

1st August celebrations of the Swiss Communities in New Zealand

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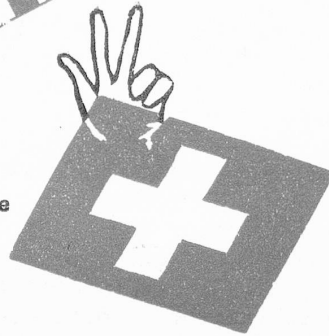
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1st AUGUST CELEBRATIONS OF THE SWISS COMMUNITIES IN NEW ZEALAND.

For five years the Swiss people in New Zealand have had to celebrate the anniversary of their homeland under the shadow of war. For almost six years they did not know whether Providence would again be kind to Switzerland and allow her to escape the horrors of war. When we reported in previous issues of the "Helvetia" with what joy and gratitude the announcement of peace in Europe was received in Switzerland, this also reflected the spirit of the Swiss people in New Zealand, many of whom still have close ties with Switzerland. Certainly our fellow-countrymen in New Zealand must feel deeply grateful for the preservation of their homeland, rejoicing at the same time from the bottom of their hearts with the people here for all that VICTORY means to New Zealand. Yes, we have a lot to be thankful for, and the 654th birthday of Switzerland on the 1st August 1945 was a special opportunity for us to pay homage to our venerable Swiss Confederation. The large attendances at the celebrations in the different districts of New Zealand where there are Swiss communities, were proof of our spirit of thanksgiving and rejoicing.

We have received reports on the celebrations in Auckland, Taranaki and Wellington, and if some more from other districts should come in later, we shall print them in the next issue of the "Helvetia". We hope our readers will find these reports interesting reading:

Auckland
Taranaki
Wellington.

AUCKLAND:

The Auckland Social to celebrate the Inauguration of Switzerland's Independence Day, was attended, according to our Visitors' Book, by approximately a hundred guests from as far north as Whangarei and as far south as Taranaki, and was held in the Overseas League Rooms. Colour was added by the gay national costumes worn by a number of our lady compatriots. Flags of the various Cantons fluttered in the breeze from the open windows out of which sounds of our community singing escaped and echoed around the neighbourhood. Lilted melodies were provided by talented musicians, and juveniles rendered typical Swiss items. Numerous vocal interludes were also given by our older friends.

A buffet supper of hot savouries, sandwiches, and cakes was enjoyed during the evening, washed down by amber-coloured liquids.

With Peace imminent, the festive spirit prevailed throughout the evening, and the social committee was well rewarded for their efforts by the attendance of a gratifying crowd of merry-makers.

KAPONGA - TARANAKI We are pleased to report on a very successful 1st of August celebration amongst the Swiss community in Taranaki. Invitations were sent out to our fellow-countrymen in this district, and with their friends, there were about 200 people present on the 31st July in the Kaponga Town Hall. The hall was decorated with a huge Swiss flag, many coloured posters showing Swiss scenery and the coats-of-arms of all the Cantons, and these and branches of tree fern created a festive and friendly atmosphere.

The Rev. Father J. Butler opened the evening by warmly welcoming everybody; he also referred to the guests of honour - Dr. Walter Schmid, the Swiss Consul, and Mrs. Schmid, Mr. E. Dickenmann, Chancellor of the Swiss Consulate in Wellington, Mr. E. B. Corbett, Member of Parliament for Egmont District and Mrs. Corbett, Mr. W. G. Cran, Chairman of the Kaponga Town Board, and Mrs. Cran. His speech was followed by an address by Mr. W. G. Cran, who offered his congratulations on this 654th Swiss Anniversary Day. Mr. E. B. Corbett also rose to the occasion and commented on the excellent type of emigrants Switzerland had sent to New Zealand. As he knew the Swiss community in Taranaki very well, he felt justified in making this statement. He also spoke of the work Switzerland had done during the war in the humanitarian field and expressed his high regard for our country.

It was a pleasure to listen to these guest speakers whose warm words evidenced such an interest in and profound knowledge of Switzerland.

Dr. Schmid in his reply welcomed the preceding speakers and thanked them for their friendly addresses which showed such a grasp of Swiss matters, and he also welcomed two old friends of the Swiss in Taranaki - Police Sergeant O'Donoghue and his wife. He then thanked the organisers of this 1st August gathering, especially Mrs. Engelberger, whose initiative had been instrumental in arranging an evening which he hoped would be enjoyed by everybody.

