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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

SWISS NATIONAL DAY IN LONDON

For a number of years, the Swiss National Day of the Swiss community in and near London has been held at the Wimbledon Town Hall, and it would be difficult to find a more convenient and suitable venue where resident Swiss and young people temporarily in this country can meet to celebrate the 1st of August. It has always been a problem how to combine the genuine wish for a patriotic commemoration by some of the more sober-minded compatriots with the eagerness for dancing and enjoyment by most of the younger generation. The Committee under Mr. Fred Streit's genial chairmanship and the efficient stewardship of Mr. Peter Jacomelli have no easy task, and a lot of the criticism levelled at them is unjustified. That their efforts are appreciated by the large majority is shown by the ever enthusiastic applause and the favourable echoes heard after the event. Knowing that the organisers would welcome suggestions, the thought has come to my mind that readers should be invited to send their ideas of how to organise a National Day Celebration (addressed to the Committee c/o "Swiss Observer"). There has never been a dearth of individual suggestions, but what is required is a totally new conception with detailed proposals of how the work should be carried out and how it could be financed. This does not mean that the present framework should be abandoned — I firmly believe that it is, on the whole, a good one. But new ideas may help the Committee to face the task in the future.

The thought of inviting readers came to my mind on reading the answers to an enquiry made by the "Basler Nachrichten" regarding the patriotic addresses held by the score at *Bundesfeiern* in Switzerland. The problem is not ours alone; at home, too, the Patriotic Address has lost much of its appeal, and local celebrations are in danger of becoming stereotype: "a little bit of 1291, a review of events of the previous year, a few sentences re the future, statements as to willingness to defend the country and an appeal to self-examination and solidarity". The speeches don't stir the mind of the young ones and possibly bore the older listeners who have heard it all so often before. Songs, dancing, fireworks and bonfires and a good deal to drink. What else?

In London, there are neither bonfires nor fireworks, but to judge from lack of discipline during some of the items in the programme, not entirely whole-hearted attention is accorded during the serious part. Of course, the biggest problem is that of language, for we have to cater for five groups, our own and that of our hostess country. Trying to please them all *and* all denominations carries the danger of dissipating our strength. Perhaps there would have been more attention if the Swiss Pact had been read by some young Swiss in command of a stentorian voice and — why not? — wearing the costume of the forefathers who made the solemn vows. On the other hand, it was gratifying to feel the impression which the Prayer (spoken by the Rev. M. Dietler) made on the audience. The lack of all pathos and the sincere simplicity filled every one of us with hope and gratitude.

The Swiss Ambassador, Monsieur Olivier Long, delivered the Patriotic Address, no enviable task in the light of what has been said before. He acquitted himself well and did not make the mistake of glorifying the past or enthusing abstractly on the future. He squarely faced

the realities, a none too easy future in a rapidly changing world where everything is in a state of flux for the Swiss as well as for other nations. He stressed Switzerland's difficulty of adapting herself and at the same time preserving fundamental values which have enabled her to resist outside pressure in the past and to survive and assert herself during the last centuries.

"First and foremost, Switzerland's future depends on maintaining world peace. Those of you who lived through the last war know that quite well. Switzerland was certainly protected by her policy of armed neutrality; but she faced just as grave a threat as the nations which were at war, although she did not suffer as they did. And now, with nuclear weapons, a widespread war would be infinitely more serious. Switzerland is therefore working for the preservation of peace; in her own way, and within the limits of her powers, for she cannot pretend to a police role. Switzerland's peace-keeping efforts are directed, first of all, to guarding her own territory and maintaining her national defences. Taxation, military service for those living in Switzerland, the military tax for the Swiss abroad — these things are not always pleasant, but they are the insurance premium we have to pay to protect ourselves from surprises far less pleasant."

"Next, Switzerland contributes to the preservation of peace by her policy of armed neutrality. This is an element of political and military stability in Europe. It also helps to reduce political tensions in the world. For instance, it means that foreign powers often choose our territory on which to try, in a peaceful atmosphere undisturbed by political passions, to solve the problems which confront them."

"Finally, when a conflict breaks out, Switzerland goes to the aid of the victims. This is humanitarian work; but it is political too, because the first essential for a return to peace is help for the injured and the prisoners. Whether the task was to rescue soldiers dying of thirst in the Sinai Desert, to repatriate the wounded and the refugees, or to exchange prisoners between Israel and the Arab states, the only organisation whose intervention was at once accepted by the belligerents was the International Committee of the Red Cross, a purely Swiss organisation with headquarters in Geneva."

