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A. RENOU.
President: " Fête Suisse " Committee.

81st FÊTE SUISSE

at

CENTRAL HALL, WESTMINSTER

on

THURSDAY, 21st APRIL, 1956

Under the Presidency of

MONSIEUR ARMIN DAENIKER

Ministre de Suisse

" Terre de mon pays, nourrie par la lumière,
sourdement travaillée par les quatre saisons,
ô terre de la vigne, terre du blé, terre
vivante comme un corps autour de nos maisons!"

The " Fête Suisse " has now exceeded its four score years, and has reached a respectable age, but in spite of the march of time there are no signs apparent of deteriation or senility, quite the contrary, it gets younger and younger every time we meet.

In one of the previous issues of this paper, I had made a sincere appeal to the Colony to give their wholehearted support to this annual festival, which is not only a family gathering in the real sense of the word — where youth and age meet for a few carefree hours in congenial company — but also a patriotic demonstration where every year afresh we testify our deep attachement to our homeland to which we owe so much, and which is always in our innermost thoughts.

I am delighted to report that my appeal has not fallen on deaf ears, the attendance having not only reached the 2,000 mark, but slightly exceeded it, in fact it has beaten all previous records save one (1951), and there is every reason to be satisfied with the result.

A good percentage of the visitors to the Central Hall, Westminster, was recruited from our younger generation, mostly residing in this country for only a short period, but quite a considerable number of our permanent residents were also present, which is a welcome sign, that in spite of the ever present shrinkage of our Colony, there are still a number of our compatriots who find time to testify by their attendance, that they have not yet forgotten " the old country ".

Again, as in former years, an attractive programme had been presented, true enough the major part of it goes to the credit of our visitors from home. I have explained on several occasions why the Colony as such is not anymore able to provide an entertainment from local talent, and I need not again enumerate the reasons why.

Whilst last year we welcomed a choir from the German speaking part of our country — the " Röseligarte Chor " from Berne, this time it was again the turn of our " romands " brethren, and the happy choice fell on the " Chanson de Montreux ", and the " Musique de Huemot ". It is often said that familiarity breeds contempt, this most certainly does not apply to our vaudois compatriots. Twice we have had the visit of our old friends the " Chanson de Lausanne ", and the Musique du Folly; and now their neighbours from Montreux came to see us, and the more we see of them the better we like them. Not only are they gifted singers and musicians, but they are indeed a happy smiling crowd, especially the ladies are so attractive and good to look at in their picturesque vaudois costume, complete with a saucy little hat. It was my privilege to meet the choir and the musique twice before their performance at Central Hall, once at the Berkeley Arms, Cranford, when they were the guests of the Confrérie Vaudoise, and again at an Aphéritif offered to them by the Swiss Minister and Madame Daeniker at the Swiss Legation. On both occasions, they gave a number of songs, and a musical interlude by the band, which were greatly enjoyed, but the high light was, of course, their appearance at Central Hall.

There they brought an atmosphere of gaiety into the otherwise rather dreary Hall, though it had been decorated for the occasion with flags, bunting and the cantonal escutcheons, and I wish to pay a special compliment to our friend Mr. J. Scheuermeier for the exquisite flower decoration surrounding the platform.

In the " Foyer " there were stands covered with souvenirs, such as small cantonal badges, pictures and postcards depecting views of our homeland, and even the " Läbchueche ", which last year found such a ready sale was not missing. Pretty maidens, some in national costume, sold programmes.

* * *

Shortly before 6 o'clock, the Swiss Minister, accompanied by Madame Daeniker, together with his collaborators at the Legation, and with Monsieur Jacquet, Conseiller d'Etat, and Monsieur Albert Mayer, Syndic of the town of Montreux, made their entry into the Hall. Madame Daeniker was presented with a beautiful bouquet of roses by the wife of the President of the " Fête Suisse ", Madame Renou.

