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# NEWS FROM THE COLONY

## THE NOUVELLE SOCIETE HELVETIQUE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The season of the Swiss Societies' AGM's has already come. The AGM of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique took place at the end of March and was, like most AGM's, fairly uneventful. Mrs. Mariann Meier, the President, conducted the proceedings.

There was a fair attendance of about 40 members, a few less than on the same occasion last year. The Meeting proceeded with the re-election of the NSH Council and was invited to appoint two ladies, should it feel that the Council needed a reshuffle. This meant eventually voting out two present members in order to keep the effectives of the Council at 18.

Mrs. E. Crack was a likely candidate proposed by Mr. V. Berti. She was very willing to serve on the Council and Mr. M. Schneebeli gracefully offered to step down from the Council in her favour. But our President would not part with such a regular and valuable member.

Another highly eligible lady candidate was Mrs. E. Sharp. Mr. E. Baumann was about to imitate Mr. Schneebeli's gesture in her favour, but Mrs. Meier reminded him that as Vice-President of the London Group he was more than ever necessary to the Council. So the re-election of the Council was performed according to the rules. We handed in our voting slips to the two "tellers". They came back some 20 minutes later with the popular verdict. A worthy member of the Society had to give up his seat to Mrs. E. Sharp.

The President asked Dr. Egli to say a few words on the development of the Swiss Cultural Forum. His news was not encouraging. There had been little progress with the Forum over the winter and its future was still more

doubtful than ever. Not surprisingly, the great hindrance to the realisation of the Swiss Forum was its huge running costs. An important element which worsened the situation has been the announcement of a drastic rent increase. The fate of the Forum had however not yet been sealed. Dr. Egli said that it still depended on the position of the Swiss Churches, who could possibly make use of the Forum for their religious services. However, it was doubtful that the churches could envisage the cost of using the Forum. The Honorary Treasurer, Mr. L. S. R. Asch commented on the accounts. There was nothing to note in particular. The situation of the Society was sane and had benefitted from an excess of income. It was decided not to change the name of the "Forum Account" of £600 for the time being.

The meeting was followed by a lively reception and then by a cold meal in the Hostel refectory, expertly served by the girls of the Hostel and Embassy personnel. It ended as usual by a welcome speech from our President. She regretted our Ambassador's absence. Dr. Weitnauer had been called to Berne for that very evening and had been very sorry at not being able to come. Dr. Jürg Iselin was deputising. Mrs. Meier further mentioned the absence of Mr. Grob and Prof. Inebnit, both of whom had sent letters of excuse and good wishes. She spoke of a number of forthcoming events. The Society was going to enjoy exposés by such important "Swiss Abroad" personalities as Dr. Philippe Garraux and Dr. Louis Guisan. She announced a very inspiring programme for Autumn.

Dr. Iselin also said a few words on behalf of the Embassy and conveyed to us the greetings and good wishes of our former ambassador, Dr. René Keller, whom he had seen in Berne. He praised the Society for the quality of its lecturers and, referring to the difficulty of finding the right lecturers mentioned in the President's Annual Report, he wondered whether the Swiss societies of London should not share the same lecturers and reach some kind of private arrangement.

Dr. Egli was certainly the person to give a competent reply to these proposals. He said that the idea of sharing speakers among Swiss societies was not new, in fact it had been raised intermittently for the past 25 years. But the situation among Swiss societies, he quipped, was similar to that among "rival trade unions". He said that the difficulty lay in the differences of style and the various premises used by the respective societies could not so easily be overcome.

(PMB)

## NOUVELLE SOCIETE HELVETIQUE

### London Group

## ANNUAL REPORT 1970/71

The last Annual General Meeting was held at the Swiss Hostel for Girls on 12th March, 1970. It was followed by the Annual Dinner. We had the privilege of welcoming our Honorary President, the Swiss Ambassador, and Madame René Keller. As usual, many of our old friends and supporters attended the meeting and dinner, members who find it difficult nowadays to attend our ordinary monthly gatherings. Dr. H. W. Egli, who had relinquished the office of President a few months previously, was unanimously elected Honorary Vice-President as a token of the Society's appreciation of the sterling services he had rendered the NSH during the 16 years in office. Dr. Egli is largely responsible for putting the London Group of the NSH on the map with the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad. Untiringly and unselfishly he has worked to bring about the cultural "Forum of Switzerland", and although prospects of its realisation are at the moment rather slim, he will continue to work towards establishing a Swiss social and cultural centre.

The Annual Meeting approved the Report of the Council and Accounts. Thanks were expressed to the Hon. Treasurer, Mr. L. S. R. Asch, and to the Hon. Auditors, Mr. D. E. Bonnet and Mr. M. A. Röthlisberger, who both agreed to stand for re-election.

