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**NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE.
(LONDON GROUP)
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING & DINNER.**

The Annual General Meeting of the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique took place on March, 15th, at the "Schweizerbund", 74, Charlotte Street, W.1. Dr. H. W. Egli was in the Chair and there were about 60 members present.

The Minutes of the last General Meeting were read, and the Annual Report of the Council having been previously sent to the members, was declared as read, and adopted. The accounts, presented by the Hon. Treasurer, Mr. R. Weist, showing a small deficit, were, after a short discussion passed. The auditors, Messrs. Rothlisberger and Bonnet certified the Balance sheet as being correct.

The President proposed that the new Swiss Minister, Monsieur A. Daeniker, be elected as Honorary President of the London Group, he mentioned that the latter had been consulted in this matter and had kindly accepted. Monsieur Daeniker was then elected with acclamation. Dr. Egli suggested that a Greetings telegram should be sent to the former Swiss Minister, Monsieur Henry de Torrenté in Washington, this was agreed to.

It was also decided to send a letter of thanks to the "Sécretariat" of the N.H.G. in Berne, for their valuable assistance and always helpful collaboration.

The President informed the Meeting that this year's "Auslandschweizertag" — the Parliament of the Swiss abroad — would take place in Zurich on August 20th and 21st. He made a strong appeal that a large delegation from the Swiss Colony in Great Britain should attend this Meeting.

The elections for the Council for 1955/56 then took place under the Presidency *pro tem* of Mr. F. G. Suter, who, after the voting slips had been collected, declared that the following members, who were on the previous Council, had been elected: Mr. and Mrs. A. Bachofen, Mr. and Mrs. Bessire, Mr. and Mrs. A. Boller, Dr. H. W. Egli, Miss A. Gretener, Mr. Th. Haller, Consul J. Huber, Mr. A. Kunz, Mr. W. Renz, Mr. R. Schneider, Mr. R. Weist, Miss M. Wolfer. Newly proposed and elected was Mrs. M. Meier.

Mr. Suter then invited Dr. Egli to take the Chair again. The latter thanked the members for the confidence they had shown him and his colleagues in electing them for a further term of office. Before closing the meeting Dr. Egli said that it was his endeavour to make special efforts to widen the field of the Council's activities in the cultural sphere. The Meeting was closed shortly before 7 o'clock.

The second part of the evening started with a cocktail party, after which the company sat down to an excellent dinner.

Various invited guests and some late comers having now arrived the assembly was increased to over a hundred. After the customary toasts had been proposed and honoured, Dr. Egli extended a very cordial welcome to the new Swiss Minister and Madame Daeniker, telling them how pleased the Society felt in having them for the first time in their midst (Applause). He further greeted Mr. and Mrs. W. Fischer, Chairman of the Presidents' Assembly, Lt.-Col. Townend, Director of the Anglo-Swiss Society, Mr. O. Ernst, General-Manager of the Swiss

Federal Railways and Swiss National Tourist Office, Rev. and Mrs. C. Reverdin, of the Eglise Suisse, Pastor and Mrs. H. Spoerri of the Schweizerkirche, Father A. Lanfranchi, Mr. and Mrs. A. Stauffer, Editor of the "Swiss Observer", Mr. and Mrs. Louis Chapuis, Mr. and Mrs. E. Bernath, First Counsellor of Legation, Mr. and Mrs. J. Huber, Consul, Mr. Valloton, Secretary of Legation, Mr. Albertini, Secretary of Legation, and Mr. and Mrs. F. G. Suter, a former President of the London Group of the Nouvelle Helvétique.

The President then asked the Swiss Minister to address the company. On rising from his seat Monsieur Daeniker was vigorously cheered.

Dr. Daeniker, speaking in German, expressed his pleasure at being able to resume personal contact with the London Group of the N.S.H. He felt no stranger in their midst since already at the time of the first war he had been an active member of the Society. During his residence in London in 1922/23 he had stood in close relation to the then Secretary of the London Group and had, in fact, been considered as his likely successor.