Dr. Schmid continued that this 1st post-war celebration of Switzerland's national day was momentous: it could not be passed by in silence. We were fortunate here in New Zealand that our annual Swiss National Day celebrations have always had the generous support of the New Zealand authorities. When he had recently informed the New Zealand Broadcasting authorities of the forthcoming Swiss National Day celebrations, they again spontaneously offered to put on a Swiss programme for the occasion. He was pleased to take this opportunity of publicly thanking the New Zealand Broadcasting authorities most sincerely for their friendship and generosity.

The purpose of our Swiss National Day gatherings is threefold:- It affords an exchange of goodwill between New Zealanders and our Swiss settlers, who unhesitatingly and gratefully acknowledge the hospitality which they are afforded in this good land. On the other hand, our New Zealand-born guests here are honouring us greatly with their presence, and, as we have been assured by the preceding speeches, we may also take their presence here tonight as a token of their approval of the presence of the Swiss in this district. The other purpose of this gathering is, of course, the honouring of Switzerland on its 654th birthday, and rejoicing in the happy outcome for Switzerland of the war.

We are thankful and rejoice that the political institutions of our freedom-loving people have been safeguarded and that the Swiss nation has been left their own masters in their own house. Switzerland has begun a new chapter in her age-old history. The first page has already been written and contains the following summaries:

1. An account of the magnificent attitude of the Swiss nation during the war: their careful preparations in every respect, for the emergency of war, their keeping faith with the democratic way of life in isolation and under great pressure, and their readiness to make the supreme sacrifice if ever war should have come to their country.
2. An account of the spirit in which the Swiss people welcomed peace in Europe. There was rejoicing day and night, yes, but above all the official speeches stressed thanksgiving to Almighty God for preservation in the war, and the hope for a better world in the future. As a token of this spirit the Swiss postal authorities on VE Day released a series of specially designed peace stamps with the inscription "Pax Hominibus Bonae Voluntatis". These

sentiments of thanksgiving and hope were, no doubt, also expressed in many private letters which had, in the meantime, reached our compatriots in New Zealand from relatives and friends in Switzerland, as had been the case, for instance, in a letter which the speaker had just received from his mother.

3. An account of the plans and problems with which Switzerland is faced in the post-war period. Increasing measures of social justice are an important feature. There exists in Switzerland a well developed system of social security - partly of long standing and partly more modern. Plans are now being discussed by the Federal Parliament for an extension of national welfare through governmentally operated social security schemes such as universal superannuation, widows' and orphans' benefits and modern methods of family protection. These welfare projects will be accomplished by the beginning of 1947.

As regards the problems in the field of foreign politics, Dr. Schmid referred to the new international organisation which was worked out at San Francisco, where Switzerland, however, was not represented, which was a natural consequence of her neutrality policy during the war years. Even if Switzerland is somewhat isolated in the international field at the present time, she is confident that she will not remain so. The Swiss people sincerely desire to take part in any peaceful efforts of the democratic nations, and would no doubt be happy to join this organisation provided it does not mean renouncing their permanent neutrality policy. He said that the Swiss nation in the past had given convincing evidence of their ability to adhere to democratic government and to maintain their status of permanent neutrality, which has proved to be in the interest of the whole family of nations as well. What had been retained and achieved in Switzerland during hard times should give us every confidence that the country would weather any storm which might lie ahead.

Soon a good dance was in progress. Really good Swiss music was provided by Messrs. A. Engelberger, A. Meier (accordions), Franz Imhof (clarinet) and Mrs. G. Schneller (piano), and everybody enjoyed these quick and lively tunes. A special vote of thanks goes to these able musicians who kept us going till the early hours of the morning. Several of our compatriots and guests contributed to the programme with songs and other items, and we wish to thank them here for their help in making this evening such a success.

A very good supper was enjoyed by everyone, and the thirsty ones did not go short of beer. Again thanks to everybody who helped in providing these very welcome refreshments.

In conclusion we may well say that this was an evening which everyone present will remember, and we hope that Switzerland's 655th Anniversary will see us all together again for a similar successful evening.

WELLINGTON: The small Swiss community in Wellington, and their guests, gathered on Saturday, the 4th August, in the gaily decorated and familiar Clubrooms of the N.Z. Educational Institute for the celebration of Switzerland's 654th birthday. We may well call it a record attendance as over 60 people were present, and a gay and festive atmosphere prevailed throughout the evening.

