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N.S.H. RECEPTION OF M. MAURICE JACCARD.

Tuesday, 19th November, 1957.

An exceptionally large number of members of the Swiss Colony forgathered at the Swiss Hostel for Girls on Tuesday, 19th November, for a reception given by the London Group of the N.S.H. to M. Maurice Jaccard, Chef de Section au Département Politique at Berne. Prior to the Society's meeting, the presidents of the various Swiss Societies were introduced to M. Jaccard, who gave them an outline of his lecture.

After an excellent dinner, which called for an exceptional effort from the catering department, M. Jaccard was introduced by the President to a capacity crowd which filled the large lecture room to overflowing. Mr. Renz mentioned that M. Jaccard, in his capacity as spokesman of the Département Politique in all questions affecting the Swiss Colonies, had had a large share in preparing various parliamentary measures in favour of Swiss victims of the last war, such as financial aid to Swiss abroad having suffered war losses, advance payments to victims of Nazi persecution, solidarity fund, invalidity and old age insurance. Subsequently M. Jaccard gave a comprehensive exposé of the authorities' attitudes and difficulties with regard to such contentious measures as Military Tax, Old Age and Invalidity Insurance Scheme.

His excellent lecture, delivered mostly in French,

was much appreciated by an attentive audience, and was followed by a lively discussion. Quite understandably the proposed law dealing with the Military Tax came under heavy fire, notably from Mr. Walter Meier, President of the S.M.S., and a member of the batch of soldiers called up in 1939. He pleaded that the proposed tax rate of 2.4 per cent should be halved for Swiss abroad seeing that the Swiss armed forces were not able, owing to geographical factors, to give any protection to us over here. Professor Inebnit, of Leeds, invited reflections in Berne on the different part Switzerland might be called upon to play in a possible further world conflict.

Dr. Egli put in strong pleas for a revision of the present terms of the Old Age Insurance Scheme and a more sustained effort in acquainting foreign countries with Swiss cultural achievements. He stressed the point that owing to the high premium asked for from voluntary subscribers to the A.H.V. (4 per cent on the gross income), this benevolent measure has been practically put out of reach for any but the elderly Swiss abroad. He suggested that a special category of voluntary participants with reduced contributions might possibly be created, which would attract the large percentage (about 90 per cent) of Swiss residents abroad who had felt it hitherto financially too onerous to join the A.H.V. scheme.

M. Jaccard replied briefly to the various points raised, and undertook to bring these to the notice of the various Government departments concerned for further consideration. He also elucidated, for the benefit of parents with growing-up sons, one important point in the proposed structure of the Military Tax law, which is that boys are not liable to tax provided they have resided outside Switzerland for at least ten years prior to reaching military call-up age.

This most instructive and enjoyable meeting ended at 10.30 p.m., after a vote of thanks proposed by the Swiss Ambassador, who, with Mme. Daeniker and a number of Embassy officials, had attended both dinner and lecture.

W.R.

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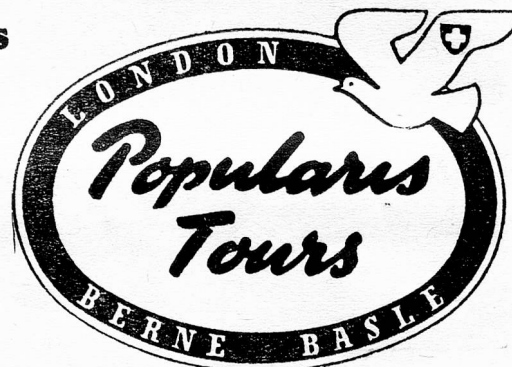
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