

Society President's report

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Editorial



A reflection on: 1. August celebration / my computer / William Tell / Jesus Christ.

What a combination of themes for an editorial, you'll say and you would be right. - But let me explain!

By the time you read these lines you will most likely have observed our national day celebration in one form or another. If you have recently had any contact with, or news from our "old country Switzerland", you will also have heard of problems and accusations Switzerland is dealing with at the moment. These problems and accusations seem so far away for us here in New Zealand and yet they can disturb our memories of an

earlier Switzerland in a very painful way.

Working with my computer and a catalogue of electronic book-images, recently, I came across a funny combination of images as shown above. I happened to browse within the index of "People with Christian Religion". To my astonishment and great amusement I found a familiar image of William Tell between two images of the crucified Christ. Well, the crossbow of our old folk hero William Tell and the wooden cross of Jesus Christ have a similar shape I thought forgivingly. Thinking about the mission of our legendary folk hero and comparing it with the mission of Jesus Christ, I found some startling similarities. Didn't both, William Tell and Jesus Christ bring the same message of freedom and hope, I asked myself? Weren't they both mystical figures and yet so very real? The worldly-political William Tell bringing free-

dom leading to the neutral country of our forebears, the other, Jesus Christ, bringing freedom from slavery of sin and spiritual destruction. And how successful have both of these missions been? Is Switzerland not still struggling and paying a price for a political neutral way of life? Is Switzerland and the world not still struggling with the adoption of the ideals of a true Christian life style?

I suppose we will all answer these questions in our own way, but hopefully we will never lose hope for neutral countries like Switzerland to retain their neutrality and for Christian people around the world to live up to a true Christian life-style.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The July Issue of HELVETIA has prompted a most welcome letter of encouragement from Mr. W.R. Simmens, Chargé d'Affaires of the Swiss Embassy in Wellington.

- However, commenting on the Wellington Swiss Club-logo, Mr. Simmens points out an unfortunate aspect of the design. The logo could indeed imply some special connection between The Embassy and the Wellington Swiss Club.

Here is an extract from Mr. Simmens's letter:

The Swiss Embassy has no particular affiliation with the Wellington Swiss Club which could in any way be deemed to be a "special relationship" compared with that of any other Swiss Club in the country.

A letter of thanks has been sent to Mr. Simmens for pointing out the negative implications the logo could have.

Please feel free to send any comments, constructive criticism, suggestions, etc. for inclusion in this column. Obviously we insist on your signature but your contribution may be published under a nom-de-plume.

Society President's Report

With a great sigh of relief, I have made friends with my computer and it usually does what I ask of it, to the extent that it even printed some labels for me! Our first HELVETIA reached all your mailboxes on time, and about six of us managed to get

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all the magazines stapled, folded, labelled and bundled in record time during a very wet, cold and miserable afternoon - so we chose the perfect day. My congratulations to Rinaldo for issue number one. Only 49 more to go!!

The past week or so has probably been very busy for all Clubs, with many and varied First of August celebrations, which I am sure will have been enjoyed thoroughly.

Now I think my next task should be to introduce myself to the many members who do not know me. I was born in Gisborne, early in 1961 (that's given it away!), the second child of parents who came to New Zealand, together with a six month old baby, just a year earlier. Only two months later, our family moved to the South Waikato, eventually settling in Putaruru, a rural / timber town, about 60 km south of Hamilton. I grew up and did all my schooling there, after which, at the age of 18, I went on my own to Switzerland, originally for a year but eventually staying for eight.

My first job there was in a "Käserei" (cheese factory / shop) in a small town called Ersigen, near Burgdorf (BE), where I was later to live for the following seven years. At the "Käserei", we made three Emmentaler cheeses daily - and I even learnt that well kept secret of how they make all those big holes in the cheese - but, of course, I can't tell you, because it's a secret! I worked in the household, as well as in the shop, where I learnt much about cheese; packed fresh, hand moulded butter; and even achieved a tasty fondue mix. Being in such a small town, no one spoke English, so my Swiss improved very quickly - real total immersion!

Then the travel bug got me, and whilst working as a waitress and in a bakery, I also managed to fit in some travel around Europe, and especially Switzerland. Eventually though, I felt it was time that I should "improve" myself, and very soon after, began a job running the office of a Corrosion Protection firm in Berne. The old saying, "you never stop learning" certainly applied to me and I found the technical side of the job very interesting. I learnt all about rust and how to remove and prevent it. Two particular contracts come to mind - one is the work we did for the

new hotel on the Jungfrauoch, and the other being aluminium pipes we sprayed in the workshop, their destination being the Clyde Dam.

Upon returning to New Zealand in 1987, I had another career change, working for the Bank of New Zealand, in several Hamilton Branches, where I remained until that fateful day of the car accident on 31 July 1994.

Although now back in New Zealand for good, I still have very strong ties to Switzerland and my Swiss heritage; as well as to Swiss culture, customs and traditions. This, together with the Swiss language, is something I feel must be upheld, nurtured, and passed down to the next generation, so that they too are able to identify with where they originate from.

Many people, at this time of year, make trips to Switzerland to visit family and friends, and, of course, to escape at least a part of the winter months, so I wish all those who are yet to depart a good and safe journey. To those people who have already returned, I hope you had an enjoyable stay and welcome you "back home". To everyone else, like myself, I hope spring will be here soon!!

With kindest regards and best wishes,

Beatrice Leuenberger

Address by Swiss Federal President Arnold Koller to the Swiss Abroad, August 1. 1997.

Dear fellow citizens living abroad,

It is good to know that, once a year, Swiss people throughout the world gather to observe our national day. You have come together to honour that beautiful spot on the globe which is our homeland. On the occasion of this year's national day, allow me to pass on to you the greetings and best wishes of the government of which I am a member, and of the Swiss people.

By attending this celebration, you are witnessing to your attachment to our country. We here in Switzerland have the same feeling of attachment to you. All over the world, you act as ambassadors of our country, and I

thank you warmly for this on behalf of the federal government. I know that, from afar, you follow developments in our country with particularly watchful eyes. Consequently, you are familiar with the relatively difficult economic situation that prevails in Switzerland after six years marked by a lack of growth. Like so many others, our country has not been spared a rise in unemployment, and many people have lost their sense of security.

We must fight against this, in the past few years, the government and parliament have carried through extensive reforms of the market and, in doing so, effected a considerable improvement in trade conditions for the Swiss economy. The private sector has, for its part, gone through a process of substantial restructuring and rationalisation. In other words, the conditions for an upswing exist. Given the country's economic strength and our efforts towards renewal, we can face international competition with confidence.

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