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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE LONDON GROUP OF THE NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE.



A. F. SUTER
President
Nouvelle Société
Helvétique
(London Group).

The Annual General Meeting of the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, took place on Friday, January 21st, at the "Foyer Suisse," some thirty members being present.

Mr. A. F. Suter, President opened the meeting, reading out a letter by the Swiss Minister, Monsieur C. R. Paravicini, who was, owing to his departure for Switzerland, unable to be present.

The Presidential annual report was then read, and as same will be published *in extenso* in this paper, no comments are necessary at this stage.

The Treasurer's and Auditor's Reports, which showed a satisfactory result, were unanimously accepted.

The re-election of the Council for the new year of office then took place, under the temporary Chairmanship of Mr. W. B. Sigrist, all the former members being confirmed, namely:

Mr. A. F. Suter, President; Messrs. Wm. Beckmann, C. Campart (Hon. Secretary); Dr. H. W. Egli, Dr. Ch. Ferrière, G. Godet, G. Keller, F. Kibiger, Theo. Ritter, M. Rothlisberger, P. Savoie, J. A. Seiffert, J. Weber and O. Wetzel.

Amongst sundry items the Society decided, with acclamation, to support the official organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain, the Swiss Observer, by taking out five annual subscriptions.

After fixing up the dates of meetings and lectures, the meeting was closed shortly after 10 o'clock.

THE LONDON SWISS RIFLE TEAM.

The Annual Prize Distribution Dinner of the London Swiss Rifle Team, took place on Saturday last, at the Glendower Hotel, S.W. —

There is at present in the Colony a strong current of good will and better understanding prevalent. Only last week we were acquainted that the difficulties which existed between the two Churches, have at long last been almost settled, and that a new era of mutual collaboration has dawned.

Now comes the glad tidings, that the differences, which unfortunately existed for some time between the old Swiss Rifle Association and the new London Swiss Rifle Team will be, before long, settled in an amicable manner.

This is indeed good news, and we hope, that another Swiss Society, which played for many years an honourable part in the Colony, will put its house in order too, so that the year 1938 will have started under a good augury. —

And so it ought to be, it is a most distressing picture to see Swiss living far away from their mother country, quarrelling amongst themselves, when unity should prevail. We are on this earth, for but a little time, requiring the warmth of human kindness and friendship, and we simply cannot afford, in this short span of time, to harbour grievances, over often trifling matters. The trouble is unfortunately that we think ourselves, at times, too important, and that differences which could be solved with good will and sound common sense, are made to look like unsurmountable barriers. —

After this homily, which I hope my readers will not take amiss, I will say right away, that last Saturday's dinner was one of the jolliest functions which I have attended in the Colony. These Swiss "sharp-shooters" are good company, and they make their guests feel at home. — When I mentioned to some of my friends, that I was going to "dine and wine" with my old friends of the shooting fraternity at the Glendower Hotel, they gravely shook their heads, saying, that I ought to have had enough by now, after having sat and eaten through innumerable Banquets, danced with a score of lovely ladies, shed tears over farewell parties, slept half way through cinema trade shows, listened to lectures, trying to look intellectual, shouted myself hoarse

at ice-hockey matches, felt sentimental at concerts of Swiss music, looked gloomy at funerals, sympathised with old age, feeling as old as they, told the youngsters of the Colony that I felt and drank every day "Younger's," spent a small fortune on Aspirin tablets and taxi's, etc.

Being always open to friendly advice, I reasoned with myself that there was some truth in their allegations. I have certainly swallowed a few gallons of *Consommé*, finished off at least half a poultry farm, depleted some of the Scottish salmon streams, ate more grass and salad than an average sized "vache," had ice cream to freeze a whole consignment of Canterbury lamb, drank cocktails, wines, spirits, and occasionally water (the latter principally early the next morning), and last but not least, added an extra stone to my already considerable weight, which caused much annoyance and perplexity in certain quarters.