The performance then started with an organ Prelude played by Mr. E. P. Dick, followed by the

Swiss National Anthem, which was sung upstanding by the entire audience. Meanwhile the " Chanson de Montreux " and the " Musique de Huemoz " had taken up their positions at the back of the stage, and arrayed in their becoming costumes presented an acttractive picture.

After a short prayer by Pastor H. Spoerri, of the " Schweizerkirche ", the " Musique de Huemoz ", who were loudly applauded, played an opening march.

The first speaker of the evening was the President of the " Fête Suisse ", Mr. A. Renou, who in English greeted the assembly, voicing his appreciation for the large attendance. He thanked first of all the Swiss Minister and Madame Daeniker, and the members of the Swiss Legation for their presence, and turning to the choir he welcomed — this time in French — the " Chanson de Montreux " and the " Musique de Huemoz " expressing his, and the company's pleasure at having them in our midst on this auspicious occasion; in terminating he warmly greeted the representative of the Vaudois Government, Monsieur le Conseiller d'Etat Jaquet and the Syndic of the town of Montreux. The speech of the President was much applauded, not only because it was a good oration, but also because it was " short and sweet ".

The lights were then lowered, and amidst much cheering a delightful bevy of young girls and boys appeared on the platform, the girls dressed in various pale colours and with flowers on their pretty little heads. They were, to begin with a little nervous, which is quite understandable as to many of them it must have been the first time that they had appeared before such a large audience, but they soon accustomed themselves to the situation, and their singing, dancing and acting was a pleasure to hear and to watch.

These were the children of the " Ecole du dimanche " of the " Eglise Suisse ", who were coached by Madame C. Reverdin; not a hitch occurred, and they fully deserved the thunderous applause with which their performance was greeted.

When silence was restored the members of the Swiss Male Choir made their entry, followed by their jovial conductor, Mr. E. P. Dick, as they are no strangers to the Colony, having on so many occasions delighted us with their songs, they too were greeted with much warmth. Not as numerous as usual, owing to the absence abroad of some of the members, they rendered three songs: " Die Nacht ", by Franz Schubert, the lovely song " Mein Dörflein " by Hans Ackermann, and Josephe Bovet's " Le Youtse ". Their performance earned them a deserving applause.

Then came the great moment, amidst tremendous cheers from the entire audience, the " Chanson de Montreux " lined up in front of the stage. When in 1954, the " Chanson de Lausanne " appeared at Central Hall, everyone was struck by the good looks of the female members of that choir, well, permit me to say, the ladies of the " Chanson de Montreux "

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TOP TABLE AT BERKELEY ARMS DINNER.

Left to right: **W. Wyler, Mme. Wiget, Rev. C. Reverdin, Mme. A. Renou, H.E. The Swiss Minister, A. Renou (President), M. le Conseiller d'Etat Jacquet.**

By kind permission of Ringier Swiss Illustrated.

"THE CHANSON DE MONTREAUX" AT BERKELEY ARMS, CRANFORD.

are every bit as attractive as their sisters from Lausanne, it seems to me that the canton of Vaud has the privilege of possessing lovely womenfolk, this was especially noticeable in the film of the "Fête de Vignerons" shown later on.

No less than twelve songs were billed in the first part of the programme, which at first sight looked rather over generous, but I am sure no one would have liked to miss a single one of them. The various "Fête de Vignerons" songs of 1905, 1927 and 1955, were especially appreciated, how delightful was f.i. the "Chanson du coucou" the "Chanson du semeur" and "Te voici vigneron". It is almost impossible to pick out any special items, as all were rendered with much warmth and refreshing unsentimentality. This choir also has the good fortune of possessing two remarkable soloists in the person of Mlle. Jaqueline Bergoz and M. Baptiste Bartolotta, their solos and duets were a pleasure to listen to. The conductor of the choir, Mr. Paul-André Gaillard, has trained its members to the last detail, and has them well in hand. M. Gaillard prefaced each item with a few words, but this was hardly necessary as the perfection of the singing more than illustrated the subject of the song. By their singing they have brought indeed the sun into the hearts of their hearers.

