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SWISS NATIONAL TOURIST OFFICE AND SWISS FEDERAL RAILWAYS ARE MOVING TO THE STRAND.

About thirty English and Swiss Journalists were invited on Monday last by the Manager of the above office, to a cocktail party and pre-view of the new premises. The official opening, we understand, will take place in about a month's time. On this occasion, the Manager acquainted the Journalists with the following particulars:—

Towards the end of the 19th century the Jura Simplon Railway Company of Switzerland opened an office in Shaftesbury Avenue to advise tourists going to the district served by their lines. With the nationalisation of the five most important Railway Companies in Switzerland in 1902 this office was taken over by the newly created Swiss Federal Railways. Soon after the office was transferred to 11B, Regent Street, where it has been ever since, in other words, nigh on half a century.

The outbreak of the war in September 1939 put paid to holiday traffic to Switzerland, and almost from one day to the other the question arose whether the Swiss Tourist Office in London should close down.

It was decided to keep open with a greatly reduced staff, and more than half the office accommodation (first floor, Carlton House) was sublet to a Red Cross Organisation whose activities were from that time on more important than tourist traffic.

All through the war years the Public Office was never empty of visitors. Although travel to Switzerland for pleasure purposes was entirely out of the question, a large number of our pre-war clients came in

merely to refresh their memory by collecting pamphlets and folders and to make tentative plans for holidays after the war. Needless to say, quite a number of our Swiss compatriots who were completely cut off from their homeland, visited our office for nostalgic reasons as the only cure available for their "Heimweh."

After the end of hostilities the demand for holidays in Switzerland was overwhelming and increased as time went on. The office accommodation left for serving the public became quite inadequate. The thorny problem of obtaining additional space, or moving to bigger premises became very acute. The latter solution was the only practical one. After lengthy negotiations new premises were found in "Golden Cross House," 458, The Strand, and the necessary building operations (structure alterations and redecoration) started in April, 1948. On the 1st December the same year the administrative section of the Swiss National Tourist Office and Swiss Federal Railways moved in, whilst the Booking Office and Ticket Department remained at 11B, Regent Street, until Saturday, the 19th February, 1949. From Monday, the 21st, the whole Organisation will be under the same roof in the Strand — and a nice new home it is. The design is modern yet practical, and the conception of our Swiss Architect, Mr. A. Roth, who, in close co-operation with Messrs. T. B. Bennett & Son, his collaborators in London, achieved results which are a credit to both.

All we need now to make our happiness complete is a favourable decision with regard to currency allocations for intending British visitors to our Country. We have the tools; all we need now is the opportunity to use them!

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on

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