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72nd

FÊTE SUISSE

*“Salut glaciers sublimes, vous qui touchez aux cieux,
Nous gravissons vos cimes avec un cœur joyeux,
La neige se colore, l'aire est pur, l'air est frais,
Allons cherchez l'aurore sur les plus hauts sommets”*

Amidst great enthusiasm and deep patriotic feelings the 72nd Fête Suisse took place at the Central Hall, Westminster, on Saturday, June 14th, 1947.

The attendance surpassed all expectations, and is a further proof how popular this annual festival, which was started more than seventy-two years ago, by Pasteur Pettavel, has become.

About 1,500 of our compatriots assembled in this great Hall, to spend a few hours together in close companionship, their thoughts travelled across the sea, over the glittering mountain tops to that small and lovely country which we so proudly call “la Patrie.”

Shortly before the start of the programme, the gallery had to be opened, to accommodate the overflow from the Hall below.

In 1939, which was a record year, as to attendance, 1,600 of our countrymen gave themselves *rendez-vous* at the Central Hall, this year the same figure was nearly reached again, indeed a fine achievement, and the organising committee, headed by Mr. Ch. Chapuis, is to be heartily congratulated on this splendid result.

As in former years, the Hall was effectively decorated with two huge Swiss Flags, the Union Jack and the cantonal escutcheons, which at once created a homely atmosphere and added to the “Stimmung.”

Long before the programme started the Hall and the Foyer was thronged with a happy chattering crowd, and I am glad to say that the younger generation was predominant.

Once again, we heard our homely Swiss dialects, the eloquent French and the melodious Italian languages spoken. Wherever one looked there were smiling and happy faces. In these times of strife, unrest and misunderstandings it acted as a tonic to spend a few care-free hours amongst one's own kith and kin.

To supply the material wants of young and old, a grand display of delicacies, such as strawberries (without cream), sandwiches (with real ham) cakes, biscuits, tea, lemonade and other soft drinks, were spread out.

When the onslaught began they disappeared in an incredibly short time, it was as if a swarm of locusts had passed over the numerous tables, and many got nothing more than a look at the appetizing dainties. Some of our young countrymen and countrywomen could easily compete with the sea lions in the London Zoo.

The catering arrangements were in the hands of our old friends Mr. and Mrs. A. Schmid and family and staff of the Glendower Hotel, and they bravely and courageously withstood the “attack.” In view of the still difficult food situation, they accomplished their task with great efficiency, and if they were unable to satisfy all those hungry mouths, no blame can be attached to them; and they are heartily to be congratulated for the way in which they carried on, smiling and unruffled. Unfortunately there were no “Wienerli's” and “Cervolats” obtainable, as in former years. Mr. Bartholdi was there, but minus his sausages.—

Swiss and cantonal flags and artistic postcards were sold by charming Ladies, some of them in Swiss costumes. These too went in no time (not the Ladies) “Alpenrosen,” plucked only a few hours previously in the heart of our mountains by Swiss children and brought over by Swissair were on sale and adorned the buttonholes of the gentlemen and the “Mieder” of the Ladies. This kind thought of our little compatriots far away was much appreciated, they brought to us a whiff from the “glaciers sublimes.”

But what about the congestion in the “Foyer”? there was no one-way traffic, strawberries and cakes jumped about in a bewildering manner, and cups of tea splashed like our waterfalls at home. Scarfs which adorned the necks of the fair sex wound themselves round the heads of their apposite members, a grand sight, but not very comfortable.

The programme started with a March “Le père la Victoire” by Louis Ganne, played with much gusto by the Swiss Orchestral Society under the conductorship of the ever-young E. P. Dick. It was the re-

appearance of the orchestra, after eight long years, and how glad we are to see them again in our midst.

Then followed the "Cantique Suisse" sung by the audience and accompanied by the orchestra.

A prayer was given by the Rev. A. Lanfranchi.

Monsieur Paul Ruegger, the Swiss Minister, then mounted the platform to the applause of the entire company; in our three national languages and English he addressed the audience as follows:—

Mes chers compatriotes,

Suisses de Londres,

Une tradition très ancienne — que nous respectons comme toutes les bonnes traditions, qui donnent de la force toujours, mais avant tout dans des périodes difficiles — veut que les Suisses de Londres se réunissent, au mois de juin, pour une Fête qui est leur Fête. L'année dernière nous avons eu la joie de voir revivre cette tradition après des années lourdes, dures, pleines de soucis, voire de dangers pour beaucoup d'entre vous. Aujourd'hui, nous sentons, lors de cette 72e Fête suisse, que les liens qui nous unissent au passé, comme ceux qui nous unissent toujours à la Patrie, sont plus forts que jamais. Les différentes sociétés et associations ont toutes repris leur pleine et féconde activité d'antan, aidées par le souffle bienfaisant venant de notre Pays. Ce sont autant de rouages, utiles, indispensables de notre communauté suisse en Angleterre.

