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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

FEDERATION OF SWISS SOCIETIES IN THE U.K.

Annual General Meeting

The new Swiss Ambassador to the Court of St. James's, Monsieur R. J. Keller, attended the third Annual General Meeting of the Federation of Swiss Societies in Great Britain on 27th May. It was held at the Residence and the Ambassador entertained the 30 delegates and representatives to a cocktail reception prior to the business meeting.

Dr. H. W. Egli as President opened proceedings with a warm welcome to the Ambassador as statutory Honorary President. From the Chairman's Report it was learnt that no spectacular developments had taken place since the last Annual General Meeting on 5th May 1967. There were, however, some welcome advances in the general aims of the Federation to be recorded. It stated them as follows:

"1) The spirit of co-operation amongst our member societies in furtherance of our common interests according to article 3a of our Rules has overcome the differences amongst the Northern societies regarding their Delegates to the Commission des Suisses de l'étranger. The opposition to the temporary appointment of Dr. H. R. Bolliger (Manchester) as Deputy Delegate at the last AGM was subsequently withdrawn, and the Northern societies have since unanimously agreed to propose Dr. Bolliger as successor to Dr. H. M. Knuchel who recently returned to Switzerland, as Delegate to the Commission and Mr. E. Hartmann (Edinburgh) as Deputy Delegate. The Colony has been excellently represented by our Delegates both in the Commission and at the *Journée des Suisses de l'étranger* (Mrs. M. Meier and Dr. H. R. Bolliger; Deputy for the South Mr. E. Bonvin).

"2) The co-ordination of our activities (article 3b) which is really a problem only in London, is progressing perceptibly, though still very slowly. There have been few if any direct collisions of events, and most societies try to space them more evenly. If they have to complain of occasional poor attendances this is plainly due to the continuing shrinkage of our Colony and the frequency of events. Occasional joint functions would obviously be the best way to amelioration.

"3) The "promotion of cultural and social activities in the interest of Switzerland's image in the U.K." (Art. 3c) is still being sought chiefly in the establishment of a FORUM OF SWITZERLAND in the Swiss Centre in London. Mr. A. Kunz has attended all, and Mr. M. Keller and the undersigned some of the Meetings of the Working Party for the Forum in Switzerland. But real progress was achieved only a few weeks ago when the Swiss Centre Ltd. decided to proceed with the building alterations for the Forum without waiting for the Federal subsidy, which, however, is still confidently hoped for. It is a great step forward raising the hope of full realisation of the project. It now comprises a special room for the exclusive use of the Colony and the young Swiss in London at normal charges, while the Pavilion will be available for bigger events at modest cost. The London societies may soon be asked to make good their promise of financial assistance on terms to be negotiated. The formation of a Company limited by guarantee in this connection has been examined and might prove advisable."

The Treasurer's report caused no special comment. Societies had paid contributions roughly in accordance with their income and compatible with their membership. The main item of expenditure had been a contribution towards the cost of attending two Commission meetings by Mrs. Meier.

The President Dr. H. W. Egli, the Honorary Treasurer Mr. A. Kunz, the member without portfolio Dr. X. M. Speckert were re-elected for two years. Dr. K. Jaggi was elected Vice-President and Mr. V. Berti Honorary Secretary. The delegates to the Commission of the Swiss Abroad and their deputies were elected as outlined above.

Dr. Bolliger gave a report on the work of the delegates and the Commission, supplemented by Mrs. Meier. To anyone reading the reports in the columns of the "Swiss Observer", there was nothing new. The main items on the agendas of the Commission meetings and of last year's Assembly in Lugano were briefly referred to, including the subject of Information with a plea to Societies to fill in and return the recently issued questionnaire which is to serve as a basis of discussion on what newspapers, bulletins and other means the Swiss communities abroad have at their disposal, and how to improve them. The draft of a letter to the Federal Council regarding the new Constitutional Article for the Swiss Abroad and how best to start implementing it, was mentioned. Criticism was voiced with regard to unnecessary delays at the Secretariat, such as 2½ months before minutes are sent out. It was hoped that the appointment of a new Director, Mr. M. Ney, would put an end to a frustrating period of temporary measures and uncertainty.

Dr. Sylvia Arnold, one of the mainstays of the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad, on whose shoulders had rested much of the responsibility and who so capably edits the "Echo" quite apart from many other duties, had travelled to London in order to take part in the meeting of the Federation. She answered some very pertinent questions with regard to the Old Age and Invalidity Insurance (AHV), a field in which the Swiss Abroad had a special grievance. She also appealed to the delegates to attend the Assembly in Schaffhausen (23rd to 25th August). She commented most favourably on the "Swiss Observer" which, in her view, was one of the best Colony Papers there were.

Her interesting comments were followed by a report on the progress of the Cultural Forum of Switzerland (Mr. A. Kunz), which, at long last looked like making progress. From a short, but animated discussion, it was evident that there would be many problems to be solved yet. But there is a great potential of goodwill and know-how, and the General feeling was one of satisfaction and hope. Thus put in a happy frame of mind, most of those present adjourned to the Dorchester Hotel, where a dinner was offered to the guest from Switzerland, and particularly to the Federation's new Honorary President. Monsieur Keller took the opportunity of introducing himself, if introduction he needed at all, seeing that he is well remembered by the majority of those present from his stay in London 1950 to 1954.

The idea of a social get-together after the business meeting was a new one, but hailed with acclamation and proved successful, more especially so because it provided an opportunity for an informal exchange of ideas and opinions with delegates from other parts of the

country. It has already been agreed at the meeting (proposed by Prof. Inebnit, Leeds), to arrange a Federation meeting in the Midlands next time.

