

Zeitschrift:	The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK
Herausgeber:	Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom
Band:	- (1977)
Heft:	1732
Artikel:	A message from our president
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DOI:	https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-690870

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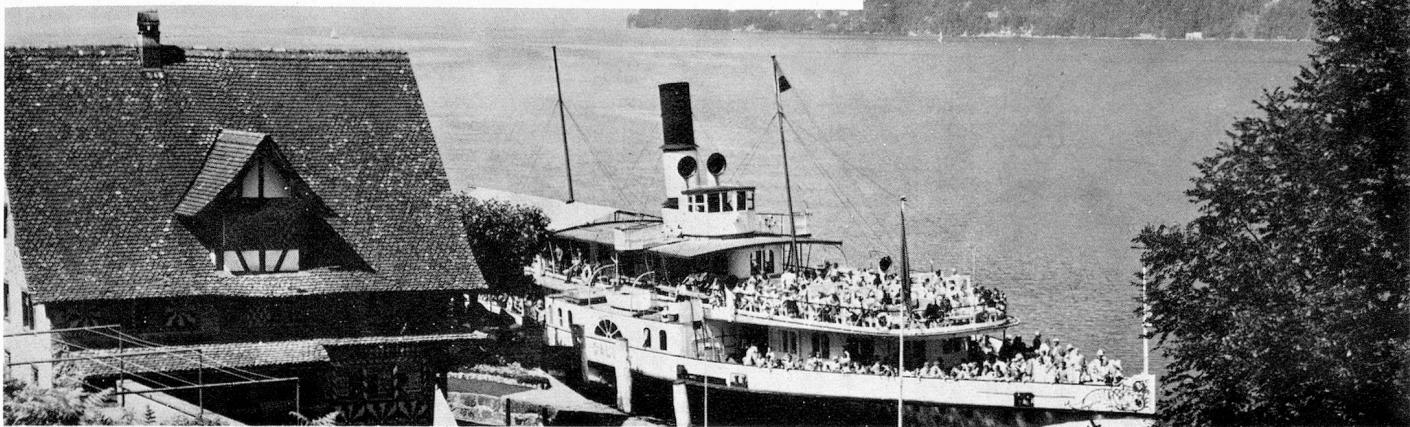
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REMEMBER OUR HOMELAND



Another view from home... This time the "Gallia", an oil-fired steamship which is the fastest vessel in service on Swiss lakes. Here she is seen at station Treib on Lake Lucerne. Photo by courtesy of SNTO.

A Message from our President

Dear compatriots abroad,

It is on this day that we recall the founding of our Confederation — the birth of our homeland. On this occasion I send you warmest greetings and best wishes from the members of the Federal Council and from the Swiss people. May the first of August serve as a symbol of our close links with all Swiss citizens abroad.

Those Swiss who travel extensively in the world tell us that many Swiss residents abroad cherish a vision of their homeland — a vision which corresponds with the traditional image of our nation, yet which is in fact increasingly removed from reality. Their thoughts of their homeland are tinged by a touch of homesickness — a homesickness which may have more to do with the "good old Switzerland" of years gone by, rather than with the country which is today seeking a new conception of itself, in an ever changing world.

Your old homeland has undergone more changes within the last few years than during the previous decades. This is not because we have ceased to be true to ourselves. We are faced today with totally new and unusual problems presented by a constantly changing world — a world from which we cannot isolate ourselves without self-surrender. As you know a small nation like Switzerland is dependent on spiritual and economic exchanges with the rest of the world. While ever ready to preserve its individuality and own values, our nation is part of this increasing inter-dependence and co-operation between peoples, and must not be allowed to encapsulate itself.

If you reflect upon this situation you will also realise that Switzerland has always been enriched and revitalised by offering foreign residents here the possibility of fulfilling and integrating themselves in our community. Those now united with us and assimilated into our way of life are — if I may use the term — our sixth Switzerland. They are not only part of the image of Switzerland but also

contribute to the real essence of our nation — just as you abroad, the fifth Switzerland, also belong to us. So in this way two elements have protected — and will continue to protect — Switzerland against narrow-mindedness. On the one side consideration and acceptance are given to innovation from outside; on the other our cosmopolitan character is demonstrated by Swiss citizens like yourselves who settle abroad.

The values which go to make up this Swissness have nothing to do with external greatness. It is the values inherent in the work of a Henri Dunant, a Heinrich Pestalozzi, and above all the common achievement uniting four different cultures in a living, deep-rooted democracy. To these values belong primarily the courage to be moderate, and to be a small nation, but also the recognition and respect towards others who are different and who think differently from us.

Dear citizens abroad, you sometimes ask us whether Switzerland is no longer the "model" nation of earlier days, where everything was in its proper place. In reply I can say that the words "constitutional state" and "civic conscience" are still written large. Good conduct and well-being are still rated highly by the great majority of our citizens.

Here in Switzerland the principle of federalism is rarely questioned. Our efficiency, diligence, our solid pragmatism continue to thrive — not to mention other positive characteristics of the Swiss image. But these no longer represent the entire picture of Switzerland and some of these elements no longer shine forth with the same brilliance. If one is to present a true picture of Switzerland 1977, it must be said that the economic difficulties of recent years — in the aftermath of the boom — have made themselves more widely felt.

Both the Swiss people and the Swiss authorities have awakened to a new

environment. They have become more quality conscious. There is awareness that in our scale of values, a certain reorganisation is now necessary — even if we are not always agreed on the position of certain priorities.

I consider it significant that we are attempting to strengthen our values in the spiritual, cultural, intellectual, social, and political spheres.

This is the happier reverse side of the situation characterised by such problems as recession, the state's financial difficulties, the pressing Jura situation, education, and the questioning by extremist groups of our constitutional state and democratic institutions.

Switzerland is not and never was a model country. But the admission that we are now conscious of weaknesses we hitherto hardly dared recognise, is more important than the fact that we have weaknesses.

The fact that we shall be accepting a new Canton into our Confederation over the next few years is proof of our will to replenish ourselves with deep respect for the other peoples and other Cantons which go to make up the Swiss Confederation.

We in Switzerland ask ourselves quite often whether our system is still valid or whether it is sufficient to combat the abuses of our democratic freedoms.

I can assure you, dear Swiss abroad, that your fellow citizens here at home in Switzerland know where to make the distinction and that our feeling for what is essential and what is necessary has remained intact. We do have the courage to reform — but we also have the courage to preserve those values worthy of preservation.

Our social and economic problems must be solved in a spirit of partnership — and we are counting on your support.

On this, our Swiss National Day, I send you my heartfelt greetings and thank you for your efforts for Switzerland and for the country where you now live.

Kurt Furgler