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NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE (London Group)

Council's Annual Report for 1954/55.

The last Annual General Meeting took place on March 16th, 1954, at the Schweizerbund, followed by the Annual Dinner. Since then the following Open Meetings were organised by the London Group of the N.S.H. :

Talks and Lectures.

- 1) May 18th, at the Schweizerbund: "Switzerland in Perspective" a talk in English by Mr. George Soloveyitchik, based on his book about Switzerland, published recently by the Oxford University Press under the same title.
- 2) September 28th, at the Schweizerbund: "Berufsberatung", a talk in Swiss German by Dr. A. Schwander of the Bundesamt für Industrie, Gewerbe und Arbeit. This impromptu talk was substituted for an intended address by Dr. H. Christ of the Secrétariat des Suisses à l'Étranger (Berne), who was prevented from undertaking his visit to England by illness. The talk was followed by films (see below).
- 3) November 1st, at Londonderry House jointly with the Anglo-Swiss Society "Jeremias Gotthelf" a lecture in English on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of Gotthelf's death, given by Dr. H. M. Waidson, Lecturer in German of the University Hull, author of a recent book on the Swiss novelist; followed by a reading from Gotthelf's works in German by Dr. G. Frei (Literary director, Swiss Radio, Studio Zürich) and in English by Miss Selma Vaz Dias, reading her own translation.

Film Shows.

In place of talks and lectures we have had rather more film shows and entertainments last year, as it has become more difficult to secure really interesting lecturers on Swiss topics. Only very few Swiss have lately been attending the conferences at Wilton Park, organised by the Foreign Office, from which we used to profit so much by way of securing the Swiss participants to lecture to us. We were, however, fortunate enough to obtain interesting new films for various meetings, namely:

- 1) July 8th at the British Council Cinema: Film Show of Animated Drawings, including renderings of Swiss folk songs by Pinschewer Films of Berne.
- 2) September 28th at the Schweizerbund: Films of "Swiss Waterpower" and "From Rhone to Rhine", put at our disposal by Dr. H. Christ, Berne, of the Secrétariat des Suisses à l'Étranger.
- 3) November 16th at Londonderry House jointly with the Anglo-Swiss Society: "Films of St. Moritz and Arosa" shown by Mr. Peter Kaspar, Kurdirektor, St. Moritz.
- 4) January 20th, 1955 at Londonderry House jointly with the Anglo-Swiss Society: Film show given by Mr. J. P. J. Chapman, A.R.P.S., F.R.S.A., of Parkstone, Dorset, showing his own films of Switzerland, and two shorts of Venice and Cornwall.

Cabaret "Rüblisaft".

As a very special treat for the Swiss Colony the N.S.H. invited the Cabaret "Rüblisaft" over here from Switzerland to give a single performance at the French Institute on October 20th, which enabled also the Swiss Club, Manchester to have a similar performance in Manchester.

The Swiss Minister and Mme. de Torrenté, as well as most members and staff of the Legation attended the performance, the artists having previously been invited to a cocktail party at the Legation held in their honour.

The four artists, the pianist and three helpers submitted themselves to considerable discomfort in travelling with their own cars and stage properties to England and back in order to give us this treat. Special thanks for invaluable help in organising the trip and the performance are due to our Council Member Mr. A. Kunz, helped by Mrs. Kunz; to Mrs. Mariann Meier who was responsible for the sale of tickets; to Mr. and Mrs. J. Bachofen and to Mr. and Mrs. A. F. Suter for giving hospitality to two of the visitors each, to Mr. and Mrs. A. Kunz, Mr. and Mrs. W. Meier and Mr. and Mrs. Wiesendanger for hospitality to one visitor each. At very short notice Dr. R. Faessler, Commercial Counsellor at the Swiss Legation, agreed to hold a reception after the show at his nearby flat jointly with the N.S.H., to which all the helpers as well as the visitors from Switzerland were invited. We are greatly indebted to Dr. Faessler for this generous assistance.

Unfortunately the expenses of the return journey and the stay of the Cabaret "Rüblisaft" in this country were considerably higher than expected, while some of the more expensive seats remained unsold. This caused us a deficit of some £60, which however the N.S.H. was glad to shoulder in the happy knowledge that the show had given much pleasure to nearly 400 Swiss and English friends. The Reverend Spörri had taken the opportunity to bring a large number of his young protégées for this singularly pleasant entertainment. A particularly charming action to help us carry the deficit remains to be recorded: An entirely spontaneous contribution made by the S.M.S.

Dinner for Prof. W. Rappard.

On the occasion of a lecture given by Prof. W. Rappard in London on "The Quest for Peace, Yesterday and Today" under the patronage of the David Davies Institute in London, which has since been published in extenso by the Swiss Observer, the N.S.H. organised jointly with the Anglo-Swiss Society and the City Swiss Club a dinner in honour of the lecturer on April 20th at the Dorchester.

Farewell to our Hon. President.

With the support of the N.S.H., the S.M.S., the Unione Ticinese and the Anglo-Swiss Society, some lady members, under the Chairmanship of Mrs. Mariann Meier, organised a Farewell Reception in Honour of our Minister and Mme. de Torrenté, in the late afternoon of December 11th at Londonderry House. Nearly 200 members of the Colony availed themselves of this opportunity personally to say goodbye to the guests of honour, for which warm thanks are due to our enterprising ladies.

