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Hostel needed a considerable amount of attention, time and resources.

The central part of our activities was, of course, the care of those compatriots who, for some reason or another needed either financial support or advice and sometimes both. In the course of the year we helped 336 people (111 men, 171 women and 54 children). We had 550 interviews of which 112 were visits to homes or hospitals. These figures, however, mean very little by themselves and we shall now try to give you some idea of the activities that we have been pursuing.

The distribution of financial help was, and presumably always will be, a very important aspect of our work, whether it be in the form of pensions or as casual help to tide someone over a difficult period.

The number of pensioners keeps going down. During the year, we helped 53 of them but the sums paid out to them have increased considerably. Among the elderly people we also discover a new problem requiring a different approach. Thanks to the English and Swiss Old Age Pensions and, in a number of cases retirement pensions from employers, we have a growing number of people who do not need financial help and manage reasonably well on their own until illness or general weakness forces them to consider giving up their home and independence and look for another solution. For various reasons, they do not really qualify for emergency accommodation from the local Council. The waiting lists for admission in the normal way are long and, more important, they do not want to go to one of these homes, whatever their merits. When they come to us, we endeavour to help them to find a place that suits both their wishes and their means. If they have any family or friends able to get about, this may simply mean one or two visits and putting them in touch with the right agencies. When they are completely alone, and many are, it can imply a lot of work, sometimes in conjunction with a local social worker. This activity is very time-consuming but we feel it to be an essential service that we must provide as the time of decision to give up one's independence is a period of great stress when lengthy discussions are required to weigh all the advantages and disadvantages of such a step. The number of good private homes at reasonable prices is not at all large and this adds considerably to the difficulties.

Young people have again come to us for help and we believe that enabling them to get back to Switzerland is particularly valuable in the case of the very young, sometimes only 16 years old who, left to themselves, might get into all sorts of difficulties.

Christmas brought us the usual bustle and we were happy to send out

over a hundred parcels benefitting 157 people. Mesdames Raulin and Kaluza spent many hours preparing them, and when it came to the packing and distribution, we were lucky to enlist the help of Mmes. Harding, Burri, Gisler and Harhalakis as well. Virtually all the parcels in the Greater London Area were again delivered by hand. Faithful as ever, the Frauenverein and the Réunion de Couture supplied us with a great number of beautiful garments and our thanks go to all those who have helped to make them. A number of Swiss firms have given us some of their products for inclusion in the parcels.

One important feature of the last year was the move of the Welfare Office for Swiss Girls to our premises in Conway Street. Whilst each social worker has to deal with her own job, it has proved a valuable and mutually agreeable solution as a number of services can be rendered to each other in times of need.

The Committee met regularly twice a month to attend to all necessary business.

Just before the last Annual General Meeting, M. M. A. Rothlisberger informed us that for personal reasons, he could no longer carry on as Hon. Treasurer. We are more than grateful to him for all the hard work he has done for us, first as Asst. Hon. Treasurer from October 1931 and then as Hon. Treasurer since August 1937. We are happy that he is still on our Committee as Vice-President.

Our grateful thanks go to our former Honorary President, the previous Swiss Ambassador, Monsieur René Keller, for the interest and support given to our activities. We are sorry that he has been recalled to Switzerland so soon and we wish him and Madame Keller well in their new activities. Counsellor C. H. Bruggmann and Consul F. Adams alternately represented the Embassy at our Executive Meetings.

We want to thank all those who have helped us in our work in so many ways, the Swiss Federal and Cantonal Authorities, the Swiss Embassy in London, the Swiss Churches, the Swiss Societies, the "Swiss Observer", our Honorary Auditors, the many individual friends to all of whom we are very much indebted and, of course, the British Authorities for their kind hospitality and assistance.

Our Secretary, Mrs. A. R. Sharp has once more administered our Society with great skill in a difficult year and we wish to express our sincere appreciation for her devoted work.