What was there to be done? Well I simply could not refuse to attend such a friendly gathering. And oh! what a dinner, I can hardly refrain my enthusiasm, there was a lovely *Homard froid*, *sauce Mayonnaise* and a *sumptuous Hors d'Oeuvres* followed by a delicious *Scotch Broth*. Next course was a *Volaille Portugaise* with *Chou fleur Polonoise*, *Pommes Purée* and *Salade* and in conclusion *Poire Melba* and *Framage*, indeed a fare fit for Kings; one of my table neighbours told me afterwards that he had never eaten such a fine dinner, so exquisitely cooked, and I gladly pass on the compliment to my good friend Mr. Alfred Schmid, who looked so well after the company.

It goes without saying that after such a fine feast everybody felt very happy, and presently the oratorical part was opened by Mr. H. Senn, who expressed his great pleasure at seeing amongst the company Mr. De Brunner, the President, and Mr. Ch. Strubin, the Treasurer of the Swiss Rifle Association, he hoped that, before long, the two institutions would again sail under the old flag, and that old scores would be wiped out. Mr. De Brunner, who replied to Mr. Senn, received a hearty ovation on rising, he too gave vent to a feeling of gratitude that a new spirit has animated both camps to try to solve their differences, and he sincerely promised to collaborate for a complete re-union. Various other speakers spoke in the same happy vein, and let us now hope that deeds will follow words.

The prize-distribution then took place and the company sat together long after Big Ben struck twelve.

A really fine and enjoyable evening.

ST.

MAN FRAEGT SICH!

The following article has appeared in our contemporary "Die Tat":

Feste aller Art werden gefeiert — an allen Ecken und Enden unseres schönen Schweizerlandes. Kaum ein ruhiger, festloser Sonntag mehr. Neue Pflichten werden durch diese Feste geboren — denn, so stehts in den Zeitungen "es ist Pflicht jeden Bürgers" zum Gelingen dies und das beizutragen. Selbst die Regierungen, die Räte aller Art, die Vorsteher von Gemeinden usw. usw., sie alle nehmen teil und müssen teilnehmen an den Festen.

Nach und nach aber fragt man sich nun doch in den ersten Kreisen der Bevölkerung, wohin dieser Festtrubel unser Volk führen soll!

Alle diese vielen Feste, sie sind kein Kampfmittel gegen die Krise, sie sind ein Gift, das für eine kurze Zeit aufreizt, nachher aber um so unheilvoller sich auswirkt. Sind nicht viele dieser Feste einfach eine Gelegenheit, dem Volke das Geld aus dem Sacke zu locken für nichts? Noch nie ist ein Volk stark und widerstandsfähig geworden durch Spiele und Feste. Noch immer waren diese ein Zeichen des Unterganges. Das alte Rom stellt für ewige Zeiten das Beispiel, das grosse, warnende Zeichen.

In vielen Städten sind die ersten Verdunkelungsübungen gar zu Volksbelustigungen ausgeartet, und in Basel hat das Polizeidepartement Freinacht bis um 2 Uhr gegeben, damit nach Abbruch der Verdunkelung gebührend gefeiert werden kann. Wir sehen in solchen Vorkommnissen eine nicht zu leicht zu nehmende Demoralisierung des Volkes. Betrübtlich ist, dass offizielle Regierungsstellen der Sache noch Vorschub leisten — jedenfalls auf die Vorstellungen von Wirten hin.

We fully agree with the above statement, and it might interest our readers to know, that we have, as far back as August, 1934, (Swiss Observer, No. 669) written in one of our articles, dealing with these innumerable festivals as follows:

"... One often refuses to take these laments at their face value, when one considers that enormous numbers of our countrymen travel year in and year out to the various festivals. It is said that these arrangements are fully justified, as they create work and thus improve the economical situation of the country, but just the opposite is the truth, and the fortune of the public (Volksvermögen) suffers by these never-ending festivals, and they are certainly no antedote for the unhappy economical conditions at home.

We therefore come back to some of the statements which have been made by various orators, namely that it is the patriotic duty of every Swiss citizen to reduce unnecessary expenses and to live in a simpler way, in short to accommodate himself to the altered conditions, like other countries have had to do. This does not mean that our people should be less happy or would get less out of life; but it would go a long way to do away with the dissatisfaction of those of our countrymen, who through force of circumstances are barred from earning their daily bread.

