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NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE.

The London Group of the N.S.H. held its 31st Annual General Meeting on Saturday, 2nd February, at the Dorchester Hotel. Members and guests assembled at 1.15 p.m. in these delightful surroundings for what the President, Mr. A. Fred. Suter, called in his welcome speech the Society's "Victory Luncheon." M. le Ministre and Madame Ruegger were present as guests of honour. In the gathering one noticed the well known faces of the presidents of the various Swiss Clubs and Societies, the representatives of the Church and a number of other guests, amongst whom the towering figure of Professor William Rappard was undoubtedly the most popular. An animated atmosphere reigned throughout the lunch. After drinking the toast to "the King" and "La Suisse," the assembly adjourned to the Golden Room, where the President opened the business part of the meeting by asking Mr. C. Campart to read the minutes of the previous year's Annual Meeting. These duties were discharged by the Honorary Secretary with great efficiency. After 31 years of office Mr. Campart, the first and only Hon. Secretary of the Group, is retiring, much to the regret of all members who have learned to appreciate his thoroughness and that touch of individuality which he succeeded in putting into his work. Indeed that neatly kept Minute Book which he will pass on to his successor is one of the treasured possessions of the Society.

Mr. Suter then rose to deliver his Presidential Annual Report:

"In presenting to you the 31st Annual Presidential Address on the standing and the activity of the London Group of the N.S.H. during the year 1945. I have to admit, right at the outset, that this period has not been a year of great progress.

I would remind you, that for the period of the war, the council had deliberately decided upon a programme of activity restricted to authentic information exclusively, and this programme was filled by our Member, J. G. Keller, to our very great satisfaction. With the end of the war in May, Mr. Keller terminated his monthly addresses in accordance with his original intention.— Before that time a small committee of investigation had been formed to examine suitable means for the further activity of the Group, but had not arrived at any definite conclusions, so that at the end of the war we drifted into a period of shall we call it 'war weariness,' or was it that intense desire by everyone to rush home for a spell of sunshine and that fresh mountain air which cures?— Whatever the reason, in due course the lassitude disappeared and we resumed our meetings in November.

In the meantime I had been given the opportunity of contacting personally the S.S.E. in Berne, where I had a number of discussions with Dr. Latt, Mlle Briod, Dr. Olgiati and others. To the result of these interviews I will refer later, as they fit into the framework of this report.

Regarding the routine activity of the Group, we have held during 1945 five Members' meetings, three special Council meetings and one Combined meeting of the two sections, all at Swiss House, usually on the third Saturday of the month. I am including the Combined meeting in January, 1946, although, strictly speaking, this belongs to the new year, but, since it was the most important meeting relative to the 1945

activity, I find it necessary to regard it as part of the 1945 sessions. — Apart from Mr. Keller's addresses at these monthly meetings, we enjoyed an excellent *exposé* of the constitution and work of the International Red Cross by Col. de Wattville in February last.

As for other activities of the Group, outside our monthly meetings, I wish to mention in the first place the showing of the film "Marie Louise," which, by the arrangement to show it publicly at the Academy Cinema, it is true, deprived the members of the Colony of seeing the picture free of charge, but proved to be of major importance for the Swiss film industry at large — and this we consider to be the greater of the two services. The Colony was specially invited to visit the Cinema during the first week of the show and their splendid attendance made it possible for a dozen ladies of the Group in national costume to make a collection for the Don Suisse amounting to over £186. The money was placed in the custody of the Legation.

In April your President had the pleasure to accompany Dr. Lindt to Manchester, where the latter repeated his fine lecture first given at the 'Dorchester.' This was a pleasant event for our compatriots in Manchester, who had long clamoured for such visits. In May we presided over an address to the Colony at the Dorchester by Dr. Hans Zbinden; this was attended very meagerly, inducing the lecturer to say very gracefully that 'it was the minority which counted.' In October your President was invited to assist at the Initiation meeting of the new N.S.H. Group Dunfermline in Fife, Scotland. He had been acting as sponsor or godfather to the Group. Our diplomatic agent in the North, Mr. Hofstetter of Balloch, was also present and we received a very warm and patriotic welcome.

