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SWISS NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATION LONDON

Celebrating this year's Swiss National Day, we cannot but remember the grave times of twenty-five years ago, when, on 25th June 1940, the armistice between France and Germany was signed, and Hitler's Armies dominated Western Europe. Grief, bitterness and fear were felt in our country, and the question of what was going to happen with little Switzerland occupied everybody's mind. If ever in this century, the will to be free and the determination to remain independent were prevalent in Switzerland, it was in those days. It became evident, that in spite of German victory, the war was not yet over, and Great Britain continued the fight relentlessly.

On 25th July, General Guisan called 650 staff officers to the Ruetli Meadow and issued his famous Ruetli Report which ended with the words "As long as millions of men are under arms in Europe and as long as considerable forces can attack us at any time, the Army will have to be on guard. Come what may, the fortresses which you have built will keep their value, our sacrifices have not been in vain, for we still hold our fate in our hands. Don't listen to those who, out of ignorance or bad intention, spread defeatist news and sow doubt. Have faith not only in our right, but also in our strength with which, if everyone is filled with iron determination, we shall offer resistance successfully."

On that day, General Guisan not only established the military redoubt, but he also fortified the country's spiritual and moral defences. And it is only right and proper that we should remember this on the occasion of this year's National Day Celebration.

It was referred to in the special communal service of the two Swiss Protestant communities at the Eglise Suisse on Sunday morning, 1st August, when a large congregation met to thank the Almighty for protecting our country. It was somehow significant that one of the representatives of the Swiss Embassy, the Assistant Defence Attaché, was in the uniform of a Captain of the Swiss Army.

The Special Service at the Swiss Roman Catholic Church was also extremely well attended, as was the Patriotic Evening at the Youth Club.

But above all, it was at the Wimbledon Town Hall on Saturday evening, 31st July, where a feeling of gratitude was present. Gratefully, we contemplated the distinctive cantonal flags displayed around the large, comfortable hall. Gratitude was felt that we were able to gather, young and old, resident and *de passage*, poor and affluent, in order to celebrate the 675th anniversary of the foundation of the Swiss Confederation. Lucky, too, we considered ourselves to hold this celebration in a friendly country, so dear to us all, and in this welcoming hall which, as for a number of years in the past, had again been put at our disposal by the hospitable Mayor and Corporation of Merton (Wimbledon that was).

The Rev. M. Dietler expressed our thoughts to the point when, in his opening prayer, he thanked God for the past, and the present and the conviction that He would also protect our country in the future. This thanksgiving (in German) followed the reading of the Swiss Pact (in French). By then, the hall had filled up more and more, and even the smallest Canton was able to muster a fair number of its citizens in the historic roll-call conducted by the M.C., Mr. P. Jacomelli. As he read out the Cantons and the year of entry into the Confederation, Swiss girls in

red skirts and white blouses carried in the cantonal flags, and the respective citizens spread throughout the hall rose from their chairs, applauded vigorously by the other confederates. As a dyed in the wool "Baselbieter", I found it difficult to swallow that the Basle flag merely showed the black crosier, and that there was no sign of the red "Landschäftler" staff. But I stood up proudly — after all, we were one in 1501 and, like it or not, we may soon be united again in one Canton.

The twenty-two Cantons assembled, the stage was set for the Patriotic Address of the Swiss Ambassador, Monsieur B. de Fischer, who had interrupted his holiday in order to be with his countrymen in London on the Swiss National Day.

He began his speech by welcoming the British guests, headed by His Worship the Mayor of Merton and Mrs. Marsh and members of the Borough Council and their ladies. He then continued in French:

Nous célébrerons demain le 675ème anniversaire de notre pacte fédéral. Comme l'année passée, notre pays fêtera ce jour en paix, en jouissant d'une prospérité exubérante et d'une harmonie sociale générales et en voyant fleurir sa vie culturelle. Cependant, cette fois-ci, quelques ombres ont apparu à l'horizon : nous avons dû faire face à certains excès de la prospérité en limitant le nombre de nos ouvriers étrangers et en restreignant les crédits à la construction; le choix des avions Mirage a créé un certain malaise dans l'administration fédérale; une malheureuse affaire bancaire a soulevé des doutes; dans certains pays, enfin, l'image de la Suisse semble s'être ternie. Il est évident et naturel que ces événements ont provoqué des réactions tant dans le pays qu'à l'étranger.

