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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

SWISS BENEVOLENT SOCIETY

Report for the Year 1964

Dear Friends and Compatriots,

This is the 95th Annual Report of our society's activities for the relief of our compatriots in need in the consular district of London, the area laid down in our Statutes. It has again been a year of undiminished effort in our work of assistance, with no appreciable reduction in the calls on the society's help, this notwithstanding the oft-mentioned ageing and dwindling of our colony and the increase in retirement pensions and AHV/AVS benefits. Indeed, advancing years, reduced savings and other causes each year bring up new cases of fellow-citizens who can no longer on their own keep pace with the mounting cost of living.

The number of pensioners in receipt of regular weekly allowances from our funds had gone up from 68 to 73 in 1963 and went down by 2 to 71 in 1964. Only twice in the last ten years has the number been below 70, having varied between 68 and 78. More significant still is that, whereas in seven of these last ten years our disbursements for them were below £4,000, averaging £3,780, a year, in the last three years they have passed the £4,000 mark and averaged £4,243 a year. Besides these "regulars", we have the unpredictable cases for casual relief, repatriations, grants for children's holidays in Switzerland under the "Pro Juventute" scheme, grants also to elderly people for holiday and convalescence at the seaside or in the country, all adding their uncertain but in the end fairly steady quota of calls on our resources and amounting last year to £2,138 including the grant to the Welfare Office for Swiss Girls, against £2,394 in 1963 and £2,287 in 1962.

Altogether, we assisted 274 cases, i.e. 30 families with 23 children, 68 widows and widowers with 10 children, 71 lone women, 42 lone men. We granted 349 interviews and dealt with 2,578 applications of one kind or another.

Total figures of our 1964 accounts were:—

	1963		
PAYMENTS	£13,911	...	£13,334
RECEIPTS	£8,940	...	£8,894
DEFICIT	£4,971	...	£4,440

Once more, repairs to our premises at 9-11 Belsize Grove, the home of the Swiss Hostel for Girls, are behind a large part of this huge deficit, but even without this additional outlay of £4,169 in 1964, which has transitory character, it will be seen that this still leaves a shortfall of receipts against current payments of £802. It was double that figure in 1963 and the trend goes back some years. Our income is no longer sufficient to meet normal outgoings and ways and means must be found to bridge the gap if our traditional work of relief in the Swiss colony is not to suffer in the long run.

If, therefore, we could induce a larger number of our subscribers to emulate those who already have increased their contribution in order to help us match the ever increasing allowances we have to give our less fortunate friends, our anxiety about the future would be relieved. We need perhaps only draw attention to the rise of our basic rates of assistance, i.e.

	<i>For one person</i>	<i>For a couple</i>
1955	40/- per week	65/- per week
1958	47/6 " "	78/6 " "
1961	56/- " "	92/6 " "
1963	66/- " "	107/- " "
1965	78/6 " "	128/- " "

based as is well-known on those of the National Assistance Board for requirements other than rent, which is allowed separately, to show that unless more support is forthcoming, we shall fall gradually behind and our work may have to be curtailed and lose effectiveness.

In 1964 we had the advantage of an increased subsidy by the Swiss Authorities of Fr. 8,000 against Fr. 6,500 the previous four years. It is gratifying to note that this was made possible by the greater response by Cantonal Governments to the Federal Government appeal for increased support for Swiss benevolent societies, homes, and hospitals all the world over. Furthermore, in recognition of our heavy burden of the premises at 9-11 Belsize Grove, the Federal Political Department very kindly granted us an exceptional supplementary subsidy for 1965 of Fr. 1,000. We are most grateful to the Federal and Cantonal Authorities for their great understanding and their encouraging help in our difficulties.

During 1964 we helped with the REPATRIATION of 11 compatriots, paid the fares for three children to enjoy a SUMMER HOLIDAY IN SWITZERLAND UNDER THE "PRO JUVENTUTE" SCHEME, enabled eight pensioners to have a HOLIDAY OR CONVALESCENCE in the country or at the seaside, and as usual provided pocket money to SWISS HOSPITAL PATIENTS in homes for nervous diseases.

Our CLOTHING SERVICE was as busy as ever dispensing garments and other articles of every description, including food, to needy compatriots, and we are grateful to all donors — Frauenverein, Réunion de Couture, firms and individuals — for their very helpful gifts. They made it possible for us to distribute also 131 parcels at Christmas, benefiting 147 people.

The Committee of the "HOME FOR AGED SWISS" again helped to maintain four elderly Swiss in homes in London.

Of the WELFARE OFFICE FOR SWISS GIRLS IN GREAT BRITAIN, whose offices are at the Swiss Hostel for Girls at 11 Belsize Grove, London N.W.3, but act as a separate institution, we need only mention here that this very useful and very active organisation was created in 1949 and opened in 1950 under the auspices of the Swiss Embassy in London, the "Amies de la jeune fille", the "Katholischer Mädchenschutzverein", both of Switzerland, and our society, all of which are represented on the committee presided by Mrs. Ellis and of which our secretary, Mr. Jules Zimmermann, is one of the two Vice-Presidents. We gave support with our grant of £280.

As for the SWISS HOSTEL FOR GIRLS, constituted and incorporated in London since 1956 as a separate and independent company, it will be remembered that it was opened in January 1957 at 9-11 Belsize Grove, London N.W.3, in freehold premises owned by our society and leased on a rental basis intended to provide revenue towards our society's traditional work of relief. Unfortunately, over the years this revenue has been absorbed in repairs, but we have every reason to hope that the

corner has been turned or soon will be. The original lease has expired and a new lease is now being negotiated, based on the experiences we have made.

