

Lecture by and farewell dinner to M. Eric Barbey

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LECTURE BY AND FAREWELL DINNER TO M. ERIC BARBEY.

The Council for the Study of Swiss Problems held a meeting on July 2nd, 1946, at Brown's Hotel, at which and at the subsequent intimate dinner M. Eric Barbey, First Secretary of our Legation, was the Guest of Honour. In the unavoidable absence of our Minister, M. Ruegger, Dr. Escher, Counsellor of Legation, honoured the meeting by his presence.

M. Barbey delivered to the meeting a lecture of absorbing interest on the history and development of the Sterling Bloc — later called the Sterling Area — over the past 25 years, an intricate subject, of which he has made a special and intimate study. He also gave some interesting details on the working of the Economic Agreement recently concluded between this country and Switzerland. The lecturer was listened to with rapt attention by all those present and earned warm and well deserved applause.

The Chairman, Mr. E. Steiner, thanked M. Barbey in felicitous terms for the great privilege accorded to the meeting by this most interesting and topical exposé.


The dinner which followed was chiefly a farewell gesture to M. Barbey, who has just been appointed Commercial Attaché to Cairo, in which capacity he will be in charge of a Department responsible for a very large part of the Middle East.

After a very excellent meal the Chairman proposed the Loyal Toast to the King and to Switzerland, and then called on M. de Graffenried, Counsellor of Legation, to propose the valedictory Toast to the Guest of Honour. M. de Graffenried, speaking in Schwyzerduetsch, acquitted himself of his task in a masterful way; he paid warm tribute to his friend and colleague, Eric Barbey, and to his many outstanding qualities and assured him that he would be greatly missed by everyone who had had the good fortune to come into closer contact with him. The speaker, after having introduced some personal reminiscences and anecdotes, concluded by expressing to our departing guest the most heartfelt good wishes of his colleagues, himself and every one present, for M. Barbey's personal welfare and for every success in his great sphere of future activities. M. de Graffenried, switching over to the English language, then introduced to the dinner party the various gentlemen from the Legation, whom the Council had specially invited for the occasion, and at the end was duly applauded for his charming, sincere and witty speech. The word next was with Mr. Wuthrich, Vice-Chairman of the Council, who said he would like to associate himself in his good wishes to M. Barbey and in expressing regret at having to say farewell to so distinguished a member of the Legation and of our Colony here. Mr. Wuthrich eulogised the work accomplished by M. Barbey in the various spheres of his activity and observed that such a record was not surprising in one whose forebears had rendered outstanding services to Switzerland. Mr. Wuthrich's address was punctuated by many a humorous sally and, as the applause at its end testified, greatly appreciated by the assembly.

M. Eric Barbey, visibly moved, rose to return thanks and, speaking in French, expressed in all modesty his deep appreciation of the tributes paid to him by his old colleague, M. de Graffenried, as well as by Mr. Wuthrich. He averred that he would be leaving London with very mixed feelings; regret at having to part from so many good and trusted friends and from a Metropolis which he had grown to love, not least for the honourable scars endured and won during the last war; pleasure in looking forward to his new activities and the opportunity of serving our home country in a new field. M. Barbey again thanked both the previous speakers for their most kind words and for all the good wishes expressed; to the Chairman and the Council for the great hospitality shown him and his colleagues from the Legation. The warm cheers of his audience must have assured M. Barbey of the genuine feelings of goodwill and affection towards him by every one present.

The Chairman lastly called on Mr. Willy Deutsch, who presided over the Pro Juventute Holidays Commission, to report briefly on the progress made with the scheme. Mr. Deutsch was able to announce that 33 children of Swiss parents would be leaving this country by air in course of the present month for a stay of 6/8 weeks in Switzerland. The speaker insisted on the great help he had received from every member of his Commission and stressed in particular the invaluable and selfless services rendered to the good cause by Dr. C. Carey, M. R. Mordasini, Vice-Consul, and above all, by Mr. Theo Ritter, Secretary of the Swiss Benevolent Society.

W.D.



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