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very fully with them and warn them that life in Switzerland is not what it used to be either when they were last there, in some instances a good many years ago. In addition, close relatives and friends have mostly died or the contact with them was so loose that they have become strangers and the reunion might not be the happy event hoped for. Also, our compatriots who have been abroad for many years tend to be more fluent in English than their mother tongue which some have all but forgotten. In our experience, after a stay abroad of more than about 20 years, the return is a difficult thing unless very regular contact has been maintained with relatives and friends and the country and its evolution.

This whole question of deciding on the best way of spending the last few years is a vexed and painful one to many of our clients. They are loathe to give up their independence but have to come to terms with being less able to fend for themselves. Voluntary and statutory services provide more and more help but the time comes when even this is no longer sufficient.

Another way in which we can help our pensioners and others is by financing, partly or totally, holidays which give them a break from the humdrum of everyday life. Quite a number have availed themselves of our offer and spent a week or two either in a guest house or with some friends or relatives. For the latter, we provide the fares and a little extra spending money.

Christmas was, as usual, a very busy time. 129 parcels were sent to 200 people. The Frauenverein and the Reunion de Couture supplied us again with a great number of beautiful garments made with much loving care and, thanks to the generosity of a number of Swiss firms and individuals, we were, once more, able to make the parcels attractive as well as useful. Their contents varied according to needs from the very large ones to families to small tokens for people whose needs were not really material, but who are lonely in this country and appreciate the thought of someone bothering about them. Mmes. Raulin and Kaluza were in charge as usual and in the packing and distribution were ably assisted by Mmes. Burri, Gyssler and Harhalakis and Mr. Buol. All parcels in the London area were once more delivered personally. Our grateful thanks go to all those who, in one way or another, have helped to make Christmas a little bit happier for our friends.

We had about the same number of youngsters stranded in London who had to be assisted to return to Switzerland but, owing to the fact that they now refund the money to the Police Department in Berne, the workload appeared a lot smaller and less frustrating than in the past.

There was another considerable increase in the number of children whom we helped to go to Switzerland for a holiday, mainly under the Pro Juventute scheme. Through the circulars sent out

by the Embassy, more families of modest means come to know about it and are eager for their youngsters to have this chance to spend a few weeks away from home. Judging by the happy mob who returned at the end of August, a good time was had by all, although there are always one or two who have difficulty in adapting to the new way of life and who are a little disappointed.

During the year, the house at Conway Street was given a complete facelift on the outside. Its rooms have been satisfactorily occupied, partly by students staying for a period of time and partly by youngsters needing emergency accommodation for a few nights. In summer, the previous caretakers left and there was a somewhat difficult period when we had no help, but now we are very happy with a young couple who have brought a new atmosphere to the place.

Our property at Belsize Grove continues to be occupied by the Swiss Hostel for Girls, which still fulfills its important function amongst the young coming here for studies, work or holidays.

The Committee met regularly once a month to deal with any business needing its attention. This formula of monthly instead of twice-monthly meetings seems to answer present needs.

We regret to report that during the year, we lost two members of the General Committee through death, Mr. Olivier Beguin and Mr. Alfred Schmid.

We are very grateful indeed to our Honorary President, His Excellency the Swiss Ambassador, Dr. A. Weitnauer, for his continued interest and support of our activities. The Counsellor M. C. H. Bruggmann and the Consul M. F. Adams again represented the Embassy at our Executive Meetings.

Our thanks go to all those whose support has helped us in some way to carry out our work: the Swiss Federal Authorities, the Swiss Embassy in London, the Swiss Churches, the Swiss Societies in London, the Swiss Observer, English Social Workers of both private and statutory bodies and very specially our many individual friends and supporters without whose interest and generous gifts we could not hope to exist. We also wish to express particular appreciation to the Finance Committee in whose able hands rests the handling of the Society's investments. And to terminate, we thank the British Authorities for their hospitality and assistance. We would not wish to close this report without thanking our Secretary, Mrs. A.-R. Sharp for the work accomplished during the year.