We do not think of those who are never satisfied, whatever you do for them, but of those thousands and thousands who do not know what the next day will have in store for them, of those unemployed who are getting on in years and whom nobody wants, of those who walk with embittered hearts through the streets, because they feel that they are outcasts and dependent. We think of all the young men, who must ask themselves, what will become of them, when they have to spend their best years in idleness. What must their thoughts be, when they see how in East and West, and in South and North the flags are hoisted for all sorts of festivals, when countless speakers tell the people what they should do to conquer the numerous obstacles, when they say that it is the patriotic duty of everyone to stand together in sorrowful and hard times, and to help those who have, often through no fault of their own, landed in Queer Street; when the result, say of a shooting, music, gymnastic or Yodel competition is far more important to the masses, than the warning given by some of our responsible statesmen. What does the country benefit, when on every possible occasion patriotic cheers are raised, and patriotic songs sung, when the very existence of the country is in danger?"

ST.

EMIGRATION OF SWISS INDUSTRIES.

By OSCAR WETZEL.

(Continuation).

We read, for instance, in the report of the Nestlé & Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Co., in 1919, the following passage which characterizes what I have just said:—

"The consequences of the War, which in certain cases have been detrimental economically seen, have luckily not struck our Company in the same way. The geographical distribution of our centres of production has had, as a result, to distribute the risks owing to strikes, transport crises and shortages of certain raw materials. Our Swiss, Norwegian and Dutch factories have been working under the most disagreeable conditions, but those in other countries have on the contrary been generally favoured and their production has developed considerably."

In many cases, we find that the newly started factory abroad brings certain work to its Mother Company, in compensation, of what has been taken away.

Remarks in this direction can be found in reports of a number of Swiss companies, like Gardy, when starting their factory in France, and Saurer in the same country — also Escher Wyss

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when starting a subsidiary company in Italy. Coming back to the Nestlé & Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Co., we can see that each time a factory was started abroad a large number of Swiss machines have been utilised and are continuously required as the different markets develop. This is naturally accentuated by the fact that these different foreign factories are able to work much more intensively for their respective clients. In many cases, it can be taken as absolutely given that the turnover in the new foreign factories is many times in excess of the turnover that would be possible under the very best conditions if the goods still came from Switzerland.

We read in a Report made by Bally in 1920:—

“These participations offer us a great advantage as far as sales abroad are concerned by allowing us to compete and distribute our manufacture better according to our requirements, and according to the tastes of every individual country. Besides, owing to the fact that these foreign factories are working as national enterprises in the countries where they are situated, a lot of difficulties have been overcome which were made by the different Authorities and clients.”

Another Company writes in their Report:— “The creation of factories abroad has consolidated our Sales in France and Belgium, which otherwise would have been totally lost owing to the depreciation of the franc.”

And another Company writes:—

“The results obtained in our factory in Germany has given us entire satisfaction. We have succeeded first of all in keeping our clients in Germany which we otherwise would have lost, after about 50 years activity in that country.”

We find even cases where the financial results of the foreign factories have helped the Swiss Mother Company to contribute, or even absorb, the losses on their Swiss factories, and have allowed the Company as a whole to close their accounts with a surplus. For instance, Bally have been able to pay a dividend of 5% for 21 and 22 owing to the favourable results of their foreign companies.

Unfavourable Consequences.

Under normal economic conditions, it is rather an exception that the results obtained by the creation of a new factory in a foreign country are unfavourable from the point of view of the individual enterprise, because the directors naturally will have very carefully surveyed the conditions before such a step is taken.

The project of starting a new factory is generally considered as a very serious step, and is studied months or even years beforehand, and if it does not appear sufficiently attractive the project generally falls through. I daresay all of you know of such cases. We can mention as an example an already old case — the Swiss Locomotive and Machine factory of Winterthur. This Company in 1880 intended to start a factory in Italy. This idea was dropped because the general business conditions in Switzerland improved very much.

