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## NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE.

### London Group.

A most interesting address was given at a meeting of the N.S.H. on Tuesday, 3rd July, at the Vienna Café, by the eminent Swiss author Dr. Hans Zbinden, President of the Bernese Authors' Society. Dr. Zbinden was the originator of the Swiss Book Exhibition in London last year and one of the initiators of the long series of visits from prominent Swiss intellectuals to German prison camps in England, designed to stimulate democratic thinking among the German prisoners. This extremely important undertaking proves a great success thanks to the readiness of so many eminent Swiss thinkers and personalities from all walks of life to come here and give of their best, frankly and without bias. It was one of these visits that brought Dr. Zbinden, who two years ago gave the Swiss Colony such an interesting lecture at the Dorchester, at the invitation of the N.S.H., back to England again.

Although the meeting had to be called at very short notice and could not be announced in the *Swiss Observer*, about fifty compatriots assembled to hear Dr. Zbinden. He spoke on the *German Problem* and managed to tell his hearers in an excellent English more sense about the vexed question of bringing about a really democratic rebirth of the German people in an hour than most of us have read these last two years. His main thesis was that just as there was once a Germany and even a Prussia of the highest humanistic and moral standing, represented by such men as Humboldt, Lessing, Gerlach usw., so it might be again given the right conditions to help along the best elements. Unfortunately the tradition of a moral attitude to public and national life is sadly lacking; it has to be recreated or rather allowed to take deeper roots again, a process which cannot be forced, or taught, especially not by occupying forces, or induced by better material conditions or even by the mere restoration of personal freedom. Democracy starts in small units, the family, the commune, the work-shop, etc., by the daily practice of tolerance as opposed to the intolerance fostered by political parties. The moral re-awakening requires above all leaders of the right type, leaders of the mind, teachers of tolerance and humanist virtue. The class of people capable and willing to work in the right direction, however, has been sadly attenuated by no less than six phases of war, hunger, persecution, impoverishment due to two inflations, etc. At present the small remains of this type of good men is practically starving because they have not the time or inclination to seek supplementary nourishment in the black market. Switzerland, which

has been spared the two wars and has therefore been able better to preserve the humanistic values than any other European country, has a direct and urgent responsibility to try to help and call on the occupying countries to save these last remnants of the nucleus from which must spring the moral regenerating forces in Germany as in every other country.

The audience was spell-bound by Dr. Zbinden's eloquent description of conditions in Germany and his analysis of the problem. Our Colony will have a further opportunity to hear Dr. Zbinden on Thursday, 17th July, at a dinner to be organised by the City Swiss Club.

\* \* \*

Another Swiss visitor to the German prisoners' camps, Dr. Arnold Jaggi, will give an address before an *Open Meeting of the N.S.H. on July 15th, 8.15 p.m.*, at the Vienna Café. He is a well-known historian and author of various books on Swiss history. He will speak in the best Oberländer Bärndütsch, on *Switzerland's Past and Future*. All Swiss and friends are heartily invited.

Preceding Dr. Jaggi, beginning at 7 p.m. the same *Open Meeting* will be devoted to a discussion of the questions to be raised at the forthcoming *Journée des Suisses à l'Étranger*, taking place at Berne, September 5th—7th. Some details of the official programme of that conference have already been published in the *Swiss Observer* of June 13th. The main questions to be dealt with are: (1) What do the Swiss abroad expect from the mother-country? (2) How to rejuvenate the Swiss Colonies abroad and stimulate national allegiance among the young? and (3) What may the mother country expect from the Swiss abroad.

The *Open Meeting* of July 15th will serve as the best method of giving some guidance to the two representatives of our Colony to be sent to Berne. The Conference at Berne represents the only annual occasion on which the Swiss abroad can make their opinion and influence felt in Switzerland. If they are alive and seize their chance, much could be achieved at such a conference always attended by at least one member of the Government and many prominent politicians and other personalities of influence in Switzerland. The importance of the Conference to us and of the next *Open Meeting* of the N.S.H., London Group can therefore not be exaggerated. It is hoped that all Swiss societies in London and possibly the provinces will send competent representatives to the *Open Meeting* to contribute to this vital discussion.

Answers to the Questionnaire published in the last issue of this paper should be sent to: Mr. A. Tall, c/o Swiss Legation, 18, Montagu Place, W.1.

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