On behalf of the Executive Committee

M. Schneebeli  
President

## CORRECTION

We have been asked by the Secretary of the Benevolent Society to correct the impression which readers may have gathered from our account on the life of the Swiss in Morocco and Algeria (9th March). As an aside, we wrote that one

of the most frequent tasks of the Swiss Benevolent Society in London is the assistance to youngsters who get stranded in Britain. In fact, of the 356 people on the Society's books in 1972, only 68 were in connection with help for repatriation.

## Parliamentary group examines British tourism

A reception was given by the Embassy on 4th May in honour of a visiting delegation of Swiss Parliamentarians and officials on a fact-finding visit to Britain. The 36-strong delegation was led by Mr. Enrico Franzoni, Speaker of the National Council. Mr. Franzoni was in London in his capacity of Chairman of the "Swiss Parliamentary Group for Tourism and Traffic". For a week, members of this group and their wives, including its Secretary, Dr. Teuscher, and the Vice-Director of the Federal Transport Office, Dr. Burki, toured Britain to see what the UK had to propose in the way of tourism and traffic.

They began their visit by a tour of the Houses of Parliament and the Swiss Centre. They were put in the picture of British tourism by Mr. L. G. Lickorish, Director General of the British Tourist Authority. From the 5th to the 10th of May, the Swiss team visited the provinces, namely, Bristol, Worcester, Stratford on Avon, Coventry, Derby and Manchester. They returned to Zurich from Manchester.

## ANGLO-SWISS SOCIETY

Well over a hundred members were in attendance at the Dorchester on the evening of 2nd May to hear *Dr. Fred Luchsinger*, Editor of the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* and guest of the Anglo-Swiss Society, develop the theme "Switzerland and the European Challenge".

For the first time, an Anglo-Swiss Society after-dinner speech was followed by a session of questions, which in fact lasted up to 11.00 p.m. As dinner had begun at 8.00 p.m., some members had already started to leave towards the end of this extended question-time.

Dr. Luchsinger's speech was outstanding for its truly perfect and most distinguished English. Answering the many questions that his talk had aroused, the Speaker showed that he did not require the support of notes to speak in his distinguished manner.

His speech touched on a well-worn subject, but probably less so for many British members of the audience. Dr. Luchsinger was strongly in favour of better ties between Switzerland and Europe, but with the habitual Swiss proviso that neutrality should not be impeached in any way. Fully in step with the Swiss Government, he discounted prospects of full membership to the EEC as a threat to our sovereignty and complete neutrality.

Many of the questions raised later referred to Switzerland's link to the Comæcon, or Soviet-block Common Market. Dr. Luchsinger recalled that

negotiations were already under way with eastern countries. Negotiating teams, including our Economics Minister, had made the journey to Moscow. The snag was that the Russians had less to sell than the west could offer. The inability shown by eastern European industries to produce

goods of high technological standards was a hindrance to trade.

Before Dinner, the Society's AGM was expeditiously dealt with by the President, Lord Selkirk, in the ante-room of the Orchid Suite. It was a routine operation.

## ***Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK***

The Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK held its Annual General Meeting at the Embassy on 27th April. Representatives from the societies present were kindly invited to drinks and dinner by the Embassy. In the absence of the Ambassador, Dr. Jurg Iselin, Charge d'Affaires, acted as host to the meeting, which was chaired by Dr. H. Egli. Dr. Marcel Ney, Director of the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad and Dr. Philippe Garraux, member of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad, honoured the Federation by being present at its AGM. Nearly all the societies of the London area were represented, but none from the North and Scotland had managed to delegate members. For the first time, the Swiss of Guernsey (six hairdressers I understand) were represented by Mr. C. A. Aeschmann (who isn't a hairdresser).

We had been told by the President in a three-paragraph Annual Report that there was no business to attend to relating to the accounting period, apart from the problem of refunding expenses to the Federation's delegate and deputy to the Commission of the Swiss Abroad in Berne. The only new item announced was the use to be made of a sum of about £300 left over from the Forum of Switzerland Foundation. The Embassy had decided to entrust these remnants of the funds which had originally been collected to finance a Colony Room at the Leicester Square Swiss Centre to the Federation for "cultural, social and economic events".

Following a brief examination of the accounts, which showed that nearly all societies had paid their dues to the Federation, Delegates heard Mrs. Mariann Meier's report on her activities during the past year as delegate for the South of England at the Commission of the Swiss Abroad.

