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CITY SWISS CLUB

100th BANQUET AND BALL

On 16th November 1956, the City Swiss Club celebrated its Centenary at the Dorchester Hotel in London. A hundred years had elapsed since eighteen compatriots of ours founded the "Schweizerverein". The name was altered five years later to that of "City Swiss Club". Though not the oldest Swiss organisation in the U.K., the City Swiss Club has always held some kind of senior position. It has been fortunate in having at the helm men mostly of personality and standing, and the Club has played an important part in Anglo-Swiss relationship. On the occasion of the Centenary Ball, the President, the late Mr. Charles Gysin, welcomed amongst the guests such distinguished persons as Lord and Lady Nathan of Churt, Sir Clifford and Lady Norton (former British Minister in Berne), Sir Seymour and Lady Howard (former Lord Mayor of London), Mr. Salvador de Madariago (Diplomat, Academician and Historian). The then Swiss Minister was in the chair, and from Switzerland, it was the President of the National Council, Mr. Paul Burgdorfer, who had come over specially with his wife. Incidentally, General Guisan had also been invited, but had had to decline on doctor's orders.

All that was nine years ago. Owing to the war years during which no banquets and balls were held, the Club had to wait for a few more years until the 100th Banquet and Ball could be celebrated. The 19th November 1965 was another milestone in the history of the Club, and thus it was suitably marked. The response to the Committee's appeal was most gratifying. If 450 members and friends attended the Centenary Banquet, the number this time was a good hundred more.

Outwardly, it was a typical November evening, drizzly and damp, though considering that twenty-four hours previously, thick fog had enveloped London, one was almost relieved to have nothing worse than rain. Inside the Dorchester, however, nothing was lacking in brilliance. The bright yet flattering lights and the beautiful flower arrangements created the right background for the ladies in their fine gowns and their glittering jewels. My personal regret was that once again "tails" had been dispensed with. The men, though still handsome as always in their dinner jackets, lacked something of their former distinguished appearance. But I was told I had to go with the times. Perhaps the picture of that evening 33 years ago when I attended my first City Swiss Club Ball is still too vividly in my mind. I could not help wondering whether one or the other of the comely young girls present this time would have the same good fortune of meeting *her* future husband as I had then.. It was indeed gladdening to see so many young people, and they added charm and sparkle to the gathering.

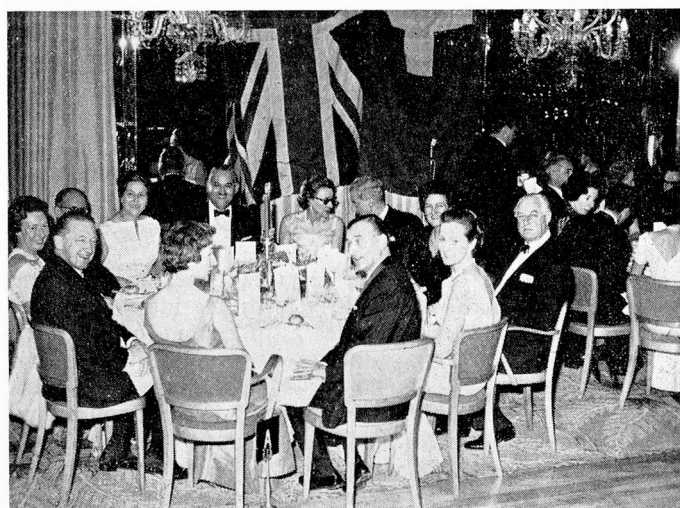
The President, Mr. Edgar Bonvin, the chief Guest of Honour, Federal Councillor Roger Bonvin, and the Swiss Ambassador, Monsieur B. de Fischer, all accompanied by their ladies, received the guests ushered in by the red-coated toastmaster. With such large numbers of men and women, the reception took up considerable time, and it was with quite some delay that the party finally sat down to an excellent dinner in the stately ballroom which had been enlarged for the occasion. The meal was well chosen and expeditiously served. After the loyal toasts, the President welcomed the guests, among them first and foremost the Swiss Minister of Finance and Madame Roger Bonvin



*Mr. and Mrs. E. Bonvin, Federal Councillor and Madame Bonvin
The Swiss Ambassador and Madame de Fischer.*

who had come over to England especially for the celebration. He said that Monsieur le Conseiller Fédéral was a great supporter of the Swiss living abroad and had always shown lively interest in our affairs and given wise counsel in many matters. We were very conscious of the honour bestowed on us by their presence.

