

Swiss Club Manchester

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"Queen's Bernese". His colleague, he added, "was the epitome of intelligence, conscience and good manners". Dr. Weitnauer ended his address by stressing the role of the Swiss community in Great Britain in the creating of a united Europe. It was his deep conviction that the British Isles belonged fundamentally to Europe and he expressed the wish that the spirit of EFTA and of working together should prevail.

Mr. Zeki Kuneralp, Turkish Ambassador to London, whose name betrays an undeniable Germanic strain, said that the explanation to his presence among a Swiss gathering lay in his long experience of Swiss life. He had gone to a "public school" (which he stressed were more "public" in Switzerland than they were in England) in the small village of Gümligen. Commenting on the belief that the Bernese were "slow", he said that the Turks had the same reputation and added that this statement was far from exhausting the whole truth. The Bernese were slow, be it as it may, but once they had understood something "they never forgot it". He proved his point by an historical example: In 1529, when the Turks invaded Vienna, Christendom lay at their mercy. All the churches of the old continent rang their bells and the people prayed to God that Vienna should be saved. The Turks addressed the opposite requests to the Almighty, which, reflected Mr. Kuneralp, must have put him in an embarrassing situation. He appeared, however, to solve this quandary as the Turkish General decided to lift the siege, to the displeasure of his Sultan and was later to incur his wrath.

At the news of Vienna's liberation, all the church bells of Europe rang in praise to God. The Bernese, who had never taken part in the fighting against the Ottoman, somehow learnt of the plight of Vienna and rang their bells too. The years passed on and gradually the steeples of most of the churches of the old continent became silent. But the churches of Berne continued to chime at noon until this very day. This explains why the sky of the capital hums with joyous jingle at noon: the Bernese have not forgotten that in 1529 Vienna and the last bastion of Christendom was freed from the Turks. To these historic clarifications Mr. Kuneralp added the opinion that the recent gift of the right of vote to women in Switzerland was not their own victory but the result of the rebellion of the men. The reason was as follows: Although the men had to take the trouble of going to the polls on Sundays, it was the women who voted really. The men finally voted for what their wives, daughters, aunties and grandmothers wanted them to. But the men revolted against this ill-treatment and managed to inflict on their women that they should themselves take the trouble of voting. To conclude, Mr.

Kuneralp quoted Victor Hugo and said: "La Suisse aura toujours le dernier mot".

These humorous reflections quickly gave way to the Dance which was opened by Mr. and Mrs. Bion. Very quickly the assembly flocked on the floor and evolved to the tunes of the Arthur Salisbury Orchestra.

The second interval was followed by a Cabaret. A minor television star, Kenneth Evans, entertained us for a little too long with his washy songs. As crooners went, he was all right, but a lady said indignantly: "Must we have an Andy Williams show at the City Swiss Club?" Opinions conflicted as to whether the performer of last year, certainly more vivacious and swinging than the present one but rather crude for some people, was better. The artist jaunted around the dance

floor and asked patrons to sing with him in his microphone. He elicited rather inhibited participation in community singing and clapping from the audience. He had much trouble in finding three lady volunteers to jangle rumba shakers while he was singing a Latin American song.

Dancing was resumed after his effort. The four Swiss National Tourist Office lassies sold all their Tombola tickets. There was an abundance of prizes: Gift vouchers, champagne bottles, hand bags, savings certificates. They were offered by the Swiss companies in the U.K. The first prize was a week's journey for two to Switzerland, offered by Bally. The Ballroom at the Dorchester was still pretty well full when the 106th City Swiss Club Annual Dance was officially closed.

(PMB)

ANNUAL DINNER DANCE OF THE MANCHESTER SWISS

"Plus cela change et plus c'est le meme chose". For the one with little imagination this may be so but I am glad to say, and many may be of my opinion, that not a year passes by without leaving some special mark on the activities in general and this function in particular. This year it was our new Ambassador to the Court of St. James, Dr. Albert Weitnauer, who gave our annual social a special meaning, adding greatly to the interest and enjoyment of such an occasion. It started all on a cold Saturday afternoon, at the Piccadilly Station in Manchester, where a reception committee consisting of our Consul, Mr. Rolf Born, Mrs. Born and our Vice-President Mr. Peter Senn was waiting. Very soon the first warm contacts were established but almost immediately the whole party was hustled away to the Town Hall where the Lord Mayor, Alderman Douglas J. Edwards received them.

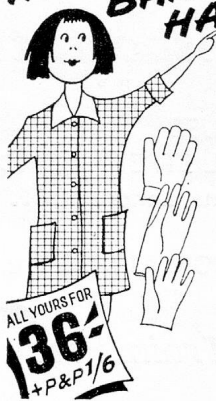
Many of us, Swiss and English friends, met Dr. Weitnauer at a Cocktail Party, given in his honour by our

Consul, Mr. Rolf Born, who had invited all the members of the Committee of the Swiss Societies in Manchester, Yorkshire and Liverpool, in his new and lovely home, and our particular thanks went fully and wholeheartedly towards his wife, Mrs. Born, who ensured that the evening in her house would be a lovely and interesting one, and certainly her warm hospitality was appreciated by everybody present, amongst whom we could see a good representation from the Yorkshire Swiss Club and some friends from Liverpool. For many of us it was the first opportunity to meet our new Ambassador and we all wish him a happy, interesting and foremost of all, a long stay in London, so that in the course of time we may know him better and better.

