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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

"SWISS SUMMIT" IN GREAT BRITAIN

The Federation of Swiss Societies in the U.K. met at the Ambassador's residence at 2 Upper Brook Street, London, on 30th April. It was the last AGM of the Federation to take place in these premises as next year it will take place in the new residence—assuming, of course, that our Ambassadors will continue to be as hospitable as in the past! The Meeting was chaired by the Federation's President, Dr. Egli, whose Annual Report, reproduced below, presents some of the problems which were discussed.

The Swiss Societies of Great Britain were amply represented at the meeting and every seat around the vast green table of the Residence dining room was occupied. Starting on the left of Dr. Egli, our President, there was Mr. A. Kunz of the SNTU, followed by Mr. O. Hartmann of the Swiss Club Edinburgh and Dr. Bolliger's Deputy at the Commission for the Swiss Abroad. Seated next in the row was Mr. B. Simon of the Manchester Swiss Club, then came Mrs. M. Meier (Nouvelle Société Helvétique and Delegate to the Commission for the Swiss Abroad for the South of England), Mr. E. Bonvin, Mrs. Meier's deputy at the Commission for the Swiss Abroad, Dr. J. Iselin (Embassy), Father Bossard (Swiss Catholic Youth Club), Mr. J. Metford-Sewell (Cercle Genevois), Mr. O. Grob (Swiss Catholics), Mrs. O. Grob (Swiss Welfare Office), Mr. F. O. Hausermann (Swiss Mercantile Society), Mr. G. Keller (Advisory Council of the "Swiss Observer"), our Ambassador, Dr. A. Weitnauer, The Rev. Dietler (Swiss Protestant Churches), P. M. Béguin ("Swiss Observer"), Mr. Burkhalter (Swiss YMCA), Mr. F. A. De Maria (Unione Ticinese), Mr. A. Jaccard (SMS), Mr. V. Berti (Swiss Benevolent Society), Mr. F. Adams (the Consulate), Mr. L. S. R. Asch (Schweizerbund), Mr. R. M. Suess (Swiss Economic Council and the Swiss Hostel for Girls), Mr. E. Tangemann (City Swiss Club) and finally the Secretary.

This list is, however, incomplete and many other societies were not represented. Those of whose existence we know of which were absent from the meeting were: The Swiss Relief Society of Manchester, the Yorkshire Swiss Club, the West of Scotland Swiss Club (formerly Swiss Club Balloch), the Swiss Club of Dunfermline, the Swiss Philatelic Society, the Swiss Club of Jersey, the Swiss Rifle Association, the Swiss Clubs of Birmingham and Liverpool. The Anglo-Swiss Society was not represented as it is not a member of the Federation of Swiss Societies.

As stated in the Annual Report below, the Meeting discussed the possible alternatives to the Swiss Forum, which now seems nearly doomed to become a still-born project. The final decision on its fate will be made in Berne at the end of May. Nothing has been decided (neither could it have been as long as there was a possibility of success for the Forum) but the idea has now emerged of finding a suitable site and building a second "Swiss Centre" housing the activities of the Colony, and in particular those of the Swiss Churches and the Swiss Hostel for Girls. The reasons are that the Swiss Catholic Mission will have to leave its small church in Westminster shortly; the German- and French-speaking Protestant parishes share the Church at Endell Street, which may one day be pulled down, depending on how the Covent Garden area is to be re-planned. Furthermore, the Swiss Hostel for Girls which rents its Belsize Grove premises from the Swiss Benevolent Society at commercial rates would eventually benefit from such a new "Swiss Centre".

A businessman among the attendance was quick to point out that if such a project should carry any chance of success and interest among potential donors, it had to be elaborated properly and expertly presented. Dr. Weitnauer, who had been asked his position, said that the Embassy was a "sympathetic bystander" but that it was not its role to influence the wishes of the resident Swiss colony in Great Britain in any way. As a professional negotiator, he pointed out the necessity of organising the campaign for this project competently and of delegating an able negotiator.

The meeting didn't discuss any practical steps to make it into a reality and all we know at this stage is that the idea of a new Colony Building has been adumbrated by Dr. Egli at the Federation's AGM and discussed in outline in some quarters.

Another topic surveyed was the situation of the "Swiss Observer". Mr. Gottfried Keller explained to the Meeting the new and favourable situation which had arisen from the generous offer by Mr. W. A. De Vigier of guaranteeing the paper. Various suggestions were made by delegates on the possible editorial and commercial amendments which could be beneficial to it.

Other points surveyed were the possibility of charter flights to the Assembly of the Swiss Abroad in Brunnen. Mr. A. Kunz said that the Swiss National Tourist Office could make arrangements for cheap journeys to Brunnen providing the stay ex-

ceeded six days in a hotel. (The Assembly for the Swiss Abroad will take place from 27th-29th August and anybody interested may contact Mr. A. Kunz at 01-734 4576). Mrs. Meier reported on her meeting at the Commission for the Swiss Abroad. Father Bossard was elected as her deputy, Mr. Bonvin having felt the need for being replaced by someone more in touch with the younger generation. Finally, we should not omit the only concrete decision of the evening, that of electing the Advisory Council of the "SO" as a member of the Federation. Mr. G. Keller thanked the attendance for their kind decision.

