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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

EVENTS IN DECEMBER

THE SCHWEIZERBUND DINNER

The Schweizerbund is without doubt one of the more intimate Swiss societies of London. It is, with the Swiss Riflemen, the society most oriented towards enjoyment, with of course the added characteristic that it is not an exclusively male Society, but indeed has members of both sexes of widely varying age groups who gather year in year out, for generations at its bi-annual dinners.

The generation span was particularly apparent at the Schweizerbund's Dinner on December 1st, when ladies who well remembered Edward VIII joined in community singing with bearded young people, sharing the spirit of youth that traditionally animates the Schweizerbund. We were treated to an excellent and simple dinner by Mr. A. Gluck in the cosy "banqueting" room of his establishment, the Orpheus Club, in the City.

The Society's President, Mr. Virgil Berti, welcomed the gathering in his characteristically warm and friendly manner. There were some new guests among us, whom Mr. Berti duly mentioned. He mentioned the imminent wedding of two members of respectable age, and regretted the absence of a former president, Mr. Fernand Delaloye, who at that same moment was performing the rather sad duty of voting the death of the Secours Mutuels Society.

Mr. Fritz Adams, representing the Embassy, brought us the greetings of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Abegglen, both of whom had been stimulating members of the Group and remembered with affection by all members. They are now at Los Angeles. Mr. Adams said a few words about the new Embassy, which definitely appears to be the pride and joy of all the staff who now work there. He told us that a vast Colony gathering had been planned for the inauguration day to take place on 21st February. Mr. Pierre Graber, Swiss Foreign Minister, and Mr. and Mrs. Rene Keller, our former ambassadors, are expected to honour this important occasion by their presence. The problem that faced the Embassy, said Mr. Adams, was that it could not practically invite the 8,000 nationals on its registrar for the opening ceremony. A choice had perforce to be made and the most intelligent way to do this was first to determine who actually took a part in Swiss activities. That is, it was necessary to make a

count of the members of the Swiss societies.

Mr. Adams was entrusted by our Ambassador, Dr. Albert Weitnauer, to perform this census. The essence of his task was, in fact, to pinpoint this mythical "Colony", of which your Editor never ceases to write about. A few thousand Swiss dispersed in the Metropolis do not constitute a Colony. However, a few hundred Swiss regularly meeting each other at organised activities of a patriotic nature and maintaining a certain degree of personal relationship with each other — this the Colony is supposed to be.

Totalising the memberships of the various Swiss Societies, Mr. Adams found that the population of the Colony lay at about 700. By some subtle hunch, however, he decided to ask for the *names* of the members of these societies. He found dozens of them appearing two or more times so that the population of the "Colony" was immediately whittled down to about 400, which was a relief to the Embassy, because 400 guests was the maximum it could cope with at the inaugural reception.

When Mr. Adams had said these few enlightening words and when most of his audience had before them a glass of kirch ideal for enhancing the post-prandial pleasures that were to come, Mr. Jurg Schmid, our Secretary, distributed Swissair song books (the same as those used last year) containing the very basic anthology of Swiss popular songs. Singing soon got under way. The same usual songs of course: *Famal-i-pe*, *Fidiri*, *Vieux Chalet*, and so forth. The inspiration for singing did not, however, reach quite the same pitch as it did a year ago, when the Table was led off the beaten tracks into songs of the gay twenties. Singing was not sustained for long and frolicsome conversation tended to take over, which was equally enjoyable.

It was only 10.30 p.m. when the first participants, looking at their watches, decided that it was time to set off for home. Half-an-hour later they had all left the Orpheus Club after what was a highly enjoyable evening.

(PMB)

ALPINE SUN FOR BRITISH CHILDREN

Alpine Sun for British Children is a Charity which has so far been responsible for sending about 250 British children suffering from various diseases to the healing climate of the Alps.

