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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE LONDON GROUP OF THE N.S.H.

Dorchester Hotel, January 20th, 1945.

The President's Annual Report.

M. le Ministre, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In presenting to you the 30th Annual Presidential Address on the standing and the activity of the London Group of the N.S.H. during the year 1944, I consider it most useful to compare, not 1944 with 1943, but rather the totality of the war years with those of the first world war 1914/1918. This, I think, will give us a clearer insight into the changes which have taken place in the Group during the two periods mentioned and the reasons for any action or abstention from action during the present war period.

Then, that is during the last world war, the London Group did not come into existence until May, 1916, and the ground was so well prepared, both from Switzerland and here, that the initial membership figure was actually very considerable after the first year. A standing Secretariat was opened in 1917 under the direction of our old friend, the very able and far-sighted Dr. Arnold Latt, whose efficiency and keen sense of organisation encouraged the rapid growth of the Group, so that it actually reached a membership of close upon 600 by the end of the fifth year. On Dr. Latt's return to Switzerland in 1921 a number of full or part time secretaries remained in charge until 1922, but none of them possessed the vivid personality of their predecessor.

The late Mr. Jean Baer of the Nestlé Company was the first, very genial, President of the Group, and he had behind him a powerful committee and council; there was a propaganda commission under Meyer-Matthes and Bretscher which did exceedingly good work, and a finance committee, in which Wuthrich was the most active and successful member in bringing together something like £2,000 per annum for the ever-growing secretariat.

It must be remembered that during those initial years we enjoyed the full support of the S.S.E. in Berne; thanks to the unrestricted communications with Switzerland, Berne was able to send us a galaxy of Swiss talent of the first order:—lecturers, musicians, poets, painters, politicians, travellers and others. The activity of the Group during those years was so comprehensive and its services to the colony so manifold that some of the biggest halls in London had to be hired to accommodate the monthly and extraordinary meetings of the members.

On the return of the late President to Switzerland in 1928 — unfortunately to die there — I was honoured with the office as second President, after having taken care of the treasury for eight years. It was then already abundantly apparent that, with the loss of the standing secretariat and the greater dispersion of the colony, membership would dwindle perhaps as rapidly as it had grown. I have always held the opinion and often expressed it then that members who believed that the *raison d'être* of the Group had disappeared with the advent of peace and even forgot to pay their subscriptions, were a quite unnecessary liability on our balance sheet and should be liquidated. It became clear that we would have to confine our activity to the actual needs of the colony and it was our duty to find out what these were. But I felt constantly that, if a mere dozen of staunch and patriotic members would remain as a nucleus of the Group, the time would come again when our work was wanted and would be of renewed value to the colony.

Now, that is during the present war, we started with a membership of about 150 and have grown again to the total of 236 to-day. The conditions in this war, however, have worked out totally different from the last. From the moment that France fell, there was no further communication with Berne possible, far less could we hope for their support in lecturers and other Swiss visitors of mark. We were thrown back upon ourselves entirely and had to reshape our activity from the bottom. The council then came to the conclusion that it would be wisest to confine ourselves to one direction, viz., the search for and provision of the fullest possible and most authentic information on the position and welfare of our homeland, our adopted country, Europe and the world at large. For this purpose we approached our friend Gottfried Keller, whose position as Foreign correspondent to a number of the best Swiss daily papers, we believed would enable him to impart this information to us. You all know the happy result:—that he has now for some years past been our own private Minister of Information, constantly enriching our fund of knowledge, sharpening our minds and satisfying our æsthetic sense with his beautiful rhetoric. We are immensely indebted to him for his rich and vivid commentaries on the progress of the war, the actual position in the various countries, the general trend of thought and action in the world. You will agree with me when I say, with justice and gratitude, that it is our friend Keller who has been able to infuse a fresh interest and a deep intellectual satisfaction into the proceedings of our Group. One notable factor I have to mention is that the proportion of lady members to men con-

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tinues to grow, and they appear to be at least as hungry for authentic information as the men are.

During the year the Group has held ten meetings, of which two were council meetings, and eight monthly members' meetings, usually at Swiss House on the third Saturday. All except one were addressed by Mr. Keller, while at the February meeting the President presented a report on his visit to the Manchester Group. The average number of audience was seventy. It was found advisable to suspend the monthly meetings during the three summer months owing to the increased aerial attacks on the Metropolis.