The order at table

Everything had been organised according to a strict time-table and soon we had to leave the Excelsior Airport

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Hotel to attend our Dinner Dance and meet the Lord Mayor who had to join us there. It was not a very long way but several groups of friends who could have been lost in the intricacies of a complicated suburban winding road were helped along by improvised but willing guides, to soon be reunited in the pleasing and elegant lounge and bar of the Hotel where we were eventually joined by the Lord Mayor of Manchester. After some friendly chats and a few drinks we gradually moved to the banquetting hall and on its way we were all introduced to our Ambassador, the Lord Mayor, the Consul and Madame Born and some other high Swiss officials. The room, which many of us already knew from previous occasions, was pleasantly and richly decorated, candles lit on the individual tables, flags and velvet ribbons supplied by some of our members, everything helping to create an atmosphere of brilliancy and festivity.

Before sitting down many of us had just the time to admire the superb tombola-table, and impressive display, both in quantity, variation and quality. Special thanks go most towards the many generous donators and the assiduous work of the organising committee and specially Mrs. Martha Themans, the soul behind it, who carried to a large degree the responsibility for it and assured also the financial success of it, which must have been considerable. The menu before us impressed us greatly for the choice of its

names, but wines which were not specially mentioned proved to be even more successful in the course of the evening.

On the top table we could see our own Ambassador, Dr. Weitnauer, with our President, Dr. Bolliger, and his wife Trudi on one side, and the Lord Mayor, Alderman Douglas J. Edwards, on the other. We were very glad to see also Dr. J. A. Iselin, Minister and First Counsellor at the Embassy, with his wife and daughter; Major Nicholson, President of the Manchester Rifle Club and his wife, our Consul and Madame Born; and also our Vice-President, Mr. P. A. Senn and Mrs. Senn.

Everybody else found a place to his or her own liking on the various individual tables well arranged around a central dancing floor, at which end stood the impressive band-stand which became the focus of our entertainment later on in the evening. Grace having been said, we all sat down, endeavouring to do justice to the various items advertised and at the coffee our President stood up to propose the toast to Her Majesty the Queen, Duke of Lancaster, followed by the Lord Mayor who toasted Switzerland.

After-dinner speeches

Whilst we were enjoying our coffee, sweets and liqueurs, our President, Dr. Hans Rudi Bolliger, stood up to welcome the many guests and friends

present and address a few words to his compatriots. We all know our President has had for many years now, with his family, a very close and friendly connection with the Swiss Colony he so successfully represents in our Homeland, whose business connections cover a wide area and whose word reaches far and wide when our interests are involved or at stake. For all this he deserves all our thanks.

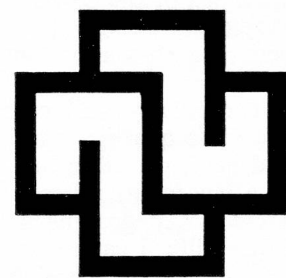
He had some happy and very appropriate words for the official guests at the top table trying very hard to reach a peaceful equation between the importance and the functions of an Ambassador and a Lord Mayor.

He even found the time to single out a few people on the floor level.

In addressing himself to the Lord Mayor, he said: "One of the biggest surprises of all for our visitors on paying a visit to the Swiss Colony in the North-west is the complete absence of homesickness and the degree with which most of our compatriots have accepted the British way of life. My Lord Mayor, I would think that this is largely due to the friendliness and hospitality which we receive from your people". And then to our Ambassador: "We are extremely grateful to you, Dr. Weitnauer, for paying us a visit so soon after taking office in London. You have been chosen for your very important post not only because of your distinguished career abroad and at the Foreign Office in Berne but also because you are one of the experts in

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European integration". Our President then emphasised the strong ties which link the Swiss Club with the Manchester Rifle Club and expressed our thanks to Major Nicholson for having accepted us on its ranges on equal terms and that we were very grateful for this privilege. He greeted also the representatives from Yorkshire and Liverpool joining us on this annual occasion.

The old and honourable town of Basle seemed to be a happy liaison and proved to be a common ground, in many ways, for our Ambassador and our President, but certain of our English friends know of course that there are also other lovely and important cities in Switzerland. The writer, however, is thankful to Basle, whose International Airport allowed him and his wife, a few weeks ago, to reach the safety of the English shores after Kloten Airport had been suddenly closed down by fog. At the end of his speech he was most warmly applauded, after which our Ambassador was invited to address us.

Our Ambassador's respect for the British

Dr. Weitnauer began by praising the virtues of the Swiss of Manchester, who represented the best traditions of the Swiss abroad.

"I greatly appreciate what the Swiss community in Manchester and its neighbourhood stand for", he said.