Then came the interval, and the "feeding of the multitude". Mr. Renou, before the company adjourned to the "Foyer", asked everyone not to make a too vigorous attack on the food counters, there was a little improvement than on former occasions — as this time extra space was allowed for catering — but the position is still not altogether a happy one, there is still too much "elbowing". The caterers, the Family Schmid of the Glendower Hotel, are hardly to be blamed, as the kitchen arrangements at Central Hall are somehow unsuitable for dealing with large crowds, and there were this year more hungry mouths to feed than ever before. A little more restraint on the part of the purchasers would greatly ease matters, and we Swiss could learn a great deal from our English friends, who are experts on "Queueing up". The "Würstli" counter f.i. had the worst of it, and it was there where the biggest battle raged. It must have been a great relief to the catering staff when the warriors left the battlefield, judging from the piles of empty plates left behind the fare provided seemed to have been appreciated.

The second part of the programme started with a Potpourri by the "Musique de Huemoz", these valiant men played with a remarkable liveliness many of our popular tunes; there were songs in French, "Schwizerdütsch" and Italian, and everybody lustily joined in the singing. In fact this item on the programme was so much enjoyed, that it threatened to upset the time table, and only when the President, almost in dispair, signalled the band leader to "call it a day", did both the singers and the musicians "pack up".

When calm was again restored, the "Corale" of the "Unione Ticinese" appeared in single file, amidst much hand-clapping. Many were their songs from the sunny canton "down south", but one could not help noticing the smallness of the choir, which only two years ago, numbered well over 30 performers. Is it a sign of the times, or have our "cari ticinesi" given up singing? It would be a great pity, as their collaboration at all Swiss functions has always been greatly appreciated. When they departed from the stage with their traditional signature tune "Ciau" they received the usual hearty applause.

It has always been the custom that the Swiss Minister, as the titular head of the Colony, should give an address, and therefore Monsieur A. Daeniker ascended to the platform to deliver his oration. He received a cordial reception, which is a sure proof how popular he has become in the Colony in the short time he has been with us.

He said:

Dear compatriots and friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I feel very happy to have the honour to preside over the Fête Suisse for the second time and to see that such a large attendance has again secured the success of this patriotic manifestation. The Fête Suisse is indeed unique not only for its venerable age but as a peculiar feature of the life of our Colony. Unlike the First of August, when the Swiss communities all over the world turn their minds towards their home country and rejoice in commemorating their common bond, the Fête Suisse is the principal gathering during the year of our Swiss in London. May the appeal of your committee reach ever widening circles of the younger generation and may they come and join our ranks in order to spend together with the older members of the Colony this one evening in a homelike atmosphere. In assuring you of the hearty support of the Legation, I think that it ought to be our first concern on this occasion to pay homage to the authorities of this country and to express our deepfelt gratitude for the generous hospitality which we all enjoy in this country. The number of Swiss citizens who come to the United Kingdom for a limited stay in order to learn the language and complete their professional training is always increasing and I am informed that this country grants more such permits to the Swiss than any other nation in the world. We gladly acknowledge the sympathetic understanding and valuable help which is thereby given to our younger generation. Yet at the same time it must be the foremost concern of the Legation and all those who have the future of our colony at heart to provide for a progressive and solid growth of the community of Swiss residents, of those who are willing to stay here a life-time and who will eventually have to secure the upkeep of our manifold welfare organisations. In a very near future we are going to make an important addition to them which shall bear witness to the spirit of solidarity in our ranks: the Swiss Hostel for girls which will be opened in the course of this year and which will offer a suitable home for more than 60 girls in this great Metropolis. Many voluntary workers within the colony are giving their best forces to make it a success from the start. Yet ultimately it will depend on our whole community whether this hostel will have its future assured.

