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FIFTY YEARS OF N.S.H. THE SWISS COMMUNITY IN GREAT BRITAIN REPRESENTED AT THE JUBILEE

The London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique is not only the oldest, but also one of the most important groups abroad of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique in Switzerland. It was therefore only right and proper that it should be represented at the Golden Jubilee of the N.S.H. on 1st February in Berne. It was my privilege as a Council member of the London N.S.H. to bring greetings and good wishes at a Dinner at the Gurten-Kulm Hotel on Saturday, 1st February. As the meeting of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad had specially been fixed to coincide with the Jubilee, the other representative of the Swiss Community in Great Britain, Dr. H. B. Knuchel, was also present.

There was an eerie "Föhn" atmosphere in Berne that evening as we drove across the Kirchenfeld bridge, and the giants of the Bernese Oberland Alps, the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau, could be seen extremely clearly — even the light on the Jungfrauoch — as if they were only a few hundred yards away. At the valley station of the Gurtenbahn we changed to the funicular. The Municipality of Berne recently bought the Gurten, so as to preserve it, and no cars are allowed to drive up. From the funicular we had a magnificent view of the town below us, clear and distinct, sparkling with a thousand lights.

A Reception and Dinner were offered to the members of the Commission, former Central Presidents and Foundation Members by the Central Committee of the N.S.H. One of the Vice-Presidents, Prof. Viktor Steiger, was in the chair and welcomed the guests, among whom I should like to mention an old friend of the London Swiss Community, Prof. A. Laett. Dr. H. P. Zschokke, gave an excellent, if rather long talk on the reminiscences of a former Central President. Mr. Paul Gruaz (France) spoke on behalf of the Swiss abroad. Several speakers followed, and it was a pity that those of us who stayed in town had to leave by the last funicular at 11 p.m. Not that we went to bed immediately . . .

At 9 a.m. many of us were at the Swiss National Library to see an interesting exhibition on the history of the Old and the New Helvetic Society.

The Solemn Ceremony took place at the Casino, in the Burgerratssaal, in which the N.S.H. had been founded fifty years ago. The second Vice-President of the Society, Mr. Francesco Bignasca, chaired the meeting in the third of our national languages, Italian. Schoolboys of the "Gymnasium" sang the Hymn of the Helvetische Gesellschaft and Gonzague de Reynold's famous song "Terre haute et féconde". Mr. Peter Wegelin came next with an extremely well-conceived *exposé* on the history of the N.S.H. This was followed by two movements of Mozart's string quartet in G major.

The President of the Society, Mr. Théo Chopard, then gave a brilliant talk on aims and objects of the N.S.H. He also covered some of the negative aspects of the present affluence. After the last two movements of the Mozart quartet, the President of the Confederation, Dr. Ludwig von Moos, gave an official address. The ceremony ended with two more songs by Johann Caspar Lavater.

The Executive Council of the Canton of Berne and the Municipality of Berne gave a cocktail reception, and at 1.30 p.m. a handsome party of about two hundred or more members and guests sat down to a substantial "Bernplatte".

Among the after-dinner speakers were Dr. G. Schürch, President of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, this time in his capacity as Commune Councillor and Director of Finances of Berne, and Regierungsrat Moine, a member of the Cantonal Government.

When the party disbanded at almost 4 p.m., the sky was blue and the sun shone. The breath of spring in the air was a symbol of a happy and prosperous future of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique.

The 1964 year book of the Society has just been published. It contains many facts about its history and interesting articles from the pen of prominent Swiss. We shall refer to it at a later date.

Mariann.

PERSONAL

It is with deep regret that we announce the death of U. August Keyser at the age of 78. He was born and educated in Lucerne and underwent extensive training in the hotel and catering trade. After having been in France and Egypt, he came to England. His enthusiasm, knowledge and efficiency were responsible for his rapid advancement to the rank of hotel manager at a comparatively early stage of his career.

During the second world war, he managed the Palace Hotel in Bath as host to the Emperor of Ethiopia during the latter's exile in England. Until he retired a few years ago, he was General Manager of the Grand Hotel in Folkestone.

Whilst in London in his younger days, he was a member of the Union Helvetia and of the Swiss Male Choir.

He was a man who made friends easily through his kindness, modesty and honest character. He leaves many friends and a number of nephews and nieces to whom we express our sympathy.

* * *

We regret to announce the death of two of our readers Mr. J. D. Bernoulli of 8 Dunkirk Road, Southport, Lancs., and of Mr. James Senn of 153 Dartmouth Road, Willesden Green, London N.W.10.

We express our deep sympathy to their families.

UN FIL A LA PATTE

GALA PERFORMANCE IN AID OF THE FRENCH HOSPITAL

The French Hospital and Dispensary in Shaftesbury Avenue in London is not nationalised and, like most free institutions, its finances are very strained. Each year the task of its Committee, on which, incidentally, the Swiss community is also represented, is becoming more and more difficult. In spite of this, the French Hospital has always carried on its work, and in 1963 it cared for 1,076 in-patients and gave 10,650 consultations to out-patients. It has always looked after a number of Swiss patients, and this is why the Swiss Embassy is giving its patronage to the GALA PERFORMANCE on Monday, 23rd March. The Comédie Française is performing "Un fil à la patte" by Georges Feydeau at the Aldwych Theatre. Her Royal Highness Princess Marina, Duchess of Kent, will be present.

Tickets from 5/- to 10 gns. may be obtained from the organiser Irene Edwards, 2a, Trebeck Street, Curzon Street, W.1 (GRO 3278 and 8452).