On February 5th we held a film show at Conway Hall, presenting the Red Cross film "Flag of Mercy" to an almost exclusively British audience connected with the British Red Cross Associations and at which a sum of over £20 was collected. This film then went on tour to the various Swiss colonies in England and Scotland, and was also shown to a number of British Societies; at the moment it is in charge of the Swiss Legation at Dublin and will be shown in Southern Ireland until next summer, always earning good money for the Red Cross.

As you all know, the Fête Suisse in June and the Premier Août celebration were both abandoned last year for the same reason as I have stated before. We must not in any circumstances expose such a valuable community as the Swiss colony is to more danger than is absolutely unavoidable. We do trust, however, that 1945 will bring back to us these fine festivals.

My own lengthy absence from London has, of course, thrown the bulk of my work on to other shoulders, but it has always been a joy to me to undertake the journey from South Wales to be present at each monthly meeting since last May, and to find that the work has been done so conscientiously and well by my collaborators on the council.

As in former years we have been very fortunate in the friendship and ready assistance of our Legation, our sister societies, our churches and the Swiss press, as well as in the esteem and sympathy shown to us by the British authorities and the Red Cross Associations. You will therefore be with me when I express the most sincere thanks of the Group to Monsieur le Ministre and the other members of the Legation present, as well as to our other guests representing Swiss bodies in London.

A. FRED. SUTER, *President*.

ERRATA.

We wish to apologise for several misprints in our last issue, which have escaped our reader. They are all self-evident with the exception of the paragraph referring to the late Dr. Henry Dreyfus where the transposition of a full-stop has altered the sense of the remark. The full-stop should have appeared after "haute-finance" and deleted after "cosmopolitan" thereby making one sentence instead of two.

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SCHWEIZERBUND (SWISS CLUB).

116th Half Yearly General Meeting.

The above held on Saturday, February 3rd, was attended by a full bevy of Swiss members. The Balance Sheet for the half-year ended 31st December, 1944, required little discussion, and the members present congratulated the Committee on its excellent result.

The ensuing elections occupied considerably more of the members' time and, may I say, patience. Various candidates were proposed for the leading offices, and after careful consideration of their respective merits, the following Committee was duly elected for 1945:—

Mr. H. Müller, President; Mr. P. Stoeri, Vice-President; Messrs. W. Hausermann and F. Studer, Treasurers; Mr. P. E. Imhof, Secretary; Messrs. A. Bossert, W. Eichenberger, W. Glauser, A. Greder, C. Hermann, H. Kaegi, E. Rickli, and P. Riktsinis, Committee.

The retiring President, Mr. J. Ellenberger, was warmly congratulated on his six years of leadership, a task which was rendered especially difficult by the war. Changes in the Club became unavoidable owing to so many Swiss members returning to Switzerland at the outbreak of the war. Nevertheless he succeeded in keeping the old Schweizerbund going. Likewise a vote of thanks was accorded to the retiring Vice-President, Mr. H. Caluori, who too did all in his power for the welfare of the Club.

The new Committee pledged itself to the members to work hard in its endeavour to restore the old Schweizerbund atmosphere, and to add considerably to the present number of Swiss members. This task will by no means be an easy one. Severe rationing of refreshments of all kinds does not tend to make it easier, but the Club is now in the fortunate position to have the services of a competent and active Swiss Steward who manages to serve excellent meals, comprising some of our national dishes.

In conclusion, the new Committee extended a hearty welcome to all Swiss who like the company of compatriots and national games, such as the good old "Kaffeejass" (minus Kirsch, however, as not obtainable at present).
P.I.

CITY SWISS CLUB

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SATURDAY, 3rd MARCH, 1945,

at 3 p.m. for 3.30 p.m.

Tickets at 6/-, inclusive gratuities can be had from any Committee Member or the Secretary upon written application, but the list will be closed on Thursday, 1st March, 1945. Kindly send remittance with application. Tables for 10 and 12 persons will be arranged, so kindly make up your party.

P. A. MOEHR, Hon. Sec.,

c/o Acme, 15/19, Kingsway W.C.2.

Please abstain from telephoning.