

# "Switzerland mourns the loss of her greatest friend"

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## “SWITZERLAND MOURNS THE LOSS OF HER GREATEST FRIEND”



These were the simple words displayed in the window of the Swiss National Tourist Office in London's Strand, together with a number of photographs of the great man taken during his stay in Switzerland in 1946. It sums up the tributes and appreciation expressed all over the country when the news of Sir Winston Churchill's death was made known.

The President of the Confederation, Federal Councillor H. P. Tschudi, sent a message of condolence to H.M. the Queen, in which he expressed the grief felt by the Swiss people on the death of the great man. He said that Sir Winston embodied the virtues of his country to the highest degree, and that the Swiss remembered with pride that it was in Switzerland in 1946 when this great European made his appeal for unity in Europe.

The Swiss Foreign Minister, Federal Councillor F. T. Wahlen, accompanied by the Secretary General of the Political Department, Ambassador P. Micheli, and the Chief of Protocol, Monsieur Ch. A. Wetterwald, went to the British Embassy in Berne to express official condolences. Federal Councillor Wahlen immediately paid a tribute to the great man on Swiss radio and television. (Text on previous page.)

Special books of condolence were open at the British Embassy in Berne and at the Consulates in other towns, and thousands of Swiss of all walks of life paid tribute with their signatures.

All the Swiss papers, periodicals, magazines and small publications of merely local or specialised interest carried some appreciation or other. The large dailies gave full pages of photographs, detailed biographical data and appreciative articles. "The great time of a great statesman", "A full, tempestuous life", "A life for England and the free world", are only some of the headings. His famous speech in Zurich and details of his stay in Switzerland at that time were prominently recalled, the reception in Lausanne during his private stay at Gilly-Bursinel, a trip on the Lake of Geneva, a visit to the Red Cross where he was received by the then President Prof. Max Huber, a journey in the SBB's luxury train "Red Double Arrow" to the

Morillon Estate, the trip to the country estate "Lohn" by horse-drawn carriages escorted by police and motorised troops, the official reception by Federal President Kobelt and Foreign Secretary Petitpierre, Sir Winston's "conquest" of Berne and the triumphal reception in the capital, followed by an equally tumultuous welcome in Zurich where he made his notable speech.

There were special memorial services in many Swiss towns. At the service in Berne Cathedral the President of the Confederation and other members of the Government, the Presidents of the National Council and of the Council of States and representatives of many official bodies were present. Cantonal, municipal and local organisations of every description honoured Churchill's memory in one way or another. The students of Zurich University had their own hour of remembrance in the auditorium of the University, the very hall in which the 1946 speech was made by Sir Winston.

A strange coincidence happened in Basle where the former Secret Service Inspector W. H. Thompson, who had been responsible for Sir Winston's safety before and during the war, appeared as guest speaker, invited months ago by the Anglo-Swiss Club, at the very moment when the great man fought his last battle before he died. Many were the stories and anecdotes the Inspector told of the man who could be so ruthless and yet so human.

At the State Funeral in London on 30th January, Switzerland was represented by Federal Councillor Wahlen and the Swiss Ambassador at the Court of St. James's, Monsieur Béat de Fischer. The funeral was relayed by the Swiss radio and television networks.

We should like to end this report by the tribute the former Federal Councillor Dr. Max Petitpierre paid to Sir Winston at the invitation of the Agence Télégraphique Suisse. He, as then head of the Federal Political Department, officially received the great Englishman in 1946. He said that Churchill had a place in the hearts of all men for whom freedom was the most precious treasure. "In these days we are deeply moved, for we have not forgotten what the deceased was to us: the embodiment of resistance

against despotism and, thanks to his energy and willpower, finally the conqueror of it. Churchill knew no paralysing doubts, for he possessed the faith in the accuracy of his decisions and in a civilisation which is built on respect for the dignity of human nature. The deceased put his extraordinary talents into the service of this faith. The victory which saved us all nearly twenty years ago, was his merit. Personally, my meetings with Sir Winston will remain unforgettable, and I shall always be grateful for the understanding he showed for our country and its special position in the world."

(Based mainly on news received by courtesy of A.T.S. and "Basler Nachrichten".)

### SIR WINSTON LOOKS BACK ON HIS MOUNTAINEERING DAYS

At the Exhibition "Switzerland 1965 — Year of the Alps", a letter is exhibited which Sir Winston sent to The Rt. Hon. L. S. Amery, C.H., on 20th June, 1955. The text is as follows:

"My dear Leo,

"You tell me that Zermatt is holding a mountaineering reunion to celebrate the centenary of the first ascent of Monte Rosa and of the opening of the Monte Rosa hotel. I still retain vivid memories of the peaceful valley of Zermatt and of its glorious amphitheatre of great peaks, when we were both there 61 years ago, as well as of my own ascent of Monte Rosa.