I gladly take this opportunity to express the thanks of the Group to our Minister and his colleagues at the Legation for their ever ready assistance and good counsel; we feel we have enjoyed their goodwill in a very full measure, and if we have not been able to attract the members of the Legation to our meetings, I believe that this is chiefly due to the fact that these meetings were held on Saturday afternoons, a time when everybody who can, goes out of town, in peace time as in war. This disability, Ladies and Gentlemen, will now be removed and we return in future to our evening meetings, on the third Tuesday in the month, to our old home, the Conway Hall in Red Lion Square, Holborn. Most of you present know and like this Hall well; it is very pleasant and holds about 100 people. We have retained very pleasant relations also with our three Churches, and our sister societies in London, Manchester and Dunfermline, but I trust I may be allowed the observation that during the year I have noted an apparent slackening of cohesion among us as a Colony. This is to be deplored; the Colony should not consist of a series of watertight compartments; every society has its functions and aims and its individual life, but every society is the servant of the whole Colony, with the ulterior aim of existing and working for the Colony as a whole and supporting to the best of their ability the efforts and aims of the other sections. We know very well the great difficulties we all have had:— Our sons and daughters were away at the war or at war work; many of us were and still are evacuated from London, and most of us have little time left to attend more than one

society's functions; none the less, it is only by voluntary mutual support that the strength and vigour of the Colony remains at its best. One factor of great value to the Colony I would like to mention here:—the new standing committee of the National Celebration in August which has now been placed on such a safe basis as to ensure a Grand National Fête each year — a long desired ideal of the community finally achieved.

One very noticeable thing and one which is not particular to our Group only is the Ageing of our Society. I have already spoken of the absence of our sons and daughters, but a much greater disadvantage to our Colony is the impossibility of immigration. Our young generation at home has been waiting for years to emigrate again; how long this universal ban will last we cannot tell, but the prospects are certainly not rosy. This condition hits us very hard in this sense, that it is difficult or impossible to find young people to take our places. In our own council we have eight members who retire this year, all men of many years' useful service, and we have come to the conclusion that a smaller number than the maximum of 14 will have to serve the purpose.

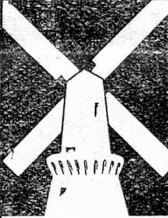
It is undeniable that the need and desire of the retention and more intense cultivation of our old cultural standards and values is as great in us as in the British race, and those fortunate ones who have already been granted a glimpse of our beloved homeland are more conscious of this than any. It is therefore in this direction that the future and hope of our Group lies. To this end the council has decided upon a more vigorous activity for this coming year and has been promised the full help of the S.S.E.. More personalities of national importance will visit and speak to us, to whom we hope to offer the same facilities as in pre-war days. We shall again obtain copies of the new films appearing in Switzerland; with this section of our activity, although not the most important one, we have already made a good start. The film now to be shown, viz., three reels of 'Prisoners of War' with French diction will be shown at a trade cinema shortly, free of charge. For our lady members who have been so faithful to us we have to offer greater diversion, possibly in the shape of one or two outings to places of interest during the summer, visits to exhibitions, a dinner or two during the winter, and perhaps even a real dance. Then we shall have under consideration the possibility of re-instituting a permanent secretariat in charge of a suitable Swiss secretary, but I admit now that this proposal is likely to give us a number of headaches.

As a warning, I have to remind you of the experience of the Group after the first world war. During the war we had registered an enormous growth of membership under the very able guidance of the permanent secretary, Dr. Arnold Latt, but shortly after the conclusion of the war a slow but steady decline set in which made it impossible to maintain the standing secretariat and some years later brought us almost to the brink of extinction. To-day, therefore, we must try at all costs to prevent a similar fatality. This is not an *apologia pro vita sua*, but the expression of a humble yet firm hope that we may find the means to prevent a similar loss of value in our usefulness to the Colony.

It has been suggested that we should approach the S.S.E. for monetary assistance. You are, of course, aware that the London Group has for many

years sent annual contributions to the parent society in aid of the 'Auslandschweizerwerk,' and that we have fortunately never been forced to ask for assistance ourselves. To-day I think it would be less possible for Berne to help us financially for this reason, that the S.S.E. have undertaken tasks of assistance to war victims of Swiss nationality of a magnitude which require vastly more funds than the organisation possesses. In this connection I may mention that at the last session of the C.S.E. one of the members, Bittel, who had completed a tour through the Swiss Colonies in South America, is of the opinion that the S.S.E. should appeal to the Swiss Colonies abroad for assistance for this purpose. I feel sure that you members will all be glad now that you have, by contributing your savings to the Special N.S.H. Fund, given us the chance to show our recognition of the great work of the S.S.E.. Our special fund now stands at £200 or thereabouts and we still have to receive the Manchester 'Jass winnings' which have been set aside for this purpose. Contributions are still gratefully accepted, and when Exchange Control permits, the fund will be remitted to the Secretariat in Berne.