It celebrated its Fifteenth Anniversary with a Reception held at the Chenil Galleries in Chelsea, attended by members of the Embassy and per-

haps 100 British guests. From a conversation with Mr. A. J. Gowling, Honorary Administrator of the Society, we learnt that it sent 17 children suffering from lung and other troubles every year to the mountains. They were accompanied by teachers and taken in the care of expert hands on the Swiss end. A sizeable proportion of these children returned healed—and it was astounding to hear that children should still be suffering from lung diseases, including consumption, in 1971. This certainly warrants the usefulness of this worthy charity. A Tombola organised during the reception raised £116. Lady guests at the reception wore evening dresses, which somewhat contrasted with the lowly nature of the hall where the reception was taking place. It resembled a parish hall more than anything else.

ANNUAL DINNER OF THE A.B.M.S.A.C.

The elaborate acronym written above stands for "Association of British Members of the Swiss Alpine Club". This Association grouping some 700 highly committed British Mountaineers and counting Lord Hunt and four past Swiss Ambassadors on its list of Honorary Members, held its Annual Dinner late in November. Dr. Jurg Iselin, Plenipotentiary Minister, deputising for the Ambassador, was their guest of honour.

The Swiss Ambassador, the ABMSAC was told, had been called away to attend the Queen's Annual Reception for the Diplomatic Corps, which was given in her absence owing to Her Majesty being bound to her room with chicken pox.

He delivered an after-dinner speech emphasising the relevance of the problem of pollution to the fraternity of mountaineers. He quoted Mr. Peter Walker, Secretary of State for Environment, who had addressed a distinguished gathering with the apposite address: "Excellencies, My Lords, Ladies and Gentlemen, Fellow Polluters"—a rather delicate expression of black humour. Dr. Iselin referred in his speech to a letter written by the ABMSAC to Federal Councillor Roger Bonvin, Head of the Department of Transport and Communications, containing an urgent complaint against the proposed erection of a few more aerial ropeways in the Zermat area. This proved that the interests of mountaineers and skiers are not always the same.

Dr. Iselin concluded his reply to the toast that had been offered to the "Swiss Confederation" by assuring his sincerely Swiss-loving audience that the authorities in Switzerland were determined to act in favour of the protec-

tion of the scenery which they enjoyed so much. The British members of the Swiss Alpine Club will, let us hope, still have one or two unpolluted mountains to scale for a few more years.

“SWITZERLAND AND EUROPE”

This is the title of the fourth “Swiss” book published by Oswald Wolff. Its publication was marked by a Reception at the Residence in which the publishers and Professor Christopher Hughes made appropriate speeches. The book is a collection of essays gleaned from various works of Jean-Rodolphe de Salis, the nationally known political commentator who addressed the Anglo-Swiss Society a year ago, speaking on his experience as a war-time broadcaster. He is a master of political vulgarisation and his lectures at the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich were by far the most successful among those extra-curriculum courses which students are held to attend.

Much of “Switzerland and Europe” is a straightforward enunciation of well known facts about Switzerland and the Western World. There are hardly any philosophical subtleties, and certainly no stylistic ones. The narration is flat and without art. The text allows the original German to transpire and tends to read like a textbook.

“Switzerland and Europe” is the heading of the most important essay included in the book. Its analysis, reflecting a deep knowledge of the title

subject and of Switzerland’s war-time predicament, is the most interesting for the modern reader. Although it is marked by healthy conservatism, de Salis tends to disagree with a number of war-time decisions, in particular the muzzling of the Press, and seems open to a new option in the field of permanent neutrality. Another rambling essay on youth unrest with all the aspects of the problem weighed leads to no discernable conclusions. It is strung with quotations from all sources, Raymond Aaron coming in the forefront, as well as with rather obvious statements on the behaviour of pupils drawn from his own teaching experience.

In the essay “Intellectuals and Politics”, de Salis devotes his reflection to the Swiss poet (a Nobel prize winner) Karl Spitteler, who was one of the first Swiss men of letters to be politically engaged. His 14th December, 1914, speech on “our Swiss Standpoint” and his participation in the rebirth of the Societe Helvetique were a vital stage in the development of a new Swiss consciousness.