"Except for the Wetterhorn (\*) I did not follow up that first youthful introduction to mountaineering, but my experience was enough for me to understand the joys you and others have found in the high hills. So I do hope your fellow mountaineers will accept my best wishes for the success of your reunion.

(sig.) "Yours ever,  
Winston S. Churchill."

\*The ascent of the Wetterhorn referred to in the letter took place on 12th September 1886, when the young Winston Churchill (at 22) climbed it with a Bernese Oberland guide. The ascent was celebrated by a yodel on the summit!

### AN ANNIVERSARY AND A BIRTHDAY

On 23rd January it was twenty-five years since one of the greatest Swiss statesmen, Federal Councillor Giuseppe Motta, died in Berne at the age of 69. He was elected into the Government in 1911, first as head of finance and customs, and from 1920 to 1940 in charge of the Political Department. He was President of the Confederation five times. In 1920, he was Honorary President of the first Assembly of the League of Nations and in 1924 its Chairman. One of his greatest merits is that he achieved recognition of Switzerland's perpetual neutrality in 1938.

The President of the Confederation sent a congratulatory message to Dr. Albert Schweitzer on the occasion of his ninetieth birthday. Tributes were paid in several places, and an unknown artist created a large snow head of the eminent doctor on the heights of the Pfannenstiel.

(A.T.S. and Tages-Anzeiger.)

### SWISS FEDERAL PLEBISCITE

On 28th February, the Swiss electorate will go to the poll to decide on the fate of the measures taken on 13th March last year to curb the excessive economic boom and inflation. There is much opposition by industry, trade and Political Parties, and it is impossible to forecast any results.

### RECENT DEATHS IN SWITZERLAND

The following deaths have been reported from Switzerland:

- Aloys Fornerod (74), Fribourg, director of the conservatoire; music critic and composer.
- Olga Gehri, née Alexandrowna Nossow (69), Morges, widow of the dramatist Alfred Gehri; former wife of Prince Alexander Lobanow-Rostowski in Petersburg from where she escaped in the Revolution. She met Gehri in Paris and became his wife and collaborator. "Die Sechste Etage" was largely her idea, and she translated a number of plays from the Russian. Since 1938 at Morges, the birthplace of her husband.
- Gobi Walder (63), Zurich, well-known writer and dialect poet.
- Ernest Zuercher (55), Geneva, chief printer with the paper "La Suisse".
- Jules-François Bruttin (61), Zurich, well-known electro-engineer; on the board of Elektro-Watt (Zurich) and other similar undertakings in Switzerland and abroad.
- Dr. iur. Alfred Cafilisch (66), Basle, chairman of the board of Hoffmann-La Roche & Co.; well-known in financial and industrial circles in Switzerland and abroad; philanthropist.
- Victor Gautier (73), Geneva, financier; at one time Commune President of Genthod; for one period Councillor of States, former director of Swiss National Bank.
- Stanislas Kronig (78), Zermatt, local politician; specially interested in problems of tourism; local historian.
- Lucien Levallant (74), Basle, well-known lawyer, member of the Council of the Swiss Red Cross and on many boards of directors; philanthropist who received an honorary degree at the last *dies academicus* of Basle University.
- Marcel Mack (64), Lausanne, paper merchant, industrialist and politician.
- Ferdinand Lion (81), Kilchberg/Zch., well-known writer of Alsatian origin.
- Pierre-Auguste Leuba, Neuchâtel, Councillor of State.
- Dr. Edouard Frommel (69), Geneva, Professor for experimental therapeutics and Pharmacology at the University of Geneva; Corresponding Member of the Academy of Medicine in Paris.
- Henri Ramseyer (53), Geneva, Director of the nursing services, one-time Commune President of Versoix.
- François Lecoultré (81), Geneva, former teacher, Commune President of Chêne-Bourg, Liberal member of the Grand Council.
- Paul Maunoir (66), Geneva, lawyer and judge; grandson of one of the founders of the Red Cross.
- Otto Muench (79), Zurich, well-known sculptor, creator of the Meinrad column at Einsiedeln, the statue of Christophorus on the Rhine bridge at Rheinau, the bronze door of the "Grossmünster" in Zurich, the Zwingli — and the "Bible" doors.

[A.T.S.]