The departing Warden of the Hostel, Miss Heidi Siegrist, was warmly thanked for her efforts in making the N.S.H. welcome at 9/11 Belsize Grove. We are glad to know that a successor to Miss Siegrist, Miss Margrit Haffter, has been found, who will take up her position on 1st May, 1971. We wish her all the best for her new work in London. We may hope that before long under her management the Hostel may again be in a position to offer us the hospitality we used to enjoy so much, including the usual refreshments.

For many years, one of the problems has been to find lecturers willing and able to address our Open Meetings on matters concerning Switzerland. During the past 12 months, this has been particularly difficult. We have, however, been able to arrange the following events since the A.G.M. last March:

1970

3rd April. Evening Concert at Eglise Suisse W.C.2 by Frankendorf Kammer Ensemble.

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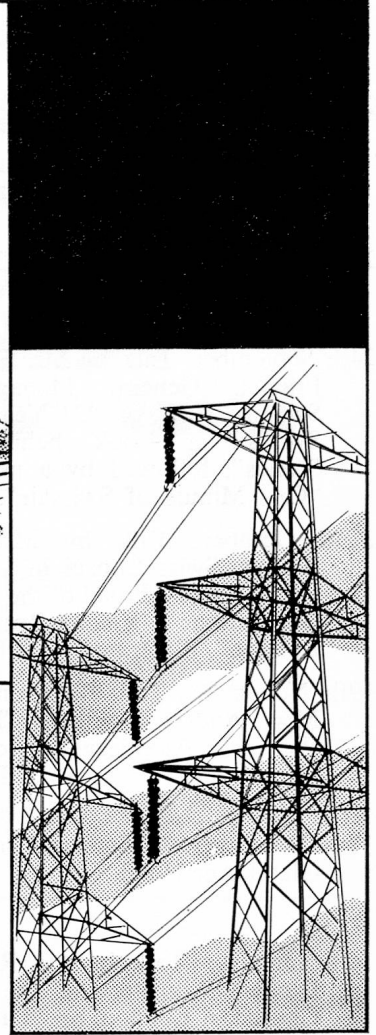
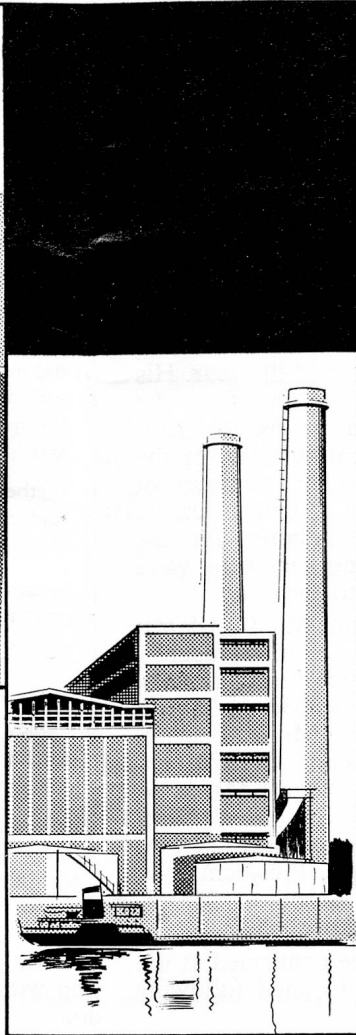
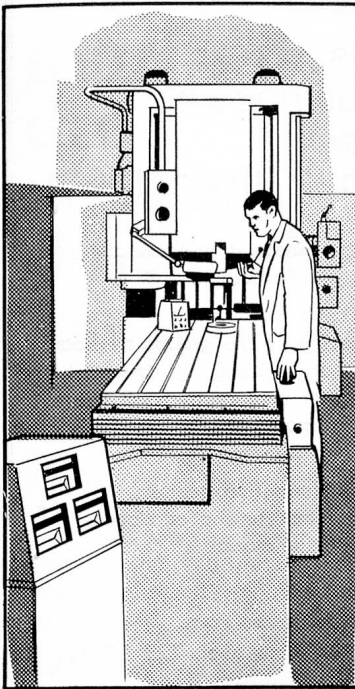
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16th April. Talk by Dr. Robert Schneebeli, Director of Extra-Mural Studies of the Canton of Zurich on "Observations and Reflections on Young Troublemakers in Universities and elsewhere".

28th May. Talk (in German) by Dr. Franz Birrer, First Secretary of Embassy in charge of cultural affairs, on "Ist die Schweiz überfremdet?"

25th June. Open Meeting and Discussion on "The Total Revision of the Federal Constitution".

24th September. Talk by Mr. Franz J. Fraefel, General Manager of Swissair U.K., on "23 Years with Swissair—a Look behind the Scenes", followed by a new film "One Minute of Swissair".

22nd October. Talk by Mr. Fritz Adams, Swiss Consul in London, on "A Swiss Abroad of the Second Generation: Vienna-Roumania-London", illustrated by a film.

19th November. Talk (in French) by Miss Andrée Weitzel, Chief of Women's Auxiliary Services, on "La Femme Suisse et la Défense Nationale".

