

Swiss National Day Celebration in Manchester

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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

SWISS NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATION IN MANCHESTER

We have become used to the idea that a First of August celebration with the Manchester Swiss Club is an event which leaves a lasting impression in all those who feel closely connected with our home country. This year's celebration was certainly no break in this tradition.

About 130 Members and friends of the Manchester Swiss Club—amongst them a contingent from the Yorkshire Swiss Club, who had ventured to cross the Pennines by bus— assembled on the 31st July after 8 p.m. at the Cottons Hotel just outside Knutsford. They had good reason to do so! A real "Schüblig mit Händöpfelsalat" was served in due course, followed by coffee and tarts, kindly provided by Mr. J. Sohm of Oldham. This wholesome meal was enjoyed by everyone, sitting around small tables in informal groups.

When twilight came, a bonfire was lit in the grounds of the Hotel. The weather, luckily, was dry and the evening air was still and not too cool. Everyone gladly joined the gathering around the beautiful fire, to which many had made their contribution of firewood brought by car or bus.

Mr. H. Berner, the President of the Manchester Swiss Club, greeted everyone present. In his address he recalled his memories of many years ago when as, a boy, he saw the First of August fires burning on the heights in Switzerland and he reminded us of their meaning. Some of us Swiss abroad, he said, visit our Mother Country once or several times a year. Others are not so lucky. For them our gatherings, our fire and indeed the Swiss Club have a special more important, meaning; they provide the only link with their Home Land. Therefore, true to our principle "One for all and all for one", we all must help to keep alive our Swiss societies.

Mr. Berner then read the message to the Swiss abroad from the President of the Confederation, Ludwig von Moos.

Following Mr. Berner, our new Consul, Mr. G. A. Brunner addressed the gathering and first read a message from the Ambassador, Monsieur de Fischer.

He then reminded us of the manifold problems with which the Authorities and our Compatriots in Switzerland are confronted:—

The economic problems, in spite of scientific and technical progress, the shortage of labour and the rising prices, as well as the prescriptions which the Authorities have had to issue to remedy this, almost paradoxical, situation.

The economical and political integration of Europe presents Switzerland with another set of problems. On the one hand, she depends on export trade and any discrimination could harm her economy. On the other hand—with regard to political integration—she is limited by one of her firmest traditions, the Neutrality.

But "Neutrality with Solidarity"—as Federal Councillor Petitpierre called it—is not yet absolute and a "European Home Land" is still far away on the horizon. The Consul then went on to say that there is much truth in the "bon mot" according to which Switzerland is, at the same time, the most national and international country. Internationally united is a people with four different languages and three different cultures. If our traditional principle of neutrality prevents us from taking sides in political differences between foreign countries, it does not follow that we are indifferent to the fate of human beings in other countries. Switzerland's contributions to the world outside her boundaries are many:—

The activities of the Red Cross; loans to foreign Governments; help to underdeveloped countries. In every country our presence is felt on economic, social and cultural planes. Let us not forget our Swiss abroad, who in all countries of the world are ambassadors of our people. Their position is now being strengthened through a new article in the Constitution. Their Home Land does not forget them as is also shown in the message of the President of the Confederation to the Swiss abroad.

The Consul's address, followed by the singing of the National Anthem, concluded the official part of the gathering. Fireworks, and singing and dancing around the dying fire ended this evening from which everyone will have taken home a lasting memory.

R.M.

ECHOES FROM THE FETE SUISSE 1964

Much has been said and written about the Fête Suisse which took place aboard the "Royal Sovereign" on 12th June. Both compliments and criticism which have come to my knowledge have been duly passed on to the Committee. I have no intention of reiterating what happened that evening. By and large, the opinions tally with what I wrote in my report which appeared on 26th June.

The Committee have asked me to announce that, thanks to the large attendance, they were able to balance the accounts, which is more than could be said of the last few years. The Committee agree that there was overcrowding and that consequently it was difficult if not impossible to have any dancing. They also regret that the catering was not all it might have been. But they strongly refute one reproach which has been made in a letter to the Editor by an elderly woman reader, that tickets were sold to all and sundry. This is definitely not so, and if there were other nationals on board apart from English friends and relatives,

they were friends who came by invitation from Swiss individuals. Nor can the Committee be made responsible for the behaviour of some of the youngsters who—again in the eyes of this particular reader—were responsible for "rowdy behaviour, broken glasses, beer boozing and let's-go-down-the-Old-Kent-Road atmosphere". Against this, the Editor would like to mention a remark made by one of the ship's attendants who said that for such a large crowd (1,900) they were very well behaved.

The criticism which has been voiced has generally been fair and reasonable. There has only been one challenge from the above mentioned reader in Cockfosters, who called my report "trash" and wanted me to publish *her* side of the story. Unfortunately, most of her criticism was neither fair nor constructive, and the writer was so abusive both with regard to the Committee and myself for reporting with a bias that I would feel ashamed to publish such language in this paper for which have the responsibility. I am not in the