

News from the colony

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NEWS FROM THE COLONY



EXIT A FRIEND

Miss Rosie Preiswerk leaves the Hostel

"All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players; they have their exits and their entrances; and one man in his time plays many parts." Thus declared Shakespeare in "As You Like It".

These words came forcibly to my mind when it was announced that Miss Rosie Preiswerk would definitely be leaving the Swiss Hostel for Girls, whose Warden she has been for a decade. It was in June 1955 that she arrived in London, and when she accepted the appointment she hardly knew how the part she had to play as head of the Hostel would develop. She had made a new entrance and took up a role which was to be one of her finest.

Born in 1905 in Basle, she had the great fortune to grow up in a happy home with five brothers and three sisters. She was educated at the "Töchterschule" in her home town and then spent a year at the "Ecole Supérieure" in Neuchâtel. Practical courses in Basle followed, and then Miss Preiswerk came to England for the first time. She worked as companion to an elderly couple in a large countryhouse.

With her intelligence, it was inevitable that the wish for further education arose, and it was during her three months at a settlement in the East End of London that she began to see her future in social welfare. This set her off on her next part. She worked in the *Chirurgische Poliklinik* in Basle before entering the "Soziale Frauenschule" in Zurich, which she left as a fully qualified social worker.

The next period in her life enabled her to combine the use of her gifts and her training with practical church work. For twenty-five years (1925-1950) she was Secretary to the well-known Protestant Minister Pfr. D. A. Koechlin in Basle. Miss Preiswerk became fully conversant with all aspects of cantonal and national Church activities, Mission and ecumenical problems. Her great qualities as a leader, which had been developed as an active girl guide, could now come to fruition and were recognised when the Church Council of Baselstadt entrusted her with the Church refugee centre.

During the war, she put her services at the disposal of the Army under an arrangement made with the Girl Guides Association. Again she was a leader, this time of a Guide Detachment in the surgical section of an Army hospital where one of her duties was to act as secretary to the Commandant.

And then followed a new part which has enabled her to make use of all her gifts and her great experience of human nature. When we look at the photograph above, our reaction must immediately be one of reserve: it is undoubtedly Rosie Preiswerk, her intelligence, her resolute and determined character show through, but what is lacking is her great understanding and her kindness and compassion, all of which make up her personality. But then *persona* means mask, and the greater the personality, the more difficult to get behind the mask.

All those who had the privilege to work with Miss Preiswerk during the ten years she spent at the Hostel, grew to respect her devotion to duty in the widest possible sense, her unflinching loyalty, her steadfast grappling with the innumerable problems her job entailed. Perhaps the hundreds of girls who passed through her hands did not all manage to appreciate her to the full. But with a little sense they must have realised that the peaceful atmosphere of the Hostel, the smooth running even at troublesome times were due to the leader.

And now, the curtain has come down on one of her finest parts. She is making her exit. She will retire to Switzerland for a well-earned rest. Somehow one can't imagine her in retirement, and I have no doubt that she will find yet another worthwhile part to play.

Godspeed and thank you.

MM

WELCOME TO THE NEW WARDEN

Miss Heidi Siegrist from Zurich has taken up her duties as Warden of the Swiss Hostel for Girls in London in succession to Miss R. Preiswerk. It will not be easy for a newcomer to live up to the standards set by the retiring Warden, but already Miss Siegrist has shown that she is fully capable of filling the responsible position.

Miss Siegrist's first training was in commerce. After working in Zurich and Geneva, she had a position as mother's help first in Paris, and then in London where she also got her proficiency certificate in English. Then she followed a "Cours de Civilisation Française" in Paris and did two months of voluntary work with Abbé Pierre. Next she took the position of Assistant Warden at a students' home in Paris.

Miss Siegrist then went to the "Soziale Frauenschule" in Zurich where she was awarded the diploma. Prior to her appointment in London, she was employed with the *Jugend-anwaltschaft* in Frauenfeld.

We wish Miss Siegrist every success and happiness in her new work.

SWISS HOSTEL FOR GIRLS

The Tenth Annual General Meeting of the Swiss Hostel for Girls was held at 9-11 Belsize Grove on June 21st under the chairmanship of Mr. J. P. Christen, the President of the Company.

On opening the meeting the Chairman asked the members present to stand up in silence as a tribute to Mr. Fred Suter in recognition of the keen personal interest which he and his wife, Mrs. Germaine Suter, have shown for the Hostel since the very beginning.

