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# NEWS FROM THE COLONY

## EVENTS IN DECEMBER

### THE SCHWEIZERBUND DINNER

The Schweizerbund is without doubt one of the more intimate Swiss societies of London. It is, with the Swiss Riflemen, the society most oriented towards enjoyment, with of course the added characteristic that it is not an exclusively male Society, but indeed has members of both sexes of widely varying age groups who gather year in year out, for generations at its bi-annual dinners.

The generation span was particularly apparent at the Schweizerbund's Dinner on December 1st, when ladies who well remembered Edward VIII joined in community singing with bearded young people, sharing the spirit of youth that traditionally animates the Schweizerbund. We were treated to an excellent and simple dinner by Mr. A. Gluck in the cosy "banqueting" room of his establishment, the Orpheus Club, in the City.

The Society's President, Mr. Virgil Berti, welcomed the gathering in his characteristically warm and friendly manner. There were some new guests among us, whom Mr. Berti duly mentioned. He mentioned the imminent wedding of two members of respectable age, and regretted the absence of a former president, Mr. Fernand Delaloye, who at that same moment was performing the rather sad duty of voting the death of the Secours Mutuels Society.

Mr. Fritz Adams, representing the Embassy, brought us the greetings of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Abegglen, both of whom had been stimulating members of the Group and remembered with affection by all members. They are now at Los Angeles. Mr. Adams said a few words about the new Embassy, which definitely appears to be the pride and joy of all the staff who now work there. He told us that a vast Colony gathering had been planned for the inauguration day to take place on 21st February. Mr. Pierre Graber, Swiss Foreign Minister, and Mr. and Mrs. Rene Keller, our former ambassadors, are expected to honour this important occasion by their presence. The problem that faced the Embassy, said Mr. Adams, was that it could not practically invite the 8,000 nationals on its registrar for the opening ceremony. A choice had perforce to be made and the most intelligent way to do this was first to determine who actually took a part in Swiss activities. That is, it was necessary to make a

count of the members of the Swiss societies.

Mr. Adams was entrusted by our Ambassador, Dr. Albert Weitnauer, to perform this census. The essence of his task was, in fact, to pinpoint this mythical "Colony", of which your Editor never ceases to write about. A few thousand Swiss dispersed in the Metropolis do not constitute a Colony. However, a few hundred Swiss regularly meeting each other at organised activities of a patriotic nature and maintaining a certain degree of personal relationship with each other — this the Colony is supposed to be.

Totalising the memberships of the various Swiss Societies, Mr. Adams found that the population of the Colony lay at about 700. By some subtle hunch, however, he decided to ask for the *names* of the members of these societies. He found dozens of them appearing two or more times so that the population of the "Colony" was immediately whittled down to about 400, which was a relief to the Embassy, because 400 guests was the maximum it could cope with at the inaugural reception.

When Mr. Adams had said these few enlightening words and when most of his audience had before them a glass of kirch ideal for enhancing the post-prandial pleasures that were to come, Mr. Jurg Schmid, our Secretary, distributed Swissair song books (the same as those used last year) containing the very basic anthology of Swiss popular songs. Singing soon got under way. The same usual songs of course: *Famal-i-pe*, *Fidiri*, *Vieux Chalet*, and so forth. The inspiration for singing did not, however, reach quite the same pitch as it did a year ago, when the Table was led off the beaten tracks into songs of the gay twenties. Singing was not sustained for long and frolicsome conversation tended to take over, which was equally enjoyable.

It was only 10.30 p.m. when the first participants, looking at their watches, decided that it was time to set off for home. Half-an-hour later they had all left the Orpheus Club after what was a highly enjoyable evening.

(PMB)

### ALPINE SUN FOR BRITISH CHILDREN

*Alpine Sun for British Children* is a Charity which has so far been responsible for sending about 250 British children suffering from various diseases to the healing climate of the Alps.

It celebrated its Fifteenth Anniversary with a Reception held at the Chenil Galleries in Chelsea, attended by members of the Embassy and per-

haps 100 British guests. From a conversation with Mr. A. J. Gowling, Honorary Administrator of the Society, we learnt that it sent 17 children suffering from lung and other troubles every year to the mountains. They were accompanied by teachers and taken in the care of expert hands on the Swiss end. A sizeable proportion of these children returned healed—and it was astounding to hear that children should still be suffering from lung diseases, including consumption, in 1971. This certainly warrants the usefulness of this worthy charity. A Tombola organised during the reception raised £116. Lady guests at the reception wore evening dresses, which somewhat contrasted with the lowly nature of the hall where the reception was taking place. It resembled a parish hall more than anything else.

### ANNUAL DINNER OF THE A.B.M.S.A.C.

The elaborate acronym written above stands for "Association of British Members of the Swiss Alpine Club". This Association grouping some 700 highly committed British Mountaineers and counting Lord Hunt and four past Swiss Ambassadors on its list of Honorary Members, held its Annual Dinner late in November. Dr. Jurg Iselin, Plenipotentiary Minister, deputising for the Ambassador, was their guest of honour.

The Swiss Ambassador, the ABMSAC was told, had been called away to attend the Queen's Annual Reception for the Diplomatic Corps, which was given in her absence owing to Her Majesty being bound to her room with chicken pox.

He delivered an after-dinner speech emphasising the relevance of the problem of pollution to the fraternity of mountaineers. He quoted Mr. Peter Walker, Secretary of State for Environment, who had addressed a distinguished gathering with the apposite address: "Excellencies, My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen, Fellow Polluters"—a rather delicate expression of black humour. Dr. Iselin referred in his speech to a letter written by the ABMSAC to Federal Councillor Roger Bonvin, Head of the Department of Transport and Communications, containing an urgent complaint against the proposed erection of a few more aerial ropeways in the Zermat area. This proved that the interests of mountaineers and skiers are not always the same.

Dr. Iselin concluded his reply to the toast that had been offered to the "Swiss Confederation" by assuring his sincerely Swiss-loving audience that the authorities in Switzerland were determined to act in favour of the protec-