

# Opening of the new administrative headquarters of the Zurich insurance Co. in the U.K.

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tions, it was still there and nothing could be easier than to give it away when a worthy opportunity came about. Mr. C. Natter said that the problem of accounting for Tombola money wasn't a question of mistrust, only a question of principle. If the funds were to be spent in charity, they should appear in a separate charity account. The treasurer justified the way in which money for charity had been dealt with in the past by pointing out that this year's proceeds had been exceptional. It was not possible to give away all the money that had been collected in a particular fruitful year because it was necessary to provide for the lean years. The Swiss Churches and the Swiss Benevolent Society could only count on regular donations if this policy were maintained. Many impassioned interventions followed. Mr. Edgar Bonvin repeatedly insisted that the question of charity funds should be discussed under the item of "donations". Mr. G. A. Ronus expressed his surprise over this debate: we had accepted the way the money was being managed for so many years, why should we all of a sudden want to change everything? This rallied the opinions of many members and we closed this point of the debate (which had lasted for an awfully long time) by entrusting the Committee with the opening of a new charity account.

Mr. E. Tangemann, speaking on his and Mr. P. Gut's behalf, reported that the accounts had been audited and found well-kept and correct.

Mr. Bonvin then chaired the election of the Committee, of the Trustees, the Auditors and the Press Reporter. All the names on the ballot sheet were proposed, seconded and accepted. Before launching the election, Mr. Bonvin had a few harsh words over some of the reactions that had been voiced on the way charity funds were being used. Visibly angry, he lashed out at the members who had outspokenly mistrusted their Committee and said that this mistrust was particularly unjust when he, for one, had been "pulled to pieces" for having instituted regular and equitable contributions among the three Swiss churches.

The time had come to discuss the item "Donations". There was a good deal of semantic haggling because the Swiss Observer (which receives £31.10 from the City Swiss Club), the Christmas Tree, the Swiss Benevolent Society and the Federation of Swiss Societies were all listed under "subscription" whereas only the last item deserved this qualification. A member suggested that all of them save the Federation should be listed under "Donation". When another member claimed that the Swiss Observer didn't deserve such a title, your Editor pleaded that the paper, a non-profit publication which needed and much appreciated the support of Swiss societies, could well be put down under "donations" if the term "subscription" was inadequate. The Swiss Churches and

the Swiss Benevolent Societies are the only items referred to as "donations" in the account. It was finally decided to term as "annual contributions" the outgoings which were neither expenses, donations or subscriptions. It was furthermore decided to raise the donation to the Swiss Benevolent Society from £60 to £100 for its centenary year.

It was nighing ten o'clock when the most anticipated topic of the evening, the liquidation of the House Club Fund for the benefit of the Swiss Forum, was introduced by one of the Trustees, Mr. E. Tangemann. He said that the Committee had received the mandate from the Club to decide on whether or not to devote some £6,600, almost all the Fund accumulated by past members, to the Swiss Forum. The Committee had decided in favour of the project and wished to know the feelings of members on this decision.

Mr. Suess suggested that we should be put in the picture by Dr. Egli. This he did and said in essence what he has written for us in the above article.. He also pointed out that the money was not so much for the good of the Club, which could live quite happily without a Colony Room, but for the great purpose of spreading out Swiss Culture in Great Britain. Mr. Kuhn said that the decision to bequeath the Fund to the Swiss Forum had been a good one. The money had been raised by our forefathers and was not ours. It was only natural that we should use it for a purpose which both honoured their generosity and which would have met with their full approval. He was backed by another member who said that, as the money was originally intended for a hypothetical "Club House" which could never see the day, it was well to give it to the Forum and the Colony Room.

The question of the conditions was raised and some members wanted to know whether the money was really being given without any strings attached. Mr. Kuhn said that the Club's gesture towards a Swiss cause was a *gift* and should therefore remain free of conditions. Mr. L. Jobin said that, however mean he may sound to be, he stood by his position at the Committee, and regretted that all this money was being given away to something which was of little interest to the Club. Monsieur Iselin, who with Mr. Adams, represented the Embassy at the meeting, specified the necessary distinction between a far-away "Swiss Forum Foundation" based in Switzerland and an effective Council running the Forum. It was at this latter body that the Societies should be represented and it was through this body that their interests should be safeguarded.

