

Society and social scene

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SOCIETY AND SOCIAL SCENE

THE fifteenth annual general meeting of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom was held at the Swiss Ambassador's residence on June 20.

Opening the meeting the President, Mr Bernard Simon, greeted, in particular, the new Ambassador and Honorary President, Monsieur Claude Caillat, the Deputy Director of the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad, Monsieur Lucien Paillard, and the new publisher of the Swiss Observer, Mr Derek Meakin.

The Ambassador said a few words of welcome, expressing the hope that all those present would feel at home in their Embassy and visit it as often as possible. The meeting then stood in silence in memory of Mr R. Asch and Mr O. Schreiberke, two very active members of the Swiss colony who had died during the past year.

Mr Jacomelli proposed that the minutes of the 14th Annual General Meeting be approved, Mrs Schwab seconding, and this

Annual general meeting of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK

was carried unanimously.

Mr Jacomelli proposed that the President's report be accepted, Mr Häusermann seconding, and this was carried unanimously.

The President reported that a number of meetings had taken place since the last Annual General Meeting with a view to ensuring the continued publication of the Swiss Observer, as the Federation, to which the paper had been generously presented by Mr O.F. Boehringer, had neither the expertise nor the manpower to undertake such a venture.

The outcome had been the appearance of the first issue published by Mr Derek Meakin, the owner of Europress Ltd, who had assumed full responsibility for the Swiss Observer, which he had undertaken to publish for

five years at no cost to the Federation.

A consultative committee, upon whom he could call, had been formed, while four trustees would hold the shares of the Swiss Observer Ltd on behalf of the Federation.

Commenting on the fantastic amount of work done on this matter by Mr Simon, Mr Tangemann pointed out that if the paper was to be a success it would need plenty of advertisements, contributions from societies, reports of exhibitions, etc., suggestions and criticisms from readers, and new subscribers. He suggested that there should also be a space for late news, reserved until the last minute.

He then asked the meeting for a clear expression of approval of the steps taken, which was given

unanimously. Mrs Meier emphasised the necessity of written comments, oral criticism being of little use.

The President reported possible changes to the agreement on the provision of official information from Berne for publication in the Swiss Observer. The consultative committee would shortly formulate proposals for combining economy in Switzerland with the continued supply of useful information.

Mr Paillard, after conveying greetings from former National Councillor Weber and Mr Marcel Ney, the Director of the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad, explained that more would be known on this subject at the end of August, after the Assembly of the Swiss Abroad. The situation in Britain was much less serious than, for example, in Germany, where the colony newspaper appeared only four times a year.

It might be necessary to reduce the number of special issues containing official information from four per year to



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three. This would produce a saving of 25 per cent, whereas the budget was only being cut by about 10 per cent; in any case, this would probably not happen before 1982. He thanked the Federation for finding a solution to the general problem of the Swiss Observer.

Presenting the treasurer's report in the absence of Mr Kunz, Mr Jauslin drew attention to the omission, through a typing error, of a credit item of £75 in the income and expenditure account. He pointed out that the Federation's accounts showed a further improvement over the previous year.

Mr Simon referred to the suggestion made at the previous AGM that recipients of support should not be named in the accounts; Mr Jauslin promised to remind the treasurer of this. The accounts and auditor's report were unanimously and gratefully approved.

Report by the delegates to the ASK: Mrs Meier reported in detail on the last two Commission meetings, namely the one in Porrentruy in August 1979, and the one held in Berne in March 1980.

Commission of Information: Regrettably the Echo was still making a loss, although it was considered a worthwhile publication. New ways were constantly tried to increase the circulation, but in some countries the subscription was rather high. Mrs Meier urged the Presidents to promote this publication.

Referring to the Solidarity Fund meetings, she expressed disappointment that so many Swiss abroad joined the fund only when there were danger signals in their country of residence. However, as applications from Spain had shown, there were signs that insuring with the Solidarity Fund was beginning to become a more serious proposition for Swiss in Europe.