"They are accepted in all walks of life, living up to the best Swiss traditions and at the same time completely integrated in the life of their country of residence: these have always been the great qualities of the Swiss abroad and make them unofficial but so much more effective ambassadors of our country.

"I am particularly well placed to acknowledge these qualities since I am a new arrival having lived in this country only for a few months. I make new discoveries every day, groping my way through English life. I cannot say how happy I am about the many helpful hands that are stretched out to me to give me a lead.

"And here I would like to note what you all know maybe better than I do: that in this great country—Great Britain—it is particularly easy for a foreigner to settle down.

"The great friendliness of the population. There are still excellent manners. The high degree of civilisation which one finds wherever one goes and whoever one meets. 'Old Europe' in the best possible sense of this formula.

"I still remember when I came to this country for the first time, in the early fifties, and the feeling I had—I came by car—when I approached the old city of London, slowly through the suburbs first, drawing nearer to

the heart of the city. I felt at home almost the first day. I am quite convinced that the great city of Manchester has conquered you in very much the same way, growing on you more and more every day so that you feel completely at home here as you felt at home in Switzerland".

Dr. Weitnauer then embarked on a highly interesting expose of the situation of Britain and Switzerland in the European context. He gave his audience precise indications on the present state of negotiations between Switzerland and the European Economic Community and said that Swiss involvement in Europe would call for inner changes and that, like Britain, she was faced with a number of crucial questions.

He passed many of the basic Swiss problems under review, in particular the problems resulting from an excessively high proportion of foreign manpower. He ended by expressing the wish that "the common responsibilities faced by our two countries will more and more be such that the traditional friendship between Britain and Switzerland will, in a new and thrilling context, not only keep but see its importance enhanced as the years go by".

Great attention was given to his interesting and clear expose and at the end of it he was most warmly applauded. Flowers having been offered to the ladies of the top table and whilst the first tunes of our band-music started to echo through the rooms, there was a well understandable rush for tombola tickets, which could have been sold at a premium, but even so the success was complete. Nobody returned empty-handed and for some it was a problem to return to the tables without losing some of the acquired bounty.

The dance proceeded well into the night and the early hours of the morning and as always it was a delightful sight, tiredness or boredom never entering into our minds; ladies in their tasteful and lovely eclat to be looked at and danced with; our beloved Ambassador, as one, taking full advantage of it. Between dances, conversation and refreshment, the hours rushed by and much too soon the time arrived for goodbye and au revoir, hoping to see us soon again under similar circumstances.

Dr. Weitnauer's Mancunian week-end

For many of us present at this evening this was well the end, but not for our Ambassador. Sunday proved to be a very busy day for him and his entourage. In the morning, Service of Remembrance in the Gardens of Remembrance and then, jointly with the City Council witnessing the March Past of troops and organisations of the town, followed by a luncheon offered by the Lord Mayor also to the Consul and Madame Born and others.

In the afternoon a drive into the Cheshire countryside, including a visit to Tatton Hall in Knutsford, afternoon tea at Mere Golf and Country Club, always in company of the Lord Mayor and the Lady Mayoress, proceeding then to the home of the Lord Mayor at Juniper Hill, Mere. They were then entertained for dinner at the Frozen Mop, Mobberley, and later in the evening they returned to the Town Hall.

Monday morning our Ambassador and the Consul were driven for a visit to Ciba-Geigy (U.K.) Ltd., and eventually to the Clayton Aniline Company Ltd. at Clayton, both firms living witnesses of Swiss knowledge and enterprise.

At one p.m. a Civic Luncheon was organised by the Lord Mayor and the Corporation to his honour and also several prominent Swiss were invited to this function which was both interesting and entertaining.

In the afternoon visits were made to the City Art Gallery, specially to the Assheton Bennett collection of painting and silver and items from the porcelain collection, and finishing with a short stay at the John Rylands Library.

I have been told that the Ambassador eventually left for London early in the evening and we all do hope that he has taken with him many happy memories from his stay here in the north, from the hospitality and friendship extended to him by the Lord Mayor, Corporation and people of the town, and strong also of the sincere affection which was given wholeheartedly to him by his own people.

(Ermanno Berner)

END OF THE SOCIETE DE SECOUR MUTUELS DES SUISSES A LONDRES

It was decided at the November Monthly Meeting of the Societe de Secours Mutuels that it should be dissolved. An extraordinary General Meeting was called for Wednesday, 1st December, at Swiss House, to officially dissolve the Society, which was the oldest Swiss society in London and one with a most glorious history. Many Swiss in London must still have fresh in their minds the memory of a glamorous 250th anniversary dinner held at the Schweizerbund at 74 Charlotte Street on 16th December, 1953, in the presence of Minister Henry de Torrenté.

Now this Society and witness to Swiss presence in the history of London is to disappear. Members were convened to carry out the five painful duties:

1. To officially record the vote on dissolution.

2. To agree the committee's proposition to refund each member on the register on 31st December, 1971, all his contributions paid to the So-