I would not terminate this report without reference to the death of one of our members during the year, a Swiss of very great distinction, Sir Hanns Vischer, C.M.G., C.B.E. Although he had resigned shortly before his death, his membership was a great honour to our Group and many of you will remember the exquisite lecture he gave to us in 1944 on his activity in




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the service of the British Colonial Office. The memory of his fine personality and his outstanding achievements in life will remain green within us.

But let me end on a brighter note than that on which I started this report. We have outlived this Victory Year, but victory is not yet, neither in political matters, nor within our own small circle. The work must go on, irrespective of personalities, and it is the obligation of the council to attract and select younger men of quality to take over their work when the time comes. After eighteen years of chairmanship of the Group, I have now decided to resign this office, and this will therefore be the last report I have the honour to lay before you. You will have to find the third President of the London Group within the next six months, and I will give you what assistance I can."

Both the Minutes and the Presidential Annual Report were accepted by the meeting with great applause.

The "pièce de résistance" of the afternoon was beyond doubt the speech of the Swiss Minister, M. Paul Ruegger, which I give hereunder in extenso:

"To-day, on the occasion of the first annual dinner of peace-time organised by the 'Nouvelle Société Helvétique,' we may also — I believe rightly — indulge, for one moment, in some glances at the past.

When, about a year ago, I had, for the first time, the privilege of establishing personal contact with the London branch of your great association — with which I always have been particularly happy to be most intimately connected, in Switzerland as well as abroad — I was able (some of you may remember this) — to forecast a rather optimistic view of the future; whilst, of course, also expressing my own and the Swiss Legation's deepest appreciation of what your Society had done during the years of a bitter struggle which has marked the lives of every one of us — Swiss abroad as well as Swiss citizens at home.

As to the past, I cannot but repeat this year what I tried to express twelve months ago:

That a considerable, a great debt of gratitude is owed by the Swiss of London to the constant endeavours of this branch of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique in the most difficult hours.

Gratitude, I am afraid, is not one of the most top ranking among the many outstanding and shining qualities of our ancient and time-honoured Republic. Members of our Government, leaders of thought and of action in many fields, know this well. But gratitude, this may be our consolation, is hardly established more firmly in other forms of Government under other régimes — we need but revert to those proverbs which may be familiar to many of you.

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Still, I believe I may say, and I am proud to do so, that, when all is told, our Swiss Colonies abroad have a *deeper* sense of this most essential of human qualities than many communities that lead a more sheltered existence than our Swiss citizens abroad; these Swiss with whom I have the privilege of being familiar, who are shaping their existence along new lines, but who, in their hearts, are faithful always to their motherland and, *because* they are clinging staunchly to this faith, are true to other moral values also.

This gratitude I wish at all events to express to-day.

Towards your Committee and their chairman, but especially also towards our friend, M. Gottfried Keller, who in his so appreciated regular talks on 'current events' to the members of your society has given you what in times of war and crisis, members of our Colony most needed: regular information about the life, the will of resistance, the aspirations of our small, but great country.

News which was so essential to those Swiss of this metropolis who, being deprived of our newspapers, were anxious to hear reliable, impartial and patriotically imparted information about the happenings at home.

Retrospectively, the merits of these regularly given home-news — inspired always by a high sense of patriotic duty — must be acknowledged by us even more gratefully to-day than they were in the days of the flying-bombs and the V.2's.

What was then taken, perhaps, as a matter of course, appears to-day as what it is — an achievement.

An achievement which will remain inscribed in the annals of the London 'N.S.H.'

For it stands as an example of what your Association will do and can do as an outlying redoubt abroad of the *réduit* of our land-locked country.

An outlying *réduit*, indeed. And I may recall also, that when, now over a year ago, I called upon your patriotic qualities of resistance and of confidence, I also then said — some of you may remember this — that whilst fortunately the freedom of the press, always so happily and gloriously maintained in England, never brought our Colony to straightened circumstances as has been the case in countries bordering our own, Switzerland would doubtless soon be in a position to re-establish the traditional currents of thought and of intercourse with her sons and daughters in this great country.

This also has, by the will of God, been most happily achieved. A year ago, amidst the flying bombs, I ventured to promise you the arrival of Swiss scientists and artists, that Swiss lectures would be organised, that Swiss exhibitions would be held in a near future. The events did not gainsay this prediction.