"Now don't let anyone try to tell you that events have made Switzerland's policy of neutrality out of date. Provided our neutrality is increasingly active, provided it serves peace or the victims of war, provided it is not afraid to take the risks inherent in it, then it is more necessary than ever. Because although our armed neutrality serves Switzerland, it equally serves world peace."

"But, Switzerland's future is also tied up with that of Europe. By geography, of course, but also by civilisation, culture and economics. That is why Switzerland has played an active part in building Europe since the end of the last world war. The aim is to make the European countries aware of their solidarity, to link them in joint enterprises, and to lead them along the road of progressive unification. The first objective is to make it impossible for them even to think of making war on one another again and plunging the world into a new catastrophe. The ultimate goal is to enable Europe, thus reinforced to exert

its restraining influence on the super powers, America, Russia and possibly China.

"Switzerland's European policy is simple. It consists in bringing the European countries together in all spheres where this can be done without provoking national reactions which would destroy the progress already made. Cultural, scientific and technical exchanges are increasingly ignoring frontiers. And for ten years, men have been striving to create a large European market so that commodities can circulate freely for the greater good of the inhabitants. That is why Switzerland already belongs to EFTA, a free market of one hundred million people. That is why Switzerland follows with interest Britain's efforts to open the doors of the Common Market. The Market of the Six has so far remained jealously closed. If it should one day show signs of wanting to open up, Switzerland would then assert her will to participate with the other countries of EFTA, and thus with Britain, in the creation of a real European market. By 'real' I mean as wide as possible, with no exclusions on either political or geographical grounds.

"But all that will take time, years, even generations perhaps. To build Europe, it is not enough for a few men of good will to sit round a table. Our own history and our experience of federalism have taught us that. Europe will not be built by treaties. It will be built by nations and men getting used to living together, collaborating more and more closely, and progressively opening their minds and their frontiers to one another.

"Meanwhile, for those who feel frustrated by the delays in building Europe, a vast field of activity is open to Switzerland and the Swiss. I mean the under-developed countries. For Switzerland's future is also at stake in that part of the world. The under-developed countries are the great challenge of the second half of the twentieth century. Our fate is bound up with theirs. If the rich countries go on growing more and more prosperous while the poor countries continue to be faced with hopeless difficulties, the stability of the whole world will be in danger. The local conflicts breaking out here and there in Africa, Asia and the Middle East are only a foretaste of what may be lying in wait for us.

"To raise the standard of living in the under-developed countries is a monumental task. But it is one to which Switzerland is well suited to contribute, within the limit of her modest means. We have no colonial past and are therefore not suspected of political aims. And the under-developed countries see in Switzerland the model of a small country, with no natural wealth, which has developed and become very prosperous while remaining fiercely independent. From there, it is only a short step to asking us for our recipe. That is why the federal authorities are trying to intensify their programme of assistance to the under-developed countries. That is why more and more Swiss ought to go to those countries, as teachers, as technicians, as specialists of all kinds. And in addition to active collaboration, they should also take them a little of that human warmth they need so much."

Amongst the most appreciative listeners to the Ambassador's interesting survey was His Worship the Mayor of Merton, Councillor Pearce, who was accompanied by the Mayoress, Deputy Mayor Councillor Holmes and the Deputy Mayoress. It was thanks to their good offices that once again the spacious Town Hall was put at the disposal of the Swiss community. If the first citizen of the Borough and his entourage were somewhat puzzled at the demonstration of cantonal flags carried on the stage

by boy scouts and giving ample scope to the *Kantönligeist* (how the *Stadtbasler* must have suffered that only the red bishop's staff of the *Landschaft* was carried in!), the English guests cannot have failed to appreciate the warmth of the welcome accorded to them. They and the Swiss audience alike enjoyed the brisk and lively yodelling by the two Giess Sisters from Radio Beromünster who, accompanied smoothly on the accordion, entertained the gathering with Swiss folk songs old and new.

A special link with the homeland was provided by a group of boy scouts Toedi-Glarus who had expressed a wish to partake in our celebration. They formed a colourful stage background, but also provided some unusual entertainment of singing and miming. The young lusty voices carried their special message, and I hope that the seventeen youngsters, two girls and seven leaders realised that their performance added a very special something to the evening.