The departure of the Minister, Monsieur Henry de Torrenté, deprives us of a great friend and

assiduous supporter of our activities as Honorary President. We have conveyed our sense of gratitude to him, while wishing him the greatest success in his new post at Washington.

We take this opportunity to express our thanks also for the continuing help and support received in all our activities from the Swiss Observer, its editor, Mr. A. Stauffer, and its publisher Mr. O. Boehringer. We would especially mention the publication of Dr. Waidson's lecture on Jeremias Gotthelf almost in full in the number of December 18th, which homage to the great Swiss author involved the S.O. in considerable extra-expense. As in previous years we enjoyed the great advantage of the generous help of the Swiss National Tourist Office at all our film shows for which we express our gratitude to the Manager, Mr. H. O. Ernst and his staff.

Journée des Suisses à l'Étranger.

The Auslandschweizertagung took place at Geneva last year on August 29th-30th. Dr. Egli and Mr. and Mrs. A. F. Suter represented the N.S.H., as usually supported by the equally unflinching attendance of Mr. J. Huber, our Consul and Council Member, while Prof. and Mrs. Inebnit of Leeds and Miss H. Heckendorn of Torquay were also present. Once more Dr. Egli expressed on behalf of the Swiss Colony in England the strong disapproval we feel of the pressure tactics, employed by Swiss repatriates from Germany and elsewhere, to obtain even more by way of compensation for the losses they suffered in the war than the 121 million francs made available for all those in real need. These tactics have jeopardised the whole generous scheme of help, leaving the irresponsible agitators completely at a loss to suggest what to do now in order to retrieve the position.

Children's Holiday Scheme.

For the third time in succession our Vice-President Mr. W. Renz, assisted by Mrs. Renz, did all the extensive work in organising the children's holiday trip to Switzerland under our usual scheme, sponsored annually by Pro Juventute and the "Stiftung Schweizerhilfe" in Switzerland and supported by the Swiss Benevolent Society here. In all 28 children benefited from the scheme which enables the children of our Colony to get acquainted with our homeland on particularly favourable terms. The Colony's thanks are due for this service in particular to Mr. and Mrs. Renz.

Swiss Youth Club.

We regret to record that the weekly dances of the Swiss Youth Club, organised and supervised for so many years, first by Mrs. P. Isacco and her husband and since 1950 by Mrs. A. Bachofen and her husband, have had to be discontinued in February last owing to the impossibility of finding satisfactory alternative accommodation after the closing of the premises in Duke Street. It is much to be hoped that before long the dancing facilities may be restored possibly under other auspices. We express once again our deep appreciation of the devoted work of Mr. and Mrs. Bachofen on behalf of the young Swiss in London. The similar devotion previously shown to this work of high social responsibility by Mrs. and Mr. Isacco, will also remain unforgotten in our Colony. The funds accumulated both by Mrs. Isacco and Mrs.

Bachofen have been entrusted to our Minister in safe custody, to be used for a Swiss Youth Centre in London when our project can be realised. We record with the greatest satisfaction that with the generous aid of the Swiss Benevolent Society at the initiative of our Minister, Monsieur de Torrenté, a large Swiss Hostel for Girls will be opened shortly in Belsize Park under the auspices and management of the "Société des amies de la jeune fille" and the "Société catholique pour la protection des jeunes filles" in Switzerland. This constitutes partly a realisation of our own combined scheme and we hope that at least some of the projected activities of a Swiss Youth Club might be suitably carried on at the Hostel premises.

Publications.

A considerable supply of the 2nd Edition of the *Guide to our Colony* still being available there is no present need for a 3rd edition.

Of the free copies of "Ma patrie", "Meine Heimat" and "Il libro del cittadino" obtained from the Secrétariat des Suisses à l'Étranger for presentation to young Swiss on their coming of age a few are still available to all Swiss Societies for this purpose free of charge on application to the N.S.H.

Council Affairs.

The Council held four Meetings in the course of the year from the last to the next A.G.M. Those elected to the Council at the last A.G.M. were: Messrs. J. Bachofen, P. Bessire, A. Boller, H. W. Egli, Th. Haller, Consul J. Huber, R. Keller, A. Kunz, W. Renz, R. Schneider, R. Weist as well as Mrs. A. Bachofen, Mrs. P. Bessire, Mrs. A. Boller, Miss A. Gretener and Miss M. Wolfer. The Council Meetings were also attended regularly or frequently by Mr. A. F. Suter, Hon. Vice-President, Mr. J. E. Schneider, Delegate of the S.M.S., Mrs. G. Suter and Mrs. Mariann Meier. Dr. E. M. Bircher of the Legation was co-opted during the year to replace Mr. René Keller who returned to Switzerland.

Once again we have to record the sad loss of two members who died in the course of the year — Mr. H. H. Suremann and Mr. E. Tschannen. There were ten new entrants while 11 members resigned mainly owing to departure from London. This leaves the paying membership of the N.S.H. at 180

On behalf of the Council

H. W. Egli,
President.

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