Let me also pay tribute to the organisers of the Fête Suisse and particularly to its President, M. Renou, to whose dynamic talents and unswerving efforts we owe it that every year this festival acquires new attractive features. We still remember gladly the thoughtful songs of the Bernese Röseligartenchor of last year. To-day we have the particular joy to meet La Chanson de Montreux and the Orchestre de Huémoz, accompanied by M. le Conseiller d'Etat Jaquet and the Syndic of Montreux, M. Albert Mayer. They bring us greetings and a most welcome spring message from that lovely corner where they live, whose beautiful nature is so deeply engraved in the hearts of most of us.

Indeed, we cannot think of our country without keeping the Pays de Vaud foremost in our minds. Clustered between the lake, the Jura and the Alps and stretching towards the central plain, it offers a variety of geographical conditions and typical landscapes as hardly any other canton. The contributions of the Vaudois have largely enriched our cultural patrimony; let me mention only thinkers like Benjamin Constant and Alexandre Vinet, or a poet like Ramuz, or the many scholars and technicians who within the last 400 years have increased the fame of the ancient academy which is now the flourishing University of Lausanne. If, alas, the political fate of the Pays de Vaud has been typical for a country situated at the crossing of the main European arteries, we will gratefully remember that through this gateway the modern ideas of liberty have made a stormy conquest of the obsolete structure of the old Confederation; they paved the way for our modern democratic and federal state over which the canton de Vaud has ever had such conspicuous an influence.

In an English guide book on Switzerland, I have read that the Vaudois is of a happy-go-lucky disposition; he will always find that there is plenty of time to do a thing because he has a deep sense of the relativity of all things. He respects authority as long as he may critisize it freely and as long as it does not interfere with his cherished habits. Yet, this particular state of mind which makes the Vaudois so popular with his confederates, is it not the wisdom of a man who lives in close relationship with nature, who takes his inspiration from his natural surroundings, accepting gratefully nature's gifts and blessings and submitting with resignation to its wrath and injuries?

It is this happy state of mind which made the people of Vevey and its neighbourhood keep up the tradition of presenting to the world that wonderful and unique pageant, the Fête des Vignerons, which depicts and extolls the cultivation of the soil throughout the year with its passing seasons. It shows the enthusiasm of an entire population for the annual harvest as a reward for their labours; it is a glorification of nature; a symphony of sound and scintillating colours. Many in this audience have witnessed last summer this magnificent spectacle, but those who like myself have not been so lucky feel most grateful to the Committee of the Fête Suisse that they present to us tonight a Colour-film of the Fête des Vignerons of 1955 to which we are still looking forward.

Mes chers compatriotes,

Je m'excuse de vous retenir encore plus longtemps pour exprimer à nos visiteurs vaudois la joie que nous, les membres de cette colonie et les nombreux amis anglais, éprouvons en saluant parmi nous un si large groupe venu des rives du Léman. Vos costumes,

votre musique et vos chants ont eu un écho doux et tendre dans nos coeurs. Votre précieux message du printemps évoque en nous le souvenir des beaux paysages de votre canton, la vue toujours surprenante et glorieuse s'ouvrant au voyageur qui traverse la crête de Chexbres,les rives harmonieuses de votre lac, les vallées austères du Jura, les collines ondulantes de la Broye et les pentes ensoleillées de votre région préalpine. N'est-ce pas Ramuz qui, parmi nos auteurs suisses, est le plus universal mais en même temps le plus Vaudois dont l'oeuvre littéraire a été consacré à la gloire de la contrée lémanique, de l'éternel grand spectacle de la nature du pays où il est né ? quelque part il a écrit que s'il tâchait de fermer les yeux pour voir le ciel, c'était toujours cette terre qui le possédait, ce sol auquel il restait attaché.