Mrs Meier touched on a number of other matters discussed in August, including the total revision of the Federal Constitution; it had been reported at the meeting of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad that most Swiss abroad appeared to be in favour of a revision.

The Swiss abroad had



Members of the Swiss Rifle Association and friends at Bisley after their mid-summer rifle meeting and barbecue. Four members appeared on ITV's World of Sport programme recently demonstrating their skill at 300m. The Association's activities resume on September 7 at Bisley. New members are welcome — contact the secretary, 58 Dickens Rise, Chigwell, Essex, for details.

however expressed their dismay that the draft of the revised Federal Constitution did no longer contain a special article dealing with "the Swiss abroad". The same meeting had discussed the Federal law on the Swiss National Bank, in which the Swiss abroad had not been included, but the former President, Dr L. Guisan, had intervened on behalf of the Swiss abroad.

The 1980 Assembly of the Swiss Abroad would be held in Lugano from August 22-24 and the theme would be "Swiss Schools Abroad", the purpose being to show what such schools were achieving.

Turning to the spring meeting, Mrs Meier reported in detail on the topics discussed which included the annual report of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad of the NSH for 1979, the yearly accounts ending with an excess of expenditure of some Sfr. 38,000. Again the subject of citizenship, social security, etc. were on the agenda.

Committee of the Federation: As the committee had expressed their willingness to stand again and as there were no other nominations, they were unanimously re-elected en bloc.

Deputy delegate to the ASK

for the South of England: As Father Bossard felt obliged to resign because other duties were increasingly taking up his time, negotiations had been going on behind the scenes but no concrete proposals could yet be made. Mrs Schwab suggested that Mrs Lisa Hall be approached. The President asked for nominations to be sent to him as soon as possible.

Auditors: Mr Jauslin having agreed to stand again, and Mr Jacomelli having indicated his willingness to replace Mr Burri, who felt it was time to retire, they were elected unanimously.

The President thanked the meeting for the confidence placed in the committee and himself.

Assembly of The Swiss Abroad in Lugano, August 22-24: Mr Paillard having drawn attention to the page in the Swiss Observer devoted to the 1980 Assembly, the President urged all who could to attend this event, which would be well worth their while.

Other business: Mr Paillard drew the meeting's attention to two recent books: "2000 Ans de Présence suisse en Angleterre" by former Ambassador Bêat de Fischer, with a preface by former Federal Councillor F.T. Wahlen, and "Gotthard: Switzerland's

Lifeline" by Arthur Wyss, curator of the PTT museum in Bern.

Mrs Meier, who had met the recently retired Ambassador and Madame Thalmann the previous week in Switzerland, reported that they still missed London and conveyed their best wishes for a successful meeting.

Mr Meakin, thanking the meeting for its vote of confidence, asked for views on the Swiss Observer and expressed the hope that he would receive more news of the societies' activities, photographs, etc; items need not necessarily be long — snippets of information would be welcome.

Mr Jacomelli wondered whether the time had not come for the colony's strength to be concentrated in one Swiss society in London rather than dispersed among several small clubs, which were declining; the Schweizerbund, for example, had ceased to exist during the past year. He suggested that a meeting under the auspices of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique or the Federation might discuss a plan.

The date of the next meeting was fixed for Friday, June 12, 1981.

History carries an inspiring message

LOOKING back on the history of Switzerland I think we can state without reservation that it is an extraordinary success story.

Switzerland managed to achieve independence and to maintain it in spite of the fact that she was surrounded by powerful states.

Switzerland is still a very small country and that puts her at a disadvantage when negotiating with world powers. From time to time you hear voices in Switzerland making gloomy predictions as to our fate. It has been said that we cannot possibly avoid becoming a satellite of the Common Market or the United States. But somehow these pessimistic forecasts never materialise and we have managed so far to preserve our independence.

We have also succeeded in building up a very close and very good relationship between our various communities, linguistic or religious.

