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Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK - a harmonious AGM as usual!

The Federation of all our Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom including the churches, formed over a decade ago in order to facilitate the cooperation and coordination of our activities, held its eleventh Annual General Meeting at our Embassy in London on 18th June in the same harmonious spirit of mutual goodwill and understanding that has always been so characteristic not only of the Federation and societies but of the Colony at large.

It is gratifying to be able to say so as not all other Swiss Colonies have been equally lucky. Maybe the traditions of fair-mindedness of our host-country are helping to bring out the same virtues amongst ourselves. Differences of opinion are invariably settled readily by give and take, but in fact we have hardly ever had any serious dispute to dispose of.

As usual the Ambassador, Dr. E. Thalmann, honoured the meeting by his presence throughout as host and honorary President, accompanied by Minister K. Fritschi, Consul-General H. Jaques (Manchester) and our Consul C. Glauser. Amongst the attending presidents of member societies there were two newcomers, Mr. O. Schreibke of the Yorkshire Swiss Club and Mr. Ch. Suttermeister (Liverpool). As in previous years the director of the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad in Berne, Dr. Marcel Ney, had come specially to attend the meeting.

In his annual report the Federation President, Mr. B. Simon, expressed his particular appreciation of the opportunities offered him for increasingly close contacts with the member societies. As regards finance the treasurer, Mr. A. Kunz, could again report a small surplus thanks to the modest expenses claims of our Delegates to the organisations for the Swiss Abroad based on new guidelines concerning such claims. As a small reserve the Federation has now about £800 at its disposal. The retiring members of the Committee were re-elected en bloc and Mr. De Maria and Mr. Burri were appointed auditors.

Dr. H. Bolliger as Northern Delegate was in the happy position of referring to two new advances in the interest of the Swiss abroad achieved by the untiring efforts of the Auslandschweizerwerk and its numerous influential friends in the homeland. One of them concerns the exercise of political rights by ourselves when on visit in Switzerland, full details of which are

published in the current special issue of the *Swiss Observer*.

Our right to vote will probably become operative before the end of the year, the changes in law having been approved by Parliament last December and no referendum against it being asked for. The voting right is as yet limited to Federal matters, leaving it to each Canton to extend it to their own sphere. The conditions of its exercise are rather restrictive in order to prevent unwanted mass invasions of the border communes or undesirable political divisions amongst the Swiss abroad. With that proviso the innovation is unlikely to be much used or abused, thus dispelling our objections in principle always voiced by our Delegates.

The other, perhaps more realistic, advance achieved concerns our ability to join a sickness insurance scheme when retiring to Switzerland at an advanced age. An agreement to that effect up to the age of 70 has just been signed with the Union of sickness insurance organisations, details of which are also published in the current *Swiss Observer*. Being rather spoilt in this respect under the British National Insurance we may find the premiums payable at home rather heavy. But for those actually returning to Switzerland the agreement will prove a great blessing.

Our Southern Delegate, Mrs. Mariann Meier, whose reports on the Journée des suisses à l'étranger and other questions regarding Switzerland and our Colony will have been read by all subscribers of the *Swiss Observer* with appreciation for her tireless work on our behalf, restricted her contribution to the discussion at the A.G.M. to renewed pleadings for a more active support of the monthly *Echo* published in Berne to keep the Swiss abroad informed on home affairs, and of the Solidarity Fund of the Swiss Abroad, neither of which is flourishing as well as it deserves.

The Solidarity Fund still has only about 12,000 members out of half a million adult Swiss abroad. Yet it paid out last year 445,000 francs to compatriots in distress the world over. The *Echo* works continuously at a loss covered by the Auslandschweizerwerk and indirectly by Federal subsidy cut back this year by 15 per cent. Dr. Boller suggested that Swiss firms should automatically subscribe to the *Echo* on behalf of all their employees abroad.

