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SWISS NATIONAL DAY

1st of AUGUST 1291 - 1948

In a time full of anxiety, political and economic upheavals and universal distress, when the spectre of war is threatening once more the peace of a tired and torn world, our country is celebrating, on Sunday next, the six hundred and fifty seventh's anniversary of its birth.

It behoves us, who are far from home, to let our thoughts wander back to the land of our fathers; alas! we shall not see the fires lit on the mountain tops at eventide, nor shall we hear the church bells ringing; but deep down in our heart's we shall, if only for a few fleeting moments, share the emotions of our kinsmen across the sea. —

There is little need or justification to celebrate this day by noisy demonstrations, and to kindle patriotism by sentimental orations; the times we are passing through are grave and full of dangers, and demand more than ever that unity which is so continuously proclaimed by innumerable speakers at our many festivals both here and at home.

The Swiss newspapers will be full of glowing reports of patriotic speeches made throughout the length and breadth of our country, in which unity and love of our country will be praised.

Why should not every Swiss be justly proud of his country and its history? Surrounded by, at one time mighty and now impoverished nations, without direct access to the sea, limited in natural resources such as coal, iron and oil, this little country of ours, founded by a handful of peasants, has developed into a federation of peoples, politically independent, with democratic institutions, an educational system second to none, and holding its own in science, industry and commerce. —

True there is room for improvement in many directions, also in our Colony where of late things have happened which seem to make our national motto: "Un pour tous, tous pour un" sound almost a mockery. We are fortunate to possess in our Colony a number of capable men, men with vision and enterprise, and yet so little collaboration has resulted from their labours, petty jealousies and lack of understanding have been rampant, threatening disruption.

There are three guiding and outstanding principles on which the greatness, happiness and prosperity of Switzerland were built up: (1) The spirit of mutual help as exemplified by the brotherhood of the men of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden, (2) The spirit of self-sacrifice, as practised by Arnold Winkelried and others; (3) The broadminded, patriotic and conciliatory spirit of men like Nikolas von Flueh.

The proud and noble epic of Switzerland's birth of freedom, as immortalised by Schiller's "William Tell" ought to be our national Bible. Rütli, cradle of Swiss Liberty, ought to be the holy Mecca of every true Swiss. Sempach, Näfels, Stoos, Murten and Stans are milestones on the long road from slavery to freedom, where our forefathers fought, bled, suffered and died. Let us pay homage to those proud gallant and upright men by cherishing and preserving the sacred heritage of Liberty, Independence and Unity which they bequeathed to us, — their children. —

And whilst we Swiss abroad are, for the time being, unable to take an active part in home affairs, we can at least uphold the prestige of our country by individual efficiency and industry, services faithfully and honestly rendered, by good deportment, modesty and gallantry, and by respecting the institutions and customs of the country whose hospitality we enjoy. The best and finest propaganda for our country abroad are men of character and integrity whose word is their bond. Above all, let the Swiss Colony, as a whole, set a good example of Swiss Unity.

Let this be our resolution, on the 1st of August, 1948.

Sweet messengers of heaven, may we entrust you to deliver our humble and fraternal greetings to the dear old country? Please carry our homage to the Swiss mountains in all their majesty and glory, to the beautiful lakes nourished by the eternal snow, to the torrents, rivers and streams, the lofty Alps and the peaceful valleys. Let us hope that you may finally descend on the Rütli, the birthplace of Swiss Liberty and Independence, to deliver our unanimous and fervent message.

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