Another feature of the London Celebration is a Swiss colour sound film. Whilst the music was superb and the photography of Central Switzerland was of the highest quality, the old question was inevitably raised about the image of Switzerland, especially as one could not help being irritated at too many half-naked girls lying around on the beaches; they reminded the audience more of adverts for cigarettes and suntan oil. But since beauty lies in the eye of the beholder, we were ready to overlook the lapses into bad taste and revel to the full in the unrivalled natural attractions of our country. The second film, too, one on the flower city of Berne, gave ample scope to nostalgic reflections.

And pride filled our hearts even more (that is to say those of us who are resident), when *our own* Corale Ticinese appeared and delighted the audience with their songs. Their efforts deserve particular praise, for it is more and more difficult to muster enough enthusiasts who will sacrifice time and effort for the benefit of the Colony.

For the Grand Finale, the Unione Ticinese's Choir was joined by the flag-bearing boy scouts and the yodellers, and under the direction of Mr. Luigi Bruni, two verses of the *Cantique Suisse* were sung. A striking improvement in the performance of the audience was noticeable as compared with last year.

The second part of the evening was given over to merry-making and dancing to Harry Vardon's untiring band. Most of the older generation retired, and the few hundred young boys and girls together with a fair sprinkling of "advanced youth" got down to the important business of careering round the dance floor in a variety of rhythms, steps and jumps which go to make up modern dancing.

An old friend of the Swiss community, Miss Phyllis Gillingham, entertained the audience during the interval, and her expert handling of the outside accordion — she is a British champion — delighted Swiss and English alike.

All too soon, the evening was over and with it the celebration of the Swiss National Day of 1967. How did it compare with the commemoration at home? I venture to say favourably. The patriotic address was of a higher standard than the average *Bundesfeierrede* so often dripping with false pathos and sentimentality. The reading of the Pact and the Prayer are a sound step in the right direction, and what could appeal more to us than a film of our beautiful country? We have no longer our orchestra and our male choir, both of which used to make valuable contributions to festive occasions. But we do

still have our Corale, and we are still willing to indulge in community singing.

Perhaps we suffer from spiritual contentedness and complacency and are apt to criticise others without being ready to *do* something ourselves. We Swiss abroad have a big part to play in the near future if we want to bring alive the new Constitutional Article devoted to us. Here is our chance, and if we take it, new meaning will be given to any National Day Celebration in the future.

MM

1ST AUGUST CELEBRATION IN BOURNEMOUTH

The Mayor plays the alphorn

His Worship was not the only one who gave a performance on this strange alpine instrument on Sunday, 30th July, when an international audience of several hundred gathered to celebrate the Swiss National Day at the ACSE Centre in Bournemouth. But I am anticipating.

It all started 17 years ago when two enterprising young Swiss, Mr. F. Schillig and G. Scheller, decided to open a language school in Hampshire. The beginnings were more than modest; of everything there was the barest minimum, except of enthusiasm, determination and devotion to hard work. Did they dream then of the time when 2,500 students from many parts of the world would attend their school *at the same time*? When a most modern language laboratory would be part of the everyday teaching methods? When a large travel organisation would be attached to the school and plans to expand would go on growing as fast as consolidation would allow? Did they foresee the day when the first citizen of the town and local dignitaries would attend an official Swiss National Day Celebration on the school premises, when their country's Embassy in London would send a special envoy, when one of them would be distinguished by being made Hon. Vice-Consul (the first time such an officer resided in Bournemouth and only the second Swiss Hon. Consular Agent in the British Isles, the other one being in Dunfermline)? Whether the two young men dreamed of it or not, it has all happened. And Mr. Schillig and Mr. Scheller may justifiably feel proud of their achievements to date. One could not help feeling that they had all along been trying to be the good Ambassadors of Switzerland, whom Monsieur E. Tosio, Swiss Consul in London, mentioned in his speech: a former President of the United States said that "*any citizen travelling abroad should be considered an ambassador of goodwill for his country. Anyone taking out a passport — he suggested — should be admonished to show respect for foreign laws and customs and courteous regard for other ways of life, and to speak and act in a manner that would enhance the reputation of his country.*"

The celebration took place in ACSE's own beautifully appointed hall, connecting several buildings which house the school and administrative offices and overlooking a well-planned garden. The Swiss students form their own *Bundesfeier* committee under the supervision of the indefatigable Mr. Scheller, and thus a new approach is achieved which shows itself in varying ideas on *décor* and programme from year to year. Beautiful flower arrangements in the national colours, red and white bunting and hundreds of Swiss flags used like flowers on green laurel, carefully planned lighting, a display of Swiss newspapers and magazines to cover scholastic notice boards — all testified to the originality and ingenuity of the students. Swiss posters, coloured pictures and girls in national

costumes stressed the patriotic character of the event.

