

# President's address

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president of the Swiss Confederation in 1915, 1920, 1927, 1931, and 1937. During the last War he took over the direction of the Federal Finance Department, and it was largely due to his efforts that Switzerland came out of the War with a comparatively small debt and a strong financial position.

In 1920 M. Motta was appointed Foreign Minister and chief representative of Switzerland at the Assembly of the League of Nations. He was not only one of the outstanding figures at the Assembly, where he always knew how to speak the right words at the right time, but also one of the best debaters in the discussions of the Commissions in which he took part. His speeches were of a high literary standard, though generally unprepared. The speech he delivered as president of the Swiss Confederation at the opening of the first Assembly of the League will be particularly remembered. Though his feelings were in no way pro-German, he repeatedly spoke on behalf of the admission of Germany, his opinion being that the League should include all nations. In 1934 he made a bitter attack on Soviet Russia in opposing Russia's entry into the League.

M. Motta was married and had 10 children.

## Nouvelle Société Helvétique.

### LONDON GROUP.

#### Annual General Meeting.

Saturday, January 20th, 1940.

A nice and informal luncheon preceded the 23rd Annual General Meeting of the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, which took place at the Foyer Suisse. Quite a fair number of Swiss with their ladies had gathered for this luncheon and were reinforced later, when the proceedings started.

Mr. A. Fred Suter was in the chair and conducted the business proceedings with his usual efficiency, mixed with good humour, up to the moment when the old Council resigned "en bloc," according to the Rules of the Society. Mr. Henry C. Balser was then asked by Mr. Suter to act as President pro tem, a duty which he discharged with ease and the eloquence of a born barrister-at-law.

The elections resulted in 12 members of the previous Council being re-elected and in adding "fresh blood" to that body in the persons of Mr. Bernard W. Sigerist and Mr. E. J. Bachofen.

Mr. A. Fred Suter was re-elected President with acclamation and unanimity, an honour which he duly acknowledged, and Mr. C. Campart, in spite of his protestations, was re-elected Hon. Secretary of the Society. The two members of the last Council, who, more by mere chance than anything else, were not re-elected, took this result of the polling with good spirit. The accounts, duly checked up by the two auditors — who were in turn re-elected, also in spite of protestations — were passed and the Assembly then had the pleasure of admitting (by acclamation) three new lady members, viz.

Mrs. Clara Muller,

Mlle. Veinig (Marcello),

and Mrs. Gertrude Anna Keller, wife of our journalist member.

Mr. Suter, in reply to a friendly farewell letter of the retiring Swiss Minister, Monsieur Charles R. Paravicini, had drafted a letter of thanks to M. Paravicini, had drafted a letter of thanks to M. Society, and also of good wishes for the future. This letter was read out and afterwards signed by each member present. It is probably already on the way to Berne, where M. and Madame Paravicini are now living.

The business proceedings thus over, after one or two more small items were dealt with, the Nouvelle Société offered a cup of tea and some pastries to everybody present. This was highly appreciated and put all and sundry into the right frame for "things to come."

What followed then was a lecture on

#### *Recent Experiences with the Swiss Army.*

delivered by Captain Bernard W. Sigerist. When Switzerland mobilised in September last, Mr. Sigerist was among those who left England to join up. Being an officer, — he was First Lieutenant when he left England and was promoted to the rank of Captain during his ten weeks stay in Switzerland — he was put in charge of one of the trains which took, altogether, roughly 400 Swiss to their homeland. After a few days he was already high up in the mountains, "somewhere in Switzerland," under very different conditions from those he was accustomed to in his luxury flat in Hampstead — to use his own expression. There followed for him a course of most intense and concentrated training, during which he became acquainted with the latest weapons now in use in Switzerland: the light and heavy machine gun, the infantry gun, the mine-thrower. Mr. Sigerist gave his audience, which had grown to over 50 persons, a lot of interesting information about the range, the firing speed and other details of these weapons, which it may be wise not to reproduce here.

This lecture, which gave the impression of having been most thoroughly prepared, lasted well over an hour, and was enriched by photographs and an occasional drawing on the blackboard. It was so instructive and so well delivered that even ladies told me afterwards that they were completely under the lecturer's spell during the whole talk. There was indeed not one dull moment in it and the Nouvelle Société Helvétique has indeed, as Mr. Suter rightly said afterwards, every reason for being thankful to Captain Sigerist. It was, from A to Z, first-hand information, and comforting information too.

Thus it was nearly 6 o'clock when the meeting broke up and members and friends bade each other "Au revoir," to go out into the dark, home to their frozen water pipes ...

G. J. KELLER.

### PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

It is once again my privilege to present you with an account of the London Group's activity during the past year.

If, as I have said, 1938 was a year of continuous crises, 1939 produced a succession of war-like acts on the Continent which could not fail in the end to provoke the mobilisation and military participation of the two great Democracies in the West. This tragic event actually came about at the beginning of September,

since when we Swiss in Great Britain have had the greatest of all opportunities to prove our loyalty to our host country.