She enumerated the many items discussed by the 34 delegates and proxies coming from all over the world (including, for the first time, Senegal and Portugal) at their last meeting. These issues included social welfare for Swiss abroad, withholding tax, dual taxation, facilities for study in Switzerland to young Swiss abroad, support to Swiss schools abroad and information.

At the beginning of her Report, Mrs. Meier briefly outlined the vital statistics of "Fifth Switzerland": There were 313,709 registered Swiss abroad

last year as compared with about 237,000 twenty years ago. Swiss population abroad has thus leapt forward during the past two decades, particularly during the fifties, but is now tending to stabilise. The number of Swiss societies is increasing faster than new arrivals of Swiss nationals. It has grown from 553 to 622 during the past five years. This occurrence could partially be explained by the fact that many old societies only recently decided to register with the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad. Mrs. Meier also made a brief reference on the accounts of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad and its losses of over 40,000 francs — mainly due to the cost of publishing the "Echo", the monthly magazine of the Swiss Abroad.

A long discussion followed on the means of publicising the debates of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad. It was stressed that these were of particular interest to Swiss living in this country. A suggestion to publish a special leaflet on this matter was turned down in favour of giving it dominance in future special issues of the prominence.

The Meeting then agreed to take care of the residue of funds from the Swiss Forum Foundation. Before the end of the session, the question of handing the funds of the defunct Swiss Sports Society to the Federation was also raised and it was decided to initiate the necessary formalities.

Finally, a problem which was discussed at length — although it bore little relevance to Swiss living abroad — was that of speeding up the naturalisation procedure. It is difficult to become Swiss. This not only costs about 10,000 francs, but also requires 12 years of residence and the authorisation of Communal, Cantonal and Federal authorities.

Dr. Philippe Garraux outlined progress achieved towards a new bill which would put an end to many abnormalities. Many children of resident families now remain Aliens all their lives. When a foreigner marries a Swiss girl and lives in Switzerland (or abroad) his children remain foreign and the families are split by nationality. Lengthy arguments followed over the "unfairness" of giving Swiss men, and not their foreign wives, the right to register their children as Swiss, and a discussion ensued as to the real time officially required for Swiss naturalisation. One person argued that 12 years of residence were compulsory, another mentioned cases where naturali-

sation was given almost immediately (particularly as regards refugees) but the discussion was purely academic as the problem of naturalisation, which is primarily a Communal issue, does not affect the Swiss living abroad.



**COMPATRIOT HAS HERE FIRST ENGLISH EXPERIENCES TOLD BY THE DAILY TELEGRAPH**

We were more than surprised to come across a feature in the *Daily Telegraph* of 13th April, on the new life of Mrs. Mercedes Buehlmann, who came to England about ten months ago with her husband, Eddy and her two children, Thomas, 8, and Christian 6. Mr. Eddy Buehlmann, who has come at least once to the City Swiss Club, is presently chief of the American Express in London and is responsible for all the European operations of this company. He is in fact the first non-American ever to hold the post.

The Buehlmann family moved from Zurich to Rickmansworth, where they have now become part of the local scenery. Mrs. Buehlmann was quoted by the *Daily Telegraph* as saying that she had at first been reluctant to leave Zurich, and had been daunted by the problems of living in an unknown country, particularly for the children.

Now she is very glad she came. She said she was puzzled by the reputation of the British, who are believed abroad to suffer from abominable weather, and very bad cooking. "How did that reputation grow up? It isn't true", she said.

Mrs. Buehlmann is delighted to enjoy a garden for the first time and to own a house, something which is prohibitively expensive in Zurich. She is loud in praise of the British education system.

"In Switzerland the schools are good, but all the pressure is on the academic side. There's no room for things like music. Here you allow a child to develop his own interests. My children have opened up like flowers in water, in spite of not speaking any English when they started".

Mrs. Buehlmann is also ready to praise English friendliness — and insists that anyone who calls the English unfriendly doesn't know the Swiss!

"Complete strangers have come round and offered to drive the children to school", she said.

Mrs. Mercedes Buehlmann hasn't much trouble with the English sense of humour. "With a name like Mercedes, you get used to any kind of joking. We drive a Volkswagen, but my husband says that that's the car he keeps in the garage; he's got a Mercedes in the house".

P.M.B.