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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATION AT WIMBLEDON

We were unfortunately not able to report in our last issue on the yearly National Day Celebration of the London Swiss at Wimbledon. Also, owing to our absence in Switzerland the report given below has been stitched together from what we have heard from the many friends who were there.

There were fewer people than on previous similar occasions. The organisers sold approximately 900 tickets, as compared with 1,200 the year before. The attendance was composed principally of young people and there were relatively few resident Swiss. The traditional reception taking place after the Ambassador's speech and the initial festivities did not take place this year. The 1st August Committee felt that the diminishing presence of resident Swiss couldn't justify the expense of holding such a function.

The programme included as usual items of a patriotic nature, with an address by H.E. the Swiss Ambassador, Dr. Albert Weitnauer. The "Musik-gessellschaft Dipoldsau" presided by Gabriel Hutter and conducted by Franz Hagen provided the main entertainment programme. The group's repertoire on that night consisted of no less than 30 different items, to the delight of the official guests (who unfortunately did not include the Mayor of Merton) and the many young Swiss living in Greater London.

It began with an opening march and then, after the patriotic part of the programme, it played Russian and Spanish music as well as Swiss pot-pourri. A few of the artists remained to play for the dance in red "Senne-chutteli". The Unione Ticinese Choir, so active in earlier National Day celebrations, was sadly missed. The youth club of the Swiss Church did not perform as it did last year, when its piece of chanson provided one of the most entertaining items of the evening.

The Ruetli Pact was read in French by Pastor Nicod. Pfarrer Dietler did *not* say the customary prayer. With characteristic frankness he told his audience that they didn't really want a prayer (hinting that they didn't believe in what prayer stood for) and instead courageously exhorted his youthful audience. The absence of this traditional but circumstantial moment of devotion shocked some but pleased many. One witness reported that "it was super and made more impression than a prayer".

Instead of a prayer Pfarrer Dietler had produced two amusing songs of his own composition for all to sing. They too (especially the one about the

Swiss au pair who becomes an unmarried mother) were very frank.

From nine o'clock onwards the young took over and Wimbledon Town Hall resounded to the stamping dances until midnight.

SWISS CLUB MANCHESTER FIRST OF AUGUST CELEBRATION 1971

The President of the Swiss Club Manchester, Dr. H. R. Bolliger, welcomed 160 guests and compatriots to this year's First of August Celebration which took place at Cottons Hotel, near Knutsford, on Monday, 2nd August, 1971.

After a traditional Swiss meal (thanks again to Swissair for the Schüblig) the official proceedings followed, during which Mr. R. Born, Swiss Consul in Manchester, spoke about current affairs including women's right of voting, EEC and EFTA.

The recorded message of the President of the Swiss Confederation, Mr. R. Gnägi, to Swiss people living abroad was followed by our National Song.

As in previous years the bonfire and fireworks were very impressive and were received enthusiastically, especially by the children joining in the Celebration.

On returning into the pleasantly decorated hall everybody was entertained by Swiss Folk music, and spent the remainder of the evening talking and dancing.

(*Elisabeth Rellstab*)

LONDON N.S.H. 55 YEARS OLD

To celebrate the 55th anniversary of the London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, its Council decided to ask Prof. Erich Gruner, well-known political historian, Professor of Social History and Political Sociology at Berne University, to give a lecture on "Switzerland since 1945". The meeting took place at the Swiss Hostel for Girls, 9 Belsize Grove, NW3, on Thursday, 22nd July.

The President Mrs. Mariann Meier, opened the meeting by giving the Swiss Ambassador's apologies. Monsieur Weitnauer was prevented from coming owing to a previous engagement. He sent his best wishes for the society's future. The First Counsellor of Embassy and Madame J. Iselin were present, as well as several other members of the Embassy. The President regretted that it was the last time

that Mr. and Mrs. Abegglen were at a meeting as they shortly leaving London for Los Angeles.

Mrs. Meier then gave a short history of the London Group. She began by referring to the origins of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique in Switzerland in 1914. At that time, its founders already intended to take their aims and objects to their compatriots abroad. In 1916, the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad was formed, and the same year, the London Group came into being as the first group abroad.

During Victorian and Edwardian times, aliens had an easy life in England. During the first world war, that changed when an ever more powerful Press became hostile towards aliens in general and neutrals in particular. Switzerland's reputation began to suffer, and the Swiss societies in London got together to do something against unfair treatment. When one of the founders of the NSH in Switzerland came to London in May 1916, the audience decided on the spot to form a committee, including presidents of Swiss societies in London. On 8th June, the London Group of the N.S.H. was declared founded, and at the first General Meeting in July 1916, the President of the Consistoire of the Swiss Church, Mr. Jean Baer, was elected President. In May 1917, Dr. Arnold Laett became its paid Secretary with a secretarial staff. Soon there were 600 members, and in two years the committee arranged 40 meetings, as well as discussions and 25 lectures. Articles were written, communiqués and corrections sent out. The Group worked closely with the authorities at home and Swiss organisations in the U.K. And the British Government gave them every support. In 1919, when the "Swiss Observer" was founded, Dr. Laett also became its first editor.

The President reflected that times had changed, and that the aims and objects of the society were not always easy to live up to, but that the Society were trying to inform members of problems and events in Switzerland, to co-operate with other societies in Great Britain, especially through active participation in the work of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom, and above all to play a full part in the work of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad and its sub-committees.