Among other essays contained in the book are an outline of the life of the Genevese historian and economist Leonard Sismondi (1773-1842); the “Small State and its Discontent”, with interesting applications to many men of letters, including C. F. Ramuz, and an analysis of Max Frisch’s “Homo Faber”, which Mr. de Salis admires most highly. Finally, his “Vienna” diary, although of rather circumscribed historical interest, cannot be considered of literary interest.

CHRISTMAS WITH THE LONDON GROUP OF THE NSH

As the Council of the Nouvelle Societe Helvetique found it impossible to arrange a Christmas Dinner, an informal gathering was held at the Hostel for Girls on 16th December. Some 40 odd members attended, and the evening proved to be a very happy one. The round tables in the lounge were decorated with fir branches, red candles and lots of bright clementines and beautiful red apples. The big attraction were the several varieties of Swiss Christmas “Guezli” generously spread over the tables.

Swiss wines and coffee were served, all refreshments offered to members by the Council and some individual donors as a Christmas gift.

The President, Mrs. Mariann Meier, welcomed various old and new members and gave apologies from a number of others, most of whom were prevented from coming through illness.

A small Christmas programme had been arranged, consisting of recorded Christmas carols and parts of Schuetz’s Christmas Oratorio, as well as the sound of continental church bells. The audience enjoyed singing old favourites like “O du froeliche Weihnachtzeit” and “Stille Nacht”. In the centre of the musical presentation kindly arranged by Father Bossard, was the reading of a Swiss Christmas story. Mrs. Meier read “The Pangronds” from Cla Biert’s book “Only a Game”. It is a collection of stories originally written in Latin, translated by Alan



Swiss Life

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Brown and published in London by Peter Owen, being a Council of Europe choice. The story about school children in the Grisons and their Christmas "pear sandwich rolls" brought back many a childhood memory, especially to those who grew up in the mountains.

It was a happy and peaceful evening, full of companionship, and the Hon. Vice-President, Dr. H. W. Egli, expressed the thoughts of all present when he said that a gathering of this kind was not all too common, but all the more valuable. He thanked the helpers, especially the President, for making such excellent arrangements, and wished members the compliments of the season.

SWISS RIFLE ASSOCIATION

The Swiss Rifle Association has 91 members. Those of them who turned up at Bisley shot 5,300 rounds of ammunition in the course of eight shooting sessions throughout the year. One had to be cancelled owing to bad weather.

These were among the indications supplied by Hr. Marcel Bucherer, President of the Swiss marksmen of London, welcoming them at the Annual Dinner. A team of six members (Mr. Bernard Jaeggi and son Stefan, Mr. Lucien Jobin, Mr. Marcel Bucherer, Mr. Peter Fischer and Mr. H. Fritz) had gone to St. Gall for a highly successful shooting match. The Swiss Rifle Association had fought two contests against the Surrey Rifle Association, unfortunately lost by seven points, and the Kensington Rifle Club, boldly won by one point. Mr. Bucherer announced two more friendly meetings for next year against the Kensington Rifle Club and the Marylebone Pistol and Rifle Club.

One of the two guests of honour from the Surrey Rifle Association was invited to address the gathering. He compared the Federal Shoot in which 75,000 Swiss took part with the national Chinese ping-pong contest, in which one-and-a-half million Chinese participated. He included a few jokes in his loose but gifted improvisation.

The prize cups and emblems were distributed to the year's winners. The prize award was succeeded by the drawing the raffle tickets. Members stayed on until past 2 a.m., consuming appreciable quantities of kirsch, beer and cigars. Needless to say, it was one of the best Swiss evenings of the season.

THE CITY SWISS CLUB CHRISTMAS DINNER

About 70 members of the City Swiss Club turned up for the Society's Annual Christmas Dinner on 14th December, rather less than on previous occasions, where attendances of 100 had been the norm, but enough to ensure the merriment of the evening. Mr.

Walter Bion chaired the meeting, welcoming members in his appreciated friendly way. Dr. Weitnauer, our Ambassador, and other Embassy staff, honoured the dinner by their presence. Dr. Weitnauer made a brief speech, telling his audience that he was about to move from the old residence at Upper Brook Street to the gleaming premises above the new Embassy at Montague Place (leaving the former building to the newly-accredited ambassador of Bahrein). Dr. Weitnauer said that he had been looking forward to this removal for a long time. He ended his address by conveying to all those present the wishes of the season.

