

Swiss Benevolent Society

Objektyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1973)**

Heft 1658

PDF erstellt am: **09.08.2024**

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the Swiss Catholic Chaplain, the Honorary Treasurer the N.S.H. were among those whom Mrs. Meier wished to greet particularly. She also welcomed Mr. B. Simon and Dr. H. R. Bolliger and his wife from Manchester. The attendance was told of the election of Mr. Peter Senn to the Presidency of the Swiss Club Manchester. The President also told us of the ski-accident of Dr. Hugo Rast, a Harley Street member of the Swiss Colony. Dr. Rast, 82, broke an ankle while skiing at Saanenmoser. Mrs. Meier expressed the Society's best wishes for his speedy recovery.

Ambassador Albert Weitnauer, who like last year had accepted to come to this annual function, then said a few words. He again extolled the "quality of life" found in Britain but said that he would not make a "progress report" of his second year of office in this country. Dr. Weitnauer, who is Honorary President

of the London Group of the N.S.H., said that as a resident of Brianston Square, he was entitled to hold the key of the garden therein. Blessing his predecessors' foresight in securing the freehold of Embassy building, he said that this allowed him to take a stroll in the garden every day at lunch time. He said that he could, if he wished, plant his own flowers in the garden. A local lady-resident had suggested edelweiss! The Ambassador ended his refreshing address by saying how much he enjoyed studying Anglo-Saxon grammar. He had discovered that the inhabitants of this Island spoke something similar to Swiss-German before the arrival of William the Conqueror.

Greetings from Manchester were lastly conveyed by Dr. Bolliger. The official part of the evening was over. People remained in the hall for a while, but the first movements towards the Exit began shortly after ten o'clock.

Swiss Benevolent Society explained on "Visitors Sunday"

No one more qualified than Mrs. Regula Sharp, Secretary of the Swiss Benevolent Society, could have come to a packed hall of parishioners on the "Journee des Visiteurs" of the Swiss church.

These yearly Sundays devoted to the problem of "visiting", and that of the people requiring these visits give the opportunity to the Swiss parish of hearing a speaker in close touch with lonely persons. Three years ago, Archbishop Anthony Blum, Head of the Western Orthodox Churches, had come to speak to the Swiss Church on the more spiritual aspects of visiting. Mrs. Sharp centered her expose on the very practical problems of the "visited". She began by outlining the essentials of social care, past and present. She stressed the tremendous development in official aid coupled with an increase of loneliness due to the decay of small human communities.

She clearly defined the limits of action of the Swiss Benevolent Society. It could not offer a "pension" to those already receiving benefits from the British State, but could supplement income in cases of real hardship. The Society's purpose was not so much to give direct material aid as to find ways, on the right channels, for effective assistance. A very common occurrence was that of old people living in misery and, either through lack of energy, dejectedness of ignorance, did not take the trouble of notifying or looking for the relevant services which could bring them aid. There was also a certain element of pride. It is difficult to end one's life having to resort to "charity". However, the Speaker stressed that the Benevolent Society did not dispense "charity". Its "benevolence" was offered from funds which had been assembled for precisely this purpose. Mrs. Sharp said that the money was there to help people, and that possible beneficiaries should not have misgivings about availing themselves of this opportunity.

The Speaker referred to the growing life-expectancy and to the way this affected the moral and material problems of old age. As far as the Parish's voluntary visitors were concerned, Mrs. Sharp stressed on the importance of bringing all new and unknown cases to her attention. She said that some circumspection was needed in dealing with the problems of the visited. One had to draw a line of defense before being involved too deeply, either materially or emotionally. It was essential to be aware of one's path, because a relationship

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thoughtlessly entered into could cause unnecessary suffering to both the visitor and the visited. Mrs. Sharp, who visits 350 people a year from as far as Dorset to the Midlands, said that visits were often emotionally exhausting and required one to "shut off" after a given time as a necessary mental-health precaution.

The "professional" visitor often had to overcome resistance by people obviously in need of aid but unwilling to accept any. Pride was by no means the only element. Sometimes, a person would have gone through so much suffering and disillusion that he, or she, would view all willing helpers from outside with mistrust. One, two or maybe more visits would be necessary until co-operation could be obtained.

Although "visiting" by parishioners mostly concerned old, and mainly retired people, this was not the case of the Benevolent Society's work, which also touched on the problems of young people, particularly of young Swiss women married to Englishmen of Commonwealth immigrants. The Secretary could give counsel but not follow a case closely. For constant and effective social or moral assistance, it was necessary to notify the case to the local social services.

A discussion followed in which the attendance somehow drifted away from the general line of Mrs. Sharp's conference. A young and angry member of the Youth Club raised moral issues of visiting, claiming that visits should not be conceived as an act of voluntary and isolated charity. This criticism of do-gooders seemed, however, to be taken for granted. One elderly man said that what he most appreciated in visitors was tact and politeness. The Speaker added that it was essential to be willing to listen with interest to the grievances of the visited.

Tea and cakes were offered after a most interesting speech and discussion which reminded us of the vital work achieved, often in connection with the Consulate, among needy Swiss people in the London area by the Benevolent Society. It establishes a vital link between the social rights and benefits offered by the British and Swiss States between our compatriots in this country.

Obituary

ALBERT SIMMEN

It is with deep regret that we announce the death of Mr. Albert Simmen, of 84, Hillway, Highgate 6DP. He was born at his parents' hotel at Ilanz on 19th June, 1893. His school years were spent at St. Moritz. At the age of eight he lost his mother and soon after his father, and he and his three brothers and three sisters were looked after by an aunt and uncle. Later he went to Chur to be trained as a masseur. After a stay in France, he came to London just before the First World War. He became well

known in his profession, and ever since 1927 he has spent a few months every winter at St. Moritz at the request of clients.