Mais il faut que parfois, deux fois par an tout au moins, lors de cette "Fête suisse" de juin, puis lors du grand jour du 1er août, tous les Suisses, toutes les femmes suisses de Londres puissent entendre l'appel cordial qui les convie à se grouper, tous et toutes, autour de notre drapeau. C'est là une des significations profondes, très hautes de notre "Fête suisse" du mois de juin et au nom des autorités fédérales, je remercie les organisations, le Comité, son président d'avoir tout mis en œuvre pour que notre réunion d'aujourd'hui soit couronnée d'un plein succès.

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Liebe Landsleute,

Ich hatte — für einen Augenblick — die Hoffnung, dass unser heutiges Fest sich zu einem Ereignis hätte auswachsen können, das in der Geschichte unserer Kolonie einzigartig gewesen wäre: auf die Nachricht hin, dass der Chef unserer Armee in Kriegszeiten, Herr General Guisan, in den nächsten Tagen nach West-Hartlepool zu kommen hofft zur Taufe eines neuen Schweizerschiffs, das seinen Namen trägt. Seine Verpflichtungen haben es ihm leider nicht ermöglicht, heute bei uns zu sein und ein paar Worte an Euch zu richten. Er weiss aber, dass unsere Kolonie glücklich gewesen wäre, in seiner Person unserer Armee zu danken, und auch ihm persönlich zu danken, für so vieles, und nicht zuletzt für seine historische Rede vom 1. August 1940 auf dem Rütli.

Herr General Guisan hat mich beauftragt, Euch seine Grüsse zu übermitteln und seine Hoffnung, ein anderes Jahr in Eurer Mitte sein zu können.

A voi, cari concittadini ticinesi e delle retiche valli dirò, anche quest'anno un sentito grazie. Grazie anche, perchè con uno spirito patriottico altissimo, che è riconosciuto dalla Colonia tutta,



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avete perseverato nelle vostre benefiche iniziative, aiutando e incorreggiandovi a vicenda, mantenendo sempre indissolubili i legami che ci uniscono al nostro diletto Paese. Sono sicuro che tutti i presenti sentono con me che la famiglia ticinese di Londra è, sotto tanti punti di vista, all'avanguardia della colonia svizzera, alla vita della quale essa partecipa così attivamente sempre.

My dear compatriots,

Just a very few last words in English. This characteristic "Fête Suisse" of ours is a special day also for our young generation. After a long break, enforced by circumstances during the war and after, the channels of communication with our country, Switzerland, are widely opened again and many of our young Swiss boys and girls, born and reared in this country, have been at last able to see, for the first time, their beloved motherland. I hope that everyone of them will have this possibility and that all will, henceforth, be able to strengthen their fundamental loyalties to our country by these immediate contacts with our native soil which develop the best qualities that make for good citizens.

I welcome, on the other hand, so many young Swiss who, having recently arrived, for a stay of some time, in England, bring us the contribution of new blood which is so essential for every Swiss colony abroad. We have witnessed, with deepest satisfaction, the arrival of hundreds, even of thousands of young people, chiefly of young girls. Our colony in Great Britain, which, for some time, we feared to see diminish in members, is growing again and in a most satisfactory manner, a new and

living proof, were it needed, of the always closer ties between this great country and our homeland. It is one of the tasks of the Swiss societies in England to help establishing the contacts between our countrymen already residing here for some time and the most welcome new-comers. In this field also, no meeting could be more gratifying than our time-honoured "Fête Suisse" which guides our thoughts, as always, towards our beloved country Switzerland.

Long and loud cheers greeted the Minister's excellent address and it was then that a little girl presented Madame Ruegger with a beautiful bouquet of flowers.

Again the Ladies and Gentlemen of the Orchestra appeared to play the overture "Le Calife de Bagdad," which they played as efficiently as in former years.

The applause had hardly died down when a number of small girls and boys, picturesquely dressed, and accompanied by two boys disguised as lambs and one boy as a black cat, made their appearance, amidst the cheers of a delighted audience.

They sweetly sang and danced, first, "Savez-vous planter les choux?", "Le petite chevrier" and "Il était une bergère." Both their singing and acting was delightful to watch, although some amongst them seemed to feel the ordeal of a large audience, they accomplished their task with great credit. The "little lambs" seemed not quite at ease in their "get-up," their little noses especially causing some irritation. It was a delightful little performance which was greatly enjoyed, and Madame Pradervand, who arranged this number, well deserved the flowers which were presented to her by Mr. Chapuis.

This number was followed by a violoncello recital by Rosemary Pfaendler, who is well-known in the Swiss Colony as an accomplished artiste and a charming personality. She played, accompanied by Mr. H. G. Martin, two old French songs, Chants Russes by Edward Lalo and Malaguena by Albeniz. Her fine playing earned for her the enthusiastic applause of all those present. She too, was presented by Mr. Chapuis with two bouquets of flowers and an "accolade."

And now appeared on the scene, the members of the Swiss Male Choir together with their conductor, Mr. E. P. Dick. They sang "s'Heiwehblümli" by Thalman-Buehler and "C'est la Chanson" by Bovet-Abt, in excellent style, both diction and sound were perfect, and a pleasure to listen to.