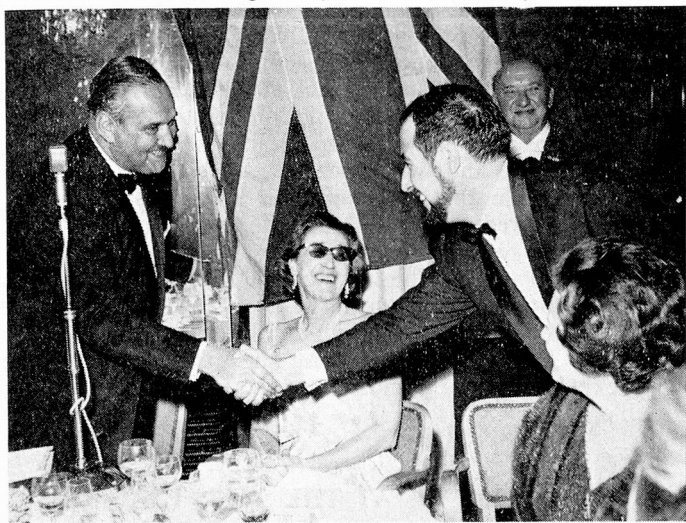
Mr. Bonvin then hailed the Honorary President of the Club, the Swiss Ambassador and Madame de Fischer whom we were always happy to welcome in our midst. Next, he extended a welcome to a great friend of Switzerland's, a former Lord Mayor of London, Sir James Harman, G.B.E., J.P. Unfortunately his wife was prevented from attending due to illness. Mr. Bonvin referred to the fact that in Sir James we had probably the first Lord Mayor ever to speak "Schwyzerdütsch"; he had surprised the Zurich citizens addressing them in their own language a few years ago during an official visit as Sheriff of the City of London.



The Presidential Table — Sir James Harman on the right.

Mr. Bonvin declared that the evening was a great occasion for many reasons: His cousin the Federal Councillor and Madame Bonvin were here; 150 years ago his

Canton, the Valais, had joined the Confederation; 100 years ago the Matterhorn had been climbed for the first time by an Englishman — what more could a Valaisan ask for? He then welcomed Monsieur Gilbert Albert, the Geneva artist/jeweller who was holding a one-man show at the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, the first exhibition of its kind during 600 years of its history.



The President congratulating M. Gilbert Albert.

Other guests included Lady Mary Strachey, Mr. and Mrs. J. P. Christen, Mr. and Mrs. Furler, Herr Pfarrer M. Dietler (who said grace), Monsieur le Pasteur and Mrs. A. Nicod, Father J. Scherer, Mr. and Mrs. Th. Haller of the Swiss Broadcasting Society, Mr. and Mrs. Menessier (*Journal de Genève*) and the Editor of the "Swiss Observer" Mrs. Mariann Meier.

The President read two telegrams, one from Monsieur and Madame A. Daeniker who had been with us at the Club's Centenary, and the other from Monsieur Jean de Stoutz, now Swiss Ambassador to Israel.



Monsieur le Conseiller Fédéral Roger Bonvin.

The Federal Councillor spoke next, and as he is wanted to do, talked without notes and in eloquent French. He had thought he would never set foot on English soil, but now that he was here he was enjoying himself. He had often heard of the Club's activities and was glad to be able to witness them in person. He brought greetings and best wishes from the Federal Council. Monsieur Bonvin said that we all had the well-being of Switzerland at heart.

We would work to the best of our country and of humanity.

