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FROM THE EDITOR

YOUNG PATRIOTS

What does the 1st August mean to a Swiss national today, and, in particular, to a young Swiss national (under 30) abroad, staying in Great Britain on our National Day? I put this question to a few young members of the Youth Club of the Swiss Church in London.

The following answers seem to be fairly representative of the general opinion of our young citizens: First, they were all looking forward to a day off. Many were going to celebrate with a nice meal out with friends, roasting sausages ("Bratwurst" of course - with a cross cut). Some were thinking of playing truant from the language class and walking through the streets of London with a Swiss flag flying. To one young man in particular, the 1st August was of greater importance than Christmas and Easter, an unashamedly festive occasion.

Another "au-pair" was a staunch supporter of celebrating Swiss National Day in the traditional manner (speeches, fireworks, etc.). She comes from a "patriotic family", as she put it and always was very interested in history at school. Another girl said that she would not miss the actual 1st August celebrations but was homesick altogether - everything was "simply better at home".

A few very young ones said that they did not have any strong patriotic feelings as such but were on the whole glad to hail from a country where everything is safe and works. They are mostly aware of the material advantages of a stable economic background. Not everyone agrees, however. I was recently greatly annoyed by one economist's view that Switzerland has only got a "fake" economy - which presumably shows that I also am capable of patriotism. But quite a few young Swiss people also seem to like the British mode of "live and let live", as opposed to the more regimented Swiss ways.

In spite of the relative lack of demonstrative patriotic feelings among the group, the common denominator among those questioned was that they were all still glad to be Swiss. One young man said that "all of us ought to be aware of the importance of our National Day and grateful to be a citizen of a country where everybody enjoys political freedom and peace and the privileges which stem from it".

Let us therefore celebrate, wherever we are, in remembrance of the solemn oath of 1291, even without the fires on the heights, the churchbells and fireworks.

Marianne Hill-Moser

On this month's front cover:

Old Schwyzer with flag on his way to the 1st August Celebration on the Rütli (by courtesy of the SWISS NATIONAL TOURIST OFFICE).

We would like to rectify a mistake in the article "An English Country House in Switzerland" in the June issue of the Swiss Observer: The sentence in paragraph five should of course read: "Theodor Bühler... being co-owner of the engineering firm Gebrüder Bühler..." (not Sulzer).

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