Looking back to the time when there was no co-ordination amongst Swiss organisations in the U.K. and only very sporadic co-operation, the present set-up of the Federation seems tremendous progress. The far-seeing founders of its predecessor, the Presidents' Assembly, i.e. Dr. Egli and the late Raoul de Cintra and Walter Meier, had such co-operation in mind and they are and would be happy to see that progress is being made.

MM

YORKSHIRE SWISS CLUB

On Tuesday, 7th May, Members and their friends met at the British Council House in Leeds for their regular monthly meeting, this time made specially interesting by the presence of several compatriots from the Manchester Swiss Club, a fact which ensured a very good attendance.

The President Prof. Inebnit, in a few appropriate words, welcomed everyone to the meeting, especially the representatives from Manchester including their President Dr. Jaggi, Vice-President Dr. Bolliger and the Committee members Mr. Lauber and Mr. W. Berner, after which Dr. Bolliger was invited to talk to us, which he did in his capacity as our delegate of the Swiss community of the North of Great Britain to the Commission of the Swiss Abroad in Berne.

In doing so he explained to us in detail the many problems with which we Swiss living abroad are confronted, such as our relationship towards our home country, matters of actuality and possibilities for the future. We may not be able to do him full justice in these few lines but here are some of the topics touched:

Desirability of a more active and efficient information service through already existing consular channels, through our Embassy in London, and also by papers such as the "Swiss Observer" so well edited thanks to the initiative and hard work of the very excellent editor Mrs. M. Meier, and the "Echo" of the Swiss abroad, published in Switzerland. There is, of course, no limit to the possibilities of even a better service, and it is well worth our endeavours.

Topics centred on such issues as the famous *Militärpflichtersatzsteuer* were explained to us at some length followed by the "Solidarity Fund" now in the course of development, and it is well to note that this typical Swiss initiative has so far received very little support from the compatriots residing in this country, which might perhaps be a reflection of the stability and order of things in these islands. Nevertheless, and this in the course of question-time, one member thought that some financial sacrifice from the part of us Swiss living abroad towards our home country would be a desirable thing, if only to show our interest and thankfulness towards Switzerland, the protection it affords to us and many other benefits which might not always be visible.

Dr. Bolliger then told us of the position, the fears and hopes of the young Swiss abroad, mainly in countries less privileged than ours, who after a few generations may be somewhat estranged from their homeland, and how desirable it would be to find ways and means, by exchanges and other schemes, to allow them to know better the country of their fathers and create new interest and understanding. Youth is indeed and always was in the forefront of our thoughts and worries, and here much

can be done, not only by our own colonies but also by the *Auslandschweizer Organisation* and by our delegates.

Another very vital issue is the one in connection with the vote and our thoughts were devoted to women's suffrage. All this, of course, needs much time, some hard thinking but most of all, patience, ingenuity and understanding, and we all hope that eventually a proper solution will be found to all these problems.

Everybody present appreciated very much the way in which Dr. Bolliger explained to us all this, and the response given to him at question time which was unfortunately only too short, showed him and proved the great interest awakened in us by his challenging exposé.

Before we adjourned for coffee and biscuits, the President of the Yorkshire Swiss Club thanked him most warmly and sincerely for coming that distance to talk to us and coupled with it the wish that more such joint meetings may be arranged bringing thus our clubs of the North more closely together, it was generally regretted that through lack of time this undoubtedly general and useful discussion had to be shortened.

Professor Inebnit concluded this evening's proceedings in regaling us with his experiences in Switzerland and handing to everyone a typewritten exposé in connection with the *Auslandschweizertag* of 1967 and an extract of the paper "The Friend" of January 1967 dealing with the "Disarmament-Campaign". He expressed the wish to see the establishment in Switzerland of an International Centre for the orientation of voluntary service of young people in the help in under-developed countries or when an emergency arises through natural catastrophies and also to tackle problems of hunger, disease, etc. Switzerland who has a long and successful record in matters of a humanitarian nature, would certainly look with great sympathy and understanding towards any action undertaken on such lines, and the personal opinion of the writer would be that any such scheme could be best served by operating it within Switzerland itself.

Before parting, the hope was expressed, that also this year's "Landsgemeinde" of the Swiss of the North of England would again be held at Hardcastle Crags near Hebden Bridge, in the same tradition of *Freund-Eidge-nössischen Geist*, thought of and created by the very first founders 20 years ago, with the idea of bringing the Clubs of the North nearer together and creating, if ever possible, closer ties of fellowship and friendship and kindle the flame of *Zusammenghörigkeitsgefühl*.

E.B.

NEW SWISS CLUB IN LIVERPOOL

With the co-operation of the Swiss Consulate in Manchester and sponsored by the well-established Manchester Swiss Club, the Liverpool Swiss Club has been reopened. On 27th March, a meeting of Merseyside Swiss was called, and more than thirty gathered. After lengthy debates, a Committee was elected in "due and ancient form". Mr. Théodore Erb, of 86 Kings Road, Bootle 20, Lancs., was elected President. Anyone interested in joining the Club, is invited to apply to him.

The President of the Manchester Swiss Club, Dr. Jaggi, gave a talk on the activities of the new Club's "elder brother", and the Swiss Consul and Madame Brunner generously donated Swiss wines to accompany the meal prepared by the "Swiss Ladies of Liverpool".

We extend warm wishes to the new Club and its officers and hope that their endeavours will be crowned with success.