The next speaker was the Swiss Ambassador whose privilege it was to thank the Federal Councillor for the kind words and friendly message from the federal authorities. Monsieur de Fischer compared the quiet but sustained activities of the Club's hundred years and more to the Congress of Vienna which had worked out decisions still effective today. "As was said in Vienna by the President of the recent jubilee exhibition of the Congress of Vienna, people who like music and dancing are much more inclined to constructive and lasting arrangements than people who are indifferent to the muses". The City Swiss Club, to, had done many good things during its existence, and above all had kept the Swiss tradition in the City very much alive. He referred to other Swiss clubs and institutions and continued:

"If we cast a rapid glance at the gallery of ancestors whose tradition you, dear compatriots, are following, directly or indirectly, we find some astonishing personalities. There are great doctors at the courts of many English kings, such as Lentulus, Sir Theodor de Mayenne, Colladon, Diodati, Odier, Marcet; there are great painters: no less than three of the first four keepers of the Royal Academy of Arts were Swiss-born — Moser, Marlini, and Henry Füssli — and a splendid group of other great names must be added to them: Holbein, Liotard, Sir Francis Bourgeois, Agasse, Challon, Louthembourg and so on; there are scientists, lawyers and philosophers like Roget, Etienne Dumont, Sir Samuel Romilly; there are of course also many successful generals and many high civil servants, including three governor-generals of Canada, one of Ceylon and one of Nigeria, and even a Secretary of State for India, Sir Joseph Planta, in Wellington's government; and there are last but not least six directors or governors of the Bank of England: Gaussen, Tellusson, Haldimand, Bosanquet, Norris and Sir August Prevost.

"As you see, this is quite a good company and provides some fine examples for us to follow."

The Ambassador then talked about three great Swiss Women who had left their mark in Great Britain. He concluded by hoping that the Club would dance into another hundred balls with the same dignity, grace and elegance as hitherto.

Sir James Harman spoke next on behalf of the guests. He told of his love of Switzerland and that to be with the City Swiss Club that evening was like a breath of Swiss air. With this pun he referred to the "Swissair" Yodel Group who had been entertaining the party during dinner. Sir James continued his humorous address in "Schwyzerdütsch" and said Switzerland to him was full of unforgettable memories. It was his second home, a country of beauty and a people with a warm heart. He wished we could manage to restore the 25 Swiss Francs to the Pound — how happy that would make him!

The last of the speeches was by the President of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom, Dr. H. W. Egli. He said a few words about the newly-formed organisation and the new Swiss Centre. He then presented the Federal Councillor with a Victorian stand of three bottles — Gin, Whisky and Brandy, wishing him the best of health to enjoy them.

That finished the official part of the evening. Dancing started. The floor was crowded, but who minded. Enjoyment was rampant. Some of the older friends who had not attended this annual function for many a year, sat watching and musing, happily recalling past events and long-gone friends. Many must have been thinking with

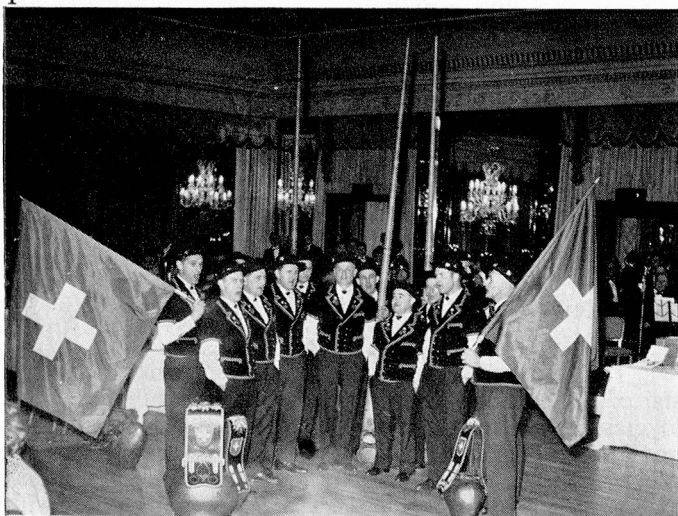
particular affection of the Club's Honorary Vice-President and faithful member for many years, our dear old friend Fred Stauffer who had still been with us a year ago and who had worked hard during the last few weeks of his life to make this event a success. His wife was there and we loved her for it.



