

# Société de secours mutuels des Suisses à Londres

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European integration". Our President then emphasised the strong ties which link the Swiss Club with the Manchester Rifle Club and expressed our thanks to Major Nicholson for having accepted us on its ranges on equal terms and that we were very grateful for this privilege. He greeted also the representatives from Yorkshire and Liverpool joining us on this annual occasion.

The old and honourable town of Basle seemed to be a happy liaison and proved to be a common ground, in many ways, for our Ambassador and our President, but certain of our English friends know of course that there are also other lovely and important cities in Switzerland. The writer, however, is thankful to Basle, whose International Airport allowed him and his wife, a few weeks ago, to reach the safety of the English shores after Kloten Airport had been suddenly closed down by fog. At the end of his speech he was most warmly applauded, after which our Ambassador was invited to address us.

#### **Our Ambassador's respect for the British**

Dr. Weitnauer began by praising the virtues of the Swiss of Manchester, who represented the best traditions of the Swiss abroad.

"I greatly appreciate what the Swiss community in Manchester and its neighbourhood stand for", he said.

"They are accepted in all walks of life, living up to the best Swiss traditions and at the same time completely integrated in the life of their country of residence: these have always been the great qualities of the Swiss abroad and make them unofficial but so much more effective ambassadors of our country.

"I am particularly well placed to acknowledge these qualities since I am a new arrival having lived in this country only for a few months. I make new discoveries every day, groping my way through English life. I cannot say how happy I am about the many helpful hands that are stretched out to me to give me a lead.

"And here I would like to note what you all know maybe better than I do: that in this great country—Great Britain—it is particularly easy for a foreigner to settle down.

"The great friendliness of the population. There are still excellent manners. The high degree of civilisation which one finds wherever one goes and whoever one meets. 'Old Europe' in the best possible sense of this formula.

"I still remember when I came to this country for the first time, in the early fifties, and the feeling I had—I came by car—when I approached the old city of London, slowly through the suburbs first, drawing nearer to

the heart of the city. I felt at home almost the first day. I am quite convinced that the great city of Manchester has conquered you in very much the same way, growing on you more and more every day so that you feel completely at home here as you felt at home in Switzerland".

Dr. Weitnauer then embarked on a highly interesting expose of the situation of Britain and Switzerland in the European context. He gave his audience precise indications on the present state of negotiations between Switzerland and the European Economic Community and said that Swiss involvement in Europe would call for inner changes and that, like Britain, she was faced with a number of crucial questions.

He passed many of the basic Swiss problems under review, in particular the problems resulting from an excessively high proportion of foreign manpower. He ended by expressing the wish that "the common responsibilities faced by our two countries will more and more be such that the traditional friendship between Britain and Switzerland will, in a new and thrilling context, not only keep but see its importance enhanced as the years go by".

Great attention was given to his interesting and clear expose and at the end of it he was most warmly applauded. Flowers having been offered to the ladies of the top table and whilst the first tunes of our band-music started to echo through the rooms, there was a well understandable rush for tombola tickets, which could have been sold at a premium, but even so the success was complete. Nobody returned empty-handed and for some it was a problem to return to the tables without losing some of the acquired bounty.

The dance proceeded well into the night and the early hours of the morning and as always it was a delightful sight, tiredness or boredom never entering into our minds; ladies in their tasteful and lovely eclat to be looked at and danced with; our beloved Ambassador, as one, taking full advantage of it. Between dances, conversation and refreshment, the hours rushed by and much too soon the time arrived for goodbye and au revoir, hoping to see us soon again under similar circumstances.

#### **Dr. Weitnauer's Mancunian week-end**

For many of us present at this evening this was well the end, but not for our Ambassador. Sunday proved to be a very busy day for him and his entourage. In the morning, Service of Remembrance in the Gardens of Remembrance and then, jointly with the City Council witnessing the March Past of troops and organisations of the town, followed by a luncheon offered by the Lord Mayor also to the Consul and Madame Born and others.