17th December. Christmas Dinner at Glendower Hotel.

1971

14th January. Talk by the Rev. M. Dietler, Minister at the Swiss Church in London, on "Faith and Ferment", reflections on a Swiss group journey to the Soviet Union illustrated by slides and recordings.

No meeting could be arranged for February due to the postal strike in Great Britain.

On the whole, there has been good attendance at these meetings, and it is gratifying that membership has been maintained. We lost two members through death, Mr. Andrea and Mr. Graf. Ten members resigned, mainly due to ill health or departure for Switzerland. On the other hand, we have been fortunate in getting 15 new members, many of them young Swiss. It has now been established that membership of the London Group may be carried on in Switzerland, and it is also possible that one may be at the same time a member of the London Group and the Nouvelle Société Helvétique in Switzerland.

The Society have again enjoyed the active support of the Embassy, in particular of the Swiss Ambassador and Madame Keller. Their premature departure is much regretted, and members had an opportunity of saying goodbye to their Hon. President and his wife at the Christmas Dinner when the President expressed the Group's gratitude, as well as best wishes to

Monsieur and Madame Keller in their new and important task in Berne.

Another loss is that of the Hon. Secretary, Mr. Franz Bischof, whose transfer to the Swiss Embassy in Ghana deprived the Society of an efficient secretary. We are grateful for the services he rendered and wish him and Mrs. Bischof success in the new post. We have been fortunate in getting a successor in the person of Mr. M. Schneiter, a member of the Consular Section of the Embassy, who has kindly agreed to take on the job. The Council co-opted him at their last meeting on 25th January, the third meeting they held in the course of the year. His appointment is another proof of the ready support given us by the Embassy, and we are grateful also for the help given by two other members of the Embassy on the Council, Dr. F. Birrer and Consul Adams. At the A.G.M. the following members were elected or re-elected to the council:

Mr. L. Ackermann; Mr. F. Adams; Mr. L. S. R. Asch, Hon. Treasurer; Mr. R. Baumann, Vice-President; Mr. P. M. Béguin; Mr. V. Berti; Mr. P. Bessire; Dr. F. Birrer; Mr. F. Bischof, Hon. Secretary to end of 1970, replaced by Mr. M. Schneiter; Mr. J. W. Bonjour; Mr. H. W. Egli, Hon. Vice-President; Mr. H. Grueninger; Mr. A. Kunz; Mrs. M. Meier, President; Mr. W. Renz; Mr. W. Schedler; Mr. J. Schmid; Mr. M. Schneebeli.

The officers were confirmed at the first meeting of the Council following the A.G.M.

Dr. Egli and the President represented the Society at discussions in connection with the Swiss Cultural Forum. As in previous years, Mrs. Meier attended the Assembly of the Swiss Abroad last August, partly representing the NSH and mainly as delegate for Great Britain South to the Commission of the Swiss Abroad. Following the interesting discussions on the possible total revision of the Federal Constitution in June, the President made a detailed report, and as a result she was asked to take part in a round-table discussion at the Assembly at Zofingen. The close relationship with the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad in Berne was also expressed in the presence of Miss Weitzel in London in November, who, at very short notice, took the place of another member of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad who was prevented from coming through military service.

We appreciate this close co-operation of the ASO, as we value the support of the Editor of the "Swiss Observer" and of the Swiss National Tourist Office in London (help with films and slides). The fact that we have been able to enrol three new members from outside London, i.e. the Vice-Consul in Bournemouth, Mr. F. Schillig, and two prominent members of the Manchester Swiss Club, i.e. Mr. B. Simon (President) and Dr. H. R. Bol-



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Swiss Embassy,  
77-81 Gloucester Place,  
LONDON, W.1. (Tel. 723-0701).

Swiss Consulate,  
Sunley Building, 18th Floor,  
Piccadilly Plaza,  
MANCHESTER (Tel. 236-2933).

liger (Delegate to the Commission of the Swiss Abroad for G.B. North) augurs well for the future, and we hope that we may count on closer co-operation with other Swiss societies in London.

The President wishes to put on record her appreciation of the help and support given her by the officers and Council members during her first 18 months in office.

The Council trust that the search for suitable lecturers may be fruitful in the coming year and that the Society with the active support of its members, may continue to play an important part in the life of the Swiss community in London.

*On behalf of the Council:  
Mariann Mier (President)*

### SWISS BENEVOLENT SOCIETY Report by the President

Dear Friends and Compatriots,

When we presented our 100th Annual Report last year, we did not expect, even in our wildest dreams, the generous response that you have given to our Centenary Appeal which brought in just over £1,170. In the late summer, we were in a position to make a first payment to our needy compatriots, which to them was as welcome as it was unexpected. The balance has now been distributed and your kindness has given much extra joy and relief. We need hardly tell you how grateful we are to you all for this magnificent gesture.

The year 1970 brought along all the familiar problems. As usual, the house at Conway Street and the Swiss