Finally, the meeting agreed that special information meetings in London

NEWS FROM THE COLONY

and in the North should be convened annually after the Journées des suisses à l'étranger to acquaint the Colony with the results and enable it to discuss them right away with our respective Delegates for their guidance. Whether the Federation of Swiss Societies should organise these meetings or leave it to the Nouvelle Société Helvétique in London, who has always kept open house for all Swiss to attend its meetings for the discussion of matters of Swiss interest, has been left open. In the North obviously another society would have taken on this valuable function.

As in every previous year the Ambassador again offered the participants of the A.G.M. a generous buffet and drinks, thus enabling them to continue the exchange of opinions and friendly contacts long after the end of the meeting.

HWE

BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

The following subscribers will be celebrating their wedding anniversaries: Mr. & Mrs. J. C. Wetter on 1st August (52 years), Mr. & Mrs. V. Bataillard on 11th of the month (57 years), Mr. & Mrs. H. Suter (55 years) and Mr. & Mrs. A. Kunzler (52 years), both couples on 22nd August, and Mr. & Mrs. E. Zwicky (54 years) on 28th of the month.

Mr. Victor Bataillard of 20 Keyes Gardens, Newcastle upon Tyne 2, will celebrate his 95th birthday on 2nd August; he has been in this country for 68 years and is an ETH graduate. Mr. B. Truninger (Zürich) will be 69 on 4th August. Mrs. A. Schmid (Glendower) will have her birthday on 6th August. On the same day, Dr. Hugo Rast, of 9 Weymouth Street W1, will be 85. Mrs. T. Senn will have her birthday on 9th August. Mrs. A. Bachofen will be 76 on 10th of the month, when Mrs. Mariann Meier will be 62. Mrs. J. Gysin will have her 82nd birthday on 14th and Mr. F. Good his 76th on 15th August. Mr. W. Frick will be 87 on 19th August.

Congratulations and best wishes to all these readers as well as to any others whose birthdays fall within the next few weeks.

From village priest to Papal Ambassador

Nearly 100 members and friends attended the Open Meeting of the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, held at the Swiss Embassy on 3rd June. It was a special occasion, for the speaker was the Most Rev. Archbishop Bruno B. Heim, Apostolic Delegate in Britain, a Swiss by nationality. The President, Mrs. Mariann Meier, welcomed the Swiss Ambassador as Honorary President, and Madame Thalmann, Minister and Madame Fritschi, and extended a global welcome to other members of the Embassy, the Rev. and Mrs. U. Stefan, Father Bossard and the presidents of several Swiss societies.

Mrs Meier said that it was her pleasure and privilege to welcome the audience as compatriots and friends, since Switzerland knew neither graces, eminences or excellencies. This was by no means any lack of respect, on the contrary, the Society was not only proud to welcome a distinguished compatriot in such high office, but also grateful to the Archbishop for coming to address the N.S.H. She also thanked the Ambassador for his hospitality.

The speaker gave a vivid account of his life and work, of how fate had changed his intention of remaining a simple village priest in Switzerland, and of his interesting life in the service of the Holy See.

The Archbishop holds a doctor's degree in philology and one in canon law.

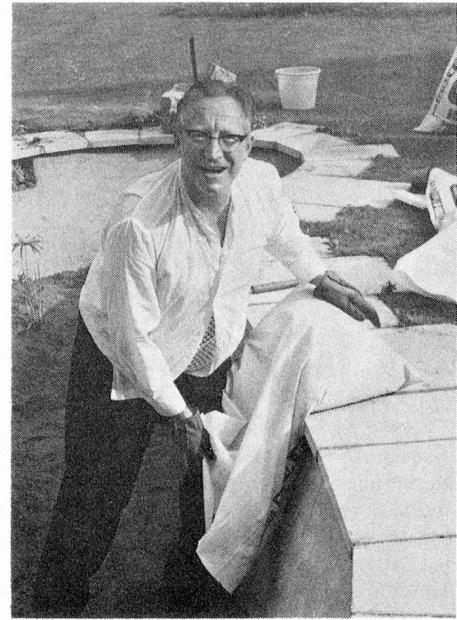
He knows 14 languages of which he speaks and writes more than half. He spent five years in Paris as Secretary to Archbishop Roncalli, who was to become Pope John XXIII, and of whom he recounted a number of anecdotes. He spent three years in Vienna as Secretary to the Nuncio and seven years in Germany, where the Nuncio was an American of German origin.

