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SWISS CLUB, MANCHESTER

On Saturday, 8th November 1969, members and friends met at the Excelsior Hotel, Manchester Airport, for our Annual Banquet and Ball, which not so long ago was known by a few as the "Gruetli-Feier". Times are changing in many respects and reflecting a new pattern, even on such occasions. If I remember correctly, it is the first time that this function has been held in Cheshire, and not in Manchester.

Our Committee tried to keep the proceedings as informal as possible, doing away with the saying of grace, the loyal toast and that to Switzerland. Evidently for many of us this was quite a change, and even more so for our English friends, and it looks as though we shall have to get used to these modern trends. This being so, I do not feel wrong in saying that the underlying feeling of all present must have been one of love and attachment to our home country and of respect, loyalty and thankfulness to the Land of adoption, which is giving us its wholehearted hospitality and support.

Many of us had to make a long journey and having braved the risks and discomforts of a long drive in the rain and wind, it was with a sense of relief that we assembled in the most colourful, warm and cosy bar of the Hotel—a happy blend of old and new, lively and full of movement, as only a place of this kind could be. It was here that we made our first contacts with members and friends and were introduced to some of our official guests, to whom I shall refer later.

Eventually we were directed to the restaurant. There we could admire the new table arrangement, where groups could sit at round tables, well spaced out around a central dance floor. The whole created an harmonious and pleasant atmosphere, enhanced by flags, and with posters decorating the walls. In one corner there was a functional and well stocked bar, and in another an elevated bandstand in a commanding position. The band itself would be joining us later. Our Tombola also had a prominent place and attracted some

envious and hopeful glances from us. The Hotel can be complimented for the quality of the food, suitably accompanied by a large variety of selected wines and other drinks, everything most efficiently arranged and well served.

Whilst having coffee our popular acting President, Mr. Bernard Simon, stood up to welcome our guests, friends and members, with a few warm and appropriate words. He must have read our minds, or delved into his innermost feelings, when he addressed in a very special way our Ladies, who, by their smiles, their youth and their glitter, graced this function and helped us most successfully to forget our everyday worries. He then mentioned specially the first Councillor of our Embassy and Madame Iselin, our Consul in Manchester and Madame Born, Major Nicholson, President of the Manchester Rifle Club and his Lady, who never miss supporting our efforts. A cordial welcome was also extended to our Vice-Consul, Mr. Zellweger, who has proved himself to be a great friend of our Club. He then read a cable received from the immediate past President, Dr. Jaggi, now in Basle, who certainly must have regretted not being with us on this particular evening.

Dr. Iselin forwarded to us the warm greetings and good wishes of our Ambassador, Dr. René Keller, and with his witty and well chosen words was able to captivate the interest and attention of the audience and was warmly applauded. He and his wife have just arrived in London and, after the initial difficulties of settling down, they can certainly look forward to a fruitful and happy stay in this country.

Our Consul then gave us a most interesting explanation of the word "Gruetli" and what it stands for, and it must have been news to many of us. We are most grateful to Mr. Born for what must have been a work of great exploration, and I think it worthwhile mentioning the history of it in full:

"On the occasion of a Landsgemeinde Celebration, which took place in 1838, some citizens of the canton of Appenzell, living in Geneva, together with other Swiss citizens from the German-speaking region, decided to found a Swiss society. It was called the Rutli Society—'Ruitli' because on a meadow known under this name the Confederation was founded. Since the French-speaking people in Geneva apparently could not very well pronounce the word "Ruitli", it was twisted into "Grutli". The central committee of this society had its seat first in Geneva, later in Lausanne. In 1890 it had about 16,000 members and it developed into the then strongest political association of Switzerland. Around the middle of the last century the Grutli-Verein started co-operative societies, and in 1869 members of the Zurich group of the Grutli-Verein made a proposal to found the first Social Democratic Party.

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SUNDAYS: Holy Mass at 9 and 11 a.m. in English. At 6.30 p.m. for the Swiss community with regard to the different language groups.

HOLIDAYS of obligation: Holy Mass at 7.30 and 9 a.m., 1 p.m. and 5.45 p.m.

WEDNESDAYS and THURSDAYS: Holy Mass at 1 p.m. afterwards time for consultations.

CONFESIONS: German, French, Italian and English: Sundays: one hour before Evening Mass.

Saturdays: 11 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. and from 5 to 7 p.m. or by appointment.

SWISS CATHOLIC YOUTH CLUB — Meeting every Sunday after Evening Mass (8-11 p.m.) at Westminster Ball Room, 30 Stratton Ground, S.W.1.

CHAPLAIN: Paul Bossard, St. Ann's Church, Abbey Orchard Street, S.W.1. Tel: 01-222 2895.

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