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“ Landsgemeinde ” of Swiss Clubs Bradford, Leeds & Manchester
ON SUNDAY, JUNE 19th, 1955
AT HARDCastle CRAGS, (YORKSHIRE).



The Swiss Minister and Madame Daeniker surrounded by some of the visitors.

Photo by courtesy of H. Ogdon, Mytholmroyd.

For the seventh year now the Swiss Clubs of Bradford, Leeds and Manchester have held a joint meeting, so called “ Landsgemeinde ” at Hardcastle Crags above Hebden Bridge in Yorkshire.

Meeting in the Memorial Gardens at Hebden Bridge we were honoured by the presence of the Swiss Minister M. Armin Daeniker and Madame Daeniker. They were welcomed to Hebden Bridge by the Chairman of the Council, Councillor E. Hubbard, J.P., accompanied by the Clerk of the Council, Mr. Ashworth, a courtesy greatly appreciated.

The proceedings were on similar lines as for previous years, that is a walk to Hardcastle Crags through the lovely wooded slopes of the valley of Hebden Water. The river below appeared in many contrasts, here as a ribbon of light or as water splashing against great rocks, there as a small cascade and once even as a lovely blue lake bringing to our mind the “ Blausee ”. There were trees of many species, even clusters of Pinetrees and of course the ground was carpeted with bilberry shrubs and patches of heather, with braken and ferns and multifarious wild plants and flowers.

After a picnic lunch washed down by numerous cups of tea provided by Mrs. Moor and her daughter Margaret, the charming hostesses of the Cosy Corner Café conveniently on the spot, most of us climbed to the top of the Crags to admire the view of many ridges and moors in this part of Yorkshire only a few miles distant from the Brontë country.

The “ Landsgemeinde ” was held in a field below the picturesque cottage that is Cosy Corner Café; above us the Swiss Flag was fluttering in the wind. Prof. J. P. Inebnit, President of the Leeds club, conducted the proceedings in his inimitable and enchanting manner. The roll-call of the participants canton by canton, proved that 16 out of 22 cantons

were represented. There were also a few English friends as well as three young ladies from Finland and two young men from Poland. The meeting ended with the singing of the National Anthem.

Returning to Hebden Bridge in mid-afternoon by a route on the opposite side of the valley, we had High Tea at the Cooperative Hall and counted 138 participants. At the “ Landsgemeinde ” there must have been more than 150 as many had said good-bye before leaving Hardcastle Crags.

It is our custom for the Chair to be taken alternately by one of the Yorkshire clubs and the Lancashire club. This year it was Lancashire’s turn and the President of the Swiss Club Manchester, Mr. H. Monney, had to perform this office. After reading telegrams of good wishes received from Mr. A. Stauffer, Editor of “ The Swiss Observer ”, from Mr. Etienne Cottet and from Miss André Inebnit, he reiterated the welcome expressed earlier in the day to our Minister and Madame Daeniker, welcoming also our Consul Mr. Oscar Schneider and the few friends present, mentioning particularly Mr. and Mrs. Sam Hanna who have shown their friendship in a practical and charming manner by filming many of our events and so keeping for us a pictorial record that will be enjoyed again and again. He then gave a short survey of the origin of this “ Landsgemeinde ” and recalled the many guests of honour we had in past years, notably Dr. Ernst Mörgeli, Dr. and Mrs. A. Lätt, Pastor Blum, Mademoiselle Alice Briod, Pastor Spoerri, Father Lanfranchi, Pastor Claude Reverdin and Mr. and Mrs. A. Stauffer. And now in 1955 we reach the ultimate with our Minister and Madame Daeniker. But we shall not worry, he added after a pause, if we must now climb down again. The essence of such a gathering is the opportunity afforded of meeting many of our compatriots, of renewing friendships and making new friends, of shar-



Swiss youths at the Landsgemeinde.

Photo by courtesy of H. Ogdon, Mytholmroyd.

ing for a few happy hours a pleasant companionship but above all of feeling that we belong to that small democracy in the heart of Western Europe, our beloved Homeland, Switzerland. The whole company then stood to sing one verse of "O mein Heimatland".

After welcoming the Chairman of the Council of Hebden Royd who had joined us, tho' late in the proceedings, the chairman asked our Minister to address us. Mr. Daeniker said :

My dear Compatriots and Friends.

I should like to express our very great satisfaction that my wife and I were able to come and attend this unique meeting and thank you for your kind welcome.

In the course of a career of more than 30 years spent in the foreign service of my country, I have visited many Swiss colonies, in Europe, Asia and America, colonies large and small, some bubbling with activity, others dragging along and living on the recollections of past glories, some torn by internecine rivalries; yet the great majority of them fostering in a harmonious spirit and in friendly intimacy the sacred bond of our common allegiance. And it is not without emotion that I remember some colonies in the midst of whom I had spent many happy hours and which have now entirely disappeared, as for instance those valiant compatriots who gathered and settled after the trial of the Russian revolution on the shore of the Baltic Sea, in Riga and Reval, striving for a new existence, to whom however only a short respite was given before they were again driven away. Our colony in Shanghai, 25 years ago so prosperous, has hardly met with a better fate.

