

Swiss National Fête Day

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SWISS NATIONAL FÊTE DAY

1st AUGUST 1291—1960

By next Monday, six hundred and sixty-nine years will have passed away since those sturdy sons of the cantons Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden clasped hands and solemnly vowed to stand steadfast together in distress and danger, in joy and sorrow.

Let us then, dear countrymen, on the birthday of our homeland, wander in thought back home to our mountains, to the picturesque lakes, to our native towns, villages and hamlets, where the church bells will be ringing gaily, spreading the glad tidings of Freedom and Independence, and where at eventide the bonfires on hundreds of peaks will send their flares heavenwards, proclaiming that here dwells a free and unfettered country.

Whilst Providence has granted us a long term of peace, other countries have seen their territories enlarged and their destinies determined by trouble and war, but no blood has stained the bonds which have knit together our free and order-loving population for many years past. We are a small nation, composed of the most heterogeneous elements — Protestants and Catholics, French-, German-, Italian- and Romansch-speaking Swiss, each, let it be remembered, with his traditions, with his prejudices. In each of these conflicting, often antagonistic, elements, however, there is a common bond of patriotism, and the only true policy is that which reaches that common patriotism and makes it vibrate, in all, towards common ends and common aspirations.

To this country of ours, which has given us its material, moral and intellectual wealth, to this country which affords to all its children its protection, we owe everything, all that we are, all that we have. And if on this day we try to find out what it means to us, it should be that we may feel and understand better what we owe to it.

What is then our duty to our country? We shall serve it best by defending it, by accepting willingly all the obligations entailed by that. We must support all efforts made for world peace, so that future generations be spared the horrors of war. This country of ours we shall also serve by defending it against internal foes, against those cynics who will tell you that love for one's country is nothing but a myth. We Swiss abroad are unable to take an active part in shaping the destiny of our homeland, but we can also serve our country by upholding its prestige by individual efficiency and industry, by faithful and honest services,

and by respecting the institutions of the country which has given us hospitality.

Patriotism is the vital condition of national permanence; no government is safe unless it is protected by the goodwill of the people; patriotism means: one country, one constitution, one destiny.

Let the Swiss Colony as a whole be a reflection of unity, which will on our National Day be the catchword of countless orators, from one end of our country to the other. There is room for improvement in many directions; let us make up our minds to be always just and forbearing in our relations with each other; let us beware of bickerings and petty jealousies. "True patriotism", Goethe once said, "consists only in this, that everyone sweeps before his own door, minds his own business, also learns his own lesson that it may be well with him in his own house." Let us remember that to err is human, to forgive, divine. A more glorious victory cannot be gained over another man than this, that when the injury began on his part, the kindness should begin on ours.

Let us beware of the pride which would make us believe there is no other country like our own, and let us beware also of disparaging it by saying there is no good thing in it.

More than ever on this our national day, our national motto, "Un pour tous, tous pour un", should be our "Leitmotiv". It is not enough to make, on every possible occasion, speeches emphasizing that we are all children of one large family, and therefore should stand together; this is, after all, an obvious conclusion. Deeds should follow words, we should show in a practical way that we mean what we so often freely proclaim. Let us then, dear countrymen, make this our resolution of the 1st of August 1960.

Wherever Swiss do dwell, their thoughts will on this day go back to their native land and to their dear ones at home, and many a heart will ache and many an eye will be moist. To many of us, that longing to see again those mountains in all their majestic glory, to hear once again those church bells ringing, will manifest itself. Let the clouds which pass above us be the messengers of our fraternal greetings, let them deliver the message of our unswerving attachment to the land of our birth, and tell of the love which still lives in thousands of hearts away from our native soil.

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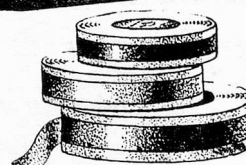
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