

Swiss National Day celebrations

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SWISS NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATIONS

FIRST OF AUGUST WITH THE YORKSHIRE SWISS CLUB

On the First of August, the Yorkshire Swiss Club was invited to the home of Mr. and Mrs. R. Muller, Overdale, Ilkley.

The house and garden are situated high on the slopes of Wharfedale, with the barren expanse of Ilkley Moors on one side, whilst on the other side one can look down into friendly Wharfedale, leading away into the distant Pennine Hills.

In this setting, typical for Northern England and yet not quite unlike some parts of Switzerland, about eighty guests gathered in the evening: club members and their friends, neighbours and people more distantly connected with the club.

The Consul, Mr. C. E. Rosset, and Mrs. Rosset came from Manchester, giving their much appreciated support to the occasion.

Mr. Muller, as host and President of the Club, welcomed the guests to this first National Day Celebration of the Yorkshire Swiss Club. He said that this multi-linguistic gathering of people of different cultures and ways of life was typical of the Swiss Club, as it was not intended to be an institution for a few foreigners to isolate themselves. On the contrary: "The club is wide open and wants to provide a link between the Swiss and the local community." He then read the German text of the traditional First of August message to the Swiss abroad from the President of the Swiss Confederation, Mr. Paul Chaudet.

Then followed the address by Mr. C. E. Rosset. He expressed his pleasure in being with the Yorkshire Swiss Club on this occasion and conveyed a message of greeting and good wishes from the Ambassador, Mr. Daeniker. He then outlined the situation of Switzerland in the midst of the present evolution on the Continent.

The integration now under way in Western Europe places before our country a grave problem and momentous decisions, as well as to some extent a dilemma, too. Our Government's aim is to attain by way of association with the Common Market a solution safeguarding her important economic relations with the countries of that group, in addition to co-operating with them in a manner compatible with her traditional neutrality, her sovereignty and also the extensive popular rights and liberties that are characteristic of our political structure.

Mr. Rossett then ended by comparing the present time of stress with the situation confronting Switzerland in 1939. He said: "Then, precisely at the time when the forebodings of the oncoming war oppressed Europe and the world, the Swiss people by a fortunate coincidence were given the privilege of being shown the 'raison-d'être' as well as the ideals of their Fatherland in an enthralling display at Zurich, the Swiss National Exhibition. In two years from now, a similar exhibition will again serve as a beacon to show the way and inspire them in the same manner. It will be the Swiss National Exhibition 1964 to be held at Lausanne. And it would seem to me most appropriate to read to you the English version of the Exhibition's motto, as a guide and inspiration, and as a patriotic credo and an evocation of the place our country hopes and strives to take in the Europe and the world of to-morrow and the future. Here it is:

To present on land and lake
a true picture of our nation
To unite twenty-five sovereign
regions in joint enterprise
To remind each man
of his true aim in life
To seek in the present
the pattern of the future
To forge new links
with the new Europe
To strive toward
world solidarity
To spur Switzerland on
to new faith and endeavour.

"May Providence enable and assist our country in attaining these ideals."

Mr. Rosset's clear and at the same time warm address was intensely applauded. Due to its topical contents it found a lively interest — not only amongst the Swiss present.

The singing of the "Prière patriotique" concluded the official part of the celebration.

At the far end of the lawn, the "chefs" were ready to meet all demands, as the centre of attraction now shifted to the barbecue, and in the cool but pleasant evening air, a blazing bonfire soon gave warmth and provided a focal point for the singing of Swiss songs, not forgetting "On Ilkka Moor Baht'at"!

FIRST OF AUGUST CELEBRATION SWISS CLUB BALLOCH

The Swiss Club Balloch held their National Day Celebration in Mr. G. Ferrari's restaurant, 10 Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow, where there was a large gathering of members.

This gathering was a homely affair and was immensely enjoyed by everyone. At 8 p.m. the President was able to welcome quite a large number of compatriots, including our Vice-Consul, Mr. Frick, and Mrs. Frick, a charming couple from Dunfermline who are always welcome in Balloch. Also our Honorary President, Mr. E. Hofstetter.

Mr. Ferrari and his staff then took over and served a very nicely arranged and most delicious dinner. Under the motto "Wo Berge sich erheben" prevailed a real First of August atmosphere, and for this we have to pay Mr. Ferrari and his staff a big compliment.

When the festive spirit was at its height, Mr. Frick, the Vice-Consul, addressed the company with a very delightful speech in which he stressed how thankful we have to be to be able to enjoy the freedom of our Homeland and the hospitality of Great Britain, and Scotland in particular. He also conveyed greetings on this special occasion from our Ambassador in London and our Consul in Manchester. These greetings were warmly acknowledged.

Unfortunately, all too quickly this most enjoyable evening reached its end, and once more we parted company, with pride in our hearts to be Swiss.