After my experience in Latvia, Germany, China, Japan, Persia, India, Siam and Sweden, I was particularly gratified to take the helm and responsibility for our Colony in Great Britain which I always considered as being a model colony. This not only on account of its venerable age — and I may just remind you incidentally that today the Swiss Church in London is celebrating the centenary of the completion of its building at Endell Street; not alone also because this colony has so successfully upheld and augmented the Swiss prestige and our reputation in this country and is giving a shining example of unity, harmony and pervading solidarity within its ranks — which I am sure is not less the case in the North of England as it is in London; last but not least this colony has taken a lively interest in and energetically represented the common cause of the Swiss abroad

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for which we always found our compatriots from Great Britain in the frontline. I shall not forget the vigorous intervention of Prof. Inebnit at the Journée des Suisses à l'étranger at Lausanne, in favour of the preservation of Swiss citizenship by Swiss women married to foreigners, and I think it appropriate to congratulate him and our compatriots in this country for their remarkable success, a success without precedent and an outstanding instance for the influence which our colonies abroad can bring upon the authorities and even the legislature of the home country if they act united. Only last year we had another instance showing on the contrary that if such unity as to the scope to be attained and the procedure to be followed is missing, the whole action will be doomed to failure.

I am particularly happy to be with you today because your "Landsgemeinde" is quite a novel experience to me and I am sure it is a happy one. The Landsgemeinde as it is still practised in five Cantons is indeed a unique feature of public life in the world. It takes us back to the origin of our political life when all matters of common interest were decided in the "ring", when the authorities had to face the assembly of citizens to give an account of their gestion before their mandate was renewed and laws were deliberated and enacted in the presence of those on which they had to be applied.

There is hardly a more illustrative example of a working democracy and a more efficient way of training in democratic life; it is moreover still a common feature of Municipal administration throughout Switzerland. In this way, in contrast to most surrounding countries, our political structure was built from below, it has not been imposed from above.



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These facts are the more remarkable because with such democratic institutions the Swiss Cantons were not only able to uphold their integrity throughout the centuries but to exercise a decisive influence on the evolution and the shaping of Central Europe. Obviously the preservation of civic liberties was hardly compatible with a strong central power which was however necessary for a country participating in power politics. Therefore very early our ancestors abandoned a policy of expansion to which they were driven by the scarcity of their soil but which implied so many perils; they chose neutrality as a guiding principle. There exists therefore a close correlation between democracy and neutrality. Neutrality was not only the shield to protect internal harmony, to overcome the differences in religion, language and culture, the differences between towns and valleys which are still so evident in Switzerland; it is also the basis on which we evolved our civic institutions during a long period of lasting peace.

At the moment when neutrality has gained renewed actuality and is also valued afresh, it seems appropriate that we remember the roots and particularities of Swiss neutrality which by its nature has grown in close affinity with our federal structure and our democratic institutions. We had never to choose between different forms of neutrality and it was not imposed on us; it has been the product of our own history, the safeguard of our rights and liberties, and therefore not made to be imitated by others. But today this same guiding principle has allowed us to enter again international politics as a trusted

intermediary between parties in conflict and as a driving force in the service for re-establishing bonds of solidarity between the Nations, and in that respect our endeavours are now fully recognized.

I am glad that our compatriots in the North of England have given a fresh impetus to the ancient institution of the "Landsgemeinde" which lends the frame to their annual meeting. Deeply impressed of my visit in your midst I express my best wishes for the future of the flourishing colonies here represented and would like to assure them anew of the unreserved support of the Legation.

When the applause could be quited the chairman called on Prof. Inbenit to answer. We then listened for half an hour to a speech of intense sincerity. The theme of Prof. Inebnit's address was that all human contacts add to one's experience and consequently make us better in the sense that it makes us wiser. He illustrated his point with several personal experiences. Amid laughter he remarked: "Why, even you, Monsieur le Ministre, will be a better Minister, if this is possible, for your experience today". He ended by informing us that owing to his age he must relinquish his work at Leeds University. But he promised to be with us again and certainly intends to come for our "Landsgemeinden".

Councillor Hubbard now spoke a few words of welcome which were received with applause.

After the singing of a few Swiss songs, we had to separate as our trains were due at any moment. But we all felt so very much better for this wonderful and happy day.

H.M.

La Fête des Vignerons

1st-14th August, 1955

The 1955 Winegrowers' Festival at Vevey will be the first for 28 years — it only occurs three or four times in a century — so it is an opportunity not to be missed. How to get there? The best way by far is on the regular Swissair Tourist and Night Tourist flights to Geneva. 23-day Night Tourist fares include:

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