Looking back on the history of the N.S.H. which was founded in 1914, Dr. Daeniker reminded his hearers of the stable and solid foundations on which political conditions rested before the first world war. It was a carefree time, he said, conditioned by an optimistic faith in human progress. The historical significance of that period of barely 40 years became emphasised by the great upheavals brought about by two world wars which completely changed our outlook. Who, at that time, could have foreseen the extent to which destructive weapons would be developed so that within a short time whole towns could be destroyed; who would have thought it possible that on the grounds of divergent political opinions concentration camps would be established, and that the population of large territories, even in Europe, would become the victims of compulsory exchange without being at least consulted? The world has come no nearer to the realisation of the aim expressed in the phrase coined in 1941 by President Roosevelt when he said that freedom from fear, that is fear of spiritual

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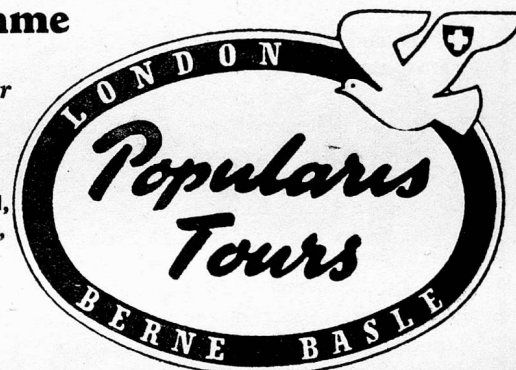
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extinction, should be one of the human attributes in the future order of things, on the contrary, for only recently has a great nation publicly declared its intention to construct and use the Hydrogen bomb as a potential means for its defence. What hope, therefore, remains for a small State? Nevertheless our generation has not abandoned all optimism. It holds the conviction that once the awareness of the common danger becomes general, mankind will find the strength to master it.

It was within that historical framework that the development of the N.S.H. had taken place. Founded in 1914, the N.S.H. attempted to overcome an equally carefree attitude in relation to the welfare of our homeland. One of the greatest dangers at that time was an excessive alien intrusion in the form of a steadily growing influx into Switzerland of foreign elements whereby our economy and our public opinions were both threatened. The N.S.H. also gave thought to the standing of the Swiss colonies abroad, a problem over which at that time the Swiss at home did not worry overmuch. During the first world war the activities of the N.S.H. proved particularly beneficial, favoured as they were by the circumstances that the Society had achieved its object in the struggle against foreign influence, and made an effective contribution towards the strengthening of our national consciousness. Many other questions bearing on our national life were objectively dealt with at the meetings of the N.S.H. delegates. These meetings provided at all times a free platform of unparalleled value. To a no less marked degree can the year-books of the Society be said to constitute a valuable record of the political and cultural life of the home-land from year to year. Time and again has the N.S.H. proved to be a fruitful element in a move towards national renaissance and taken the initiative for reforms that ultimately found their way into our legislature.

The N.S.H. was fortunate in that from the beginning it had laid stress on its neutral character as regards religious creed, political party and economic organisation; it thus represented a cross-section of Swiss national life and a free union of men and women of good will, come together in the interest of the

commonwealth. Thanks to their activities it became a fact that not only academic scholars, but also representatives of trade, crafts and industry, including labour, were to be found in its ranks.

The speaker finally mentioned the "Eidgenössische malaise" so much heard of these days in Switzerland, a phenomenon that might well be more closely investigated by the N.S.H.

"Pro Helvetica dignitate ac securitate" this axiom implies an obligation; the N.S.H. has duly honoured it.

The speaker concluded with the wish that the will to action in the N.S.H. may bring forth fresh and verdant fruit, adding that in this sense he accepted the position of Honorary President of the Group.

The Minister's interesting address was acknowledged by warm applause.

The next speaker was Mr. W. Fischer, Chairman of the Presidents' Assembly, who referred to the importance of the "Auslandschweizertag" of the N.H.G. He highly commended the Society for their efforts, together with the Pro Juventute, in enabling children of Swiss residents in Great Britain to spend a holiday in our country at very reasonable terms, and concluded his address by giving a short *resumé* of the aims and work of the Presidents' Assembly. He was followed by Colonel St. Townend, who expressed his pleasure that the two Societies had been able to hold some of their functions together, and hoped that the close relations would continue in the future for the benefit of both institutions.

Mr. Louis Chapuis, as Doyen of the London Swiss Colony, spoke in French, and with his usual enthusiasm referred to this year's "Fête des Vignerons" at Vevey, which he hoped will be visited by many of his compatriots.

The last speaker was Mr. F. G. Suter, who warmly thanked the Swiss Minister for having agreed to be the London Group's Honorary President. He said, "You have always met the Swiss abroad in a friendly manner, for which we are grateful to you".

This very enjoyable evening then came to a close, and we are tendering the Nouvelle Société Helvétique our best wishes for the future.

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Nouvelle Société Helvétique and Anglo-Swiss Society

Monday, April 18th, 1955, at 7 p.m.,
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Dr. JOSEPH ZIHLER (of Zurich)

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