A côté de ces quelques difficultés du moment, plusieurs problèmes de fond sont venus se poser à nous, problèmes que l'euphorie de la prospérité et certaines circonstances avaient quelque peu obscurcis, et qui apparaissent aujourd'hui plus clairement. Il s'agit, sur le plan international, avant tout de notre position à l'égard de l'Europe intégrée et sur le plan national de questions telles que notre participation au progrès technique, l'aménagement de notre sol exigü, puis la construction de nos autostrades, la conservation de la pureté de nos eaux et de l'air, la planification de nos villes et celle de notre mouvement démographique.

La solution de ces problèmes exigera de nous de gros efforts de pensée et de considérables dépenses d'énergie et de moyens financiers. Je ne parlerai ici que de trois de ces points; c'est à dire de ceux qui intéressent plus particulièrement nos suisses à l'étranger : notre attitude à l'égard d'une Europe intégrée, notre politique scientifique, l'image de la Suisse dans le monde.

La neutralité reste, aujourd'hui comme hier, la maxime qui, dans notre temps marqué d'antagonismes intenses, garantit le mieux l'existence et l'indépendance de notre pays et de ses institutions politiques. Mais cette neutralité et ces institutions politiques ne peuvent, en aucun cas, être un obstacle à une collaboration étroite de notre part à une Europe unie que, comme tout pays de notre continent, nous souhaitons, l'actuel division ne correspondant à aucune réalité fondamentale. Nous sommes prêts à cette collaboration pourvu qu'un régime approprié nous permette de conserver certaines règles de notre vie politique auxquelles nous restons profondément attachés et qui font de nous les citoyens que nous sommes.

Quant à notre politique scientifique, nous savons que les économies nationales dépendent aujourd'hui toujours plus directement des efforts de la science. Cela pose des problèmes vitaux à notre petit pays. Il va sans dire que certaines tâches ne peuvent s'accomplir qu'à l'échelle continentale. D'autres au contraire doivent trouver leur solution sur le plan national. Ainsi, la modestie relative de nos moyens en hommes et en argent exigera de nous des choix judicieux, une utilisation rationnelle de nos ressources et une étroite coordination de nos forces. Ces points seront la tâche, passionnante mais pleine de responsabilités, de notre nouveau Conseil national de la science. Nous avons tout lieu de penser que grâce à notre matière grise bien entraînée nous trouverons des formules capables d'assurer l'avenir de notre économie.

En ce qui concerne l'image de notre pays à l'étranger, la NSH a jugé opportun d'en faire le sujet principal de la prochaine rencontre des Suisses à l'étranger. Nous espérons qu'on y trouvera les moyens nécessaires pour expliquer mieux le cas spécial que nous représentons dans le monde. D'excellents esprits comme le Prof. Edgar Bonjour et Monsieur Denis de Rougemont se sont, d'ores et déjà, employés à répondre, dans leurs derniers livres, à certaines critiques qu'on nous adresse. D'autre part, le Conseil Fédéral a décidé de proposer au Chambres Fédérales l'introduction dans notre constitution d'un article accordant un statut légal aux Suisses à l'étranger et leur donnant les moyens de collaborer, d'une façon organisée, au rôle de la Suisse dans le monde.

Voilà, chers compatriotes, quelques aspects de notre vie nationale contemporaine. Comme vous l'avez vu, notre pays continue à être infiniment privilégié, et nous le constatons, non sans une certaine émotion. Nous voyons, d'autre part, que notre peuple est conscient des problèmes qui se posent devant lui et qu'il cherche les moyens d'y faire face.

Profitions de la solennité de notre jour national pour remercier, de tout notre cœur, la Providence de nous avoir conservés sur ce bon chemin jusqu'ici et pour nous pénétrer, une nouvelle fois et profondément, de nos responsabilités personnelles et nationales devant notre pays. Je m'adresse ici tout spécialement à nos jeunes compatriotes dont un grand nombre se rend chaque année en Angleterre et dont plusieurs se trouvent ici ce soir. Je ne doute pas qu'ils savent que notre pays est souvent jugé d'après leur comportement et qu'à l'inverse, les expériences qu'ils font ici contribueront à créer chez eux la personnalité du citoyen dont dépendra en grande partie l'avenir de notre chère patrie."

Rarely, if ever, have I experienced such profound silence during a speech as when the Ambassador was speaking. It has often been said that the young people show lack of discipline and that they are noisy and restless during speeches and musical performances. This criticism certainly never applied to this year's National Day Celebration, especially during the Ambassador's address — though over a thousand people were present, you could literally have heard a pin drop. And it was mainly young compatriots only temporarily in this country, who made up the audience. The residents were fairly representative, but a good many of the faithful friends were missing, most of them already on holiday. And quite a number had stayed away because the death of our beloved Fred Stauffer had put a damper on their capacity of enjoyment.

