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The 23d Year of The Circle

Rolf's speech made on the occasion of the yearly meeting
of The Circle's subscribers on May 9th 1956

The 23d year of our monthly has in some ways proved better than the preceeding one, at least with regard to the stability of the number of subscribers. The number of contributors to the German and English section of the monthly has also increased. Contributions submitted to us were on the whole acceptable for printing and all the more so as in style and contents they had improved. Unfortunately, however, most mss. for the German section were submitted from Germany and Austria. Once again we realized that our Swiss friends rarely put into writing either their experiences or their queries and problems. Whether it is a reluctance to discuss personal matters or linguistic inability is a question still to be solved.

Above all we would be more than happy to find subscribers ready to discuss in the French section their special point of view towards all aspects of the problems concerning us. Charles Welti, our French editor, whose tireless work for years and years cannot be in any way underestimated, would be especially pleased if our French-Swiss subscribers could make up their mind to use the beauty of their mother-tongue for expressing themselves on the pages of the monthly.

From Austria and Germany we receive, as I have said, most of the material which can immediately be put to use. We readily admit that because of this fact the situation in both these countries, in which our friends still suffer from an inhuman law, is being dealt with to a somewhat larger extent. But as it is the task of The Circle to help wherever possible and justifiable, the editorial staff sees no reason for any changes in this policy although some have been suggested. It is understood that when any necessity arises in our own country The Circle will deal with such matters promptly. Once again, however, we ask our subscribers to submit only well-founded articles and to quote their sources. It is being said of The Circle that it provides the most worthwhile reading — and we must live up to that reputation.

The English section has developed most satisfactorily — and that is to a large extent due to the work of our English editor Rudolf Burkhardt whose assistance we were most fortunate to acquire last year. The reception which was given to our journal and our Jubilee books in the USA made it urgently necessary to find someone to relieve our Walter of the burden of this work.

We could no longer ask of Walter to deal with all the work at the Club in addition to the enormously growing overseas correspondence. By a stroke of luck we found Rudolf who, as a former librarian and teacher at an English university, had all the necessary qualifications not only to deal with the business correspondence but also to keep up a lively exchange with writers and subscribers all over the world. English is no

longer in these days a «foreign» language for many of our younger subscribers — and therefore it will always remain an important task to give careful attention to this section of our monthly. All the more so as the number of our USA and English subscribers is slowly but steadily increasing. In addition to that many of our US subscribers are interested in The Circle to such an extent that in many cases the bound volumes of The Circle of former years have been ordered — a fact not to be overlooked and very gratifying as regards our finances.

At this point I should like to express my gratitude for the assistance given throughout the years by the generous donors of our beautiful photographic material. I would like to recall amongst others the names of Arfe and Jim, Zürich, and also the gifted artist Rico as well as the master-photographer Pavel, Bucharest-Zürich. I think I may say that photographs and drawings given to us by all the donors have provided us with material which many another paper may rightly envy. The unexpected death of Roberto Rolf was mourned equally by us and our subscribers. Idle tongues maintain that our monthly is subscribed to merely on account of its photographs. Well, even so they help to build up the financial structure for the printing — and perhaps now and again a passionate picture-enthusiast will turn into a reader. At least let's hope so.

A total of 500 pages was printed this year (excluding the covers and the «Kleine Blatt») in comparison to 480 in the previous year. The number of photographs, which is one hundred, remained unaltered. We were also able to print two small booklets: «Die einander bei Händen und Sternen halten» by Hans Alienus and «Unsere Verantwortung vor Gott» by Dr. A. Even if they did not meet with a great success they may be the forerunners for bigger things.

Another hearty expression of gratitude may find its place here. To all those who help us on the Wednesday nights at the Club, the members tirelessly attending to the record-playing, the attendants at the door and many other helpers. Thanks to two of them we were able to improve considerably upon the lightning facilities. May I mention also the various lecturers who spoke to us. Without all this help The Circle would not be able to function. An additional burden of work was shouldered by our accountant André for which we are most grateful.

Shortly after our exceedingly happy Autumn Festival we met with an unexpected stumbling block. Permission for regular dancing at the Club was withdrawn and reduced to only twice a month. Why after twelve years such a veto should be uttered has never been satisfactorily been cleared up. But it seems that even this veto did us some good as on our other evenings discussions can take place now which otherwise would not have been possible. We can only hope that there will be sufficient interest in such debates to enable us to maintain our present Club premises. There are plans for a club of our own, for which some funds have already been established but the realisation of that plan is still in embryo form.

Our big social events during that year met with an exceptional success. Carnival night was full of wonderful surprises. The Autumn Festival saw

the first performance of the last act of «Game of Fools» by James Barr, translated very well by our friend Rudolf. Apart from that the big cabaret-show, already customary, provided a happy climax. And once again very many friends joined in the traditional Christmas-party and enjoyed the yearly Nativity play. We do hope to have built a foundation strong enough to withstand any adverse attacks.

To conclude this short survey let me repeat a request made many times before: We would like all of you to help us in the continuance of the work we have started. The worker and the executive, the businessman and the intellectual and the scientist, the younger generation hand in hand with the older. There remains for all of us the same task and the same world, which would topple if we did not stand united. And even if our work shows sometimes traces of human frailty and might call for objective criticism let's speak frankly and search together for the path of mutual understanding. One likes best to learn from those of one's friends of whose sincerity and truthfulness one can be sure. Let us not forget for a moment the freedom we possess and what its loss would mean. I feel myself unanimous with all my co-workers and friends: It's well worth while for all of us to stand together and defend all we live for.



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