We of the older generation, born in Switzerland, naturally remain Swiss in nationality, for it goes without saying that none of us could be as good an Englishman as we are Swiss. But with the introduction of compulsory military service in Great Britain our sons, with few exceptions, are face to face with the fact that their nationality is no longer that of their fathers'. Being born in England, they are British in reality, and as such take their places in the British Army to fight for freedom and a lasting peace. In doing this, they are not serving Switzerland any less than if they fought with the Swiss Army. It is precisely this state of affairs which illustrates the correctness of the view that a man is the citizen of his native land, not that of his father's.

Needless to say, the life of our Group has been affected deeply by the outbreak of war. For a moment, activity was stunned; private and personal pre-occupations absorbed each individual; the mobilisation of the Swiss army claimed the men of service age, although many of them returned towards the end of the year; there could be no thought of a November film show or other social activity, but we have held the regular monthly meetings since the outbreak of war, with as little alteration as circumstances permitted.

In the course of 1939 we have held our usual ten monthly meetings, up to September alternatively at the Foyer and at the Swiss House, and since outbreak of war at the latter address on Saturday afternoons, in order to evade the unpleasantness of the blackout and night travelling. The meetings are briefly described in their chronological order below:—

- January 27th. Annual General Meeting at the Foyer. Chairman pro tem. le Pasteur Pradervand. Election Council, no lecture.
- February 17th. Administrative meeting at Swiss House. Mr. Campart in the chair. No causerie.
- March 17th. At the Foyer. Lecture by Mme. Dr. Sylvia Brunner, on "Der Kampf um das Schweizerdeutsch" which delighted the audience and proved to be a subject for intense discussion.
- April 14th. Special visit of Dr. Arnold Lätt to the London Group, when he delivered a lecture on "Switzerland and the present European Crisis," at Conway Hall, presided over by the Swiss Minister, M. C. R. Paravicini. A very large audience followed with great sympathy and deep interest the lucid exposé of our famous speaker.
- April 21st. Administrative meeting at Swiss House, when the organisation of the London Children's holiday came into being.
- May 19th. Meeting at the Foyer, attended by various members of the Legation. Dr. W. H. Egli, our Foreign journalist member, spoke on the subject "Switzerland's mission in Europe." The attendance was excellent.
- June 16th. Administrative meeting at Swiss House, Mr. Campart in the chair. The meeting was fully occupied by matters connected with the Children's holiday, a party of 39 having enrolled.

September 30th. First Emergency meeting at Swiss House. No lecture. Chief matters discussed were the childrens' holidays, five of them having returned, while the others were left in the care of their relatives and the Pro Juventute until facilities for their return should be established. The President read a short report on his participation and impressions of the A.S.T. in Zurich on August the 12th, 13th and 14th.

October 21st. Afternoon meeting at Swiss House. Miss Tschachtli, the leader of the holiday children who brought the bulk of the party back to England, presents a report to the Council. Dr. W. H. Egli reviews the present war situation and is followed by a long and serious discussion.

November 18th. Afternoon meeting at Swiss House, enriched by Mr. Gottfried Keller's review of the present war situation.

December 16th. Afternoon meeting at Swiss House, again followed by a review of the present situation by Mr. Gottfried Keller. These monthly war reviews have been a big attraction to the audience from the beginning and are highly appreciated. It is expected that in course of time they will bring back the audience to pre-war numbers.

Until outbreak of war no monthly meeting took place without a number of candidates being admitted to membership, and we confidently expect that similar accretions will continue once the first disturbances of war conditions are behind us.

Apart from the special meeting convened by the Group at Conway Hall in April to reet Dr. Lätt and receive his lecture, one film show was held in February at Kingsway Hall. This show drew the largest audience of members and their friends and you will be gratified to hear that strenuous efforts are being made to re-introduce the film shows during 1940. We were of course, again interested and actively engaged in the Fête Suisse in June, our President acting as President of this most successful gathering of the year. The S.S.E. again contributed largely and most generously by the supply of Swiss artistes of first rank, as well as by the usual gift of Swiss alpine flowers. In August the President travelled to Switzerland to take part in the Journée des Suisses a l'Etranger in Zurich, where he was given the honour to respond to the address of welcome by Director Meili to the Swiss Abroad. Of this highly successful and enjoyable function a full description may be found in the Sept./Oct. issue of the "Echo." — At the Farewell dinner given by the Colony to M. C. R. Paravicini on December 15th, your President was privileged to express in a speech the profound gratitude of the Swiss in Great Britain for the noble service which the retiring Minister had given to the Colony. We have in the course of the year further contributed to the best of our ability to other social events and deserving causes in the Colony and at home and we welcome in particular the very successful effort to re-introduce the Fête of the First of August in the colony.