HOW BATH SWISS CELEBRATED THE FIRST OF AUGUST

A few Swiss gathered for the First of August in an English friend's orchard.

A young Swiss girl brought some lovely red and white carnations to adorn our picnic table.

Our white cross on the red field was hoisted and we started at 8 p.m. sharp with the National Anthem. Then I read the President's message in German, French and English.

After this we enjoyed several Swiss Jodel records and our picnic.

Unfortunately the weather was not too kind for our outdoor activities, so we had to leave sooner than expected, and we finished at my home.

We are sorry not to see more Swiss in Bath and Bristol taking an interest in meeting each other on such occasions.

Frieda Maddox-Müller.

FIRST OF AUGUST SWISS CLUB MANCHESTER

The Swiss Club Manchester convened on the evening of the First of August at Cotton's Hotel near Knutsford for the traditional bonfire preceded by a "Wurst und Kartoffelsalat" supper.

The evening was successful in every way. Around the faithful "old guard" we were all happy to see the numerous young people who are the life-blood of the club. After the excellent and joyful supper the dynamic president, Mr. Simon, invited us to gather round the immense bonfire, much of whose wood had been contributed by members of the club.

As the flames rose, our thoughts turned to our beloved homeland with its long and perilous history. The vice-president, Mr. E. Berner, read extracts from the Bundesbrief, which even after more than 650 years makes us marvel at the level-headed way in which the founders of the confederation were able to reconcile down to earth practicalities with sacred ideals. Mr. Simon then read the annual message of the President of the Swiss Confederation to all Swiss living abroad and added a few words for the occasion. In the absence of our consul, Mr. Rosset, who was at the Leeds Club First of August festivity, Mr. Sollberger, vice-consul, spoke to us of the problems, mainly of an economic and social nature, facing Switzerland.

After this reminder of our nation's problems we returned our attention to the bonfire, which was gradually losing its initial force and sending fewer sparks into the balmy evening air. Before parting company we all enjoyed a splendid firework display which was arranged by Mr. Sohm and which was a fitting ending to a very enjoyable and harmonious evening.

W.B.

Wer nur Vergangnem lebt,
Verfällt der Schwermut leicht;
Wer nur an Heutgem klebt,
Wird naseweis und seicht;
Wer Künftigem allein
Sich weiht, wird irrgelekt;
Der nur wird glücklich sein,
Der alle drei bedenkt.

(O. Sutermeister)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

A number of most encouraging letters have reached the editor, particularly regarding her thoughts on our National Day. One reader felt that "this inspired message is the best thing we as a small nation can give to Britain and the world at this point". Another reader says he trusts and prays that the front page message "will have a deep influence on all that read it". The editor humbly accepts such heartening praise — her words came out of her deep love for her homeland, as well as out of sincere respect for the country we live in.

But then patriotism does not mean the same thing to everybody.

A letter full of complaint arrived from Paddington. It contains bitter disapproval of the First of August Celebration at Wimbledon. The writer asserts that it was such a great disappointment to many because "Chopin was no Swiss", and why was half the programme devoted to him? "Are we Swiss abroad or are we Poles abroad?" The writer expected folk music. (What, if not that, were the songs sung by the Unione Ticinese? Ed.), yodelling, "2 Schwitzeroergeli, Bassgigge, Clarinet und etwa noch ein Alphorn! Und einen anständigen Huddjaeggeler!"

He asks why there was no money for a "really good Celebration". He and others would be prepared to pay double for "a decent National Day Celebration in order to have the feeling at least one day a year that we have a country which is not only interested in military taxes!"

The writer will let the New Helvetic Society in Switzerland have a report of the celebration and threatens with some boycott (of *what* is not clear) if that does not help.

"Why can't we have any Swiss music on our National Day? If we cannot, what is the point of a gathering in the first place? Does the fault lie with the organisers or with the Swiss Embassy?" Even the film, he asserts, was poor according to expert opinion. The writer maintains that in previous years the "programme came up nearer to established standards".

The editor considers the criticism unjustified, at least in most parts. There are quite a number of Swiss to whom patriotism is not equivalent to the strains of a "Ländlermusik". She wonders what reaction the writer would have if some music by Frank Martin, Arthur Honegger or other Swiss composers were performed. In fact, from the tone of the letter she cannot help suspecting that the writer could well have been amongst those who marred Miss Huggenberg's recital by lack of discipline.

The First of August Committee is only too glad to receive constructive suggestions for next year's celebration. But, obviously, it is of no use suggesting a group of artists from Switzerland which would cost a vast sum of money. It becomes more and more difficult to support the Swiss Benevolent Society, the Churches and other institutions within the Colony. The hundreds of young Swiss who attend the National Day Celebration are, generally speaking, not those who give financial support year after year to the many good causes in the Colony — which benefits them, too, in quite a large measure. Yet often it is they who complain first and criticise most. Incidentally, the writer of that letter is not amongst the subscribers and supporters of the "Swiss Observer".