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SWISS CLUB MANCHESTER

Swiss National Day Celebration

Years may pass, we all get a little older, but on the 1st of August time seems to stand still. On this rare occasion we try very honestly and seriously to gather together as a community, bound to each other by a very deep feeling of solidarity, friendship and national pride. This is indeed the date when we celebrate the birthday of our homeland, and in so doing we do not only honour and remember people of long ago, the dear ones who have left us, but take stock of what has been achieved so far, and strengthen our minds for further efforts toward the success of our activities, not just for the benefit of ourselves, but in the pursuit of serving others.

It was in this spirit, at least for the majority of us, that we met again in the most hospitable Cotton's Hotel near Knutsford. We always feel at home there, and it must give great satisfaction to our Committee to sense the very friendly and warm atmosphere, to watch the slowly growing company, composed of old, young and very young, and well supported by a host of good and faithful English friends, specially welcome on such occasions. There was, as usual, a good contingent of the Yorkshire Swiss Club, further proof of the excellent and very friendly relationship existing between our two Northern Clubs on either side of the Pennines, and it must be hoped that such reciprocal support may grow in strength and scope as time goes on.

It was, for many of us, our first opportunity of meeting our new Consul in Manchester and his good lady, Monsieur and Madame Rolf Born, and we most sincerely hope that their stay with us will be a long, happy and fruitful one, and whilst we shall seek their help and wise counsel whenever necessary, we can assure them both of wholehearted support and friendship on our part.

A very happy surprise for all of us was to meet again Mr. Ney, director of the "*Sécrétariat des Suisses de l'Etranger*" in Bern. Some weeks ago he honoured us with his presence at the "Landsgemeinde" and it was his wish to be with us again and to have an opportunity to meet more Swiss and their friends from the Manchester area. Such feelings do him great credit and we can assure him of our sincere support and thanks for what he does personally, and also as one of the leaders of the "*Sécrétariat des Suisses de l'Etranger*" de la Nouvelle Société Helvétique. On our behalf abroad.

People gradually flocked together and formed little groups near to, or not far away from, the excellent bar, in animated and friendly discussions and talks, auguring well for what was to follow. Eventually we moved to the beautifully laid tables, and it was again the truly "Outsize-Schueblig", accompanied by an excellent "Kartoffel-

Salad", which attracted our immediate attention. Also the excellent white "Mont Dorin" a l'enseigne du cheval blanc, from the cellar of a prominent committee member, added considerably to the success of the evening. Another member, a well-known confectioner, supplied us with some delicious tartlets and many of us would have wished to, or did some (?), have a second helping. This was followed by a well deserved cup of coffee.

This great and lively animation came to a sudden end, when the first tunes of the "Schweizer-Psalms" were heard and soon everybody joined in, with some emotion, singing the first verse of this impressive hymn to our Country.

Soon afterwards, our acting President, Mr. Bernard Simon, who was in the chair, addressed us in a few but well chosen words, welcoming our guests, compatriots and friends, and explaining to us the full meaning of this function. In particular he thanked "Swissair" for having arranged in good time, directly from Switzerland, the safe delivery of "our Schueblig". He also thanked Dr. Hans Bolliger, a committee member and our delegate to the Commission of the Swiss abroad, for his generous help in supplying the "Mont Dorin". Mr. Duerig, another member of the committee, was complimented, and rightly so, for his excellent tartlets. Our President also expressed, on our behalf, sincere thanks to all those concerned for the most efficient way they had arranged this evening, so as to make certain that everything would proceed in an orderly and harmonious way, which is exactly what happened as the evening went on.

Our Consul, Mr. Rolf Born, was then asked to address us, and this he did in a most human and clear manner. He began by bringing us the good wishes and friendly greetings of our Ambassador in London, and continued by expressing his wishes and hopes for a strengthening of the contacts between us and the Consulate.

It was his most sincere desire to assist our compatriots whenever needed. He mentioned also how much he was impressed, first of all in Hardcastle-Crags and now here, by the friendly and most human atmosphere pervading our functions and other gatherings.

The celebration of the 1st August was in his opinion a suitable occasion on which to consider the problems Switzerland faces, be it within our boundaries or in our relations with the world around us. How we had to learn to live in a world where history was shaped by the super-powers, the United States on the one side and the Soviet Union on the other, and in the background China. Of the existing division of West and East and all this may mean to us.

In spite of this rather sombre outlook there are fortunately also some redeeming aspects such as the

evidence of tendencies towards unification of European efforts in many fields and the evergrowing and general feeling that European Nations should join forces in order to survive. Switzerland in particular was faced with its relations with the United Nations, with the developing countries and many other problems of internal or external nature.

He reminded us of the efforts our friends of the "Ausland-Schweizer Sekretariat" are doing in the interest of the Swiss living abroad and making its influence felt also in the higher circles of our Government.

He very fittingly concluded by expressing the wish that our Fatherland may continue to prosper and in this he can be assured of our full interest and support.

His words were well received and warmly applauded.

It was then a great delight to listen to Mr. Ney, who spoke to us in the four languages of our Country, his "Romansh" being specially applauded, although hardly any of us could have fully understood this particular part of his exposé. He commenced by conveying to us the warm greetings and best wishes of the Secretariat of the Swiss abroad of which he is the director and told us how much he wanted to see us again, after his experience at Hebden Bridge, and that this function would allow him to get to know better his compatriots and their friends on this side of the Pennines. He then touched on various points which might be of particular interest to us, such as the proper programming of information, social security, education, military service, and finished by explaining to us some aspects of national and international policy. His words fell on thankful ground and he and the Organisation he so ably represents can be assured of our continuous interest and support. Loud applause greeted his words — the best way of telling him how grateful we all are for the work which is done in our interests in Berne.

As the evening progressed, we gradually assembled outside around our beloved 1st of August fire, a most impressive sight, and a true and unmistakable symbol of freedom achieved after hundreds of years of hard fighting, of ups and downs. We thought of the many gatherings of a similar kind that would be happening in our homeland at the same time, fostering active and sound patriotism but not forgetting that we are not standing alone in this world. The fireworks were arranged in a most efficient way, and the air was filled with their sounds, and by happy talk and sing-songs.

The dimming of the fire, and the thinning out of our gathering, told us that a clock never stands still and eventually everybody has to leave, with the firm resolve and hope that we might soon see each other again, all of us, next year on a similar occasion.

E. Berner.