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Autor: MM.

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The Swiss Observer

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EDITED BY MRS. MARIANN MEIER WITH THE CO-OPERATION OF MEMBERS OF THE SWISS COLONY IN GREAT BRITAIN

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SWISS NATIONAL DAY FUND

SCHWEIZERISCHE BUNDESFEIER-SPENDE
DON SUISSE DE LA FETE NATIONALE

The Swiss National Day Fund is a politically and denominational neutral body whose aims are to realise true patriotism in the annual National Day. The organisation is composed of suitable societies and federations as well as individuals in all parts of the country. The President of the Confederation holds the Honorary Presidency.

The object is to make the public aware of the true ideals of patriotic thinking, be it on a cultural or welfare level. The money collected every year is allocated to a special deserving cause.

The *Spende* was founded over half a century ago out of a need to give purpose and dignity to the National Day, to remember in gratitude that Switzerland was spared war and destruction at the time. Its aims and ideals have been carried on, and its beneficial activities can no longer be missed. It is not just an empty thought to give away money for a good cause, but it answers a genuine need to seal the promise as a good Swiss by some tangible act.

We Swiss abroad have much cause to be grateful to the *Bundesfeierspende*, as every few years the collection goes towards the upkeep of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad and its Secretariat in Berne.

In 1967, badges were sold for 852,249 francs (5,000 francs more than in the previous year) and special stamps for well over 3 m. (1966: 2,928,383 francs). In addition, there were cash gifts of 42,584 francs, somewhat more, too, than in the previous year. After deducting expenses, well over 3.1 million francs was distributed for cultural purposes to 21 Swiss organisations devoting themselves to historic research, music, literature and drama. 312,428 francs were given in equal parts to the Swiss Tibetan Help and the Swiss Chess Federation. Gifts also went to the Disaster Fund and the Fund for the *Heimatschutz*, including a sum for the renovation of the altar in the *Pfarrkirche* St. Albin at Silenen, Uri.

It has just been decided that next year's collection will be donated mainly to the Swiss Red Cross.

This year, seeing that it is the Golden Jubilee, the collection is in aid of the "Swiss National Fund for our Soldiers and their Families", a Foundation which received the first contribution in 1918 and again in 1929 and 1940. Even these days of affluence and economic boom, of military insurance and *Lohnausgleichsordnung*, this fund meets a need. Again and again, there are cases of hardship — every year some 5,000 applications are made by soldiers who have been hard-hit by periods of military service or even more so where a soldier's health has suffered and there is the need for building up a new life. The families left behind by men who died on active service, often are in dire need of assistance.

And what about the Soldiers' homes and *Solatenstuben*, a practical form of help to the young servicemen? The means of the Soldiers' Fund are not high enough to cover all these requirements. It is hoped that this year's collection on 1st August will prove a handsome and most welcome injection to the Fund. If the organisers of this summer's sale of badges and stamps have decided to support needy militia men and their families, it is to honour the anniversary of the Confederation's birth by a really eloquent sign of solidarity.

The badges will be on sale in Great Britain at various Swiss functions during the next two months, also at "Shopping in Switzerland" at the Swiss Centre in London. Should anyone be unable to find an opportunity of buying one, the Swiss Embassy in London, 77-81 Gloucester Place, W.1, may be approached. They will send a badge if a postal order or cheque for 2/6 and a stamped/addressed envelope is enclosed.

The badge is particularly attractive this year, showing the above emblem in gilt mounted on a red and white ribbon. We Swiss abroad shall be proud to wear it and even prouder to support such a deserving cause.

MM