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The Swiss Observer

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A SAD DAY FOR THE SCHWEIZERBUND

It is with sadness that we must report here the result of the Extraordinary General Meeting of the Schweizerbund held on Thursday, 21st September, at 74 Charlotte Street.

For, after 82 years' existence and 76 years of activity at the above address, this unique institution of the Swiss colony in London, of which so many of us have unforgettable memories, will be closing down at the end of this year with the fragile hope that it can be revived later at less costly premises.



*President V. Berti:
his tremendous efforts were all in vain*

Despite the tremendous effort made by president V. Berti, and the urgent appeal for funds, less than forty of the Club's members came along to Charlotte Street to hear of its fate. Furthermore, only eleven hundred of the five thousand pounds estimated necessary to carry on the Schweizerbund had been raised.

* * *

It was therefore more or less obvious, at the very start of this Extraordinary Meeting, that the situation looked very black. Nevertheless, Mr. Berti retained his

calm manner and presided with his usual objectivity. In a few words he summed up the Club's position, its great financial difficulties, its needs, and the landlord's exigencies. Mr. Berti explained that the only solution left was to renew the lease and then to resell it.

During the debate which followed, a proposition was raised to make the Club a Swiss restaurant open to the general public, but as things now stand this does not seem possible. Another proposition to hold Bingo sessions at the Schweizerbund was judged technically unrealisable.

Afterwards the members present were asked to approve or reject the following:

"The Committee recommends to the Extraordinary General Meeting that in view of the fact that the necessary finances could not be raised, no alternative remains but to have the lease renewed on our behalf, to sell it, and to apply the funds arising thereof to the liquidation of our current debts and obligations."

* * *

This was approved unanimously, and therein was sealed the fate of the Schweizerbund. The fact is, as Mr. Berti rightly pointed out, that the Colony expressed the most surprising indifference towards the appeal. With the exception of a few generous supporters, nobody seemed concerned over the Schweizerbund's disappearance. For over three-quarters of a century this typical corner of Switzerland in the heart of London has been a familiar "rendez-vous" of the Swiss colony.

To be sure, the Schweizerbund may start a new life somewhere else, under more favourable aspects and without the heavy inheritance of past mistakes. But it is not easy for an old institution to rejuvenate itself — and the Schweizerbund is an octogenarian. In any case, nothing will be successful unless the Colony changes its attitude and gets rid of its apathy.

Earlier this year the "Fête Suisse" had to be postponed until 1962. Now the Schweizerbund enters into, it is hoped; only temporary liquidation. What next?

P.H.