The operational details of the Forum (supervision, vending machines, furniture, arrangements with Swiss Fair, etc.) were not discussed. But the Meeting broadly approved, perhaps with mixed and not very responsive feelings, the decision taken by the Com-

mittee to give away the Club's House Club Fund to the Forum. Dr. Egli will then be able to attend the founding meeting of the Swiss Forum Foundation in May with good news from Great Britain.

(PMB)

## Opening of the New Administrative Headquarters of the Zurich Insurance Co. in the U.K.

The Zurich Insurance company opened its new British administrative headquarters in Portsmouth on April 23rd. The gleaming 17-storey block was inaugurated by the Lord Mayor of Portsmouth.

The company had decided to move out of London into the provinces in 1965 already. London has many well known disadvantages. The cost of office space is irrationally high and would have compromised the expansion plans of the company. Wages in London are also higher and it is harder to find adequate personnel. The greatest disadvantage of all is perhaps that London employees have to commute into the town for work and arrive in the morning already strained by a long train or underground journey. This not only costs time and money but has adverse effects on the performance of the staff.

All these disadvantages prompted the management of Zurich Insurance (U.K.) to look for some better location outside London. With the help of the official Office Location Bureau it surveyed some twenty provincial cities. The criteria for a suitable location were its social amenities, the cheapness of land or rent, the ease with which housing could be found for the displaced personnel, schooling facilities, the availability of both clerical staff and school leavers with "A" levels who could be trained to eventually assume executive positions and good connection with London.

Portsmouth met these requirements better than any other provincial city. The beautiful new administrative headquarters stand proudly above Portsmouth harbour, well in view of the "Victory". In fact, every office has a view of the famous flagship, as well as on Royal Navy cruisers and aircraft carriers, on the docks, St. Ann's church and the distant sea. The building will eventually house a staff of 500 and the Zurich Insurance company will be the most important employer of clerical staff in the town.

It was necessary to displace key personnel from London to Portsmouth

as only fifteen top executives are to remain in the London office. A city of the size of Portsmouth could obviously not offer available staff with the necessary experience and expertise and some 150 families will have to be moved. So far 76 have made the journey to Portsmouth and have been greatly encouraged to do so by the generous help given by the company. This included, as Mr. Frank Hall, the Public Relations and Productive Manager explained to me, a displacement bonus,

the payment of the legal costs of buying and selling a house, and the surety of the company for a mortgage. Many of the displaced staff in fact found themselves for the first time of their lives with a few thousand pounds of ready cash thanks to the greater cost of houses in London.

All these executives were pressed in a tent erected next to the office block on the morning of the inauguration. The Lord Mayor and the Lady Mayoress of Portsmouth arrived in the com-

pany of Mr. Frank Noyes, manager of the Zurich Insurance company in the U.K., Mr. Fritz Gerber, General Manager of Zurich Insurance Company and Sir and Lady Laithwait. Mr. Noyes presented his collaborators all aligned along the red carpet to the Lord Mayor.

The party moved from the tent towards the entrance of the building which was closed by a red satin ribbon. Mr. Noyes welcomed and thanked the Lord Mayor for his presence. He presented him with a majestic navy cutlass

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and invited him to open the new premises officially by cutting the ribbon.

The Lord Mayor made a joke about the superiority of the cutlass to the hammer and the sickle, weighed his lethal implement, reflected for a moment on how he would accomplish his task and finally slashed the ribbon entwined in a mighty upward sweep that glittered under the flash of cameras.

We entered in the reception hall at the end of which a velvet curtain was hiding the commemorative plaque. After some gracious words by Mr. Noyes, the Lord Mayor pulled the curtain and unveiled the plaque commemorating the inauguration of the present building this very day, Thursday, 23rd April, 1970.

After this short ceremony we moved up to the seventh floor for a reception. There were many interesting and distinguished persons present. I had the opportunity of having a conversation with Sir Ronald Howe, Chairman of the City Wall Proprietaries, the firm which built and let the £1m. building to the Zurich Insurance Company. Sir Alec Rose, the Portsmouth grocer who circumnavigated the world single-handed without any outside backing in his 28 feet yacht, also honoured the reception by his presence. He is a very kind and unassuming man who willingly gave me an autograph. Another interesting guest was Mr. J. Emery-Wallace and his wife, former Lord and Lady Mayoress of Portsmouth. They told that the job involved some 360 dinners and 280 receptions in a year and that the customary one-year term of office was enough for the health of any man.

