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GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE. *President* — Mr. J. J. Boos; *Vice-Presidents* — Messrs. W. Meier and L. W. Krucker; *Hon. Secretary* — Mr. R. Chappuis; *Hon. Treasurer* — Mr. M. Heilinger; *Members* — Messrs. W. Burfen, W. Fuchs, R. Senn, F. Streit.

AUDITOR — Mr. Percy H. Green, F.C.A.

SECRETARY — Mr. J. J. Schneider, F.I.A.C.

PRESS REPORTER — Mr. W. Burfen.

DELEGATE TO THE ADVISORY BOARD OF THE EMPLOYMENT DEPARTMENT — Mr. Ch. Chapuis.

DELEGATES TO THE SWISS SPORTS COMMITTEE. — Messrs. R. Chappuis and F. von Bergen.

DELEGATE to the Nouvelle Société Helvétique — Mr. F. Streit.

This terminated the proceedings, a cordial vote of thanks being passed to the Chairman.

WB.

NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE LONDON GROUP.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 1941.

Held at the Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, London,
W.1, on Saturday, 18th January, 1941.

Members of the London Group of the Society and their guests foregathered between 12.30 and 1 o'clock at the Dorchester (Ball Room). It was particularly gratifying in view of the present times, to observe the great number of Members and their friends who turned up. Many a one had undertaken what may be described as an arduous journey in order to be able to be present at this gathering; all the greater was the joy to see so many familiar faces. Lunch was served punctually at one o'clock, and a pleasant informal atmosphere reigned. Special appreciation was expressed by everyone that the Swiss Minister and Madame Thurnheer were present as guests of honour of the Society. Grace was said before sitting down to lunch by our beloved Pasteur Pradervand. After toasting the King and Switzerland and the Swiss Federal Council, the President, Mr. A. F. Suter, gave an impressive address, reviewing the present situation and how it affected the Members of the Society and all other Swiss in these Islands and our beloved home country. On behalf of the Society Mr. Suter thanked our Minister for the devotion and efficiency with which he was fulfilling his arduous and delicate mission; to Madame Thurnheer he said he wished to express the deepest gratitude of himself and all his compatriots here for her untiring efforts to help and comfort those in need. The President assured both our Minister and Madame Thurnheer that they were held in the highest esteem and deepest affection by all Swiss living in this hospitable country. In reply our Minister gave to the Society an account of Switzerland's present problems, in particular how our country was struggling to maintain its traditions and independence, both spiritual and political, against all difficulties, whether political or economical. Needless to mention with what interest the statements of our representative at the Court of St. James were

listened to by all those present. We all felt that the representation of Switzerland's interests over here could not be in better hands.

After an interval of scarcely ten minutes the Official Annual General Meeting was held, preceded by a paper on the present international situation read by Mr. G. Keller, one of our journalist members who has done such invaluable work in making known in Switzerland the true spirit and magnificent effort of this country. Mr. Keller's review of the situation was followed with tense attention by all. Thereupon the various items on the agenda of the actual Annual General Meeting were proceeded with speedily. After the reading of the record of the last Annual General Meeting by Mr. Campart, Secretary of the Society, and after approval of the Treasurer's and Auditors' Report, the Council officially resigned. Mr. Henry C. Balsler took the chair as Interim-President during the election of the Council, which was elected, constituted as for the past year with one exception and — with great applause — Mr. Suter was again elected unanimously President of the Society for the year 1941-42. Mr. Bernhard Sigerist, on behalf of the Society, paid tribute in moving terms to the invaluable offices rendered to the Society by the President and to his devotion to the well-being of the Swiss in Great Britain and the maintenance of close relations between them and our home country. It is natural that Mr. Campart was re-elected Secretary of the Society, and as a tribute to his untiring efforts on its behalf, he was made — among stirring applause — a free member of the Society, he having been member and Secretary thereof for twenty-four years.

At the conclusion of the meeting Mr. Suter again addressed the Society, appealing to all to pull together and thanking all for the confidence placed by them in him.

Special applause followed the President's words of thanks addressed to Mr. Anton Bon to whose generosity it was due that the meeting could be held at the Dorchester and who offered us such a delicious luncheon — although it in every way complied with the spirit of the food regulations! Mr. Suter took the opportunity of thanking Mr. Bon for his tireless devotion to the cause of the Swiss who are destitute in this country.

After the official ending of the Meeting most of us sat down to an informal tea and were entertained by some of our own members with songs and music. A pleasantly hilarious mood was the result of the community singing, but at 5.40 — the time simply having flown — we all had to break up in view of the Black-out. Many a one was heard to say how much it was appreciated that our Minister and Madame Thurnheer stayed with us from the beginning to the end of the Meeting. This will long remain a memorable day in the history of the N.S.H. Grave were the times in which we met, but we have faith in the future!