International flavour was brought to the programme by Miss Phyllis Gillingham, the "All Britain Virtuoso Solo Accordion Champion". She is no newcomer to the Swiss community, and she not only played a variety of tunes

from many countries, but also presented a number of Swiss folk songs and "Ländler". If the audience was quiet during Monsieur de Fischer's address, they made up for it with their enthusiastic singing, clapping and stamping when Miss Gillingham's excellent playing dominated the stage.

The great surprise of the evening was the film. For months, various quarters and in particular the Chairman of the First of August Committee, Mr. Streit, had made strenuous efforts to get a film of the Swiss National Exhibition. The answer was always the same — none available. Then suddenly things began to happen, and in the end, and really only at the last minute, the EXPO film arrived — in two copies! We were most gratified to learn that one copy, brought over specially was the personal copy of Monsieur Gabriel Despland, Councillor of States and President of the EXPO. The film, called "EXPO VISION", brought back happy and fascinating memories of the *Exposition Nationale*. The film was extremely interesting and covered every aspect of the EXPO. My own criticism would be that the real value was decidedly to those who had seen the exhibition, but that it could have been somewhat confusing to someone who had not been able to go to Lausanne last year. Occasionally, a little less of the abstract and a little more of the tangible might have made it more easily understood to our English friends. Personally, I should have welcomed less of the symphony of typewriters and revolving fashion "saucers" and more of, say, the "Path of Switzerland". But on the whole, the film was excellent and I hope I shall have a chance of seeing it again.

The theme of gratitude which I felt ran through this year's National Day Celebrations became evident again during the film: that unlike 1914 and 1939, 1964 did not mark the beginning of another world war, that our country was still on the alert, and above all, that we were still able to call Switzerland our own.

The Corale of the Unione Ticinese under the direction of Mr. Bruni brought the first part of the evening to a close. Two dozen or so of our compatriots from the Ticino — many of them second generation Swiss in this country — appeared in their colourful costumes, full skirts and silk aprons, velvet breeches and *zoccoli*, and delighted the audience with happy tunes from the South. Some were old favourites, some newly-found songs, but all equally appreciated by the audience. The cantonal flag bearers joined the Ticinesi singers, and the National Anthem was sung by the audience and the choir, accompanied on the organ. I was not the only one to be glad that the "Schweizerpsalm" has not yet been chosen as the definite National Anthem, for if one has to scan the programme in order to sing the right words, the atmosphere remains strained, and there is nothing specially moving.

The second part of the evening was given over to dancing, and it was a pleasure to watch the obvious enjoyment of the couples on the floor. One of the items on the programme, folk dancing by students of the Swiss Mercantile Society's College, was held over to the second half of the evening, and a very attractive number it was. The young girls and boys had carefully studied the gay figures and rounds, and the girls had sewn their red skirts and white blouses themselves and at their own expense. The students' efforts were so successful that they had to give a repeat performance later in the evening.

The Swiss Ambassador entertained the Mayor and his party, as well as a few of the organisers, friends and supporters, at a reception in the Mayoral Suite. That provided a welcome chance to express appreciation of all the hard work done by Mr. F. Streit and his Committee.

It is by no means a matter of course that such a celebration should be staged year after year, and success cannot be achieved without jolly hard work. There is room for a few more of our compatriots to serve on committees and in societies engaged in activities in the interest of the Swiss community. A reader recently wrote:

Patriotic feelings are no longer what they were on 1st August 1914, either in Switzerland or amongst our compatriots here. Solidarity is sadly lacking. Is there still justice and mutual trust? If that is missing, the First of August is useless — it would be like a church without faith.

Had I read this last year, I should have been inclined to agree with it, however regretfully. But now having been at this year's National Day Celebrations, I cannot but feel more optimistic. Did I detect a change in the air, ever so slight, but noticeable all the same? And I recall a few words seen somewhere at the EXPO and fleetingly, but none the less impressively repeated in the EXPO film: "AUF DICH KOMMT ES AN" (It is up to you). Much has been said and written, and much more will be heard this summer of the "Image of Switzerland in the World". We were reminded of our privileges and our duties at the EXPO, and we certainly all — at home and abroad — have our chance to help affirm or possibly re-create the image of Switzerland. Perhaps quite a few left Wimbledon Town Hall on 31st July reflecting on the message AUF DICH KOMMT ES AN. This as much today as when General Guisan appealed to the Swiss nation twenty-five years ago.

