

News from the colony

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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

SWISS HOSTEL FOR GIRLS Warden's Report for 1967

The Annual General Meeting of the Swiss Hostel for Girls Ltd. took place at the Hostel on 28th May. The Chairman, Mr. R. M. Suess was in the chair. The Warden, Miss H. Siegrist, presented the following report:

Numbers 9 and 11 Belsize Grove again look fine and inviting. Both the fronts and the backs of the two houses were painted last summer. At the same time, all windows on the third floor were either replaced or repaired. This was really necessary because the rain came through everywhere, and in winter it was very draughty and sometimes bitterly cold. The subject of draughts gave rise to discussions on several occasions because quite a number of windows in bedrooms and common rooms were in bad condition and in great need of repair. Several efforts were made and the result of the repairs executed to date is already noticeable. The remaining work to be done will be tackled in 1968. We have, however, to forget some of the comforts we are used to in Switzerland and realise that we live in an English house and in a mild English climate.

The scaffolding which was up for several weeks constituted quite an attraction to "Peeping Toms", and more than once, girls were shocked by seeing a stranger at the windows of either their bedrooms or bathrooms. These shocks were quite serious, but later on when the experience was recalled one could laugh about it. On each occasion the police were informed.

We have not been spared the usual minor repairs inside the house which is otherwise in fair order.

We have bought, however, several new pieces of furniture, such as wardrobes and chests of drawers which were needed for bedrooms where the usual set-up was not complete. The purchase of shoe-racks for all bedrooms also proved to be a good idea, because it has helped enormously with bedroom cleaning.

In a very stormy night, our huge Elm tree suffered quite a lot of damage, and we were forced to have it lopped together with three other trees.

In 1967 we reached the, so far, highest number of bookings in all 23,490 (1966: 22,202), representing an average of 64.3 beds per night against 60 in the previous year. As we have only 60 beds, the remainder refers to campbeds which were in demand almost the year round. The admission of non-Swiss girls gives the atmosphere a more interesting touch, and our experience with these girls has been very satisfactory. English girls are especially desirable as it gives our Swiss girls a good opportunity of conversing in English. There were 199 non-Swiss girls who came from the following countries: Germany 50, France 35, Italy 29, England 25, Canada 9, U.S.A. 8, Holland 7, Sweden 6, Portugal 5, Austria 4, Belgium 4, Iran 3, Argentina 2, Brazil 2, Norway 2, Turkey 2, Greece 1, Lichtenstein 1, Russia 2, Spain 1, Yugoslavia 1.

The structure of our residents has remained just about the same: full-time students, girls working, holidaymakers and *au pair* girls are equally represented.

As the Hostel expenses had increased considerably, our terms had to be reconsidered. The new price-list which was set up late in 1967, became operative from 5th February 1968.

Our old brochure of which we had run out of stock, has made way for a nice new and more up-to-date leaflet.

Once again, we shared quite a number of cases with the Welfare Office. The increasing number of disturbed girls during the past year is striking. Dealing with these girls (ten altogether) took up much of the time of Warden and Staff. It has also sometimes been very trying, especially in those cases which were on the verge of hospitalisation. Two girls who were suspected of schizophrenia had, after a few quite exciting days at the Hostel, to be sent to hospital. All the others recovered at the Hostel so far that they could either go back home and get adequate treatment or were able to settle down in a new job over here. Our great problem is always to get the necessary immediate medical help. It seems that the legal obligations of the doctors are such that we have to operate differently according to the origin of the case. We benefit from the splendid collaboration with the Welfare Office, especially in such difficult situations.

For many girls, the Hostel has again been a little island of refuge when they have had trouble with their families, or when arrangements have fallen through on arrival at Victoria Station, or when they have got themselves into trouble for various reasons. The possibility of doing a few hours' work per day at the Hostel for board and lodging — an arrangement we make especially for girls who for one reason or another are out of work and short of money and with no prospects of getting financial help from home — has met with great appreciation from the girls.

A highlight of the year was our Carnival Party in February. The residents organised programme and decorations, and I had the not very easy task of recruiting partners for all girls without escort! The winner of the fancy dress competition was Berta Spiess who belonged to our staff.

Regarding staff we have managed fairly well during the past year. We even found a housekeeper, Miss Baumberger, who rendered us great service from March until September. She has been followed by Miss Moser who took over in October and will stay until summer 1968. It is to be hoped that a replacement will be available when the time comes. There still remains the problem of the frequent changes of staff and the gaps we get when dates of leaving and arriving do not match. One great security is the loyalty of our cook, Miss Ruth Grütter, who came back in January 1967. For the first time, a deaf girl from Basle worked with us for eight months. It was her ardent wish to come over here in order to learn the language and to gain experience in a foreign country for herself. To our delight this experiment was a great success. Gertrud, a very gay and intelligent girl, learned English with untiring energy, and by the time she went back home she could write and lip-read almost anything. Shortly before Gertrud left, her teacher organised a school-party where everybody conversed in English and no one noticed Gertrud's deafness.

Christmas and New Year's Eve were again happy family events. To our great surprise a former resident arrived unexpectedly on Christmas Eve. She was let down by her boy-friend and did not care to spend Christmas with her own family; consequently she came all the way from Switzerland to join us.

