

Swiss National Fête Day

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SWISS NATIONAL FÊTE DAY

1st AUGUST 1291 — 1957



Six hundred and sixty-six years have passed since those sturdy sons of the cantons Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden clasped their hands and vowed to stand steadfast together in distress and danger, in joy and sorrow.

Let us then, dear compatriots, on the birthday of our homeland wander in thought back home to the silvery mountains, to the picturesque lakes, to our native towns, villages and hamlets where the church bells will be ringing melodiously, spreading the glad tidings of Freedom, Liberty and Independence; and where at eventide the bonfires on thousands of hills, peaks and mountain tops will send their flares towards heaven, proclaiming that there dwells a free and unfettered country.

Whilst Providence has granted us a long term of peace, other countries have seen their territories enlarged or diminished and their destinies determined by trouble and war, but no blood has stained the bonds which have knit together our free and order-loving population for many years past.

We are a small nation, composed of the most heterogeneous elements; Protestants and Catholics, French, German, Italian and Romansch speaking Swiss, everyone, let it be remembered, with his traditions, and his prejudices. In each of these conflicting and often antagonistic elements, however, there is a common bond of patriotism, and the only true policy is the one which reaches that common patriotism and makes it vibrate in all of us toward common ends and common aspirations.

To this country of ours, which has given us its material, moral and intellectual wealth, to this country which affords to all its children its protection, we owe everything — all that we are, all that we have. And if, this day, we have tried to find out what it means to us, it should be that we may feel and understand better what we owe to it.

What then is our duty to our country? We shall serve it best by defending it — and by accepting willingly all the obligations entailed by that. We must with all our might support the efforts of all peace-loving nations, so that future generations may be spared the horrors of war. This country of ours we shall also serve by defending it against its internal foes, against those cynics who will tell you that love for one's country is nothing but a myth.

We Swiss abroad are unable to take an active part in shaping the destiny of our homeland, but we also can serve our land by upholding its prestige by

individual efficiency and industry, by faithful and honest service and by respecting the institutions of the country which has given us its generous hospitality.

Patriotism is the vital condition of national permanence, no Government is safe unless it is protected by the good-will of the people. Patriotism means: one country, one constitution, one destiny.

Let the Swiss Colony as a whole be a reflection of unity, which will on our National Day be the catchword of countless orators from one end of our country to the other. There is room for improvement in many directions; let us make up our minds to be always just and forbearing in our relations with each other; let us beware of incessant bickerings and petty jealousies. "True patriotism", Göthe once said, "consists only in this: that everyone sweeps before his own door, minds his own business, also learns his own lesson, that it may be well with him in his own house." Let us remember that to err is human, to forgive divine. A more glorious victory cannot be gained over another man than this, that when the injury began on his part, the kindness should begin on ours.

Let us also beware of the pride which would make us believe there is no other country like our own, and let us beware of disparaging it by saying there is no good thing in it.

More than ever, therefore, our national motto, "Un pour tous, tous pour un", should be our *Leitmotif*, and this should lead us to happier times. It is not enough to make on every possible occasion speeches emphasizing that we are all children of one large family and therefore should stand together; this is after all an obvious conclusion. Deeds should now follow words, we should show in a practical way that we mean what we often so freely proclaim. Let us then, dear countrymen, make this our resolution on 1st August 1957.

Wherever Swiss dwell, their thoughts will on this day go back to their native land, they will go back to their dear ones at home, and many a heart will ache and many an eye will be moist; to many of us that longing to see again those mountains in all their majesty and glory, to hear once again those bells ringing, will manifest itself; let the clouds which pass above us be the messengers of our fraternal greetings, let them deliver the message of our unswerving attachment to the land of our birth and tell of the love which still lives in thousands of hearts away from our native soil.

ST.