For many years, Archbishop Heim was in Scandinavia where he had to look after five countries. Whilst living in Denmark, he visited Finland 25 times and many times, too, he went to Iceland.

In Egypt, the Archbishop spent four years, first when President Nasser was in power, whom he did not find as religious and human as his successor President Sadat.

When he was appointed Apostolic Delegate to Britain, it was the place he wanted to go to most. The Apostolic Delegation in London was established in 1938, but he is the first Swiss to hold the important office. When the R.C. Archbishop of Westminster was to be appointed, Archbishop Heim had to consider lots of names proposed by many people. Ninety per cent mentioned the very person he had in mind himself.

The duties of an Apostolic Delegate are not much different from those of a secular diplomat – except that he has no wife and often has to look after household arrangements himself! But he



This delightfully informal picture of Archbishop Bruno Heim at work in his garden at Wimbledon injects a pleasant aura of humanity into a man with what could be regarded as a rather "austere" job. His talk at the Swiss Embassy (reported here) also gave a good insight into his life.

has no military, industrial or economic duties. His task is concerned with peace, charity, religion and ecumenical co-operation, education and culture.

He has to report to Rome, also with regard to political life in the country he resides in. The Holy See, incidentally, has representation in 85 countries. The Delegate has a great number of visitors and leads a very busy social life, and that on a small salary only. In Paris he had no

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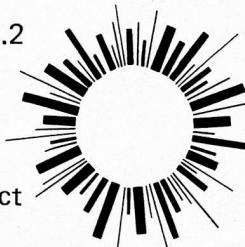
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Mercantile College and the Swiss
Youth Club.

pay at all at first, and later only \$18 a month. It rose very slowly, and even today, the Archbishop pointed out, it was a surprisingly low sum indeed. But he loved his work and found his life interesting and rewarding.

And so Archbishop Heim talked about all the important aspects of his life, his studies in Rome, his work in internee camps in Switzerland, and of a gipsy festival he had had to attend in France, of many incidents both personal and political, which made his talk fascinating. Not only did he speak without any notes at all, but in fluent English. He showed great humanity and humility, and displayed such a lively sense of humour that the audience frequently responded with laughter, and the prolonged applause was ample proof of the interest and appreciation by all present. Mrs. Meier expressed thanks and gratitude to the speaker and then finished the meeting by announcing a few forthcoming events, not least the Assembly of the Swiss Abroad at Morat at the end of August.

The audience then adjourned to the Residence upstairs where the Swiss Ambassador and Madame Thalmann kindly offered a Reception to all present, a generous gesture much appreciated as a sign of respect for the eminent guest and the Society's work.

MG

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CITY SWISS CLUB

Somewhere under the arches of London Bridge Station the City Swiss Club discovered a delightful old-fashioned pub called Skinkers.

There it organised, for its April function, a tasting of wines combined with a cold buffet à la Victoriana.

For the choice of wines the Club invited the St. James's wine firm Michael Druitt to do its best. This it did most handsomely, starting with a Saint Gall, Blanc de Blanc Champagne, followed by a succession of eight French bottled Bordeaux and Burgundies, most of them obtained at between one and three pounds.

Even the cheaper ones were so good that only real connoisseurs could

distinguish them from the more pricey ones. What with the equally excellent cold meats, salads, cheeses and sweets it stands to reason that the members and their ladies enjoyed themselves until closing time!

CORRECTION

In the article which appeared on page 22 of our July issue (Card Evening) the City Swiss Club was not mentioned.

In fact, it was the Club that organised the function on behalf of members and guests. We wish to apologize to members and readers for this omission.

WGS

CONGRATULATIONS

Our congratulations to Mr. F. Schaufelberger of Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire whose solution to last month's Jass problem was the first correct one

opened. A pound is on its way to him.

The answer to the problem was: the Schaelen Ober!

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