Prior to the celebration, the Mayor and Mayoress of Bournemouth were entertained to dinner at the Carlton Hotel. Guests included Monsieur and Madame Tosio, Mrs. G. Luminati, Messrs. Wild and Forster from the ACSE Management in Switzerland, Mr. A. Kunz of the Swiss National Tourist Office in London and the Editor of the "Swiss Observer". After the dinner, chaired by the new Vice-Consul and Principal Director of the school, Mr. F. Schillig, the party drove back to the school escorted by a police car. They arrived in time for the opening march on the accordion, played by the expert accompanist of the Giess Sisters from Eiken, well known yodellers from Radio Beromünster. An elegant courtier read the Swiss Pact of 1291 — perhaps not the perfect costume, but it was done with the right amount of pathos and received by the audience with more than ordinary respect. The stirring song "*Wir sind die jungen Schweizer*" underlined the patriotic implication of the solemn declaration. The ACSE Choir sang in several languages and convinced the audience of their high standard achieved under the baton of one of the masters, Mr. Alan Williams. He richly deserved the gift presented to him in appreciation of his efforts in training the choir for the past five years.

More singing and yodelling framed the opening address by Mr. F. Schillig who welcomed the official guests, and the patriotic speech by Consul Tosio. Both thanked the Mayor, Mr. Frank Purdy, and Mayoress for honouring the celebration with their presence. Monsieur Tosio congratulated Mr. Schillig on his appointment as honorary Vice-Consul of Switzerland in Bournemouth, "... *a distinction conferred upon him by the Head of the Federal Political Department and formally recognised by Her Majesty's Foreign Office.*" Monsieur Tosio said that the title bestowed upon Mr. Schillig was *in a way a gesture of recognition of his endeavours to build up an important centre of learning for Swiss and other students in Bournemouth, and all he has done to foster good relations with our British friends.*

He said that both ACSE and the other Swiss establishment, the European Language and Education Centre of high repute, had done much in recent years to put Switzerland on the map of the South of England. They and others gave young Swiss a golden opportunity to get to know Great Britain, foremost champion of civic liberties and the rule of law.

Monsieur Tosio then recalled the historic beginnings of Switzerland and said that it had not been the intention of the founders to strive for political independence, nor to assert any new rights or liberties, but that they had met because of their common anxiety to preserve their ancient rights and very considerable material and economic interests and to form a common front. He showed how the fundamental principle had been upheld throughout 676 years of uninterrupted corporate existence. The modern State of Switzerland owed its unity to this, but the price of liberty was still eternal vigilance.

The Consul referred to this year's 1st August emblem, a symbol of harmony amongst people of different races and creeds, and that we were fortunate to enjoy the generous hospitality of Great Britain, outstanding defender of the rights of the individual. The message to the Swiss abroad sent by the President of the Swiss Confederation, read in French and German, ended the Consul's well-received address.

The second part of the evening was given over to dancing and entertainment which included some more

yodelling and alphorn blowing. Mr. Albert Kunz announced the winners of the third leg of the holiday competition organised by the Swiss National Tourist Office — the winning cards were drawn on the stage — and presented a gift each to His Worship, the Swiss Consul and the new Vice-Consul. The order of precedence was determined by the skill in blowing the alphorn, Mr. Schillig being the winner, followed by the Mayor who was also presented with the genuine alpine shirt worn by the alphorn artist, Mr. N. Rutishauser. Had His Worship been encountered in some part of Central Switzerland, nobody would have doubted his genuine Swiss citizenship — so strikingly “native” were his features under the white hood.

There was much laughter at Mr. Kunz's version of Swiss history, at some sketches, especially the three-legged antics of Mr. Brierly's “Pete's Feat”. “Show Time” songs by Mr. Freddy Ziegler were performed with much sentimental elegance, and how true were the words of one of his songs “*Auch der schönste Tag geht mal zuende.*” All too soon the happy evening came to an end, the Swiss wine bottles were empty, the *Cervelats* gone, the candles in the red cardboard cups with their white crosses burnt down, the youthful faces a little tired and the crisp summer dresses a little less fresh. (An original idea had been put in words on the tickets: *Wear what you like, but the well-dressed are especially welcome* — advice taken liberally), and the organisers could go to bed with the satisfaction of a well-planned evening successfully brought to a close. 650 new students arrived the following morning — back to the grindstone; the old *Eidgenossen* could not have been more in earnest.