The first part of the programme ended with a delightful performance of the members of the Swiss Accordion Group dressed in Swiss costumes under the leadership of Mr. A. Gandon. In a lively manner they played a March, two Valses and a "Ländler." The youngest member of the Accordion Players, Janine Gandon played the solo part in a Mazurka, and by her playing "brought the house down." This performance was accompanied by "Juchzers" coming from all corners of the Hall, and one felt one self almost transplanted to an "Aelplerfest" back home. The applause earned was well deserved, and a proof how much accordion playing is popular amongst our countrymen.

Everyone then filed out into the "Foyer" for one hour's interval, where some of the lively scenes occurred, which I described in the first part of my narrative.

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The second part of the programme was heralded in by a March and a selection from Verdi's opera *Rigoletto* played by the Swiss Orchestral Society and followed by community singing in which everybody joined most heartily.

Pastor Pradervand then gave a short and very moving address citing the example of Niklaus of Flueh, who centuries ago, exhorted our countrymen to unity and brotherly love, when disunion and strife threatened the existence of our country.

That the Swiss Colony in London has many talents was proved when Albert Ferber, who in a short time has made a name for himself in the musical sphere in this country, by his regular pianoforte recitals at Wigmore Hall, appeared on the platform.

This gifted musician has only recently returned from a concert tour on the continent where he met with great success.

His playing of Beethoven's Sonata in C sharp minor Op. 27. No. 2 (Moonlight) was exquisite, and earned for him prolonged applause.

Time after time he was recalled to make his bow to an enthusiastic audience, and as an *encore* he generously gave us some Debussy which once again proved what a great artiste he is.

Then the Swiss Male Choir reassembled on the stage. This time they sang Walker-Ackermann's lovely song "Mein Dörflein," and I think they deserve a special mention for their fine rendering, it gave one great pleasure to listen to them, and I am proud of the fact, that in my younger days I once belonged to this choir.

They ended up by singing "Rolling down to Rio" by German, with piano accompaniment, by Miss Uden, who is another gifted and charming artiste. The Colony is indeed lucky to have such a fine choir. There are not many foreign colonies in London which can boast of having an excellent orchestra, a fine choir, a large number of talented artistes and even its own newspaper, and if we had a Club House and centre "everything in the garden would be lovely."

For the second time in the Programme, Mr. Gandon led his accordion players on to the stage and they once more delighted everybody by their lively rendering of popular tunes.

And then came the "Grand Finale," the orchestra and the Swiss Male Choir played and sang Attenhofer's inspiring and patriotic song "Mein Schweizerland, wach auf!" a befitting ending to a really fine and enjoyable afternoon and evening.

There remains for me nothing more to do than to thank, on behalf of a numerous and enthusiastic audience, first of all the organising committee and its untiring President, Mr. Charles Chapuis, then the orchestra, the choir and the various artistes for a really grand performance, which perhaps, if some criticism should be voiced, was just a trifle too long.

They have all given us immense pleasure, and enabled us to wander in thoughts to our beloved country, which we love more than ever.

Before I lay down my pen, I wish to extend also a hearty "merci mille fois" to my old friend E. P. Dick, who has worked so hard to make this 72nd Fête Suisse a real success.

These few sunny hours spent amongst our compatriots will linger for many a day in the memory of your gratefully.

ST.

THE PROBLEM OF DUAL NATIONALITY.

Open Meeting of the N.S.H. held on June 17th.

The appeal of the New Helvetic Society to all members of our Colony to take part in an Open Discussion of the question of dual nationality, put before us by the Secrétariat des Suisses à l'Etranger in view of the possibility of legal changes being enacted, has been responded to by a record crowd of over a hundred compatriots. It was particularly gratifying to see many young faces, men and women, who have not hitherto taken much interest in such serious proceedings. Fully competent representatives of all Swiss Societies and other elements in the Colony were present and took an active part in the discussion. It had to be cut short after nearly two hour's duration and it certainly helped enormously to convey a reliable cross-section of opinions for the benefit of the legislators in Switzerland who may have to deal with the problem in the near future.

The President of the N.S.H., Dr. Egli, prefaced the discussion with the observation that we should welcome most warmly the initiative taken by the Secrétariat des Suisses à l'Etranger to consult first of all those particularly and directly concerned before the legislator in Berne puts his hand to the task of revising the present legal position. It was our duty to seize this chance with both hands. If we failed in giving the Homeland proper guidance on our attitude, it would be our own fault if changes of the Law were brought about contrary to our wishes. The President asked the Meeting to bear in mind that first of all we should be clear, whether any change was desirable, what should be aimed at in revising the Law and what particular changes we would recommend. Before opening the discussion the President called on M. Aubaret to give the Meeting a full survey on the questions involved. (*This survey will be published in full in our next issue.* Ed.)

The first speaker in the discussion was Pasteur Pradervand. He pleaded most strongly against any excessively nationalistic approach to this question, but declared that the retention of dual nationality was of use only in cases where the holder really feels that he belongs to both countries and is prepared to shoulder willingly the obligations of both nationalities including the payment of military tax. Dr. A. Lindt reinforced M. Pradervand's plea for a liberal treatment of this question. Provided the obligations as well

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