As in former years, the Nouvelle Société Helvétique and the Unione Ticinese have held several functions at the Hostel. Their continued use of our house would seem to imply great appreciation of the services we can give them, on the other hand we ourselves benefit from the incidental publicity which follows in that individual members themselves get to know of our work.

We were also honoured with visits from our Ambassador, Monsieur Olivier Long and his wife, and a former Ambassador, Monsieur and Madame Daeniker.

The Hostel can look back on another prosperous year as shown by the great number of Swiss girls and others to whom the Hostel has been of use and help in some way or other. And once again we wish to express our sincere thanks to all who have assisted and encouraged us in the past year. Our special thanks go to the Council of Management, to the Swiss Embassy, and the Swiss Benevolent Society, and to Mrs. Cottet who is ever ready when the need arises.

"ENGAGEMENT"

"The task which you fulfil has provided you with a *doctor honoris causa*." But long before, the refugees had bestowed another title on you: "Mother of Refugees". These are words of high appreciation for the work of the "Christian Peace Movement", expressed by our former Federal Councillor, Monsieur M. Petitpierre, some years ago, on the occasion of the seventieth birthday of its leader: Frau Doktor Gertrud Kurz. Those who came to the Swiss Church during the Week of Reflection got an insight into the work of Mutter Kurz.

The Christian Peace Movement came into being shortly after the first world war because two enemies, a German Mayor and a French Officer got to understand each other better, due to a communion service which they had both attended at the local Protestant Church of Datteln, a German town then held by the French troops. The Lord's Supper which marks the reconciliation between God and man produced reconciliation between the two enemies. These two men in their capacity of Mayor and Officer ended the bloodshed in Datteln and created a movement of reconciliation.

During the second world war, the Peace Movement had to operate from Switzerland where, under Frau Kurz, it became a family of refugees. After the second world war it was largely taken over by young people who had realised that reconciliation with God means "engagement in the world". They are Christians from Western Europe as well as from East Germany. They work in those parts of the world, where there is unrest and hatred: in Jordan as well as in Israel, in the Southern as well as in the Northern part of Vietnam, and in Algeria, Rhodesia and Greece.

Thus the Week of Reflection drew the thoughts to "God and engagement". On 7th May, Mutter Kurz spoke to elderly people about "problems of getting older", the following Wednesday afternoon she addressed the members of the Mothers' Group with a talk on refugees and in the evening the "Kontakt" on "Youth"; Thursday she was received by the "Jeunes Romands", and on Sunday, 12th May, she preached at St. Mary Woolnoth's to a crowd of mainly young people. At the end of the Week of Reflection Mutter Kurz was given £150, a collection which shows the impression on those who had attended.

M.D.

SCHWEIZERBUND (SWISS CLUB)

At the request of the Schweizerbund's last Annual General Meeting, the Club organised an additional social evening and dinner which was held on 31st May at the Glendower Hotel. It was most gratifying to see an attendance of 44 members and friends — many of them from the Swiss Embassy. The President, Mr. V. Berti, welcomed Monsieur and Madame Charles Abegglen and Monsieur Jean-Marie Déboeuf, Vice-Consuls at the Embassy, as well as Monsieur F. Bischof, the new Secretary of the NSH. The Club's "youngest" member, Mr. F. Delaloye, a past-president, again had some complimentary and witty tributes to pay. To crown the evening in true Swiss spirit, singing in our three official languages was started when the Secretary distributed, by courtesy of the Swiss National Tourist Office, copies of a booklet "Let's sing with the Swiss". And what singing it was!

It was also announced that arrangements were being made to organise a dinner at a country club at Elstree (Herts.) on a Friday in August, and a Sunday outing to Hever Castle near Westerham (Kent) in autumn — possibly on 6th October. Further details will be given in the "Forthcoming Events" columns in the Swiss Observer and by circulars to the Club's members.

J.S.

A RETIREMENT AND AN APPOINTMENT OF TWO OF OUR READERS

For over 20 years, Mr. P. Bucher, of 21 Pemberley Avenue, Bedford, has been head of Le Bas Tube Company (George Fischer Group). On 5th June, he relinquished the chairmanship. He will, however, remain a Director. His successor is Mr. R. C. Jones, Chief Executive of the George Fischer Group in Great Britain.

Mr. R. E. Baumann, of 24 Gurney Drive, N.2 (Vice-President of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique), has hitherto been Director and General Manager of the Company; he has now been elected Managing Director. Congratulations!

BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

We wish many happy returns to all our readers whose birthdays fall within the next fortnight, in particular to Mr. Jakob Vogel who will be 87 on 2nd and Mr. Leon Jaeggi who will reach his 79th birthday on 7th July. On the same day, Mr. and Mrs. F. E. Brunner will celebrate their 51st wedding anniversary.

OBITUARY

We announce with deep regret the death of Mr. Henry Meyer, of 5 Cedar Road, Cricklewood, N.W.2. He hailed from Adliswil (Zurich) and was an agricultural engineer. He was a member of the Swiss Club "Schweizerbund", of the Société des Secours Mutuels des Suisses à Londres. When the Swiss Gymnastic Society was still in existence, he was a regular member, and in the days when the Swiss Rifle Association held their shooting meetings at Hendon, he took part regularly.

Mr. Meyer died on 28th May at the age of 79. His only relative in this country is his daughter, Mrs. H. E. Fulford, Westbourne, the Ridge, Maybury Hill, Woking, Surrey, to whom we express our sincere sympathy.