President's Address.

The period under review has been the first full year of war and it was to be expected that the serious interference with the Group's activity already apparent during the last quarter of 1939 would be further intensified. However, we were resolved to hold our monthly meetings at all costs, and in this we were successful with the exception of September,

when the freshly bombed Swiss House was as yet unfit for a session.

Including the Annual General Meeting in January we held eleven monthly meetings, usually on the third Friday and later on the third Saturday in the month. Both our meeting places, the Foyer Suisse and Swiss House, having been seriously bomb-damaged, it was fortunate that the latter could be put in sufficient repair for us to continue our occupation.

Almost every meeting was addressed by one or even two lecturers; we remember with satisfaction and gratitude:—

March: Mr. H. C. Balsler, on "Things in General."

May: Mr. Walter Menzel de Lausanne, on "Le penitancier de la Guyane Française."

May and June: Dr. W. Egli, on "The Present Situation."

August: Mr. A. Girardet, Councillor of Legation, on "Renseignements sur les relations Anglo-Suisses."

It is with special gratitude that I wish to acknowledge the fine work as a lecturer which our journalist member Mr. Gottfried J. Keller has done for our Group. We have every right to call him our "Minister of Information"; he has read to us on no less than seven separate occasions a most excellent aperçu of the political, military and economic situation of the war, while informing us also of the current events in Switzerland. The value of this highly specialised knowledge, imparted to us in confidence by Mr. Keller, is very considerable and his lectures attracted a steadily rising number of audience. It is the pride of the Group that our member has been congratulated by the British Minister of Information on the excellence of his professional work.

We have been greatly encouraged in our endeavours by the presence of our Minister Mr. Thurnheer at the March session, and you will all remember the wonderful success of the *THÉ OFFICIEL* held on March the 3rd at this Hotel, when we first had the honour to make the personal acquaintance of our new Minister.

In view of the war restrictions it is quite natural that a good deal of our social and cultural activity has had to be abandoned for the duration of the war; I mention in particular our cinematograph shows "A Travers la Suisse." It has always been our motto:— If you cannot go to Switzerland, we will bring Switzerland to you; the loss of these fine patriotic reunions is an ever present grief to me and the council. Furthermore the Swiss Sports, the Fête Suisse in June and the First of August Fête met a similar fate for the same reason, leaving an emptiness in the colony which it was impossible to fill by other means. Nor could there be any further attempt at a holiday camp in Switzerland for London children. The serious problems of the day, with which we were all preoccupied individually and as a Group, have sufficed to make this year go by almost as if it had not been.

The reduced or diverted activity did not call for the employment of large funds, so that no special finance action had to be resorted to, as you will hear later from the Treasurer's report. But we now have the Swiss Relief Centre with us, an organisation which has so ably and so courageously tackled the problem

of relief for war victims of Swiss nationality, and we have to be prepared for possible further demands on our resources in the course of the war. We shall be proud to assist this work at all times and to the best of our ability.

The membership at the time of the last Annual meeting was 161; there were 17 admissions during 1940, while 5 members were lost, two by death. Today's figure, including the 5 applicants to be elected at this meeting, is 174, 7 members are lost to us through departure to Switzerland and the U.S.A., leaving a total of 167, being 142 paying members, 20 membres de passage at the Legation and 5 free members.

Our intercourse with the Secretariat at Berne has been greatly hampered by the reduction of postal facilities, and has in fact latterly been confined to one ELT per month, sent off after each monthly meeting. The replies received from the Secretariat show only too clearly their anxiety and concern for the welfare of the London Group; the message of greetings and encouragement received from Berne to-day I shall suitably answer in your name and in due course. The "ECHO," the official organ of the Suisses à l'Étranger, has been issued every second month and has arrived here at irregular intervals; it is happily still in existence and shows little alteration in make-up and contents. There is, however, one serious omission in this bright little paper:— the news from London are more often than not conspicuous by their absence. I have made several attempts to remedy this fault, but without success. We must somehow devise a suitable scheme for the monthly provision of London news to the S.S.E. It is my fond hope that such news, if approved by our Minister, might possibly be allowed to travel by the diplomatic mail. There remains then the difficulty of finding a suitable reporter, unless one of our Foreign journalists could spare the time for the work which should be done by a professional reporter.