Mr. Christen had another sad duty to perform, namely to take official farewell of Miss Rosie Preiswerk who, after ten years of devoted service as warden of the Hostel, will shortly be leaving this country. In the name of the Council of Management and of every member of the Company, in that also of the thousands of Swiss girls who have so far found a happy home at Belsize Grove, he thanked Miss Preiswerk wholeheartedly and wished her a happy return home and a well-deserved retirement. The Chairman then introduced to the assembly Miss Heidi Siegrist who had just arrived from Switzerland to take up her new job as warden. He wished her God Speed in her new venture and assured her of the friendly support of all those who have the welfare of the Hostel at heart.

After the reading of the Secretary's and Warden's reports, and the presentation by the Treasurer of the Balance Sheet and Accounts for 1965 the Council of Management was re-elected *in corpore* under the temporary chairmanship of Mrs. Mariann Meier.

The following excerpts from Miss Preiswerk's last annual report are sure to interest our readers:

The year 1965 was marked by a notable increase in bookings. We accommodated 21,036 girls (1964: 18,989) with an average of 57.6 beds let per night against 52.3 in the previous year. Consequently the admission of foreign girls was reduced to 115 from 22 different countries (1964: 127 from 18 countries). We have by now learnt to accept the fluctuating numbers as something beyond our control.

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Once more we shared a number of cases with the Welfare Office, some to be accommodated, others to be engaged temporarily or for good by the Hostel as domestics. The team-work with the present Welfare Officers could not be more satisfactory.

Among the residents we had a few who were seriously ill and had to be sent to hospital. All of them have fully recovered. During the Centenary Festivities of the Salvation Army we accommodated a Swiss delegation of nine members, mostly elderly women. They were a cheerful lot and brought a pleasant change to the usual composition of our residents.

Several successful Residents Parties were held. The Advent Sundays were spent with Carol-Singing, Music and Reading. Christmas and New Year's Eve were as usual happy family events in which we were haphazardly joined by non-residents and Amadeo, a Brazilian boy.

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While we sometimes deplore that preference is given to the light TV programmes, it goes to the credit of many residents that they are making ample use of the cultural features London offers. We have a great number of enthusiastic concert goers. Some of them are talented piano players.

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Regularly once or twice a week, Mrs. H. Cottet has taken charge of the Hostel and enabled the Warden to

have her time off or to discuss various problems with her. Her wide experience and sound judgment have proved a tremendous help and I am deeply grateful to her.

To my very best wishes for a prosperous future of the Hostel I would like to add my deep-felt gratitude to the Council of Management, the House Committee, the Embassy, the Swiss Benevolent Society, Mr. Asquith, the Clergy, the Welfare Officers and all our other friends, not only for their personal kindness but for their generous contributions in time, encouragement and support. They are far too many to be mentioned individually. We like to think of them as a connecting link, so essential to the Hostel if it is to fulfill its task as an integral part of the Swiss community in London.

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I now leave this place in the good care of Miss Siegrist, deeply convinced that a wind of change can only be beneficial to its further development. May she find the same satisfaction and joy I have known in the past eleven years.

F.A.

THE CITY SWISS CLUB SUMMER DANCE

It has never been considered wise to pay heed to rumours. Those who kept aloof when it was said that the food at Great Fosters was no longer what it was, were rewarded not only by an excellent dinner, but by an extremely enjoyable evening. Those who decided to be influenced by the whisperings and to forego the City Swiss Club Summer Dinner and Dance were quite definitely the losers. In any case, it seems to me that the duty of a member to support the efforts made by a Club should outweigh any culinary considerations. It is, of course, quite true that good food and first class wine enhance a pleasant evening; but a few carefree hours spent in the company of good friends, to my own mind at least, should always be the decisive factor — food and drink should be of secondary importance.

Be this as it may, those who supported the President and Committee of the City Swiss Club and drove to Great Fosters on Friday, 1st July, never regretted it. It was a lovely evening, not too hot and with the promise of mid-summer night still in the air. The stately Elizabethan manor looked inviting, and the spacious gardens were a treat to behold. Drinks were served out of doors tasting twice as good in the cool of the rose-scented summer evening.

Any lingering speculation as to the quality of the meal was quickly dispersed, once the sixty or so members and friends had sat down and started to dine and wine in the ancient tithe barn. The Commercial Counsellor and Madame M. Feller graced the table of the President and Mrs. Edgar Bonvin. Also of the party were Consul and Madame E. Tosio, Monsieur G. Bodmer and Dr. and Mrs. H. B. Knuchel representing the Manchester Swiss.

One of the attractions of this summer function is the absence of formality, no toasts, no speeches. Soon *Pâté*, salmon, duckling and strawberries had receded into the past, and the main business of the evening began — dancing. This went on until 1 o'clock, an hour considered regrettably early by most of the dancers. The farewell thank-you's to the President were sincere, and contentment was expressed all round at an extremely successful and pleasurable evening.

MM