In our urgent need for more financial support for our work, we usually stress the advantage of GUARANTEED CONTRIBUTIONS UNDER DEED OF COVENANT. In 1964 we had the satisfaction to see the total of such contributions pass from £706 to £797 and the tax refund benefit to us from £413 to £443. We do so hope that more of our friends will adopt this form of subscription, which means no extra cost to them, yet so much to us. Information and forms of covenant will be gladly supplied on application to our office.

There has been no change in the form and practice of ADMINISTRATION of our society, the Executive Committee meeting normally on the second and fourth Monday of each month at 31 Conway Street to hear a report by the secretary, Mr. Jules Zimmermann, on actions taken, applications received, and other developments during the interval. Mr. Walter Ziereisen, our other collaborator, shares with him the day-to-day business of the office. We wish to thank both of them for their devoted services.

We are always glad to welcome at these twice-monthly meetings members of the General Committee and anyone of our colony who is interested in our work. And we are particularly grateful to Monsieur F. Ansermoz and Consul E. Tosio, who never fail to join us in turn on those occasions and provide a most useful link between us and the Swiss Embassy.

We record here with pleasure and gratitude the acceptance, early in 1964, of the Hon. Presidency of our society by Monsieur Beat de Fischer, our present Ambassador at the Court of St. James, in succession to his predecessor, Monsieur Armin Daeniker, for whose well-known interest in our society and great help in the years 1955-1963 we are most thankful.

At our Annual General Meeting this year, our President, Mr. F. G. Sommer, asked to be relieved of his position for reasons of health, age and travelling distances, after he had been at the helm since 1954 following the retirement of Col. Anton Bon who had returned to Switzerland. Mr. Sommer's request was accepted with the utmost regret, and we wish to express to him here our very sincere thanks for his devoted and inspired leadership. In recognition of his distinguished services, he was elected as Hon. Vice-President of the society.

At the same meeting, Mr. X. Speckert, hitherto one of our Vice-Presidents, was elected President of the society. Mr. M. Schneebeli, a member of our General Committee, was elected to succeed him as Vice-President. New members of the General Committee are Mr. L. S. R. Asch and Pfarrer M. Dietler.

Our appreciation and thanks go to Mr. and Mrs. Ziereisen for their constant devotion to our Clothing Service all through the year and a special word of acknowledgment is due to them for their handling of our Christmas parcels action. In this they have the unfailing co-operation of Mrs. Bachofen and Mrs. Raulin, to whom also we are grateful for the help they are giving us, Mrs. Bachofen lending us a hand on other special occasions too.

In CONCLUSION, may we repeat that the aims of our society are to assist Swiss citizens temporarily or permanently resident within the consular district of London who are in need of help. All cases brought to our notice are considered with every sympathy.

Once again, we wish to express our very sincere gratitude to the Federal, Cantonal and Municipal Authorities at home, the Swiss Embassy, the Swiss Churches, the

Swiss Societies, and all our subscribers, individuals and firms, for their great kindness and generosity in support of our endeavours, not forgetting the "Swiss Observer" for the free publicity they give us. It is fitting also that we extend thanks to the British Authorities for the kind hospitality we enjoy in this country.

On behalf of the Committee:

X. SPECKERT,
President.

* * *

The S.B.S., 31 Conway Street, W.I:

Honorary President: Monsieur Beat de Fischer, Ambassadeur de Suisse. Honorary Vice-President: Mr. F. G. Sommer. President: Mr. X. Speckert. Vice-Presidents: Mr. J. Oertli, Mr. M. A. Rothlisberger, Mr. M. Schneebeli. Hon. Treasurer: Mr. M. A. Rothlisberger. Hon. Assistant Treasurer: Mr. D. E. Bonnet. Secretary: Mr. Jules Zimmermann.

PERSONAL

Mr. Marcel Zublin, Joint Managing Director of Messrs. Sulzer Bros. (London) Ltd., has returned to Switzerland to take up an important post with the firm in Winterthur. He will, however, remain on the Board of the London Company. During his stay in this country, Mr. Zublin has been an active member of the Swiss community, especially of the Swiss Economic Council, the Swiss Hostel for Girls and the City Swiss Club. We extend our best wishes to him and his family.

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In order to continue the technical liaison with the Swiss Company and to co-ordinate the sales of Sulzer specialities, Mr. P. Haefeli has been appointed Sales Manager of the London Company. Mr. Haefeli has extensive experience of Sulzer Products having served the Sulzer organisation in Switzerland and abroad for many years.

We wish him and his family a successful and happy stay in this country.

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On 14th February, the Protestant voters in the Grisons agreed to having women Ministers of the Church. On 27th June, The Rev. Doris Voegelin, well-known to many members of the Swiss community in London from the days when she was Minister at the Swiss Church, was accepted into the Grisons Synod. She has been working in the Communes of Sils-Silvaplana-Champfèr for several years, but without having equal status with her male colleagues. We wish to congratulate Miss Voegelin and extend our best wishes to her.

FOR THE SWISS COMMUNITY IN SCOTLAND

The Federal Day of Prayer will be celebrated at 7 Hughenden Terrace, Glasgow W.2. The Minister of the Swiss Church in London, the Rev. M. Dietler, will give an illustrated talk on the Swiss Church in London at 5 p.m. The Get-Together is at 4 p.m. and at 7 p.m., Mr. Dietler will give the Sermon followed by Holy Communion.