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FAREWELL SERVICE FOR MONSIEUR JACOT

On Sunday, 18th July, the French-speaking community of the Swiss Church in London bade farewell to Monsieur le Pasteur and Madame Jacot who will be settling in their new parish of Fleurier (Neuchâtel) at the end of this summer. In his Communion Service sermon, Monsieur Jacot reminded the congregation of the unity of the Church and of the joy felt by the Church at being united together in a visible community. Subsequently, Monsieur O. Béguin, President of the Consistoire, expressed the gratitude of parishioners for the work of their pastor in London and presented him with a tangible souvenir of his stay among this community as a token of their thanks. After the service, those who wished to do so had the opportunity of having lunch with Monsieur and Madame Jacot — and their little daughter — and thus spending a few moments longer with them to say good-bye and to express best wishes for their future.

R.A.E.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Every Sunday 8 to 11 p.m. — The Swiss Catholic Youth Club — Social at Westminster Ball Room, 30 Strutton Ground, S.W.1.

Every Thursday, from 6 to 7.30 p.m. — Discussion Circle in English — Young men specially invited. Tea from 6 to 6.15 p.m. Swiss Y.M.C.A., London Central Y.M.C.A. Building, Great Russell Street, W.C.1.

Secours Mutuels des Suisses à Londres — no meetings until first Wednesday in October.

Every last Thursday of the Month — Swiss Club Manchester — Ordinary Monthly Meeting from 6 p.m. at the Midland Hotel, Manchester.

AUGUST :

Sunday, 15th, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. — Swiss Rifle Association — SHOOTING at Bisley (Siberia Range).

Sunday, 22nd — Swiss Club Manchester — RAMBLE.

Thursday, 26th — Swiss Club Manchester — MONTHLY MEETING. (Jass Competition.)

27th — 29th — ASSEMBLY OF THE SWISS ABROAD — Solothurn.

SEPTEMBER :

Wednesday, 9th — Swiss Mercantile Society — MONTHLY MEETING.

Sunday, 12th — 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. — Swiss Rifle Association — SHOOTING at Bisley (Siberia Range).

Thursday, 16th — Swiss Club Manchester — LECTURE (Film Show).

Tuesday, 21st, 6.30 for 7 p.m. — City Swiss Club — MONTHLY MEETING — Guest: H.E. the Turkish Ambassador — Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, W.1.

OCTOBER :

Sunday, 3rd — 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. — Swiss Rifle Association — SHOOTING at Bisley (Siberia Range) — Handicap Competition and "Grümpelschiessen".

NOVEMBER :

Saturday, 13th — Swiss Club Manchester — ANNUAL BANQUET AND BALL.

Friday, 19th — City Swiss Club — 100th BANQUET AND BALL — Dorchester Hotel, London W.1.

SWISS CHURCH

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS: à l'Eglise Suisse, 79 Endell Street, W.C.2, tous les *dimanches* à 11h00 et 19h00.

L'Eglise est ouverte le dimanche: pour le lunch l'après-midi et le soir; le *jeudi*: dès 15h00 et le soir.

PASTEUR: F. Jacot, 7 Park View Road, London N.3. Telephone: FIN 5281.

SERVICES IN GERMAN: At St. Mary Woolnoth Church, Lombard Street, Bank, E.C.3, every Sunday at 11 a.m. and 7 p.m.

PFARRER: M. Dietler, 1, Womersley Road, N.8. Telephone: MOU 6018.

SWISS CATHOLIC MISSION

CHURCH and SERVICE: St. ANN's Catholic Church, Abbey Orchard Street (off Victoria Street), S.W.1.

SUNDAYS: Holy Masses at 8, 9 and 11 a.m. with sermon in English. At 7 p.m. with sermon in German and French.

HOLIDAYS OF OBLIGATION: Holy Masses at 7.30 and 9 a.m. and 5.45 p.m.

WEEKDAYS: Holy Mass at 7.30 a.m.

CONFESSIONS in German, French and Italian:

EVERY SUNDAY 1 hour before Evening Mass.

EVERY SATURDAY from 11 a.m. to 12.45 p.m. and from 5 to 7 p.m.

Every first, third and fifth Wednesday of the month from 3 to 6 p.m.

Every second and fourth Thursday of the month from 3 to 6 p.m.

At any other time by appointment.

CHAPLAIN: Rev. Joseph Scherer, St. Ann's Church, Abbey Orchard Street, S.W.1. Tel.: ABBey 2895.