Votre pays n'a jamais cessé d'être une grande attraction pour les Anglais. Je pense moins au flot des touristes qui viennent le visiter chaque année, mais aussi aux poètes anglais qui s'en sont inspirés, un Byron qui a écrit plusieurs de ses plus beaux poèmes sur les rives du lac, un Shelley et un Thackeray et enfin Gibbons, dont une bonne partie de l'oeuvre historique a été écrite à Lausanne. A son tour, notre colonie compte aujourd'hui comme depuis 200 ans un fort contingent de Vaudois. Je ne vous mentionnerai que la famille des Haldimand, dont un membre, le Général Frédéric Haldimand avait grimpé les plus hauts échelons de la carrière militaire et fut même gouverneur militaire du Canada, alors que ses neveux ont fondé à Londres une importante banque privée. Quand vous vous promènere dans le Westend de Londres et arriverez au Belgrave Square, souvenez-vous que c'étaient les Haldimand d'Yverdon qui furent largement responsables pour l'aménagement en 1825 de ce quartier qui compte encore parmi les plus aristocratiques de cette ville.

Nous autres confédérés en ce pays somme fiers et largement redevables de l'apport de l'élément vaudois parmi nous. Il a laissé des traces ineffaçables dans l'évolution de l'Eglise Suisse et de nos oeuvres de bienfaisance. Y aurait-il un meilleur ferment pour nos colonies à l'étranger que cet esprit vaudois qui, tout idéaliste qu'il soit ne perd jamais le sens de la réalité. Empreint d'une profonde et cordiale sympathie pour tout ce qui est humain ; pourvu d'un sens critique aigu qui va de pair avec un amour farouche de la liberté ; parfois un peu turbulent, mais toujours optimiste et ne se lassant jamais de bonnes initiatives.

C'est pourquoi nous Suisses de Londres saluons l'heureuse initiative de votre belle capitale Lausanne de vouloir organiser la prochaine exposition nationale suisse en 1964. Elle témoigne une fois de plus votre confiance dans l'avenir, votre courage et don d'entraînement, la force d'une imagination au vaste horizons comme cette belle nature qui vous entoure.

M. le Conseiller d'Etat et mes chers confédérés vaudois, dites à votre retour à vos compatriotes combien nous avons été heureux d'apprendre cette bonne nouvelle ; nous serons tous prêts à venir vous donner rendez-vous à la prochaine exposition nationale.

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"LUCKY CHAP."

The Minister's oration was much applauded.

Not the least attraction of the evening was the showing of the "Fête des Vignerons" film; although it was not the film of the actual performance in the big amphitheatre at Vevey, which I had seen last year in Switzerland, and which was of outstanding beauty, it nevertheless succeeded in giving an idea of the grandiosity of this Festival of the wine-growing brotherhood.

The film which was thrown on the screen depicted the procession of no less than 4,000 performers through the gaily beflagged streets of the town of Vevey. This film was excellent, picturesque and colourful, and enabled us to admire the lovely costumes of the singers and dancers. Inumerable brass bands headed each contingent, richly guirlanded wagons carrying the Godesses Cerès and Palès, with their retenue of lovely ladies, or big wine barrels, and wagons loaded with grapes; there was Bacchus, the God of wine, looking as happy as a sand boy, and what about the banners of the 146 wine growing communes carried in the procession? It was all an orgy of colour, frivolity and merriment, and I only regret that the space at my disposal does not allow me to give a more detailed description of all that we saw in this most interesting film. We are all greatly indebted to our friend Mr. Ch. Fer of Paillard's for having so kindly put this film and Cinex projector at our disposal, by doing so he has given us all so much pleasure.

When the lights were switched on again, and the excitement had abated, we beheld again our friends from the "Chanson de Montreux", and after what we had just seen we liked them even better than ever, what memories this Festival must have evoked in all those who were lucky enough to have been there. I understand that quite a number of the audience had witnessed this performance at Vevey. One not so young lady sitting in my neighbourhood was in a flood of tears, and when I enquired the reason of her emotion, all she could mutter, was "Oh, it was wonderful, never, never shall I forget it". I am sure no better compliment could be paid to the organisers of this unique festival.

The further song cycle numbering ten items, was now listened to with increased interest. By now, we were convinced that this choir can sing as we seldom heard singing before, but we did not know that they could also dance, and how well they did it with the accompaniment of the remainder of the choir. Master Bernard, a sweet little lad, with a sweet little voice, sang like an angel, and how lovely were the soli "Galé Gringo", arranged by Boller, and "J'ai rêvé d'une maison", composed by P. A. Gaillard, the conductor of the choir. The rendering of the "Hyme à la nuit" by J. Ph. Rameau was most impressive.