An hour later Mr. Noyes presented the cutlass used at the opening ceremony to the Lord Mayor. The Lord Mayor made a short address reminiscing of his experience in the Navy, praised sports and good health, and suggested that the Zurich tower block should with its 17 storeys be the venue of a climbing race among Portsmouth civil servants just as the Post Office tower in London was annually used as a climbing track by students.

The more distinguished guests and the higher hierarchy of the company left for dinner at the Guildhall while the rest of us were offered a delicious and generous snack lunch on the sixth floor.

I left the animated attendance as it was still making inroads in the trifle and the fruit salad for a quick visit of the "Victory" before taking the return train to London after what was a particularly enjoyable trip.

(PMB)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Every Thursday from 6 to 7.30 p.m. Discussion Circle in English. Young men especially invited. Tea from 6 to 6.15 p.m. Swiss Room, YMCA, Gt. Russell St., W.C.1.

Secours Mutuels des Suisses à Londres. Monthly Meetings every first Wednesday of the month at 35 Fitzroy Sq., W.1., 7 p.m.

### MAY

Sunday 10th. Swiss Rifle Association, shooting at the Siberia range at Bisley from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Monday 11th. AGM of the Swiss Benevolent Society. 35 Fitzroy Sq., 6.30 p.m.

Wednesday 13th. Monthly meeting of the Swiss Mercantile Society.

Wednesday 13th. Annual Meeting of Société de Secours Mutuels des Suisses à Londres. 35 Fitzroy Sq., 7 p.m.

Friday 22nd. 7.30 for 8 p.m. at the Orpheus Luncheon Club (1st floor) Dumville House St. Mary-at-Hill off Eastcheap, London E.C.3. (nearest tube station: Monument) social Dinner of the Schweizerbund.

Sunday 24th. Landsgemeinde for all the Swiss of Scotland and their families. 1 p.m. at Cochrane Park Hall, Alva, Clackmannanshire.

Tuesday 26th. City Swiss Club card evening.

Thursday 28th. 7.45 p.m. Swiss Hostel for Girls. OPEN MEETING of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique. Talk in German "Ist die Schweiz überfremdet?" by Dr. Franz Birrer, first Secretary of Embassy, in charge of cultural affairs.

Sunday 31st. Annual Church Assembly of the Swiss Church at Endell St., W.C.2.

CONCERTS: Wigmore Hall, Sunday 17th May at 3 p.m., four hands recital by the distinguished Swiss duo Isabel and Jürg Von Vintschger. Queen Elizabeth Hall, Thursday 21st May, 7.45 p.m., recital by Jürg Von Vintschger. Schumann, Debussy and Schubert.

ASSEMBLY OF THE SWISS ABROAD: Zofingen, 28th-30th August.

## SWISS CHURCH

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

REUNION DE COUTURE: le 2<sup>e</sup> mardi du mois.

LUNCH: tous les dimanches à 13h00.

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SERVICES IN GERMAN: at Eglise Suisse, 79 Endell Street, W.C.2, at 10 a.m. At St. Ann's Church, Abbey Orchard Street, S.W.1. at 7.30 p.m.

HOLY COMMUNION: every first Sunday of the month at evening service only. On major feasts at morning and evening services.

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SERVICES IN ENGLISH: every fourth Sunday at 7.30 p.m.

"KONTAKT" (Youth Group): every Wednesday 4-10 p.m. at Eglise Suisse. Supper at 6.30 p.m. Programme at 8 p.m.

SWISS Y.M.C.A.: see Forthcoming Events.

WOMEN'S CIRCLE: every first Tuesday of the Month.

MOTHERS' REUNION: 1st Wednesday in the Month, 11 a.m. to 4 p.m.

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SWISS CATHOLIC MISSION: at St. Ann's Church, Abbey Orchard Street (off No. 25 Victoria Street), S.W.1.

SATURDAYS: Ecumenical Service at 6.30 p.m.

SUNDAYS: Holy Mass at 9 and 11 a.m. (in English).

At 6.30 p.m. (mostly in German)

CONSULTATIONS AND CONFESSIONS: preferably on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays in the afternoon or by appointment.

SERVICES EN FRANCAIS: Notre Dame de France, 5 Leicester Place, W.C.2. on Suns. at 9, 10, 11 a.m. 12.15, 6, 7 p.m.

SWISS CATHOLIC YOUTH CLUB — Meeting every Sunday after Evening Mass (8-11 p.m.) at Westminster Ball Room, 30 Strutton Ground, S.W.1.

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