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SWISS CLUB MANCHESTER.

On Saturday evening, November 7th 1959, a gay and most colourful assembly of over one hundred filled the Foyer of the Ballroom suite at the Midland Hotel in Manchester. The members of the Swiss Club Manchester had gathered with some of their friends to attend the Annual Banquet. Gay and colourful indeed, for against the dark background of the mere males, the glittering many-coloured dresses of our ladies gave light and brilliance to the assembly. The bright faces of our young girls especially, full of anticipation for a jolly evening, helped to create an atmosphere of the joy of life which augured well for the success of the Banquet and the Ball.

At 6.45 the announcement "Dinner is served" was followed by a general movement to the Banqueting hall and soon the President and his lady, accompanied M. and Madame C. E. Rosset, the new Swiss Consul in Manchester, to their seats at the head of the table to the sound of continuous applause. After Grace was said by the senior member present, Mr. E. Kuebler, the company sat down to an excellent dinner of Melon frappé, Consommé Double à l'Ancienne, followed by Escaloppe de Flétan Mornay and Contre-Filet de Boeuf Moderne with Petits Pois à la Menthe and Pommes Galettes; the Sweet: Bombe Glacée Pralinée the traditional Gateau Fédéral and Café.

After the usual toasts had been honoured, the company awaited impatiently the address by the President, Dr. H. B. Knuchel, who on rising received a lively welcome. He said: "Mr. and Mrs. Rosset, Dear Members and friends. It is always the pleasant duty of your president to say a few words of welcome to you. So let me say straight away: I hope you have all an enjoyable evening. The programme we have arranged, we are sure, is to your liking; it is now up to you: have a good time.

Before making any *special* welcome, let me first remind you of those who are not here tonight and have asked me to make their apologies. First and foremost H.E. the Swiss Ambassador and Mme. Daeniker have asked me to be excused. The 'Swiss Fortnight' which was such a success and has done so much for our country by way of Public Relations, has tested their strength and that of their staff to the utmost. This is the reason why — and I am sure you all understand it — we have nobody here tonight from the Swiss Embassy. Mr. and Mrs. Berner are also not here this evening. Our sympathy goes out to our long and valued friends in their sad bereavement. Finally our past Consul, Mr. Büchi and Mrs. Büchi, are not with us any more. They are probably somewhere on the way across the Atlantic taking them to their new task in San Francisco.

This brings me to you, Mr. and Mrs. Rosset, who have just taken over the Consular functions here in Manchester. You have 'just made it, so to speak, by the skin of your teeth' to be present here and we are all very appreciative that you have come. As I mentioned to you earlier, this evening affords a nice and pleasant opportunity to meet a substantial part of the Swiss Colony in Manchester. We all hope that your stay in Manchester will be a pleasant one and we certainly shall do all we can to be helpful and make your task as easy as we can. It must be quite a change for you, to come from hot and sunny Egypt to

this city reputed for its weather, but we assure you, it is not quite as bad as some people say or as one comedian once put it when he said: 'Manchester is probably the only place where, when you open your windows, at the Midland Hotel, early in the morning, you can hear the birds coughing'.

A special welcome to-night to Mr. Kuebler. It is really a special privilege to have our old and merited friend at the top table this evening, since it is fifty years ago that he attended his first annual banquet of the Swiss Club in Manchester. Mr. Kuebler must have seen many changes in the Club in these fifty years. At one time, it used to be a 'men only club' and that is not really long ago. Now, of course, the ladies play a very important part in the club. Which reminds me, as I of course intended that it should, of a saying attributed to Sir Winston Churchill, when asked whether he approved of clubs for women: 'Why not, if they cannot be persuaded any other way'.

My special welcome and thanks go also to my Committee — so much abused — and I hope they will accept my apologies for not consulting them at all or making them do all the work.

Last but not least a special greeting to our young girls who bring life and youth to our meetings. Their lot is not always an easy one. Apart from their normal language and 'domestic' troubles, they have at our ball, to fight our chronic shortage of young men.

Only a couple of days ago we celebrated the Fifth of November. Firing the usual amount of rockets for my own and my children's benefit, and looking at the huge bonfire in the garden of our friends, I could not help thinking how closely related our own National Day celebration and Guy Fawkes Day really were. They have so much in common; bonfire and fireworks; and at the same time they are for just opposite reasons. In the case of Guy Fawkes: we celebrate a plot against the Government and the attempted setting fire to the Houses of Parliament. In our First of August celebration we rejoice that the then Government, the masters and rulers of that time, were overthrown.

I could not help wondering whether this difference in the reason for celebrating did not also throw some light on the different characteristics and attitudes of the British and the Swiss. The English — Guy Fawkes — seem to us very often too much opposed to changes. They accept given facts or conditions as unchangeable, while the Swiss still have a bit of the Rebel in their blood. They are very often less ready to accept certain things. They are highly critical, not only of their 'Rulers' but in everything. This has no doubt many advantages: The highest standards are demanded, be it for government, goods for sale, or service. But it has also got its negative side: this highly critical attitude — particularly against anything which comes from 'above' — leads readily to a state 'when nothing is really good enough. As occasional visitors to Switzerland we are sorry to see this over critical attitude very often, and this may be the reason why many of us, after some years over cohere, might find it difficult to settle again in our country.

That this critical attitude of the Swiss is, to a mild degree, also present in our club, is nothing but good. We would not want it to be otherwise. At the same time, the Club has a very good remedy against those who become too critical: You just make them president for a while, that makes them shut up very

quickly and they have to learn the hard way. Unfortunately I found out about this too late and so you have got me here in this chair to-night.