As an *encore* the choir sang Guibat's "La Jardinière du Roy" which evoked happy memories of when we heard it two years ago, sung by the "Chanson de Lausanne".

This ended the performance of our visitors from home, a performance which, I am sure will not soon be forgotten, they have by their exquisite singing captured our hearts and made us long to see once again the sun kissed shores of Lac Léman. Thank you members of the "Chanson de Montreux" for what you have given us, thank you also, members of the "Musique de Huemoz" for your performance which made us itch to sing and dance.

Whilst I am handing out compliments, I must not forget to say "un grand merci" to the President of the "Fête Suisse" committee, Mr. A. Renou, who has tackled a big job with his usual efficiency, in his task he was ably assisted by Messrs. W. Wyler, Pasteur C. Reverdin, C. Nater, X. Specker and J. Zimmermann, and by a number of "back room" boys and girls, who all deserve the thanks of the 2,000 visitors to Central Hall, and of course, to all other

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performers, programme sellers, stall holders and the caterers.

A grand evening deserves a grand finale, and it was here that a little hitch — the only one — occurred, first of all, one member of the staff of Central Hall, switched on the lights prematurely, as in his opinion the audience should have had enough, and he wanted "to go home", frantic signalling and "runners" rushing to the culprit, persuaded him to switch off the lights again. Then the President announced that instead of finishing the programme with the singing of the "Hymne Suisse" the National Anthem should be sung again, as at the beginning, as the choir expressed the wish to sing "God Save the Queen" in English, a very fine gesture. This announcement evidently was not heard by the organist, who turned the back to the stage, he started with "Trittst im Morgenrot daher"; more signalling and more running, this time to the organ quarters, and after a few bars played, the organist "changed his tune", and everybody was happy again. These little disagreements in no way marred the evening and were insignificant.

When the last sounds of "God Save the Queen" had faded out, the audience slowly made their exit, highly pleased with what they had seen and heard, and a most enjoyable evening came to a close, which will leave nothing but pleasant memories behind.

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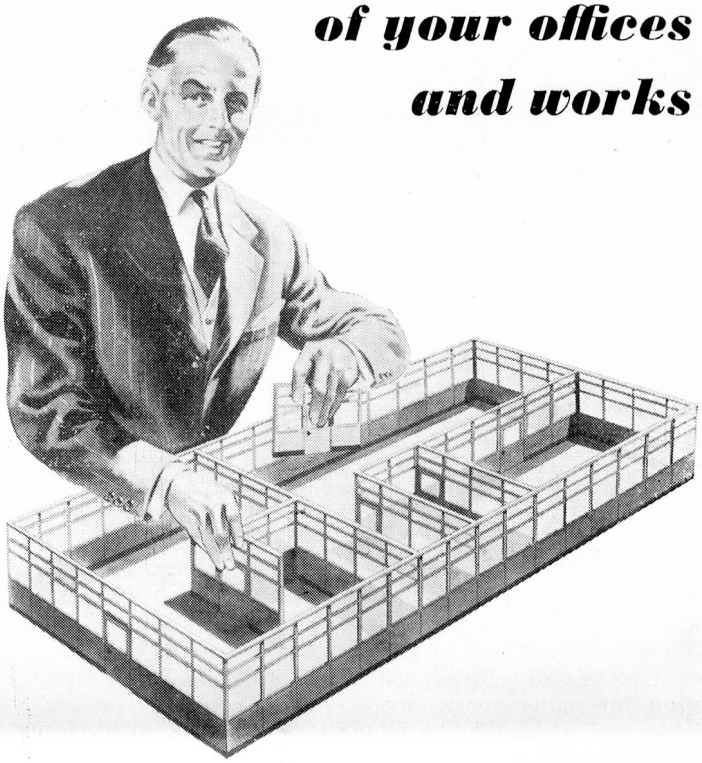

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