As your President I now take very special pleasure in expressing the gratitude of the Group to all our collaborators and wellwishers who have in the course of the year assisted us to live up to our principles and good intentions. M. le Ministre has favoured us right from the beginning of his duties in London with the most gratifying encouragement and friendship; the Staff of the Legation have never failed to give us their assistance willingly and extensively; our sister societies have loyally collaborated with us. With our thanks to the editor of the *Swiss Observer* we combine our sincerest sympathy in his heavy loss due to repeated bombings; we are all delighted to hear that he will be in the position to produce his paper again in the coming week.

Inside the Group it is the lecturers who deserve our thanks for enriching our knowledge, and those members who have taken an active interest in any of the problems which have come before us. Very special compliments are due to our Hon. Sec. Mr. Campart, who, for 24 years uninterruptedly, has so faithfully carried out his duties and whose reports of the transactions of the Group are a model of what such documents should be. I now propose that in recognition of his services we should elect him at this meeting a FREE member. Our indispensable Madame Clara Muller has fully deserved the same high praise to which I gave expression at the last Annual meeting.

As a Group we wish to express here our deepest condolence with all those of our compatriots who have been war damaged; we do not at the moment know how many such cases exist, but the most serious ones are only too evident and the number cannot fail to increase with the progress of the war. We furthermore express our wholehearted sympathy with those of our compatriots whose sons, born in this country, are fighting with H.M. Forces, and when I say we sympathise with them, I mean we are proud of them, the parents and the sons.

In conclusion of this address, I would wish to give expression once more to some sentiments pronounced in my speech at the luncheon:— Our future as individuals is uncertain, but the need of the moment is pressing and clear. So is our responsibility as good citizens. The present is the time to test the depth of our loyalty and the sincerity of our endeavours; NOW must we hold together faster than ever; NOW must we open our hearts and purses to those less fortunate than ourselves; NOW must we make any sacrifice to assist in the preservation of the faith and the practice of our forefathers — FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY.

A. Fred. Suter,
President.

* * *

Owing to some delay a telegram from the Secrétariat des Suisses à l'Étranger à Berne was received too late to be communicated to the meeting. It reads as follows:—

“L'activité que vous deployez au cours mois terribles fait notre admiration Secrétariat vous adresse vœux et félicitations respectueux hommages Ministre Thurnheer que Dieu vous protège.”

Brio.

SINGLE COPIES OF S.O.

The present issue of the Swiss Observer is posted to the latest addresses in our possession and we sincerely hope that every copy will be received safely. Owing to prevailing restrictions, we have to point out that we cannot post spare or propaganda copies unless these copies are prepaid (3d. each).

OUR NEXT ISSUE.

We hope to publish our next number on March 21st *a.c.*

Drink delicious "Ovaltine"
at every meal—for Health!

A FEW OF THE MANY APPRECIATIONS RECEIVED.

Dear Sir,

I am exceedingly pleased to see "The Swiss Observer" again. Through this paper we always get interesting information from the whole Swiss colony in Great Britain and also from Switzerland.

I realise the great difficulties you will be experiencing during this worrying time, and more expenses than ever will be involved in running the paper. May I, therefore, offer you a small donation of £2, which I trust will help you in carrying on the publication of "The Observer."

With my Good Wishes,

I remain,

Yours truly,

E. HOFSTETTER,

Swiss Consular Agent.

* * *

My dear Mr. Boehringer,

The arrival of the Swiss Observer this morning fills me with great pleasure and I congratulate you sincerely on the indomitable spirit with which you persevere and which enables you, in spite of the terrible blows inflicted by the Huns, to publish this welcome newspaper.

In these days when it is practically impossible for us Swiss to re-visit our beloved homeland and when, therefore, we all feel all the more homesick — we all now realise the feelings of that "Schweizer auf der Strassburger Schanz" — the appearance of the Swiss Observer is all the more welcome and you and your collaborators are doing fine work in making its publication possible from time to time.

I enclose a very modest contribution towards expenses you have — a widow's mite, as it were — but as business is at a standstill you will understand that my position is not any too rosy.

Sincerely yours ever,

U. BRETSCHER.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Saturday, March 1st, at 12.45 p.m. — City Swiss Club — Monthly Meeting at Brown's Hotel, Dover Street (nr. Green Park Station).

Saturday March 8th, at 2.30 p.m. — Swiss Mercantile Society Ltd. — Monthly Meeting — at Swiss House, 34/35, Fitzroy Square, W.1.

Saturday, March 15th, at 1.30 p.m. — Nouvelle Société Helvétique — Monthly Meeting — at Swiss House, 34/35, Fitzroy Square, W.1, to be followed by Mr. G. J. Keller, on "Comments on current events."

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