In the afternoon a drive into the Cheshire countryside, including a visit to Tatton Hall in Knutsford, afternoon tea at Mere Golf and Country Club, always in company of the Lord Mayor and the Lady Mayoress, proceeding then to the home of the Lord Mayor at Juniper Hill, Mere. They were then entertained for dinner at the Frozen Mop, Mobberley, and later in the evening they returned to the Town Hall.

Monday morning our Ambassador and the Consul were driven for a visit to Ciba-Geigy (U.K.) Ltd., and eventually to the Clayton Aniline Company Ltd. at Clayton, both firms living witnesses of Swiss knowledge and enterprise.

At one p.m. a Civic Luncheon was organised by the Lord Mayor and the Corporation to his honour and also several prominent Swiss were invited to this function which was both interesting and entertaining.

In the afternoon visits were made to the City Art Gallery, specially to the Assheton Bennett collection of painting and silver and items from the porcelain collection, and finishing with a short stay at the John Rylands Library.

I have been told that the Ambassador eventually left for London early in the evening and we all do hope that he has taken with him many happy memories from his stay here in the north, from the hospitality and friendship extended to him by the Lord Mayor, Corporation and people of the town, and strong also of the sincere affection which was given wholeheartedly to him by his own people.

*(Ermanno Berner)*

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#### **END OF THE SOCIETE DE SECOUR MUTUELS DES SUISSES A LONDRES**

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It was decided at the November Monthly Meeting of the Societe de Secours Mutuels that it should be dissolved. An extraordinary General Meeting was called for Wednesday, 1st December, at Swiss House, to officially dissolve the Society, which was the oldest Swiss society in London and one with a most glorious history. Many Swiss in London must still have fresh in their minds the memory of a glamorous 250th anniversary dinner held at the Schweizerbund at 74 Charlotte Street on 16th December, 1953, in the presence of Minister Henry de Torrenté.

Now this Society and witness to Swiss presence in the history of London is to disappear. Members were convened to carry out the five painful duties:

1. To officially record the vote on dissolution.

2. To agree the committee's proposition to refund each member on the register on 31st December, 1971, all his contributions paid to the So-

ciety since admission.

3. To discuss the Registrar's recommendation of distributing any possible surplus in equal shares to all existing members on the register on 31st December, 1971.

4. To agree on the dissolution date (31st December, 1971) on which all payments of benefit will cease.

5. To agree on the disposal of the Society's property.

The special 1st December meeting was attended by 10 members with Consul Adams in attendance representing the Swiss Embassy. All the members, representing 97½ per cent of the voting power (except one member away in convalescence) having signified their agreement to the dissolution of the Society, the meeting unanimously agreed that the official date of dissolution be 31st December, 1971.

Regarding any of the Society's relics which may prove of historical interest, including the BANNER which was presented to the Society by the ladies of the Colony on the occasion of the 200th Anniversary in 1903, the President will keep in contact with the Embassy as to where they might be exhibited. The disposal of the Society's assets will be in compliance with the Friendly Societies' Rules and Regulations and in accordance with the Rules of the Society.

A further report will appear in the "Swiss Observer" in due course.

#### THE HISTORY OF THE "SOCIETE DES SECOURS MUTUELS"

*The following is a short history of the Secours Mutuel Society sent by its President, Mr. Adolphe Ganden, on*

*12th October, explaining to members why it had to face dissolution.*

Sometime in 1703 a handful of gentlemen originating from Geneva, living in London, felt the need to organise for the purpose of helping each other in case of sickness. They formed a society which they called LA SOCIETE DES GENEVOIS. The object was mainly to assist members incapacitated due to sickness or accidents, to help the family on the death of a member and assist members in other distressed circumstances. After the admission of Geneva as a Canton of the Confederation in 1814 the name was changed to LA SOCIETE DES SUISSES, later to LA SOCIETE DE SECOURS MUTUELS DES SUISSES A LONDRES, membership being open to all Swiss males in Great Britain. Twenty-nine years ago it was registered under the FRIENDLY SOCIETIES ACTS.

During these 2½ centuries the Society went through many a crisis, many a tribulation, survived them all and assisted a great many compatriots at a time when help from other sources was non-existent. Details of the society's activities may be found in the reports which appeared in the "Swiss Observer" on the occasion of the 250th anniversary of the society and need not be repeated here.

