

# Swiss Problems at Home and abroad

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## SWISS PROBLEMS AT HOME AND ABROAD.

### N.S.H. lecture and discussion.

On May 17th the Nouvelle Société Helvétique had the pleasure of welcoming Dr. H. Christ, joint director of the Secrétariat des Suisses à l'étranger, Berne, as a friendly visitor and an interesting lecturer. The Secrétariat in Berne has been established after the first World War by the mother society of the London Group to look after the interests of the Swiss abroad and to maintain their contact with the homeland. With a ridiculously small subsidy from the Federal Government and private donations it fulfills its task excellently with untiring devotion. It has sent us many high-class lecturers, it provides us with books on Switzerland free of charge or at specially reduced prices, it represents our interests in all discussions and negotiations at Berne when the Swiss abroad are in question, anyone of us needing advice or an introduction can confidently address himself to the Secrétariat.

For these reasons the London Group of the N.S.H. was particularly glad to receive the visit of one of the directors of this invaluable organisation, Dr. Christ, accompanied by his charming wife, and to offer them a modest dinner at the Schweizerbund before his lecture. The Swiss Minister, Monsieur Armin Daeniker, and several other members of the Legation honoured the meeting with their presence. Dr. Christ spoke at first about the problems of the ever-growing population and wealth of Switzerland. The tendency to an over-centralisation around Zürich causes some concern at least to other parts of Switzerland. The lure of an easy life in the towns threatens to de-populate the mountains, a danger that can only be met by increasing subsidisation of the mountain communities and cantons. The insatiable needs of the population and motor traffic threaten to absorb more and more valuable agricultural land for housing and new roads. Over 300,000 foreign workers are finding seasonal work year after year in the building trade and ever-busy industries. The growing wealth and high incomes bring about a tendency of excessive spending on inessential superficialities, while in essentials such as the arts and sciences more could be done to advantage. Also on the international plain Switzerland cannot stand aloof and could perhaps, as Professor Wahlen has pleaded, help more actively in the great task of bettering the living conditions in under-developed countries for their own sake and that of future peace.

The diminution of the urge to emigrate and seek their fortune abroad among the younger generation in Switzerland is the natural though regrettable result of our country's well-being. Since 1939 the known Swiss abroad have shrunk from 420,000 to 230,000. Only North and South America still attract most young Swiss still emigrating — about 2,000 per annum, apart from those who go without bothering to inform the authorities. The aging of the European Colonies is inevitable in the circumstances and makes proper co-operation within the Colonies and with the homeland doubly urgent. The Colonies themselves can do much to make those coming only for a temporary stay so welcome that some of them at least may be swayed into staying for good. Dr. Christ

ended his talk with a cordial invitation to all Swiss in England to try and attend the annual Conference of the Swiss Abroad (held this year at Zürich on August 20-21st) to join in the discussion of our problems and wishes. After a lively discussion arising from Dr. Christ's lecture two lovely films were shown to a grateful audience, one of the Appenzell, its people, pastimes and work, the other showing Ferdinand Hodler's life and paintings. Both were delightful and led the chairman to express the wish that more such films of educational and cultural, as well as entertainment value might be forthcoming from Switzerland to the Colonies. Thank you Dr. Christ for this excellent choice of films to crown your stimulating address!

E.

### NEW ARRIVAL AT THE SWISS LEGATION.

We have much pleasure in welcoming Major and Madame W. Koch, on their arrival in London.

General-Staff Major Werner Koch, born 1910 at Schlieren (Zurich) and citizen of Schlieren and Villmergen (Aargau), attended schools at Trogen and Zurich. He studied economics and languages at the universities of Paris and New York. After several years of activities in trade and industry, he started his military career as instructor in 1944. He passed the General Staff School in 1949 and was promoted to Major on the 1st of January, 1950. He was nominated Commanding Officer of the 11th Anti-Aircraft Battalion of the 11th Mountain Brigade, and succeeded, on May 15th, 1955, Colonel Gygli as Military and Air Attaché to the Swiss Legation.



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