The Swiss are very attached to their cantons. The Genevese, for instance, like to say that they are Genevese first and Swiss second. But that attitude never leads to separatism or to a lack of Swiss patriotism.

The reason is that the Genevese applied for membership of the Swiss Confederation because they knew then, as they know now, that it was the only way for them to remain Genevese. And I think this is the case with all the Swiss cantons, including the first three which formed the Swiss Confederation in 1291.

Our Swiss cantons founded the Confederation, or joined it later, because this was the only means by which they could retain their independence and so remain themselves.

The necessity of being Swiss to remain what we are is, I think, our predominant attitude. Jokes which Swiss from one canton sometimes tell about another canton, and which may be popular back home, are not very successful in our communities abroad, where solidarity among the Swiss is considered so sacred that jokes about other cantons are usually regarded as being in bad taste.

When the Queen's trip to Switzerland was being planned

By Swiss Ambassador Claude Caillat

*making his traditional
First of August speech
at the Swiss National Day
celebrations in London*



the Queen herself insisted on visiting the Rütli. She wanted to see the place where Switzerland was born.

She was told, too, of the initiative taken by General Guisan, who in 1940 assembled the officers of the Swiss armed forces down to the regimental commanders at the Rütli in order to tell them that Switzerland meant to defend herself with all her strength and determination, even against an enemy whose armies were vastly superior and which, in fact, completely surrounded Switzerland. General Guisan's message was well understood and gave a sense of purpose to the whole of the Swiss armed forces.

After the war Winston Churchill spent a few days in Switzerland taking a rest from his overwhelming duties. It was a very private visit but he was asked, all the same, whether there was any Swiss personality he wanted to meet. He replied immediately: "I want to see General Guisan".

All this is history, but history which we have to remember, because it contains a very inspiring message which we have come here to celebrate.

You are fortunate enough to be living in a country which we all respect and which has always had a very friendly relationship with Switzerland. We must

never forget what Britain has done for us.

Britain saved our freedom during the last war at the cost of enormous sacrifice, and she deserves our everlasting gratitude.

Finally, I bring you greetings from the Federal Council. Our authorities in Berne are very much aware of your community, of its endeavours and its achievements. By your presence in this country, and your work, you are doing Switzerland an immense service, and our Government is very conscious of that.

I also wish to say that my colleagues at the Embassy, and I myself, are extremely anxious to foster the good relationship which exists between the Swiss community and our Embassy. I should like you to consider the Embassy as a place where, at all times, you will find people eager to assist you in any way they can.

Many join in celebrations

THE National Day celebrations of the Swiss community in London were held at the Swiss Church in Endell Street, with the support of the Rev Urs Steiner, the Rev F. Orna-Ornstein and Father Paul Bossard.

Accordianist Phylis Gillingham played a medley of extracts

from West End shows and popular tunes from Greece, France, Scotland and, of course, Switzerland, concluding with the congregation singing the National Anthem in the four national Swiss languages.

Mr Vergil Berti, president of the 1st August Committee introduced the second part of the evening at the John Southworth Centre, where there was discotheque dancing until midnight, sustained by raclette and bratwurst and entertainment by a magician.

Thirty children were among 140 members of Manchester Swiss Club who celebrated the First of August at a hotel at Knutsford, Cheshire. An address was given by Consul-General Urs Karli.

The evening ended with a bonfire and fireworks, a sing-song and a disco.

Adviser is honoured

DR Theophil von Mandach, honorary legal adviser to the British Embassy in Berne for the past 25 years, has been appointed an Honorary Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire.

The award, usually only given to British nationals, was made at the embassy by the Ambassador, Mr Sidney Clifford, in recognition of Dr von Mandach's professional services to successive ambassadors.

Dr von Mandach has served Britain in other ways too.

For eight years he has been president of the Bernese group of the British-Swiss Society. And in 1965 he was instrumental in raising funds to erect a monument to Winston Churchill to mark the statesman's achievements in saving the freedom of Europe.

The monument, which stands in Oberhofen, led to the