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SWISS NATIONAL FÊTE DAY

1st AUGUST 1291 — 1958

On this, our National Day, gladness and gratitude fill the heart of every right thinking Swiss. Gladness that our country has been spared the horrors of war, gratitude that once again the Swiss people may celebrate that precious gift which surpasses everything else in importance, that FREEDOM.

Bonfires are lit on the hills and mountains, signalling one to the other that " all is well " ; songs are sung in the towns and villages, testifying to the same message; speeches are made from endless platforms to thank Providence and to exhort the listeners to continue lives worthy of Freemen and Freewomen.

We Swiss living abroad, separated from our homeland by land and by sea, send our innermost thoughts across to our beloved country, across to the hills and dales, the eternal mountains, and in those moments when we celebrate in close union of spirit with our kinsmen at home, we too feel that deep gratitude, that holy stir in our hearts, we too testify wih our kinsmen and rejoice that once again " all is well ".

We are proud to signal, not only to each other but to the world at large, that " all is well " in Switzerland. We know very well that there is a great deal happening also in Switzerland, to which that signal could not be applied, but when, on the 1st of August we Swiss celebrate our independence, we say " all is well ", and we signal it to those abroad, not in a spirit of arrogance, of superiority, but in a spirit of deep gratitude, and in the hope that others, who, in an effort to cure the ills that beset their people, might take stock of themselves and their thoughts and turn for a moment to the contemplation of what has been achieved in Switzerland, and what is being held fast there.

It has been stated not so long ago by the representative of a country, which name need not be mentioned, that the abolition of patriotism must necessarily precede any serious attempt to bring the nations of the world again together in a close union. It all depends on what one understands by the term " Patriotism ". If it means the love one bears one's country to the exclusion of kindly consideration for any other, if it means that one's own country must be considered right in every case, that one's own country must come first in every instance, that one must be imbued with the notion that no other country can possibly come near it in any way, that no other country's people can possibly be anywhere near so good as one's own countrymen, then I agree to the necessity of abolishing Patriotism.

If, on the other hand, Patriotism means the natural love any living man or woman has for his or her country of origin, the same as the love that, for instance, a " Berner " quite naturally feels for his home town, but which does not prevent him feeling a deep love also for the canton of Berne and equally so, even more perhaps, for the country of Switzerland, then I disagree.

Patriotism which enables one to extend one's love for one's nearest home to the larger home without, and from that to the still larger home which is represented by the country of one's birth, and from that, it would follow quite naturally, to the still larger home represented, say, by the Continent of one's birth, and still extending, to the whole earth, is a fine thing to be encouraged.

And, I think and hope, in that respect we Swiss can be an example to others. We can show other Nationals that, although we are Swiss first and foremost, we are also good Europeans.

When we come to look into the history of the Swiss Confederation as we know it to-day, we shall see that it has grown up from very small beginnings, in precisely the same way as a future World Confederation will grow up.

This progress from the smaller to the larger unit has been slow, has necessitated a number of wars, all sorts of international clashes, religious strife, economic wars, congresses and conferences in great numbers and of the most varied composition, but, finally and under the pressure of necessity as much as because the individual really wanted it, the fusion has come about, painfully at times, joyously in other instances.

In other words, the growth of the small units into a larger whole has not done away with Patriotism, but, on the contrary, made Patriotism possible, in a loftier form, in a form which in its interpretation means much more to the welfare of the individual Swiss than did the old form of Patriotism embracing only the small unit.

Therefore, when we Swiss celebrate the 1st of August let us be aware of the deep significance attached to that unity and independece which we celebrate. Let us take renewed hope that one day it may be possible to celebrate this festival of achieved unity on a much larger scale. Let us hope that the world at large will finally realise that salvation will come only when the various units come together, that improvement will be possible only when the various forms of warfare in which the various countries are engaging to-day have ceased, and when in their stead there is Peace and Goodwill, Unity and Independence.

And meanwhile, on the 1st of August, 1958, let us send our affectionate thoughts across to our dear homeland, commune with our people and celebrate with them, and let us thank God and invoke His further blessing on the land of our fathers.

ST.