MM

THE “SWISS OBSERVER” THIRTY YEARS AGO

In the issue of 3rd July 1937, we read of a present to the Swiss Government of a magnificent Persian carpet by the Crown Prince of Iran, in gratitude for his prolonged stay in Switzerland. Nearly £3m. more was to be spent on strengthening Switzerland's defences, on arms, strategic roadways and arsenals. The Cup winners for 1936/7 and the League Champions were Grasshoppers of Zurich. There was also a report of a dinner at the Swiss Legation, at which a number of prominent personalities of British public life were present, and when Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone honoured the Swiss Minister and Madame Paravicini.

The following week we read of a gift of £700 having been sent to the monks of St. Bernard by the President of the British Animal Protection League, in order to build better kennels for the St. Bernard dogs whose reputation had been harmed by the killing of a little girl. Sulzer Brothers were able to settle an impending strike by having an independent commission looking into the grievances of the workers; Escher Wyss were given the order to construct the Cairo Water Works, and Brown Boveri were able to expand again and re-engage 600 of their former workers who had been idle for some considerable time — *tempi passati*. The same issue also carried the first instalment of an article from “The Times” called “A Citadel of Neutrality — The Swiss Citizen Army”.

A week later, a statement appeared regarding the Swiss franc, following speculation as to its stability when France devalued for the second time; the Swiss franc had been devalued nine months previously, and its strength seemed now re-established.

On 24th July, we read that the Geneva Convention

between Poland and Germany concerning Upper Silesia had expired, and that Dr. Calonder (Swiss) had ceased to be High Commissioner there after 16 years in office. Prof. Emil Brunner, eminent Zurich theologian, had been awarded an honorary degree by Oxford University. A whole page (in German) was devoted to the newest Swiss-air aircraft, the DC-3.

The last issue of the month, we learned of a proposed new capital appreciation tax in Switzerland, and that subsidies would be cut still further. There was also a report on an athletic match between the Metropolitan Police “C” Division and the Swiss Mercantile Society at Imber Court, when the S.M.S. won both in athletics and tennis. Incidentally, the reporter, Mr. W. Burren, is, we believe, the only regular press reporter of a Swiss Society who is still actively engaged in reporting today, 30 years later. There was also a write-up of the real ice musical “St. Moritz” at the London Coliseum.

The first issue in August 1937 reported a price increase of 2 cts. on petrol — the “high price” of 45 cts. a litre was going to have a bad influence on motor traffic! There were also reports on various 1st August celebrations, amongst them one at the “Myllet Arms” and one at the S.M.S. (There was no official celebration in those days, a fact on which the Editor commented a week later.)

On 14th August, we read of 1 million francs being put at the disposal of the National Exhibition to be held in 1939, by the Zurich Municipal Council. Swiss trade figures were slowly improving. There was an article on “Switzerland's most Distinctive Antiques” and a letter by Mr. A. Meschini of “Pagani's” telling readers of Sir Malcolm Campbell's intended visit to Locarno, where he was to try out his speed boat.

The following week, an article appeared which might have been written today “*L'Appétit du fisc fédéral*”.

On 28th August, there was a report on the first Swiss railway, the *Spanish Brötli Bahn*; it was used in a week of festivities to popularise the town of Baden as a health resort. There were articles on the Swiss Police Headquarters, the economic distress of the Brienz woodcarvers and the Swiss military exemption tax. There appeared two long letters in support of the Editor's proposal to arrange a 1st August celebration for the Swiss Colony — the writers (S. Bruggisser and W. Meier) were to organise the first official celebration two years later.

GRAND SWISS HOLIDAY COMPETITION

Correct answer of third section: Lake Zurich

The draw took place in Bournemouth (see report of National Day Celebration). The first prize — a month's holiday in Switzerland including travel by Swissair — was won by Mrs. R. Lawrence, 7 Moat Court, Court Road, S.E.9. All prize winners have been notified.

“SWISS OBSERVER” PUBLISHING DATES

The “Swiss Observer” is published every second and fourth Friday of the month. Our next issue will appear on 25th August. We should be glad to receive all articles and reports not later than Tuesday, 15th August. Only short news items can be accepted later.

The next issue but one will be published on Friday, 8th September. All contributions for that number should be to hand not later than Tuesday, 29th August.