Lectures by eminent Swiss have been held since V-day, also upon invitation of the N.S.H., whose members had the opportunity of listening to at least one philosopher. All this went hand in hand with the talks of great interest to our country so admirably arranged in the City Swiss Club by their Chairman, Colonel Bon.

To-day, also, we may, perhaps, have the rare, the great privilege of hearing the voice of a man, who, in economics, in history and — moved by

patriotic feelings and at the price of a great personal sacrifice; also in the field of public service — is one of our great national figures: Professor William Rappard.

Professor Rappard was the representative of the Federal Council at the Peace Conference of 1918/19. He had — I may say this to-day, in London, having witnessed his efforts, being then myself a young secretary at our Foreign Office — a probably more decisive influence than any other living Swiss in the fact that the neutral soil of *Geneva* was selected as the centre of the first world organisation. An organisation sprung into being from the world of thoughts which haunted the ideas of all real and great statesmen since Henri IV. of France and Sully — until the first Peace Treaties, concluding the first world war, taken up and continued to-day on other lines, made it a reality. I need not say more and I will not say more, knowing Professor Rappard's feelings. His presence here to-day, means, at all events, a great privilege to the London branch of the 'N.S.H.'

A year ago, I ventured to say that when the day would come, we would endeavour to further the necessary current of thought and of achievement, between Switzerland and Great Britain, also by the means of Swiss exhibitions. Two Swiss exhibitions will certainly be opened in London in 1946: the Swiss book exhibition in March and the Swiss architectural exhibition in the autumn. Like our confederates of the Ticino, I will be superstitious in saying: "*non c'è due senza tre,*" and I therefore foresee, hoping that events will not gainsay this, that *at least* one other very great cultural, artistic exhibition may and will be held in England in a not remote future, an exhibition which may show Swiss art at its best and most nobly expressed.

Likewise, of course, we are anxious to see similar initiative coming from the great country which offers us a traditional and generous hospitality.

We may expect that, in a very near future, our people in Switzerland may witness, in an exhibition, the outward signs of the prowess and the means of the members of the Royal Air Force. They will then

realise again not only what has been done by the gallant warriors of the Battle of Britain, but also what British aviators do as pioneers of the future peaceful traffic across the continents and the seas, a traffic in which their Swiss comrades are happy and proud to join them.

Now, as to the *future*, which may often appear to be enshrouded in impenetrable veils.

One thing is certain. Switzerland will give, as always, her wholehearted support to all endeavours towards peaceful and just settlement of international disputes and to all efforts of broadening and strengthening international administration — a field in which she has done herself a by no means negligible pioneers work. In many technical fields, moreover, her association and active co-operation with new organisations will doubtless be increasing and be encouraged to increase.

All this is not in opposition to our country's desire to uphold the *traditional status* of Switzerland. This status — the origin of which is attributed by our historians to the father of Marignano in 1515, but which appears to be even earlier, dating back to the days of Bruder Claus — this status which was recognised centuries later, in 1815, to be 'in the real interest of Europe,' must be upheld. In the interests of *all*, even of those who may not fully realise it to-day. The intransigent value of rules of international law, like other branches of law, is in fact not always recognised in time by those whom it may concern. The special status of Switzerland — the basis of all humanitarian activities permanently and safely developed on our soil — may not be known to all; it is recognised by treaty and by international law, and those who earnestly and honestly strive for human progress and understanding in all continents realise its purpose. It is not merely a safety-valve in case of international conflicts. It does not even merely signify a clause of re-insurance in an — as yet — loopholed world organisation, a clause thus strengthening the chief aim: security. It means that, if things come to the worst, humanitarian activities and humanity itself are not outlawed. Therefore, among all maxims of State, the time-honoured Swiss maxim of permanent

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neutrality — as expressed by 'Bruder Claus' even before Marignano, and even more purified, as it may be in future, ranks, surely, highest, amongst any maxims of States so far existing in history.

To those who criticize this status, we may humbly before the Almighty, proudly in the face of mankind, put this question: How many lives has your nation's attitude saved or benefited? Switzerland's barely more than four million inhabitants in sheltering the International Red Cross and through their own humanitarian activities have surely benefited *several* times their number. Of these other countries, which may say the same? Yes, there is surely one: Great Britain. By the sacrifice of her sons, the splendid spirit of her people and her constant striving for liberty for all, she has saved far more souls from moral annihilation than the sheer number of the population of the United Kingdom. Everlasting gratitude is due to her. Are there other countries? There may surely be. But those who have responded most to highest moral standards appear also nearest to understand our point of view.