The President said that the Council had decided there was no better way to mark this 55th anniversary than to ask an eminent speaker from Switzerland. She then introduced Prof. Gruner who gave a most interesting address in German on "Switzerland since 1945".

It is not often that one has the opportunity of listening to a lecturer who has studied his subject so closely as Prof. Gruner. He was most critical of the drawbacks of direct democracy which were ever more visible in Switzerland with its growing population. And he looked at Switzerland within a united Europe and wondered whether the small country would be able to make the 25 cantonal voices heard inside the vast area of 250 million people. He reflected on Switzerland's foreign policy which was a more foreign *economic* policy. How would the "Militia Parliament", the Government of collective responsibility, the sovereign people who control legislation by Referendum and Initiative, survive in a changed Europe. Prof. Gruner referred to the economy and Switzerland's finance policy, to the country's great efforts with regard to old-age insurance and to the fairly recently created problems of education and research, as well as to the preoccupation with resources, energy and environment protection.

He deplored the *Entpolitisierung* in today's affluent society, the neglect of civic duties, and that man's personal and individual success should count for more than his social work. Switzerland's pioneering spirit had resulted in a *laissez faire* attitude in politics since the war. The personal success cult had a creative and rejuvenating influence in the private sector, but a retarding effect on public life. Prof. Gruner did not consider Communism a danger to Switzerland's political life, but rather the increasing lack of balance between private existence and public concerns.

Prof. Gruner's talk was received with great appreciation, and a most animated discussion brought the interesting evening to a close.

MM

JAKOB VOGEL 90

We have only just heard that Mr. Jakob Vogel, of "Ceres", Shobdon-Kingsland, Leominster, Herefordshire, was 90 on 2nd July. We regret this delay, but our congratulations are none the less sincere, and we wish Mr. Vogel the very best for the future.

Mr. Vogel is a citizen of Schaffhausen and was born at Neunform, Unter-Thurgau. After completing his apprenticeship as a saddler and upholsterer, he worked in different places, amongst them with a specialist in harnesses and collars in Zurich. Whilst he was at Mézières (Vaud), he met the future General Guisan. In 1906, he cycled to Goeschenen, put the bicycle on the train and walked over the Gottard. Still on his cycle, he went to Milan for the International Exhibition, hence to several other Italian towns

and along the Riviera to Cannes where he again worked as an upholsterer.

Later, at Meiringen, he was engaged in repairing the old Grimsel and Furka postal coaches—horse-drawn at that time. He also did a lot of mountaineering. Then he went to Germany and worked in different branches of his trade. In Frankfurt, he trimmed motorcars at the Adlerworks. In 1909, he came to London and worked as assistant foreman and cutter at Vanden Plas (trimming department). During that period, cars were built for H.M. George V and the Swiss Minister, Monsieur Paravicini.

Jakob Vogel married a Swiss girl in 1914 and then returned to Switzerland to do service in the *Landwehr*. After the war he came back to London and opened his own business as Coach and Motor Trimmer.

He lost his wife in 1946. Eleven years later, he retired and moved to Herefordshire where he lives with one of his daughters. He does gardening and occasional repairs and goes to Switzerland for a holiday every year.

FRED STREIT



It is with heartfelt sympathy that we have learnt of the death of Mr. Fred Streit at the age of 73, two months after the death of his wife Alice (see "Swiss Observer" of 11th June). His last two years had been plagued by illness, resulting in the loss of a leg.

A week before the death of Mrs. Streit, he developed certain symptoms which proved to be lung cancer. Treatment was prescribed and he was expected to be discharged from Westminster Hospital on Friday, 13th August. However, he suffered a coronary on 12th August and died on the morning he was expected to come home.

Mr. Fred Streit had been in this country since 1921, a staunch Bernese who showed his attachment to his native country by taking part in an

active and useful way in many Swiss organisations in London. His professional career as a banker was highly successful. He joined the staff of Barclays Bank Ltd., Chief Foreign Branch, London, on arrival in Britain and was appointed Principal of the Central European Department in 1947. At the end of May 1958, he retired from the position he had held with great distinction.

In the Swiss community, he was well known as the Chairman and Treasurer of the First of August Committee, offices which he held successively for several years. He was co-founder of the London Swiss Philatelic Society and its President. In 1953 he was elected Chairman of the President's Assembly (now the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK) and was later the Honorary Patron of the Swiss Philatelists. For many years he sat on the Education Committee of the Swiss Mercantile Society and was elected member of the Council during the war. Reporting on his 70th birthday in these columns in March 1968, Mrs. Meier wrote: "It was typical of Fred Streit that on 11th October of last year, the very day of the Streit's 40th Wedding Anniversary, he attended the Monthly Meeting of the Swiss Mercantile Society in order to take part in the little celebration arranged for him and three other members who had presented him with a stained glass paenl by the 'Schweizerischer Kaufmännischer Verein' for 50 years of membership."

Until the onset of the circulatory troubles that were to make the end of his life so painful Mr. Streit was as active as ever. He was appreciated by all who knew him by his sense of humour and friendliness. Now he has left three children, Sylvia, Mary and Robert, and two grandchildren. To all of them we wish to express our heartfelt sympathy.



WELFARE OFFICE

for

SWISS GIRLS IN GREAT BRITAIN

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