The traditional Christmas pudding and the speeches were followed by entertainment offered by Father Bossard, with accompaniment from the Youth Club. Dressed in a Father Christmas garb, he sang a Colony Revue on a well-known Swiss melody, just as he had done two years ago. The attendance was issued with the words and joined in the fun and singing. There were few people in the Orchid Suite to whom a satirical verse was not dedicated.

The customary collection was made in favour of the Colony Children Party on January 1st and raised about £60.

THE ESCALADE DINNER

The "Cercle Genevois" of London celebrated the Escalade, Anniversary of the Duke of Savoy's failed attempt to take Geneva by stealth, at the Valcherra Restaurant in Richmond on 10th December. Fifteen people were present. The Embassy was represented by Mr. and Mrs. René Serex, First Secretary, and proceedings were presided over by Mrs. Yvonne Metford-Sewell. Her mother, Mrs. Marthe Curchod, who had brought a huge nougat cauldron overflowing with marzipan and chocolates from Geneva, told the story of that city's coat of arms. Other participants to the evening were Mrs. Bruce-Schwatt, Mr. and Mrs. A. Alan, Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Overton, Mrs. David Davidson, Mr. Jurg Schmid and bride and Mr. Jacques Mangard. Apparently no names from Geneva. However, three of the ladies hailed from Geneva.

Having begun with a glass of punch and enjoyed a sterling Valcherra meal, participants followed the Escalade Ritual, listening to a record on the Escalade offered by Mr. René Keller to the Society, singing "cé-qué-laino" and watching Mr. Alan and Mr. Mangard smash the cauldron to smithereens.

It was a most enjoyable and intimate evening, well catered for by the younger Jacomelli generation. The guests left for home with beautiful photographs and brochures of Geneva supplied, via Mr. Jurg Schmid, by the SNT0.

THE NEW EMBASSY BUILDING

The new Embassy has now been in use for two months. Its opening will be marked by a Reception for the Swiss Colony on February 21st and by a second Reception for British officials. Its history was outlined in the second Consular Bulletin issued in 1971. We reproduce it below.

In 1964 after a limited competition T. P. Bennett & Son, the London architects, were appointed to act in conjunction with the Swiss Federal Office of Works for rebuilding the Embassy and residence.

Contemporary designs were produced in London and Switzerland but at the wishes of the British Ministry of Housing the pavilion is being rebuilt as a replica of the original. The design of the reinforced concrete structural frame was carried out by R. T. James & Partners.

The Embassy is on the corner of Bryanston Square and Montague Place, the square being laid out on the estate of Edward Berkeley Portman in 1810. Buildings which previously occupied the site were constructed in 1816.

In 1932 the Swiss Government acquired numbers 21 and 22, Bryanston Square. These were united and used as the Embassy. Following damage by enemy action during the last war the adjacent number 19 was demolished, acquired by the Swiss authorities in 1962 and used as a temporary car park.

The Georgian elevation to Bryanston Square dictates floor levels and storey heights. This wing will be the Ambassador's residence and reception rooms as in the previous building. Thus the residential atmosphere of the square has been retained.

Fronting on to Montague Place is the Chancellery block. This is of modern design with Swiss stainless steel faced windows, mullions and sills and Portland stone apron bands.

As the Chancellery section is a strictly working area, the storey heights were reduced from those to the Bryanston Square wing. This enabled a further storey to be introduced while still maintaining the parapet in line with that of adjoining buildings in the square.

The basement covering the complete site has accommodation for 33 cars and storage areas. In the sub-basement are more storage areas, a boiler room and other accommodation for services.

The Chancellery block, entered from Montague Place, includes a large hall with ancillary rooms on the ground floor. This is for people visiting the Embassy on Consular matters; another section is for the granting of visas.

First, second and third floors of the Chancellery block have offices for the diplomatic and consular services and on the fourth floor are three staff flats. The fifth floor will have a small library, rest rooms and Telex service.