Mr. E. Dickenmann opened the evening by welcoming members and their guests and conveying the apologies of Dr. Schmid, the Swiss Consul, and Mrs. Schmid for not being able to attend as they were away from Wellington. He asked all those present to do their bit to make the evening a success, so that they would remember it as an occasion when they had had a very enjoyable time with the small Swiss community in Wellington, and he asked everyone to consider himself a member of a happy family which liked a good time and knew how to have it.

Thanks to the courtesy of Mr. S. Porter, we were able to show two films on the work of the International Red Cross, and one film with the title "Children of Switzerland" which gave a very good idea of life in a small Swiss mountain village. As no films on Swiss wintersports were handy, a film showing Canadian winter scenes was screened together with another

scenic film. All these films proved to be very interesting and were very much appreciated. Thanks to Mrs. Joblin, Mr. Tom Wood and Mr. Bob Henry we heard some very good songs and piano solos, and the "encores" which were demanded proved their popularity. Mrs. Weiss obliged by reciting some poems by C. F. Meyer which were very good indeed.

After some time Mr. E. Dickenmann, in the absence of the Consul, spoke again to the gathering, striking a more serious note. He reminded us that we were here to pay homage to a country of which we are rightly proud, and which has earned itself a place amongst the nations of the world far beyond its importance in square miles and population. Switzerland was born 654 years ago and had only survived these many hundreds of years because its people were determined to stand by, and if necessary to fight for, the principles laid down in the Charter of 1291 and in our Constitution. We Swiss abroad should be especially thankful to our people at home, because their attitude and determination during the long years of war had given us the right to hold our heads high amongst the people of any nation. He also reminded us of the very difficult time which lies ahead in the economic and political future of our homeland, and said that the difficulties to be overcome will be tremendous but that the Swiss people had given proof of their ability to face great odds and this fills us with confidence for the future also. He asked those fellow-countrymen who had adopted New Zealand as their second homeland, to do everything in their power towards the wellbeing and progress of this country, but not to forget what they owe to the land of their birth; they should look at it in the same way as a man who gets married - his first duty is towards his wife, but he should not forget what he owes to his mother. He mentioned that New Zealand could be proud of what she has been doing towards the defeat of Fascism, just as Switzerland could be proud of her activities towards the wellbeing of mankind. That the British Commonwealth of Nations stood alone for a long time, just as Switzerland stood alone for four long years, and we hope these countries will see the value of the spirit we showed, as we admire them for holding out. He ended his speech with toasts to The King and to Switzerland.

So the evening proceeded with film shows, songs, piano-solos, recitations, and when at 11 o'clock the ladies brought on their usual delicious and plentiful supper, no one needed to be told twice to "come and get it". A good cup of coffee rounded off the supper and everybody by then felt strong enough to have a good dance to Ted Steffen's accordion. It did not take long to start a sing-song and a good part of the gathering stayed on till the early hours of the morning, which should be proof enough of the success of the party.

We wish here to thank our ladies again for their lavish supper; our guests for their assistance with the programme, and all the others who helped to make this celebration of the 654th Anniversary of Switzerland such a success.

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NEW ZEALAND NATIONAL BROADCASTING SERVICE STAGES TWO SHORT PROGRAMMES IN HONOUR OF SWITZERLAND'S NATIONAL DAY.

As in previous years the New Zealand National Broadcasting Service arranged for two short programmes to honour Switzerland's National Day.

The first programme (2YA) on the evening of the 1st August included a short address by the Swiss Consul in Wellington, followed by some classical music by a Swiss composer.

The second programme (2ZB), on Sunday the 5th August, lasted about half-an-hour, and to the great delight of the majority of our fellowcountrymen, was devoted to Swiss popular music (Vodels Ländler). These records apparently had just reached New Zealand from Switzerland. Listeners who commented on this programme were enthusiastic, and this statement includes New Zealanders and Swiss alike.

Again we wish to express our great appreciation to the New Zealand National Broadcasting Service for their generosity, and this proof of friendliness for Switzerland. The Swiss Consulate at Wellington thought it appropriate to write a special letter of thanks to the Hon. F. Jones, Minister in Charge of Broadcasting, asking him, at the same time, to pass on to those responsible for these programmes, the thanks and appreciation of the Swiss community in New Zealand, adding that it was felt that such occasions gave an opportunity for fostering goodwill between our two countries.