Presidents address to the London Group of the Nouvelle société helvétique

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PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS TO THE LONDON GROUP OF THE NOUVELLE SOCIETE HELVETIQUE.

At the Annual General Meeting, 27th Jan., 1939.



A. F. SUTER

Président.

Nouvelle Société Helvétique.

(London Group).

It is once again my privilege to deliver to you the report of the Group's activity during the year we have just passed. If in former years we have experienced political crises which have, directly or indirectly, affected our organisation and progress, this last year appears to have consisted of one single and continuous crisis of such magnitude as we have not seen since 1914. And, I think, as in 1914, our anxieties regarding the peace of Europe have again brought us closer together. "Einigkeit macht stark" is as true to-day as in the heyday of Swiss military power. These anxieties have therefore been directly responsible for an increased membership, greater obligations, but also a keener appreciation of the services we can and do render to our colony.

In the course of 1938 we have held nine monthly meetings, the Annual General meeting in January, alternatively at Swiss House, our registered address and at the Foyer Suisse, where each meeting is usually preceded by a simple and homely supper. I have noticed with pleasure that the Foyer meetings always attract a larger number of ladies, who sooner or later are eager to join as members.

While I shall speak of the administrative activity of these meetings later, I would now record briefly and chronologically the causeries and addresses we were privileged to hear on these occasions:—

February 18th, at Swiss House. Dr. H. Egli spoke to us on "The return of Switzerland to complete Neutrality," an exposé of topical events in politics full of instruction and interest.

March 18th, at the Foyer. Pasteur Hahn entertained us with a subject of keen enjoyment "Allemanisch, die Rettung der Eidgenössischen Seele" which evoked an animated, almost heated, discussion among the large audience attending the meeting.

April 22nd, at Swiss House. In the absence of the President the Secretary, Mr. Campart, directed the meeting, at which only administrative matters were brought forward.

May 20th, at the Foyer. A lecture by our journalist-member, Mr. Gottfried Keller, on "The political situation in Europe" attracted one of our largest audiences and was keenly appreciated and debated.

June 24th, at Swiss House. Mr. A. Tall, of the Swiss Federal Railways, himself an ardent mountain climber, held the audience spellbound with his description of dangerous and famous climbing feats in the Alps. The lecture was entitled:— "Swiss Alpine Guides and Mountaineering."

The first meeting after the summer holidays was held on September 23th, at the Foyer, and brought together the largest audience of the year (40). Mr. Hanns Vischer, of the British Colonial Office, who has since joined the Group as member, spoke on "The Swiss and the Empire." This was a most admirable lecture which made us feel very proud of our new member.

October 21st, at Swiss House. Mr. F. E. L. Ferraris gave us an historical and technical account of the "Swiss Watch Industry," demonstrating practically the testing of modern watches and giving us a great deal of valuable information on one of our chief national industries. This lecture was followed by a film depicting the London Swiss Sunday School childrens' holiday camp in Switzerland under the care of Mr. W. Fischer.

November 18th, at the Foyer. Dr. Albert Bettex, Lector in German at Cambridge University, paid us a visit to deliver his lecture "Contemporary literature in Allemanic Switzerland."

These monthly meetings have well fulfilled their purpose; all the lectures have been of a very high order of merit, while some of them were experiences not easily forgotten, treasures of great and lasting value.

Of the other functions during the year which were held under the guidance of our Group, the February Film-show was the last to be held at King George's Hall. The constantly growing audience and the desire to produce sound films made it advisable to take a bigger hall for these performances. The November show was consequently held at the Kingsway Hall with the gratifying result of bringing together an audience of about 1,700 Swiss with their friends. This first performance of the enlarged venture was by no means perfect, but has none the less been greatly appreciated by the colony.

We again co-operated with the Swiss Orchestra in a concert at Conway Hall, where also a very successful lecture by Major Paul de Vallière "Comment la Suisse est née, et le secret de sa nationalité" has been arranged by us. At the Fête Suisse in June we were able to contribute considerably to the success of the fête by the provision, through the kindness of the S.S.E., of the two chief artists, Mr. de Ribeaupierre and Mlle. Lavanchi, the famous Swiss violinists; by the provision of Gentians from the Bernese Oberland and by the active part we have taken in the organisation. We also took part at the Sports Suisse, successfully revived in new and more genial surroundings.

The administration of the affairs of the London Group is steadily becoming more onerous; the work entailed by the execution of the various services is such that, if I were not so ably and willingly seconded by Mrs. Clara Muller, to whom our sincere thank are due, we would probably have to employ a paid assistant. We have imported and distributed 1,000 Swiss Calendars this year: Christmas cards were sent again to every other Group of the N.S.H. abroad and these greetings were reciprocated by a large number of them. This contact is valuable and should be cultivated to a much larger extent.

The accounts for the year will be discussed and passed elsewhere. The membership has risen from 134 to 145 inspite of a considerable loss by death and repatriation. I am particularly pleased that we have just lately been able to recruit a number of ladies who have for some years past taken a keen interest in our proceedings and have now fortunately decided to also have a voice in the matter. We extend our hearty welcome to them.

As your President I now take particular pleasure in expressing the thanks of the Group to all those who have in the course of the year assisted us actively in one way or another. Our Minister and the Staff of the Swiss Legation have at all times shown us their appreciation and are always ready to give us assistance; our sister societies in London have gladly and willingly co-operated with us in various matters; the Editor of the Swiss Observer, genial Mr. Stauffer, never refuses to grant us space in his paper whenever required; the management of the Foyer Suisse has made us welcome and fed us well at our meetings there, and the Swiss Mercantile Society are still the best landlord we can think of. The Swiss colony in London at large is not unmindful of the services we render them. Our special thanks are due to the various lecturers who have enriched the value of our activity, to Mr. William Jenny, who has so kindly provided all the films for the November show free of charge, and again to Mrs. Clara Muller, the "indispensable."