*On behalf of the
Executive Committee*

X. Speckert
President.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

The article in your issue of 22nd January, 1971, entitled "The Glorious Days of the Swiss Rifle Association" stirred the Swiss blood in my veins—for even in early childhood, a rifle held a tremendous fascination for me. Well I recall my father, a "shot" of no mean repute, teaching me how to aim and fire—and this fascination is still with me today.

Mr. Adolf Schmid stresses "the need for new blood" . . . may I respectfully suggest a way to enlist a hitherto untapped source—i.e. "the Ladies". After all, we have been given the vote—so why should we not also be given the opportunity of showing our worth on a rifle range?—and gaining entrée to that Sanctum of Sanctums, the Swiss Rifle Club!

Start a Ladies Section, Mr. Schmid—I am already a member of the Surrey Club and once or twice joined my husband on "Swiss Day" at Bisley—but was only permitted to *watch* the gentlemen showing off their skills! I for one would be a regular attender if the ladies had their own section—for we too have the instincts of "Tell" and are well prepared to "shoot to defend our Country" . . . Who was it that made the first warrior fall back, by flinging a pot of rice soup at his head, on the day the Genevese repelled the last attempts of the Dukes of Savoy to conquer the town? None other than Mère Royaume, a stout-hearted Swiss lady. So, Mr. Schmid, start recruiting the fair sex!

Ilde Boehringer.

THE OFFICIAL ANSWER

We raised these suggestions at the Annual General Meeting. Our President, Marcel Bucherer, explained why women were banned from the Swiss Rifle Association, despite the fact that many attempts had been made in the past to get them in.

The main reason for refusing admittance to the ladies at regular Swiss Rifle Association meetings is that they are not, in their overwhelming majority, experienced in shooting and in handling guns. To allow them to shoot at Bisley would inevitably require some devoted coaching from range officers or other responsible members of the Association.

This, in view of the already tight competition programme, would be impractical. The Association fights out one, and sometimes two, Cup competitions at every meeting and this programme would be perturbed if arrangements had to be made to provide for inexperienced female newcomers. Ladies, after all, do not have the luck of being part of a militia army that gets the chance and obligation of regular trials in marksmanship fitness!

For the very few ladies who may have shot before and who may be in-

terested in shooting at Bisley, it is not worth their entering the Swiss Rifle Association. They would be lost among an overbearingly male company and Marcel Bucherer encouraged them to join a female rifle club or even form their own Swiss Women Rifle Association.

Could women come to shoot at Bisley meetings without being members of the Swiss Rifle Association? Unfortunately not, because they would not be covered by the Association's insurance. One or two other members spoke out at the AGM to voice their disagreement to the entry of ladies in the Swiss Rifle Association. It would have meant, they thought, a preferential treatment and hinder the smooth activities of regu-

lar meetings. The suggestion was, however, submitted to a vote but it was rather difficult to see any show of hands in its favour!

(PMB)

THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE SWISS RIFLE ASSOCIATION

This year's AGM of the Swiss Rifle Association was exceptionally well attended. The meeting, which took place at the Glendower Hotel, began with a minute's silence in memory of a member of long standing of the Association. Mr. P. Odermatt, who died last October.

Among the various points raised

in the Secretary's report and the President's survey, we can mention the encouraging intensity of shooting during 1970. No less than 5,060 cartridges were fired during eight meetings. Membership stood at 85 and there had been 27 new members during the year.

The President, Marcel Bucherer, told the meeting that he had been approached by the Marylebone Rifle and Pistol Club for a friendly match this year, as well as by the British Free Rifle Club. Mr. Bucherer had accepted the first proposal for this year, but had turned down the other, in view of the already tight shooting programme of the Association.

The Swiss marksmen of London can therefore expect to meet the Mary-

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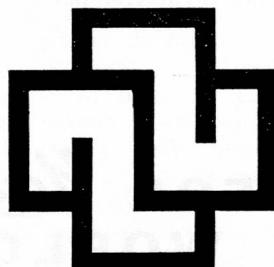
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