The President — Madame R. Bonvin — Mrs. H. Jauslin with the OMEGA watch — Madame B. de Fischer.

Of course, an evening like this cannot be an unqualified success without much careful planning and hard detailed work. Amongst those who had done their share, apart from the President and (behind the scenes) his wife Francine, were Mr. H. Jauslin — how well he deserved the first prize of the tombola, the magnificent OMEGA watch — Mr. E. Tobler and Mr. J. Jobin. Thanks are also due to Mr. E. Burgaezzi, Deputy Manager of Swissair, for getting the Yodel Group and folklore band over from Switzerland for the occasion. The Club are also grateful to the Swiss National Tourist Office and the many donors of valuable prizes for the tombola. Just how successful this was, is shown by the splendid result: £200 have been distributed to the Swiss Benevolent Society, and £75 each to the Eglise Suisse, the Schweizerkirche and the Swiss Catholic Mission.

But also the ladies and gentlemen who were not lucky in the draw, received some consolation. Everybody was presented with rare scent or toilet water, a gift from the Club. The Swissair yodellers and alphorn players distributed gramophone records of Swiss folklore music, a present from home.



The Cabaret was provided by Swissair, the Yodellers in the traditional black "Sennechutteli", the "Ländlerkapelle" in embroidered blue tunics. The alphorn sounded remarkably genuine in the unfamiliar surroundings. The elegance of the gathering did not disturb the skill of the flag tossers who performed their art with great dexterity. David Kay from the Empress Club entertained by means of singing and other musical turns. The best part, both in my personal opinion, and to judge from the applause, was the dance music supplied by the Ländlerkapelle". With all due respect to Arthur Salisbury and his excellent dance orchestra, nothing could beat the racy rhythm and very helvetic strains of the folklore band. What a change and what fun!

Regrettable that dancing time was so short. Only too soon the red candles in their silver holders had burnt down. The red and white flowers on the tables began to wilt just a trifle. The last note of Auld Lang Syne and the two National Anthems died away. We drained our glasses and gratefully and confidently drank to the Club's future — had not the President said earlier on that "as in cricket we are one hundred not out — let's play on to a double century."

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NEW ARRIVALS AT THE SWISS EMBASSY

Monsieur **Richard Gaechter** arrived in July to replace Monsieur Gallusser who returned to Berne. He is attached to the Section for Economic Affairs at the Swiss Embassy. Monsieur Gaechter hails from St. Gall. He studied in Geneva and the United States (political science). He had assignments in Berne, Paris and, for the past 4½ years in Germany. He is married and has four children. We wish him and his family a happy stay in this country.

Monsieur **Paul Stauffer** arrived in November from Moscow. He takes over Cultural Affairs and Educational Matters at the Embassy and replaces Monsieur J. Revilliod, now Ambassador to Indonesia, Cambodia and Laos. Monsieur Stauffer is a citizen of the Aargau. He studied modern history, literature and philology. Previous assignments included Berlin and Berne. He is a bachelor. We wish him a successful stay in Great Britain.

PERSONAL

We have just learnt that Mr. E. M. Huber, "Cophornes", Crabtree Drive, Givons Grove, Leatherhead, Surrey, has been seriously ill. We are glad to hear that Mr. Huber is making progress and wish him a speedy and complete recovery.

* * *

Once again it is farewell to old friends. Mr. and Mrs. William Bernhard Sigerist have left their Hampstead home after many years' residence in this country. They have both been active in the Swiss community, and we shall sadly miss them. We wish them many years of happy retirement in their new home at Territet on the shores of Lake Geneva.

OUR NEXT ISSUE

The "Swiss Observer" is published every second and fourth Friday of the month. Our next issue will appear on 14th January 1966. We shall be glad to receive reports and articles not later than Wednesday, 5th January. Short news items only can be accepted later.