The Swiss of Great Britain, who are grateful to their country of residence, may well be proud too of their country of origin. As to the London branch of the 'Nouvelle Société Helvétique,' its members also will follow the glorious motto of the Association: *Pro Helvetica securitate ac dignitate.*"

When the storm of acclamation which followed this magnificently rendered address had died down, there was yet another treat in store for the audience. Every member, and especially every lady member of the N.S.H., was eager to listen to an address by the principal guest, Professor William Rappard, who volunteered to express the thanks of the guests. He elected to talk about the history of the Helvetic Society in Switzerland, of the original stages going back to the 18th century, when its members had a great deal to do with the shaping of the country's destiny, of the time when the old Helvetic Society died an undeserved death on account of the absence of the young people, and of its being reformed, though not without encountering similar difficulties for the same reason. When, just before the first world war, the same necessity for closer patriotic co-operation became again urgent, the daughter of the old Society, under the name of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, was born and has held its important position to the present day. When he went on to compare, in a brilliant causerie interwoven with many an amusing anecdote, the political conditions of 27 years ago with the state of affairs to-day, he held the audience spell-bound for the better part of half an hour. Whilst he jokingly mentioned that it was considered more respectable to be neutral in 1918 than to-day, he ventured to say that during this last war Switzerland had the salvation of many thousands of human lives to her credit, giving the audience sound advice with the words: "Don't be ashamed of your Swiss neutrality."

Prolonged applause greeted this address. Hardly at any time before has a visitor brought home to the Colony Switzerland's spirit in a more inspiring and convincing way than this great warrior on the battlefield of politics and economics.

The Treasurer's Annual Report, presented by Mr. Renz in an exemplary manner, and the Auditor's Report voiced by Mr. Röthlisberger, were heard and ac-

cepted. The usual votes of thanks were proposed and seconded.

The resignation of the Councillors and Auditors followed. Under the able leadership of Col. Anton Bon, as President pro. tem, the routine business was proceeded with on the usual lines. Col. Bon took the opportunity whilst in the interim chair to express his personal opinion that Mr. Suter should be encouraged to stand for re-election for the whole term of 1946 instead of for six months only, in order to allow sufficient time to choose the future President of the Society. It would appear that this view was shared by the majority. The newly elected Council will no doubt bear this in mind when confirming Mr. Suter's appointment for the chair for the current year.

At about 5 p.m. this most interesting meeting came to its end. The assembly once more settled down in groups in the ballroom where tea was served. Mr. Suter then announced the result of the election, appointing the following members to the Council for 1946: Mrs. O. M. Bolla, Messrs. Werner Gamper, Wm. Renz, M. Röthlisberger, W. Schedler, Wm. B. Sigerist, A. Fred. Suter, W. C. Weilenmann. As Auditors, Mr. Röthlisberger and Mr. Weber were re-elected.

A homely and animated atmosphere prevailed for the rest of the afternoon. Mlle. Margret Uden at the piano delighted the party with brilliantly played selections from Schubert and Chopin. It is a pleasure to follow from year to year the progress of this young and promising artist. The Swiss Male Choir, conducted by Mr. E. P. Dick, paid our Society the compliment of turning out in full strength. Nothing is more refreshing than to listen occasionally to the old Swiss folk songs, of which we all keep an echo in our hearts; nothing seems more Swiss to me than to see these sons of the mountains grouped around their leader. Our thanks go to all the artists for their fine performance.

By about 6 p.m. — and all too soon — with the tune of the "Brienzerburli" still ringing in the ears, everyone brushed gaily through the swing doors out into the dark, to take up his or her stand in one of those "fascinating" London queues.

W.B.S.

SWISS BANK CORPORATION.

The Swiss Bank Corporation announce that the accounts for the year 1945 show net profits of S.Frs. 10,627,647 including the carry-forward from the previous year, against S.Frs. 10,510,496 for 1944. The total assets at the end of 1945 amounted to S.Frs. 1,826,427,161 against S.Frs. 1,540,016,463. At the General Meeting, which is to be held in Basle on the 1st of March, 1946, a dividend of 4% will be proposed as for the previous year. The carry-forward will amount to S.Frs. 4,227,647 against S.Frs. 4,110,496 for the previous year.

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