Mr. Simmen opened a house in Fellows Road, Hampstead, which he made into a home for many a young Swiss. His sister Helena helped him. She is remembered by many as matron of 31, Conway Street, which was then a home for old Swiss. She later married Mr. Gustave Jenne, a well-known personality in the Swiss community. Her brothers needed help, and it was a friend of Mrs. Jenne's who took over. She and Mr. Simmen got married in 1943. Their home was bombed in the war, but undaunted, the couple went on, and many are the grateful clients of Mr. Simmen's who benefited from his professional skill.

And it was up at his beloved St. Moritz that he spent the last few months prior to his sudden death on 7th January. It had always been his wish to die there, and it has been granted. We extend our deep sympathy to his wife (above address) and to his sister Mrs. Helena Jenne at Andeed (G.R.).

M.M.

SWISS DRUGS GANG ARRESTED

The Zurich police have made the biggest arrest in the history of anti-drug operations in Switzerland. Twenty-two youngsters, fifteen of them below twenty, were arrested during a swoop which was brought about by the complaint of a 32-year old woman about damages caused by the gang. Several of its members were already known to the police. Eight were heroin addicts. The group had been responsible for the disappearance of a sizeable quantity of heroin and opium from the central laboratory of the Federal Health Services in Berne. The police only recovered part of the haul. The group had also imported 22lbs. of hachisch from Amsterdam.

Anglo-Swiss Affairs

Sir Alec Douglas Home, Britain's foreign secretary will visit Berne from the 17th to the 19th of May on the invitation of the Federal Council. His visit is in answer to Mr. Graber's trip to London during February of last year. A spokesman at the Political Department said that the coming visit will have an essentially "informative" purpose and will serve to strengthen Anglo-Swiss relations.

Swiss experts are testing from 2nd April to 8th May, the British-made VTOL "Harrier" jet-fighter and the Swedish Saab 37 "Viggen" as possible replacements for the Swiss Air Force.

Evaluation work for a new aircraft has started anew following the scrapping last year of six years of expertise which had started with the French "Mirage" and the American "Corsair" being the most suitable candidates. The "Harrier" and the "Viggen" had both been tested before.

Swiss Churches

SERVICES EN FRANCAIS: à l'Eglise Suisse, 79 Endell Street, W.C.2, tous les dimanches à 11h15 et 19h00.

PERMANENCE: chaque jeudi de 15h00 à dimanche du mois, matin et soir.

SAINTE-CENE: le premier et troisième 18h00.

REUNION DE QUARTIER: huit veillées en automne et au printemps: voir "Le Messager".

CLUB DES JEUNES: tous les dimanches de 12h00 à 22h30, tous les jeudis de 15h00 à 22h30.

REUNION DE COUTURE: le 2e mardi du mois. **LUNCH,** tous les dimanches à 13h00.

VISITES: sur demande.

PASTEUR: A. Nicod, 8 Park View Road, London, N.3. Téléphone 01-346 5281.

SWISS CATHOLIC MISSION: John Southworth Centre, 48 Great Peter Street, London, SW1P 2HA.

Sundays: Holy Mass at 6.30 p.m. with sermon in German, in the Club hall, ground floor.

(2nd floor at the same time, Protestant service in German).

CONSULTATIONS AND CONFESSIONS: by appointment.

SERVICES EN FRANCAIS: Notre Dame de France, 5 Leicester Place, W.C.2, on Sundays, 10.00, 11.00, 12.15, and 6.30 p.m.

SWISS CATHOLIC YOUTH CLUB: Open every Sunday from 3 p.m. to 11 p.m. (48 Great Peter Street). Discussions, dance, lectures (with members of other denominations), Sunday services and refreshments. See programme "Die Stimme."

During the week: open according to programme of the English Youth Club.

RESIDENCE OF CHAPLAIN: Bossard, Swiss Catholic Mission, 48 Great Peter Street, (2nd floor), London SW1P 2HA. Telephone: 01-222 2895.

SERVICES IN GERMAN: at Eglise Suisse, 79, Endell Street, W.C.2, every Sunday at 9.45 a.m. Sunday school takes place on the first and the third Sunday in the month for children of all age groups. Children assemble in the church with their parents who attend the normal Service. Liturgical Service takes place every second Sunday in the month. Services also at John Southworth Centre, 48 Gt. Peter Street, S.W.1 every Sunday at 6.30 p.m.

HOLY COMMUNION: every first Sunday of the month at evening service at John Southworth Centre. Every second Sunday of the month at morning Services at Eglise Suisse. On major feasts at morning and evening services.

CONSULTATIONS: every Wednesday 4-6 p.m. at Eglise Suisse.

DISTRICT GROUP S.E.21 and SERVICES OUTSIDE LONDON: see "Stimme."

"KONTAKT" (Youth Group): every Wednesday 4-10 p.m. at Eglise Suisse. Supper at 7 p.m. Programme at 8 p.m.

WOMEN'S CIRCLE: every first Tuesday of the month from 12 noon onwards at the Eglise Suisse.

MOTHER'S REUNION: third Wednesday in the month, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Eglise Suisse.

VISITS: by request.

MINISTERS: Pfr. U. Stefan, 1, Womersley Road, N.8. Tel: 01-340 9740.