The depreciation of many foreign monies, to which I have already alluded before, has also caused many disagreeable surprises. Many new companies have been started abroad by Swiss firms with good hard Swiss francs, and by the time a profit was earned on them such profit was in form of devalued money. These are hard facts that many Swiss firms have had to swallow, although theoretically the value of an industrial enterprise always remains the same however much the rate of exchange fluctuates.

Remarks of this kind have been found in quite a number of yearly reports of Swiss companies. In the years after the War, it was generally the firms established in Germany that provided the Swiss industrialists with great disappointments.

We should also mention here the risks that these foreign companies have to take in case of war. If we come back to the results and losses of our Swiss industries during the last War, we find that in quite a number of cases the factories abroad have been taken over by the respective Governments, as belonging to partially Swiss and partially enemy proprietors — and how are you going to argue this point with a Government that is fighting for its life.

Again, we find cases where Swiss factories have been demolished owing to war operations. French factories in the same district were after the War recompensed, whereas Swiss factories had to suffer their losses. In many cases, I am afraid it was considered as a joke on them.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF EMIGRATION FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE SWISS NATIONAL ECONOMY.

Unfavourable Consequences.

The first, and very probably the most important unfavourable consequence of emigration is that we start centres of production which later

on become competitors to our national industries. If the tendencies of industrialisation, which we find in certain countries, are the result of natural evolution, the participation of Swiss industrialists in this movement will contribute to render their companies independent from the protection of our Swiss industries.

The development of production in such Swiss Works abroad undoubtedly means the weakening of our industries at home. Not only are the Orders, which formerly have been executed at home, lost for our market, but the emigration means also a loss from the point of view of our Swiss labour, which often is obliged to follow such enterprises.

The Swiss industrialists abroad easily become competitors to the enterprises left in Switzerland. This is the case generally if the Mother Company has not full control over the foreign Works.

We find, then, that the new enterprises, after having satisfied the markets in which they are established, fiercely attack other markets abroad where the Mother Company may still be doing some business, or they even go so far as to tackle the Swiss market by offering goods made abroad under more ideal conditions from the point of view of cost, and selling them in Switzerland, in spite of import duties, at cheaper prices. It seems, therefore, to be most essential that whenever a Swiss Company starts its activities in foreign countries, steps are taken to assign the market which is to be covered by the new organisation. The best security naturally lies in the financial control of the respective companies.

The complaint made by Swiss manufacturers remaining in their own country of the competition made to them by their own compatriots abroad is already ancient. It has been heard when the emigration of Swiss industries first began, and during the last two decades of the 19th century took disquietening proportions, especially in the textile industry.

Here is a little example, read in a report of the Chamber of Commerce in Zurich in 1897, page 66:—

“Our Swiss competitors in Italy have thrown during the past year great quantities of textile goods on the Swiss market at real dumping prices (Schleuderpreise) and Swiss spinners have suffered grievously.”

But the danger does not only lie in this fact. Indirectly, we find many cases where Swiss manufacturers after having started their own factories in foreign countries lose all interest in arrangements of commercial treaties between Switzerland and the respective countries. They go even further and become the most decided defenders of protectionist tendencies in the countries where their new factories are established. This is naturally a secondary development which is most deplorable especially as the damage done can be quite immeasurable. But, please do not believe that this is a new phenomenon — No, we find already in the years 1665/68, when there was question of conclusion of a commercial treaty with Austria, that the Swiss established in Vorarlberg were adverse to certain concessions as regards exports to Austria. In 1885 when new negotiations with Austria were taking place we find the same case again and towards the end of the 19th century we have a similar observation to make regarding the Swiss established in Italy.

(To be continued.)

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Wednesday, February 2nd, at 7.30 p.m. — Société de Secours Mutuels — Monthly Meeting, at 74, Charlotte Street, W.1.

Wednesday, February 16th — at 8 p.m. — Swiss Mercantile Society — Annual General Meeting — at Swiss House, 34/35, Fitzroy Square, W.

Saturday, March 26th — Annual Banquet and Ball — Swiss Club Birmingham — at the Midland Hotel, Birmingham (Reception: 6.30, Dinner 7 o'clock.)

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