A new President can do one of two things. He can either stick strictly to tradition and continue the line followed by his predecessors, or he can try out one or two ideas he has had in his mind. This does not mean that he has to throw overboard everything but he just might give a new 'impetus' here and there. Well, I, or rather we, have tried one or two new ideas. Whether they were successful or not, it is not for me to say. Anyhow we have tried and shall go on trying, to make the life of the club a pleasant and pleasing one.

Among the 'innovations' we have made, take this as an example: We have dispensed with the Grütli-feier Menucards for our banquet which have been used for I don't know how many years. Instead we use these nice, very large cards, presented to us by Swissair, with different pictures of some Swiss cities. We hope you like them. These artist's impressions of Geneva, Lausanne, Berne, Basle, Zürich and St. Gallen can remind us more than anything else why we are here to-night. They remind us of the towns and regions we have come from, and with that they remind us of our country, the country that we love and cherish and which is to-night very much in all our minds."

The end of our President's speech called forth a very hearty applause of appreciation from the whole company, yet it had hardly died down when the President called on our new Consul to address the gathering and asked the company to give him a warm welcome. Mr. Rosset said: "Before anything else, I should like to express my thanks and appreciation, as well as those of my wife, for your gracious invitation to be your guest here to-night. We deem it an honour and a privilege to be able to meet a large number of our compatriots of the Manchester Colony so soon after our arrival.

Friends and acquaintances both in Switzerland and Egypt expressed their concern, and even their compassion at our having to leave the sunny climes of Egypt in order to affront the mist and smog of the English Midlands. But truly, we have been agreeably surprised.

To my wife and to me who spent many years in the United States, the beautiful countryside we passed through on our way here reminded us of New England, of the counties around New York.

Besides, Manchester and its surrounding districts have carried on for many decades a most active and extensive trade with Alexandria, the metropolis of Egypt's white and fluffy wealth: 'King Cotton'.

A good dozen among our many Alexandria Swiss engaged in the cotton business visit Manchester every year, and when they heard that we were assigned here, they assured us that we would soon feel at home.

Thus, we believe we will like this City. Anyway, the warmth of your welcome and the congeniality of this gathering would have quickly chased away whatever nostalgia that might have befallen us.

In Egypt the Swiss, with all other Westerners, bend their energy and determination to defend their 'patrimoine', resisting the mounting tide of restrictions that are slowly endangering their property and curbing their right to work, and to some extent their liberty of movement. The Westerners' problems are as many as they are complex. Those of the Swiss concern the survival of the Swiss school, the Swiss church and also our clubs and societies.

I do not expect that in this country any problems of the kind I have known in the course of the past years will arise. But whatever happens, it will be my endeavour to serve our Swiss Community to the best of my ability and to apply myself to safeguarding Swiss interests in every way. And I hope, whenever you require advice, assistance, information, you will make use of the services of the Consulate. I am at your service, as are my collaborators.

But if I am to carry out my consular duties successfully, I do need your co-operation and support, and I hope you will extend them to me in the same manner you have done in the past to my predecessors. May I express the hope that our relations may be mutually rewarding and pleasant.

Before concluding my remarks I should like to communicate to you a message that was given to me last week by M. Max Petitpierre, Federal Counsellor and Head of the Political Department, which I am sure will be particularly welcome to you:

'Transmettez à mes compatriotes de Manchester ainsi qu'à ceux dispersés ailleurs dans le nord de l'Angleterre, en Ecosse et en Irlande du Nord, l'expression de mes sentiments patriotiques, en les assurant de l'intérêt et de la sollicitude constants que le Département politique et les autres organismes de l'administration fédérale vouent à tout ce qui touche à leur bien-être et à la sauvegarde de leurs biens et intérêts.'

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M. Rosset could hardly have had a more attentive audience and that with his address he created immediately a most friendly bond between himself and his audience which augurs well for the future relation between M. Rosset and the colony, was shown by the hearty and long applause from members and friends all round.

The Annual Banquet also serves to announce the winners of the Shooting competition of our Rifle section and after a short résumé of the activities of this youngest branch of our colony by Vice-President E. Simon, Madame Rosset was asked to present the Cups to the valiant winners. They are:— Dr. H. R. Bolliger, winning the Challenge Cup, and Mr. J. Scheiwiller, winning the Swiss Air Handicap Cup.

A short interval followed during which the ball-room was got ready for the dancing and at the same time gave the members a chance to exchange a few words with their friends.

Then our dance band struck up with a lively tune and soon the floor was filled with a merry crowd which obviously was intent to enjoy every minute remaining during the rest of the evening. To heighten the amusement, the M.C. Mr. Simon, arranged some special dances, at the end of which small "prizes" were awarded to the lucky winners. These surprise

items caused no end of entertainment to the participants as well as to the entire company and so the evening passed all too quickly. The traditional "Auld Lang Syne" at midnight brought to a close another successful Ball and the committee are to be congratulated for their effort to make this Swiss Annual Banquet another outstanding event in the life of the Swiss Club Manchester.

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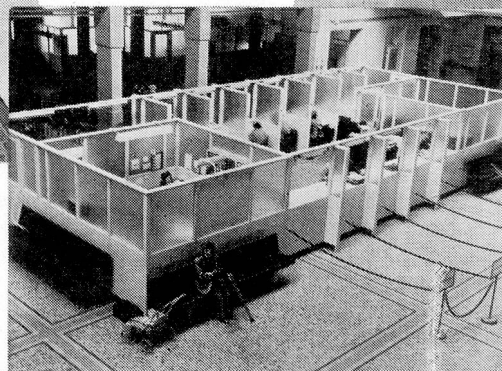
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