

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:	- (1979)
Heft:	1749
Artikel:	A message from our ambassador
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DOI:	https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-686713

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR AMBASSADOR

As in previous years, the Swiss *Observer* has once again very kindly opened its columns to me for a Christmas message to my compatriots. I am grateful for this opportunity to address a few words not only to my fellow Swiss in and around London, whom I have a chance to meet quite often, but also to the many members of our colony who are dispersed all over the British Isles. What I have to say is perhaps less important in itself than the simple fact that this line of communication is available to me every year at this time. It gives me the feeling that I am not cut off from a significant part of the Swiss community to which I myself belong.

Whenever I use the word "colony" I have to overcome a slight hesitation. For so long it was linked with "colonialism" and therefore had an odious meaning for many people. When we speak of a colony today we have a totally different situation in mind: namely, a more or less cohesive group of citizens of one country living in another country. In this sense the word has, of course, lost its disreputable connotation. And yet the new and the old senses still have one element in common. That is the relationship between the host country with its indigenous population, and a sometimes quite large group of foreign nationals. For a country like Britain this is — and probably will be

for a long time to come — a real problem. Even in our own country, as you know, there has been a serious dispute about the "Ueberfremdung der Heimat". And, finally, new developments have taken place in the field of European integration which, within the framework of the EEC, has already achieved a large measure of freedom of migration. Are we approaching the point where nationality no longer counts? Personally, I rather doubt that this will happen in the foreseeable future.

The relationship between a colony and its host country therefore remains of vital importance. Relations between human beings or human communities depend on the attitude of the partners. And I hasten to say that in the case of the Swiss colony in Britain these relations are not only correct but harmonious and even cordial. If one takes into account the historical, geographical and political diversity of the two countries this is rather surprising. It is obvious that this happy relationship has been greatly facilitated by our British hosts. Their generosity and fairness, their respect for the individual and for human rights, and last but not least their human kindness — these factors have helped a lot to give the Swiss that good feeling of being "at home" in Britain. On the other hand, the Swiss have shown by their own

positive attitude, by their loyalty to the host country and by their active contribution to its economic development how much they appreciate being able to live and work here.

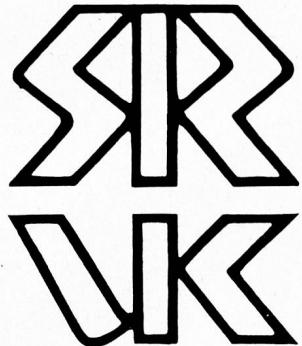
Nobody could be happier about this mutually satisfactory situation than your Ambassador, whose principal task is to maintain and foster the excellent official relations which traditionally exist between the two countries. And I should like to take this opportunity to express for once, to all my compatriots, my deep gratitude for the invaluable help I receive from them in my endeavours year after year. In wishing our host country all the best for 1979, I trust that the Swiss colony will do what it has always done: be proud of being Swiss and be proud of being British Swiss.

My wife joins me in wishing you all a Merry Christmas among your loved ones and a Happy New Year.

Ernesto Thalmann

As in previous years the Swiss Observer would like to thank Ambassador Thalmann for all he has done for our colony. His seemingly tireless activity for our well being is much appreciated by all concerned and, on behalf of the colony at large, the Swiss Observer most warmly reciprocates his good wishes to us.

W.G.S.



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