The meeting was closed half an hour later than scheduled, and nearly all the delegates either walked down or took their cars to the neighbouring Dorchester Hotel and this reunion among compatriots ended with a very enjoyable dinner.

(PMB)

THE PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT

I regret to have to state that the realisation of the project for a cultural and social centre at the Swiss Centre in London, so confidently awaited after the necessary capital was assured, has not progressed materially since our last AGM, although a "STIFTUNG FORUM OF SWITZERLAND IN LONDON" was established in due form under Swiss Law on 5th June, 1970 at Berne with full responsibility for the creation and running of the Forum. The President is Dr. W. Spühler, the former Federal Councillor, and Fürspreh M. Jaccard of the Federal Political Department is the Secretary. I had the honour of being appointed a member of the Stifungsrat, representing our Federation and Colony, and Mr. R. Süess was elected to represent the Swiss Economic Council and Colony. The other members of the Foundation Board are: Mr. L. Boissonnas (Pro Helvetia), Dr. W. Kämpfen (Swiss National Tourist Office), Dr. C. Minger (Federal Finance Department), Mr. M. Ney (Auslandschweizersekretariat) and Dr. G. Senn (Swiss Centre Ltd.).

On the basis of an expert's estimate of rates likely to be demanded for the Forum and upon a late clarification of the rent payable for the premises at a steeply rising rate, it was realised that the running costs would far exceed the likely income. Various possibilities of achieving a balanced budget were explored, and early in December some London Presidents were invited to a discussion about this with Mr. M. Jaccard. No new solution has been found so far and the realisation of the project appears less likely

today than it did four years ago.

On hearing that our Churches intend to solve their urgent accommodation problem jointly, that the Swiss Mercantile Society has an equally pressing accommodation problem for the College, being aware of the unsatisfactory aspects of the present premises of the Swiss Hostel for Girls and fearing that the Forum project at the Swiss Centre might have to be dropped, I suggested last autumn to all concerned that a unique opportunity existed for a joint building of real distinction costing less for each participant than would separate solutions. The possibilities of proceeding along this path are being examined closely and urgently at present.

Since our last AGM our main Delegate from the South, Mrs. M. Meier, has attended two meetings of the Commission in Berne, a Council meeting of the Solidarity Fund and two meetings of the Information Committee of the Auslandschweizerwerk. Dr. Bolliger and Mr. Hartmann from the North have attended one meeting of the Commission each.

The financial problems of the "Swiss Observer" had reached a point by the end of last year where the Chairman of its Advisory Council, Mr. G. Keller, felt compelled to issue a most urgent appeal for increased support on the part of the Colony to ensure the continuance of the paper beyond the end of June. Endorsing this ap-

peal, I urge all member Societies to re-examine all possible ways of helping. I am inviting Mr. Keller to the forthcoming AGM in case a discussion of his appeal is desired and I shall propose the admission of the Advisory Council to full membership.

H. W. Egli
Federation President

THE CITY SWISS CLUB AGM

The Annual General Meeting of the City Swiss Club, which took place in the Stanhope Suite of the Dorchester on 26th April, enjoyed a record attendance including the presence of the Ambassador.

The Secretary read the Minutes of the last meeting, some new members were elected and four old ones, who had just served 50 years of membership in the City Swiss Club were added to the list of Honorary Members. These four personalities were Mr. P. Bessire, Mr. E. Werner, Mr. J. Steiner and Mr. A. Schorno, all of whom had been members since 1920. Mr. Paul Bessire was the only one present. He stood up to thank the President and members for their kind attention and reminisced on the past of the City Swiss Club. He evoked the time when French was the Club's official language and when the two linguistic groups were separated into the "right" and the "left", as the German speakers sat on the right of the President and the French to his left. In the

event, the German-speaking minority grew into a majority and English came to be the official language of the City Swiss Club.

Mr. Bessire further recalled the palmy days of the Club, when it used to meet at Pagani's and hold regular cinderellas with attendances of 500. He was warmly acclaimed. Mr. A. Kuhn then rose to pass the year under review. There had been three dinners with speakers and two card evenings. The Summer Dance, the Annual Dinner and Ball, the Soirée Familiale and the Christmas Dinner had all been very successful. Mr. Kuhn, however, deplored the insufficient turn-up at some meetings. In particular, only 12 members had come to hear an expert speak on the highly topical problem of pollution.

Our President had furthermore noted the presence of no more than a dozen members at the Annual Ball, the immense majority of the attendance being their guests. Five members had been lost through death or departure, but as six new members had been accepted, the overall membership had remained level and stood at 225.

Mr. Kuhn said that after two years tenure of City Swiss Club's Presidency it was time for him to retire. The role had "taught him patience, tolerance, understanding" and curtailed his ambitions. Mr. Kuhn said that he no longer wished to become President of Switzerland!

CITY SWISS CLUB

"Informal Dinner Dance"

FRIDAY, 25th JUNE, 1971
at The Thatched Barn,
Barnet By-Pass, Herts.

COCKTAILS AT 7.30 p.m.

DINNER AT 8 p.m.

DANCING UNTIL 1 a.m.

DRESS
INFORMAL

TICKETS £3

FROM L. F. JOBIN, 10 KELVIN DRIVE, ST. MARGARETS, TWICKENHAM, MIDDXX.