The administration of the affairs of the London Group has been particularly difficult this last year, owing to the great pre-occupation and the efforts required in the execution of the childrens' holidays in Switzerland. Everything had been arranged to "the last button," the money had been collected and the



happy party was off — only to find that on the outbreak of war there was no way of returning for the main body of the party for something like five weeks after the appointed date. The costs accruing to the Group through this delay were frightening, especially as most parents of the children sent to Switzerland were not in the position to take any further expenses upon themselves. Had it not been for the splendid help of the Pro Juventute, in particular, the generous and compassionate action of the Southern and the French State Railways in refunding to us the cost of the unuseable return tickets, we could never have hoped to square the accounts at all. Yet this organisation — the “Sorgenkind” of the year — was really well worth undertaking, giving health and happiness to about 40 London children, most of whom might otherwise never have seen the land of their fathers. Interesting and gratifying observations on the conduct and the reactions of the children have been received from their holiday centre in Switzerland. — On the other hand, we have failed to obtain a licence early enough for the importation of the usual 1,000 Swiss calendars.

The weight of this onerous administration of the affairs of our Group has been taken and carried to an astonishing extent by one member, Madame A. C. Muller. Her unfailing energy, her outstanding organising capacity, her unselfish spirit of goodwill and help are qualities which the London Group could ill afford to lose or miss. She has undertaken this heavy task and is continuing it so successfully in a voluntary capacity after her own busy day's work; our admiration and gratitude, therefore, have to be very sincere in order to form anything like a just reward for her patriotic activity.

The accounts for the year will be discussed and passed elsewhere. The membership has risen from 142 on January 1st, 1939, to 161 to-day; the movements being rather considerable. There was an accession of 27 new members while the loss was 8, consisting of 1 decease, 1 resignation, 2 repatriations, 2 departures to other Foreign countries and 2 names taken off the register for non-payment of subscriptions.

As your President I now take a particular pleasure in expressing the thanks of the Group to all those who have in the course of the year assisted us actively in one way or another. In the first place these thanks go out to our Minister in Retirement, M. C. R. Paravicini, whose friendship and appreciation of our efforts have been particularly encouraging to us. I am glad that I have been able to express in my Farewell speech our deep feelings of gratitude. The Staff of the Swiss Legation have shown us by their frequent presence and assistance that they are in sympathy with our work; our sister societies in London have gladly and willingly co-operated with us in various matters, and I would here make a special mention of their generosity in the matter of the Childrens' holiday fund. The genial editor of the Swiss Observer has never refused us space when space was wanted; the Foyer makes us welcome and feeds us well, while the Swiss Mercantile Society is still the best landlord we could have. The Swiss Colony in London at large, I believe, is not unmindful of the services we render to our compatriots, and we are happy to feel that they approve wholeheartedly of our continued efforts. To-day, as in 1914, our

responsibility is growing again in relation to the needs of the Colony; the greater its need, the greater our *raison d'être*.

With the Secretariat in Berne — an institution which is constantly extending in efficiency and influence — we stand in the most intimate relationship. We cannot sufficiently express to them our thanks here for their constant desire to fulfil everyone of our wishes; but I will also repeat what I have said before that they look upon us as “a model group in a model colony of model Swiss,” and that they expect performance accordingly. Our special thanks are due to our lecturers who have enriched the value of our activity, to those members of the Group who have taken an active interest in any of the problems ever before us, to our Hon. Secretary, and, again, to Madame Muller, the “indispensable.”

In conclusion I would refer once more to the statement I made at the beginning of this report that with the outbreak of war Switzerland had lost a large number of citizens in the persons of the English born sons of Swiss who had hitherto been regarded as Swiss themselves. No doubt this is a shock to many of us, but it is a fact which we have to accept with fortitude. It is clearer to me than ever since the end of the last war that the colonies of the Swiss Abroad can only be kept alive by the older generation of Swiss born in Switzerland, and their responsibility in this direction is a serious one. They are now the sole guardians of our national patrimony in preserving the Swiss spirit in many Foreign lands until such times as peace may reign once more and the free exchange of men, goods and ideas may be re-established between the nations. It will not be until then that the permanent emigration of a part of the young manhood of Switzerland — a tradition which will persist — can be again effective, and we must look to these future emigrants settling in Great Britain to take over from us the guardianship of the Swiss Spirit Abroad.

## Unione Ticinese.

Scialba e sbrigativa si è svolta la prima Assemblea Generale ordinaria di quest'anno dell' *Unione Ticinese* — Sezione Autonoma *Pro Ticino* — in Londra, al locale sociale in Charlotte Street, Domenica scorsa, 22 Gennaio, col concorso di soltanto una ventina di soci. Senza dubbio il freddo intenso di questi giorni, nonché un insistente quanto impertinente nevischio, devono aver fatto a gara a sbaragliare il tenue coraggio di altri pur bene intenzionati. Forse anche le gravi questioni dell'ora saranno la causa della stasi nella vita del sodalizio.

Apprendo la seduta il Presidente, Sig. Giuseppe Eusebio, ebbe parole di ammonimento ed incoraggiamento. La gravità del momento in cui viviamo non dovrebbe essere di scusa per star lontano dalle nostre adunate, bensì dovrebbe servire di sprone a prendere una parte più attiva alla vita sociale della Colonia, già ridotta per se stessa. Inoltre se la guerra che attualmente divampa in questa vecchia Europa si può additare come un'ulteriore prova dell'eterno contrasto fra autorità ed individuo, dovrebbe essere nostro