With the Secrétariat in Berne — an institution which is constantly growing larger and more effective — we stand in the most intimate relationship. We cannot sufficiently express our thanks here for their constant desire to fulfil every one of our wishes; but I will repeat what I have said last year that they look upon us as one of the earliest and a model Group and that they expect performance accordingly.

In order to express better my own appreciation of the Auslandschweizerwerk, I would quote the article from the pen of our old friend Dr. A. Lätt, the President of the Auslandschweizer Kommission, which appears in the January issue of the Echo Suisse:— "Ein Jahr der Hoffnung — ein Jahr der Erfüllung." The magnificent tribute of our homeland to her compatriots abroad, expressed in the munificence of the Frs. 680,000 collected on the First of August last year in favour of the Auslandschweizerwerk, is our incentive to greater effort, greater service and greater loyalty, in the same measure as it will bring greater comfort and solace, spiritually and bodily, to thousands of our compatriots who have suffered from war, disaster and mischances abroad.

Dr. Lätt says at the conclusion of his article:— "Möge uns der Friede bewahrt bleiben, dass wir alles schaffen können wie wir es haben möchten. Das ist schliesslich der heisseste Wunsch — der alle andern enthält und erfüllt — Friede. Gott schütze die Schweiz."

CITY SWISS CLUB.

In our last week's issue we announced that the Secretary would not be satisfied until such time as he had an average attendance of a hundred members at the monthly meetings.

We gather from Mr. Bingguely that he has now planned a really attractive surprise which will no doubt help the February meeting to beat all previous records in attendance.

Our highy esteemed Minister, M. Paravicini, has kindly consented to be present.

Our well-known compatriot, M. Robert de Traz who gave such a treat to many of our compatriots on Tuesday, will also be a guest of honour.

Monsieur Sauret, Directeur de l'Institut Français, has also been invited to attend the meeting.

The Swiss Orchestral Society under the leadership of our 'sympathique friend' Mr. Dick has kindly agreed to come and delight us with a concert of light music during the evening.

The Swiss Accordion Club under the leadership of our enthusiastic friend Gandon will complete that touch of Swiss harmony which is one of the features of the Swiss colony.

Never before has the monthly meeting promised to be so attractive and interesting, and thanks to all those compatriots who have promised to co-operate, we can look forward to a really wonderful evening.

If time permits it is hoped that one or two Swiss songs may be sung by the assembly so that the meeting may be turned into a typically Swiss evening.

A large number of members have promised to attend, and the Committee would strongly urge everybody to reserve their seat in due time so that they shall not have the same difficulty as was experienced in connection with the January meeting as far as seating accommodation is concerned.

May I now let you into a little secret? ..... Pagani's are preparing a real menu de Luxe ..... Every member will therefore appreciate that it would be helpful to them to know whether they are safe in preparing for a hundred guests .....

All good compatriots will no doubt wish to come along and *bring as many guests as possible* to give full encouragement to the Committee and to treat themselves to a first-class entertainment.

UNIONE TICINESE.

Malgrado che l'avviso di convocazione promettesse una seduta interessante, dato che le trattande elencate oltre ad essere insolitamente numerose rispecchiavano il nuovo indirizzo culturale e patriottico che il Sodalizio si è dato, soltanto un numero modesto di soci è intervenuto Domenica, 22 gennaio a.c. alla prima Assemblea Generale Ordinaria di quest'anno dell'*Unione Ticinese* — Sezione Autonoma della *Pro Ticino* — alla Sede Sociale.

Dopo la lettura e l'approvazione del verbale della precedente Assemblea Generale, il Presidente, Socio Giuseppe Eusebio, svolge tre proposte che la Direzione era stata incaricata l'anno scorso di presentare. La prima venne addottata all'unanimità; l'aggiunta all'art. VII dello statuto sociale per permettere l'assunzione di soci contribuenti. Le altre due proposte, come fece rilevare il socio benemerito, Sig. Oscar Gambazzi, metteranno alla prova il coraggio della Direzione, dato che si tratta di due iniziative affatto nuove alla cui realizzazione le condizioni attuali della colonia non sono per nulla favorevoli. Si tratta dell'introduzione di un esame a concorso in lingua italiana, per il quale il Comitato Centrale della Pro Ticino ha offerto di stanziare dei premi. Con questo mezzo la Società spera di incoraggiare lo studio della nostra lingua specialmente fra i figli di ticinesi che non hanno avuto la fortuna di recarsi in Patria. Allo stesso scopo gioverà l'altra iniziativa; la fondazione di una Sezione femminile. Viene così colmato un vuoto nella vita della Colonia che esisteva ormai da anni. Alla creazione di tale Sezione, che si reggerà indipendentemente della controparte maschile collaborerà la Signora Teresa Lunghi-Rezzonico, sempre pronta a dare il suo valido appoggio ad opera patriottica.

Eccellente, sia per stile che per il suo contenuto, il rapporto della Commissione per la Revisione dei Conti e Gestione dello scorso anno, letto dal Sig. Gambazzi. Dopo aver rilevato la saldezza delle finanze sociali, il rapporto passa a elogiare il lavoro svolto dalla Direzione ed anche a biasimare quei soci che ancora sono in arretrato col pagamento delle quote annuali, e biasima pure quelli che lasciano a desiderare nell'adempimento di altri doveri sociali; il tutto