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The Swiss Observer

THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE SWISS COLONY IN THE U.K.

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THOUGHTS FOR OUR NATIONAL HOLIDAY

I believe I am right in saying that somebody once wrote that patriotism is the last resort of a scoundrel! If that opinion is true then many citizens of many countries could be branded with a rather unfortunate label.

On the other hand, many of the most heinous crimes committed against humanity during man's comparatively short existence on this earth have been perpetrated in the name of what was rather lightly called "national interest".

Without labouring the point, we can look at ancient history — the Roman persecution of the Christians — the enslavement of the people of Israel by the Egyptians (and many more) — or we can all take a look at ourselves in more modern times. Pogrom after pogrom has taken place during the so-called Christian era — an era which should, by definition, have heralded in an era of love, peace and mutual understanding.

But did it? I pose a rhetorical question — only recently our great friend and compatriot Gottfried Keller sent us one of his much loved letters from Switzerland in which he revealed the

activities of a Neo-fascist organisation based in Richmond, Surrey. I am a Berner by origin but I have also been a citizen of the London Borough of Richmond since 1942. I confess, without hesitation, that I thought long and hard before I published that letter. I was prepared to face any wrath incurred, by my refusal to do so. Then I thought "why not?" An animal's cruelty to a fellow creature is matched only by man's inhumanity (and intolerance) to his fellow man. We do not need to quote specific examples to prove this allegation — history speaks for itself.

One of our pastors has written a thoughtful — perhaps controversial — piece to mark our National Holiday. He, too, looks at issues which could easily — perhaps too easily — be categorized into black and white, right and wrong. He advocates tolerance and moderation. But he also warns us against regarding ourselves as entirely right and our neighbours as being entirely wrong.

So what am I trying to say? Simply that we Swiss — democrats all — should be thankful to live in a community which is synonymous with most, if not all, that our Swiss constitution stands for. We enjoy splendid relations with our British hosts. A mutual respect exists.

But let us be clear about what we mean by patriotism. Let us by all means be proud to be Swiss but let us remember that we belong to a larger European house (our Ambassador's words) and that we are only a very small part of a much bigger family — the human race.

So may thoughts of tolerance, justice and respect for all mankind take their place alongside those very natural ones about our beautiful homeland during these 1st August celebrations.

With warmest regards — George Sommer

Copy Dates

Will readers and contributors please note that items intended for inclusion in the next edition of the *Swiss Observer* should reach the Editor no later than 30th July.

WGS

Swiss Churches

SERVICES EN FRANCAIS: à l'Eglise Suisse, 79 Endell Street, W.C.2, tous les dimanches a 11h15 et 19h00.

PASTEUR: Raymond Renou, 7 Park View Road, London, N.3. Tel: 01-346 5281.

SERVICES IN GERMAN: at Eglise Suisse, 79 Endell Street, W.C.2, every Sunday at 10.00 a.m. Sunday school takes place on the first and the third Sunday in the month for children of all age groups. Children assemble in the church with their parents who attend the normal Service. Liturgical Service takes place every second Sunday in the month. Services also at John Southworth Centre, 48 Great Peter Street, SW1P 2HA, every Sunday at 6.30 p.m.

MINISTER: Pastor U. Stefan, 1 Womersley Road, N.8. Tel: 01-340 9740.

SWISS CATHOLIC MISSION: John Southwark Centre, 48 Great Peter Street, London SW1P 2HA.

Sundays: Services at 6.30 p.m. for Catholics and Protestants. See notice-board in house for details and location.

RESIDENCE OF CHAPLAIN: Bossard, Swiss Catholic Mission, 48 Great Peter Street (2nd floor), London SW1P 2HA. Tel: 01-222 2895.

ON THE FRONT PAGE

On this our National Holiday any number of patriotic pictures would have been appropriate. However, I am sure this beautiful and typically Swiss façade in Küssnacht will serve just as well to turn our thoughts to the homeland. Picture by courtesy of SNTO.

GS