Since the advent of the WELFARE STATE the value of the society for its members as a welfare organisation has gradually diminished as the benefits given by the state have increased. The assistance given to members in accordance with our scale of benefits is a mere pittance compared with the benefits which are given by the state in one form or another. As a welfare society we have, in fact, nothing sufficiently attractive to offer to

attract new members.

For one reason or another the interest shown by members in the affairs of the society has fallen faster in recent years. Some 20 members have not attended one meeting in 20 years—another 10-12 members may have made one appearance in one or two years. Monthly meetings have mostly been attended by some six or seven members only. The last AGM was attended by only 11 members.

It had been hoped that the much talked of FORUM at the Swiss Centre would have assisted us in reviving the Society in one form or another. However, now that this project has been abandoned our last hope must be discarded.

Apart from the lack of interest shown by members our assets, the interest on which has been our main source of income for some time, have also gradually dwindled. Our investments consisting of stocks and units have depreciated by some £1,500.00 over the past eight years alone (to 31.12.70) and, at this rate, our funds might well be exhausted a few years hence in spite of changes made in the investments on the recommendation of a special committee appointed to study the position.

In view of all the foregoing circumstances, your committee feels that, in the interest of the still remaining members, the Society should dissolve now rather than later in order to forestall any further diminution of our funds.

An extraordinary meeting will be called in due course for the purpose of registering the votes of the members. At least 85 per cent of the votes must be in favour of dissolution before it can take place. At this point your committee would appreciate comments

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from any member who is opposed to the proposed dissolution. For the purpose of this preliminary enquiry it will be assumed that any member not recording an objection will be deemed to agree and be prepared to sign an instrument of dissolution in compliance with the rules and regulations laid down by the Registrar of Friendly Societies and in accordance with the rules of the Society. The committee will further assume that unless members lodge an objection within 10 days from this date they are, in principle, in agreement with the scheme and allow the preparations for the special meeting to be proceeded with accordingly.

Assuming that the total votes registered by the members in favour of dissolution reach the required minimum the committee's proposition is to refund to each member all his contributions paid to the Society since admission. As an illustration an honorary member who paid 50 years @ 32/6 per year would receive £81.25, a member of 30 years' standing would receive £49.62 taking into consideration that in 1970 the subscriptions were raised to £2.50, whereas a five-year member would receive £9.00, etc., subject to the funds available at the time of dissolution covering this scheme in full.

A decision as to distribution of any possible surplus would be taken at a special meeting of the Society when the final financial position of the Society is established.

Realising that the step recommended means a clean break with tradition the Society has upheld for over two centuries it is with the greatest reluctance that the committee put forward this proposal hoping that you too will, after careful consideration, come to the conclusion that circumstances leave us no alternative.

*(Adolphe Gandon, President)*

## SWISS ECONOMIC GROWTH IN CRISIS

### Dr. Charles Bruggmann at the Nouvelle Societe Helvetique

After a pleasant talk on mountain flora, illustrated by slides, which Mr. A. D. Ruscoe gave to the London Group of the Nouvelle Societe Helvetique on 21st October, members were given a talk on a more sober subject on 25th November. Dr. Charles Bruggmann, Counsellor for Economic Matters at the Swiss Embassy, addressed the group on "Swiss Economic Growth in Crisis". He gave a chronological account of Swiss economy since the end of the war, of its unprecedented expansion and the problems the country had to face in consequence. He dealt with the growth of the foreign working population and the repercussions it brought. He mentioned the influx of foreign money into Switzerland, the stability of the Swiss franc and gave a

fair picture of inflation which was rampant in Switzerland as in other countries.

Dr. Bruggmann's talk showed up the difference in governmental and parliamentary power between Switzerland and Great Britain when it came to economic measures. A lively discussion followed his talk, which proved that the subject was of great interest to the Swiss in London.

