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MESSAGE TO THE SWISS ABROAD BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONFEDERATION

It is with sincere pleasure that I convey to you the greetings of the Federal Council and the best wishes of the whole Swiss people. The fact that, on 1st August, the Swiss Colonies scattered all over the globe are commemorating the foundation of the Swiss Confederation 674 years ago, fills us at home with proud satisfaction. We on our part feel particularly closely united with our compatriots beyond the seas and mountains on this solemn day. Our heartfelt thanks are due to you for your achievements for the good of Switzerland; for by your steady work, your efficiency, your readiness to help, and your upright way of thinking you contribute decisively towards the good reputation of our country in the world.

At home, we try to solve the big problems which have been created by the fast economic, technical and scientific development. We should like to assure you that you possess a powerful prop and support in your old homeland.

SWISS NATIONAL ANTHEM

For some considerable time, "Rufst Du mein Vaterland" was considered the Swiss National Anthem. This was not altogether satisfactory, and some confusion arose, especially at international gatherings when the British and Swiss Anthems were identical. In September 1961, the Federal Council resolved, after consulting the Cantons and various organisations concerned, that the "Cantique Suisse", the "Schweizerpsalm", should be the provisional National Anthem for three years. This period expired at the end of last year, but no definite decision has yet been taken. Some of the Cantons are for, some against "Trittst im Morgenrot" daher. Several of the music organisations are for it, a number oppose it. Opposition all along the line has come from theologians and religious bodies on the grounds that not only was the song difficult to sing, that the complicated text went badly with the tune, but above all that the song had to be rejected for its pantheistic and pseudo religious character.

Many suggestions have been made from competent quarters. The Beresina song, Hermann Suter's "Vaterland hoch und schön", the "Vaterlandshymne" by J. B. Hilber and "Grosser Gott, wir loben Dich" with a new second verse by the late Bernese clergyman Karl von Geyerz; this hymn, it is argued, would also have the advantage of being truly ecumenical, as the writer of the first and third verse was the R.C. Ignaz Franz, von Geyerz, on the other hand was Protestant. The latest suggestion comes from the "Schweizerischer Evangelischer Kirchenbund" asking the Federal Council to call for a competition.

There are some people who consider it wrong to create a National Anthem artificially. They say, and we are inclined to agree with them, that a song may suddenly appear which, due to some impulse from national joy or sorrow, could become the right National Anthem spontaneously. At the moment, the spark is missing.

For want of a better suggestion, the Federal Council has now decided that the "Cantique Suisse" or "Schweizerpsalm" will remain the provisional Swiss National Anthem. It will be the official Anthem, binding to the Army and Swiss diplomatic representations abroad.

After thorough preparatory work, the Federal Parliament will presently be able to take up discussion of the Constitutional Article regarding the Swiss Abroad. With it you will at long last find your rightful place in the principles of our State. It will create the basis of regulating your rights and duties with a view to a closer tie with Switzerland. As a further sign of our lively interest, I should like to mention the increase in contributions to the schools of the Swiss Abroad, an item dealt with by the Federal Department for Home Affairs of which I am in charge.

Finally, I thank you for your loyalty to your homeland, and from the bottom of my heart I wish you and your families happiness and prosperity in your far-away field of activity.

H. P. Tschudi,
President of the Confederation.

SWISS NATIONAL HYMN (*Trittst im Morgenrot daher*)

With the sun's first golden beam
Setting snow-capped peaks a-gleam,
Yet another glorious morn thus is born.

As we stand in adoration,
Proud of our land and nation,
We pray God for maintenance
Of this great inheritance.

When the ev'ning's shadows fall,
Starry heavens us enthrall,
We are lifted high above, by God's love.
Whilst in silent contemplation,
Filled with awe and admiration,
Our grateful hearts expand,
Beating high for Switzerland.

And when storm-clouds stir the sky,
Lightning flashes from on high,
We implore, with one accord, Thee, Oh Lord!
In our greatest tribulation
He is our sure salvation,
May His strong, protective hand
Ever guard our native land.

GALLUS.

This translation was made by our countryman, the late Mr. Willy Deutsch, a few years ago, when "Trittst im Morgenrot daher" was called "Swiss National Hymn". It has since become the temporary Swiss National Anthem to replace "Rufst Du, mein Vaterland".

* * *

We invite our readers to express their own opinion regarding a Swiss National Anthem. May we ask them to send their suggestions to the Editor by 9th August, please.