

Swiss National Day Celebration

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SWISS NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATION

on Monday, 1st of August 1960
at WIMBLEDON TOWN HALL

For the third time in recent years the Swiss community held its National Day Celebration at the Wimbledon Town Hall. As on former occasions, this very pleasant and spacious hall was decked in festive garb, decorated with the cantonal escutcheons around the balcony, and a large Swiss banner flanked by the Union Jack suspended at the rear of the stage.

From the outset a happy patriotic atmosphere predominated. The younger generation was very much in preponderance, but quite an appreciable number of older members of the Colony were also present.

By the time the programme started the hall was filled to the last seat. Shortly before the entertainment was due to begin, H.E. the Swiss Ambassador and Madame Daeniker took their seats in front of the balcony. They were joined by the official guests, His Worship the Mayor of Wimbledon, Alderman Philip Corbishley, J.P., and the Mayoress, the Deputy Mayor, Alderman G. Waller, and Mrs. Waller, and Mr. F. Streit, president of the First of August Committee, and Mrs. Streit. On their arrival the ladies were presented with lovely bouquets by a young lady in national costume.

The programme started with an organ prelude, which was followed by prayer by the Rev. Joseph Scherer.

Loud applause greeted the Swiss Ambassador when he rose to give the patriotic address; his opening sentences were unfortunately marred through a breakdown of the microphone.

He welcomed first of all His Worship the Mayor of Wimbledon and Mrs. Corbishley, and the Deputy Mayor and Mrs. Waller, and thanked them for placing once more Wimbledon Town Hall at our disposal. The Ambassador then greeted the large number of compatriots and welcomed also their British friends. He reminded them that that day Swiss Colonies all over the world were in their thoughts at home and commemorated with the people in Switzerland the anniversary of the birth of our country, and how, wherever they were, in imagination they heard the church bells and saw the bonfires on the mountain peaks; how this day signified not only the link with past generations but brought home to us the responsibilities for the present and our belief in the future. We first of all owed it to divine Providence, which has guided our people and our country through many centuries of perilous history, how we owed recognition to our ancestors who had stood against tyranny, who laid the foundation of the Confederation, and to those many men who, in times of danger, did their best to preserve our country politically and economically.

The Ambassador reminded us of the beloved figure of General Guisan, whose appeal to the people on the First of August 1940 did so much during the Second World-war to unite us and strengthen our determination to preserve our inheritance. We should also think of the many millions of refugees who, in the last twenty or thirty years had been pushed from camp to camp,

from land to land, and how that splendid effort, the International Year for Refugees, which had just been closed, helped millions to obtain again what we Swiss had possessed for so many centuries.

The Ambassador then asked us to think of the most recent group of people in distress, the compatriots who were now refugees from the Congo. How that incident again was a reminder to all of us of the wisdom to create a Solidarity Fund, a scheme launched under the auspices of the Secrétariat des Suisses à l'Etranger, an attempt to help those members who had sustained losses and thus were forced to make a new start, however late in life, and how such a venture could only fulfil its aims if it were built on the broadest basis with the greatest number of participants.

Pointing to the First of August badge, which we all were able to buy at the entrance to the Hall, the Ambassador gave us to understand that this was a symbol of Swiss solidarity. Last year its revenue had been devoted to the benefit of our compatriots abroad, and this year it was destined to help in furthering the professional training of our youth. We should take pride in buying the badge and should be proud to wear it.

The Ambassador was delighted especially to see so many young Swiss amongst the assembled company. He encouraged them to keep their eyes open and look and absorb and learn as much as possible. Great Britain and its people were most hospitable, friendly and helpful, and there was much we all could learn from this great Nation. At the same time, they should bear in mind the good reputation that Switzerland and the Swiss Colony here enjoyed. They should do their best to maintain it. Our country, like the world at large, was facing many difficult problems and only by keeping wide awake and by willingness to learn and understand could we help our country.

The Ambassador then drew special attention to the film which was going to be shown to the Colony for the first time. He hoped that it would not cause too much "Heimweh". He asked us also to be grateful to Mr. Hugentobler, Miss Dubacher, the "Corale" of the Unione Ticinese, and the choir of the Anglo-Continental School of English, Bournemouth, who had worked hard to contribute to our entertainment. He thanked also Mr. Streit and his First of August Committee for devoting so much time and energy to preparing what he felt sure was going to be a memorable and enjoyable evening for all.

The Ambassador's oration was vigorously cheered, and then came the traditional reading of the Swiss Pact (by the Rev. Ph. Nicole), to which the audience listened up-standing.

Then an excellent Swiss sound film in colour was thrown on the screen. It was one of the best films we have seen for a very long time, absolutely devoid of any tourist propaganda, a real Swiss film for the Swiss.

It took us to some of the large Swiss towns, such as Berne, Zurich, Basle, Geneva, St. Gall and Lucerne,

showing buildings of historic interest and fountains and monuments. Great hilarity was caused by the showing of the cortège of the Basle "Fastnacht". No less admired was a historic procession in Berne, the Youth Festival at Geneva, and the "Thalerschwinger" in the canton of Appenzell.

Lovely mountain scenery was shown, which awakened nostalgic feelings in many a heart. There was chamber music and, of course, yodelling too, which encouraged some members of the audience to break out in blood-curdling shrieks. Whoever was responsible for choosing this very fine film deserves a pat on the back.