## BIRTHDAYS

Within the next few weeks, the following subscribers will be celebrating their birthdays: On Christmas Eve, Mrs. Scheuermeier will be 82. On New Year's Eve, Mr. E. C. Schmid will be 77. On 2nd January, Mr. W. Renz will have his 73rd and Mr. C. Nater (St. Moritz) his 63rd birthday. Mr. J. Christen (Oberwil/Zug) will be 83 on 3rd January. Mr. E. P. Locher will be 79 on 4th January. Mr. A. Baenziger will have his 77th birthday on 7th January. Mrs. L. Meyer will have her birthday on 10th and Mrs. P. Moehr on 12th January.

To all these readers and any others who may be celebrating birthdays and anniversaries within the next few weeks, we send best wishes and many happy returns.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We should like to thank most sincerely all those readers who have supported us with donations and gift subscriptions. We have not managed to thank personally all of them, but our gratitude remains just as strong. We should like to mention the following readers who have helped us from June to November:

Mr. L. S. R. Asch, Mr. Ch. Abegglen, Mr. A. H. Aubaret, Mr. J. Ammann, Mr. P. Bucher, Mr. H. Berger, Mr. A. Burgisser, Mr. J. W. Bertschinger, Mr. C. A. Berti, Mr. V. L. Bataillard, Mr. G. Beckmann, Mr. R. E. Baumann, Mr. H. Bronnimann, Mrs. H. Blessley, Mr. A. Boog, Mr. O. Braga, Mr. H. Schneider, Miss H. Cotti, Mrs. Clements-Hunziker, Mr. M. M. Christen, Mr. B. Cogliatti, Mrs. H. Chiverton, Miss C. H. Carden, Mrs. H. P. Conder.

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bacher, Mr. E. Loechler, Mr. F. Liniger, Mrs. K. Lutz, Mr. P. Lerch, Mr. P. E. Meister, Mr. J. Muller, Mr. J. Moser, Mr. M. L. Meyer, Mrs. M. Nestorides, Mr. J. Oertli, Mr. H. Ott, Mr. R. E. F. Oggier, Miss M. Paly, Mr. W. Pellet, Mr. A. M. Reggiori.

Mr. L. Schaer, Mr. G. A. Schmid, Mr. A. Schorno, Mr. A. Strittmatter, Mrs. J. Schmid, Miss S. J. Streit, Miss E. Stamm, Mr. H. Schmid, Mr. R. B. Pitcairn, Mr. E. C. Schmid, Mrs. E. M. Stauffer, Mr. F. Schillig, Mr. W. A. Stettbacher, Mrs. A. L. Scheurmeir, Mr. J. Scheiwiler, Mr. R. A. Strahl, Mr. W. Schlapfer, Mrs. M. Schneebeli, Mr. X. Speckert, Mr. A. W. Sommer, Mr. H. Tanner, Mrs. H. Themans, Mr. J. Thiebaud, Mrs. G. J. Turner, Mr. J. G. Wetter, Mrs. P. Walker, Mrs. J. Weller, Mr. W. H. Worpe, Mrs. M. Welsford, Mr. W. H. Zuber, Mr. E. Zwicky and Mr. J. E. Zollinger.

## IN MEMORIAM

To the memory of my beloved husband Frank Seitz, who passed away on 26th December, 1964.  
So loved and remembered  
Kathleen.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### French-speaking Swiss Church:

Christmas Service at 11.15 a.m. on Christmas Day at the Swiss Church, Endell Street. No evening service. Normal services on Sunday, 26th December.

### German-speaking Churches:

Family Christmas Celebration on Sunday, 19th December at Endell Street, 4 p.m.; Christmas Service at 10 a.m. on Christmas Day at Endell Street. Normal Service on Sunday, 26th December. Ecumenical Christmas Eve Service at the John Southworth Centre, 48 Gt. Peter Street at midnight on 24th December (which follows an ecumenical Christmas celebration at the same address beginning at 6 p.m.)

New Year Protestant Service at 10 a.m. on 1st January at Endell Street.

COLONY CHILDREN. Fete on Saturday, 1st January, at Queen Mary's Hall, YMCA, Great Russell Street, 2.15 p.m.

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY. Annual Ball, Saturday, 5th February.

NOUVELLE SOCIETE HELVETIQUE. Christmas Dinner at Swiss Hostel for Girls at 7 p.m.

CITY SWISS CLUB. Tuesday, 25th January. Card Evening.