Newcomers to a 1st of August programme were the Swiss members of the choir of the Anglo-Continental School of English, Bournemouth, under the efficient conductorship of Mr. O. Rosenorn-Lanng. This choir, consisting of very attractive young ladies and gentlemen, rendered songs in German, French, "Schwyzerdütsch" and English with much warmth and purity of tone. All the songs were sung with feeling, restraint and perfect harmony; it was a real joy to listen to their performance. Waves and waves of applause greeted their singing.

They were followed by a piano recital by Heinz Hugentobler, who played Polonaise in A flat major by Chopin. This young artist deserved a better instrument than was available, when his competent rendering would have been more enjoyed. He bravely fought against heavy odds, for which he deserves much praise.

Amongst old performers to appear were the "Corale" of the Unione Ticinese under the leadership of Sig. Bruni. Their hearty singing of the "Canzonette" of their native canton is always much appreciated, and as usual it was acknowledged with much applause. They are old and faithful friends of the Swiss community. In their programme were included yodelling songs by Maria Dubacher, who hails from Walchwil, and, therefore, is really a "gate-crasher" in the Ticinese *ensemble*, but a welcome and a charming one! Miss Dubacher yodelled lustily, and was much applauded.

Also much enjoyed were a series of sketches, "A day in the Life of a Swiss Student", delightfully acted by several of the Swiss students of the Anglo-Continental School.

The choir of the Bournemouth school once more appeared with songs, which were listened to with great pleasure; then followed community singing led by the assembled choirs, in which the entire audience joined with much vigour.

The programme ended with the singing of the "Schweizerpsalm".

Mr. F. Streit, president of the First of August Committee, thanked the various performers for their collaboration in the programme, the Swiss firms who by their donations enabled the committee again to hold this celebration, and the Swiss Ambassador and Madame Daeniker for having honoured the national celebration with their presence.

The second part of the evening was entirely reserved for dancing. Hundreds of couples, young and old, joined in, and vigorously turned and twisted to the sounds of Harry Vardon's Band. Conspicuous amongst the revellers was Mr. Bossert, who in spite of his 80 years danced like a twenty-year-old.

At 1 a.m. the National Anthem was played and another First of August celebration came to its end.

It was a most successful evening, and in concluding this report I wish, on behalf of all those who were present, to thank those who had worked so hard in making this year's celebration a success. Special appreciation should be given to the president of the First of August Committee, Mr. F. Streit, and his colleagues.

Let us hope that next year we shall be able to celebrate our National Day in less disturbing circumstances.

ST.

MESSAGE OF MR. A. RENOU, President of the Fête Suisse Committee, to Radio Suisse Romande

Radio Suisse Romande asked Mr. A. Renou to send a message over the air, on the occasion of the Swiss National Day, and we have much pleasure in publishing the text of this message.

"Mes chers Compatriotes,

"Les cloches sonnent, les lampions brillent gaiement, sur les sommets des feux s'allument.

"Souvenirs d'enfance, combien précieux aux Suisses à l'Etranger. Il faut quitter son pays pour mieux l'aimer; loin de lui on apprend à se souvenir, alors que tant oublient.

"Se souvenir! Pour nous Suisses d'Angleterre c'est évoquer — ces jours — avec ce courageux et hospitalier peuple britannique, la Bataille de Grande Bretagne de la R.A.F., il y a 20 ans, au cours de laquelle des milliers d'hommes, à la fleur de l'âge, donnerent leur vie pour la LIBERTE, celle du monde, la nôtre. Respectueusement nous nous inclinons en disant: Merci.

"Il y a 20 ans aussi, le Général Henri Guisan convoquait au Rapport historique du Grutli, des Chefs inquiets. L'horizon était chargé de nuages, mais la voix de ce grand soldat devint celle de l'homme d'état, respecté autant qu'aimé, qui rendit à tout un peuple troublé, à des magistrats hésitants, la Confiance et la Volonté de défendre le territoire, quoiqu'il en coûte.

"Honneur à la mémoire de ce grand homme, gratitude dans nos coeurs,

Oui, mon Général, nous nous souvenons."

"Partout dans le monde — le Congo en est le dernier exemple — déchirement, revanche: des millions d'hommes qui ont connu faim et oppression, qui savent que des millions d'autres êtres dans le monde subissent la Même horreur, souffrent, ou se revoltent. Dans ce brouhaha, les fruits d'un dur labeur d'une vie entière sont balayés: nombreux sont nos compatriotes qui ont tout perdu.

"En ce jour de fête, souviens-toi, peuple suisse, de ceux qui ont faim, toi qui vis dans l'abondance. Souviens-toi aussi que ce franc suisse que tu vénères tant, qui te donne confort et bonne chaire, ne vaudrait... oh! rien, si des millions de Jeunes d'autres nations n'avaient payé de leur vie pour qu'il reste un monde libre.

"Oui, en ce 1er août 1960, souviens-toi, humilie toi aussi, et comme nos ancêtres au Grutli pris... et dis merci à Dieu.

"Dis-lui merci d'être libre en mesurant toute la responsabilité de cette liberté qui doit non pas paraître simplement sur des pancartes, mais pénétrer dans les