Swiss National Day celebration

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SWISS NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATION

AUGUST 1ST 1939

AT ST. PANCRAS TOWN HALL.

In view of the bad weather, the newly built Town Hall of St. Pancras proved to be the right spot for the celebration of our National Day. How many Swiss and how many of their English friends did attend is difficult to say, but there is no doubt that the organisers' expectations were far exceeded by the wonderful demonstration of loyalty to the memory of the Pact of 1291. In fact the writer was told on good authority that the 2,000 mark was nearly attained! not to mention those who, unfortunately, had to be turned away and had to leave through the pelting rain.

What an excellent incentive for the Committee to repeat their efforts for the organisation of next year's Festival in yet vaster surroundings.

The half hour allowed for the Reunion before the opening of the official programme afforded a good opportunity of acclimatisation in the beautiful Hall which was decorated with the flags of the Cantons, and two big Swiss flags flanking the Union Jack at the back of the stage. By the time the Swiss Orchestral Society started playing the opening march the seats to the left of the Hall and on the two galleries were taken, whilst the space left open for dancing after the Programme was thronged with people.

In truly democratic fashion the welcome was made in the four national languages.

Mr. J. J. Boos, President Swiss Mercantile Society, spoke in "Schwyzerdütsch." What he said would read in German as follows:—

"Im Namen des Organisations Komitee heisse ich Sie alle zur 1. August-Feier recht herzlich willkommen. Es freut uns, dass Sie in so grosser Zahl erschienen sind und es beweist, dass unsere Londoner Schweizer Kolonie eine solche Feier haben will und wir werden Sorge tragen damit Sie in Zukunft alle Platz finden werden.

Daheim in der Schweiz, in Stadt und Land, auf Dorf und Hof feiern sie mit Glockengeläut und Höhenfeuer, Umzug und Rede den Bundestag. Wir in der Weltstadt, fern von Bergen, Seen und Gletscher sind auch zusammengekommen um in patriotischer fröhlicher Schweizerart des Tages zu gedenken da unsere Vorväter zur Erhaltung der Freiheit und Gleichheit sich Treue und gegenseitige Hilfe gelobten.

Die fünfte Schweiz, die Auslandschweizer, stellen ja 10% der Bevölkerung der Schweiz dar, und so ist es nur recht, dass wir in London, wohl die grösste Schweizerkolonie, auch eine 1. August-Feier haben und wo wir uns alle, jung & alt, reich & arm, Deutsch, Welsch, Tessiner & Romantsch, zusammenfinden um unserer Vaterlandsliebe Ausdruck zu geben. Heute denken wir an unsere Heimat und manchem wird das Lied des Berner Dichters in den Sinn kommen in welchem es heisst:

Herz mis Herz warum so trurig & was soll
das Ach und Weh —

S'isch so schön i fremde Lande, Herz mis
Herz was fählt dir meh?

Was mir fählt, es fählt mir alles, bi sogar
verlore hie,

Sig es schön i fremde Lande,

Doch es Heimat wird es nie.—"

Wir sind in der Fremde, in einem Lande das, Gott sei Dank, frei ist wo wir frei denken, reden und schreiben dürfen, in einem Lande welches vielen von uns eine zweite Heimat geworden ist. Viele von uns sind am Sonntag in der Kirche gewesen und haben Gott gedankt dafür, dass Er unser liebes Schweizerland während dieser Jahre vor Unheil bewahrt hat, und wir haben gebetet uns weiterhin zu behüten. Wer sich selbst hilft dem hilft Gott — Auch wir müssen alle unsere Pflicht tun und sagen: "Rufst du, mein Vaterland, sieh uns mit Herz & Hand all' dir geweiht."

Gerade vor 25 Jahren sind 4-5 Tausend Schweizer von Stellung & Heim von Frau & Kind, von England zurück gekehrt, als Gefahr drohte, und wir geloben dies wieder zu tun, wenn unser Vaterland dies von uns wieder verlangt. Mit Schiller wollen wir sagen:

"Wir wollen sein ein einzig Volk von
Brüdern, in keiner Not uns trennen und
Gefahr.

Wir wollen frei sein, wie die Väter waren,
Eher den Tod, als in der Knechtschaft leben.
Wir wollen trauen auf den höchsten Gott
Und uns nicht fürchten vor der Macht der
Menschen. —"

This speech was immediately followed by the singing of "Trittst im Morgenrot daher."

Mr. H. Bingguely, Hon. Sec. City Swiss Club, made the following address:—

"C'est avec un sincère plaisir que je vous souhaite, au nom du Comité d'organisation, la plus cordiale bienvenue à notre réunion patriotique, la première de ce genre organisée à Londres pour célébrer notre fête Nationale du 1er août.

J'espère que vous passerez une soirée agréable et que la musique, les chants et les allocutions patriotiques que vous entendrez réchaufferont vos cœurs de Suisses.

Nous nous sentons tous en sécurité dans cette grande Angleterre qui nous accorde une si bienveillante hospitalité et voici une occasion pour nous, Suisses à l'étranger, de respirer ensemble une atmosphère patriotique pour quelques heures.

Il y a près de 650 ans, ils étaient trois qui jurèrent sollennellement de s'unir pour s'affranchir de l'esclavage qui accablait leurs compatriotes. Nos pères, nos grand-pères, tous nos ancêtres ont respecté ce serment sacré du Grütli. Aujourd'hui nous sommes plus que 4 millions décidés à faire honneur à leurs engagements. Si l'on considère les difficultés internationales actuelles, nous avons tout lieu de nous réjouir que notre chère Patrie ait été épargnée jusqu'à ce jour, et qu'elle n'ait pas été victime d'aggression.

Rappelons nous cependant que si certains de nos voisins turbulents devaient trahir leur engagement de respecter notre pays, je suis sûr que nous tous, comme nos autorités et tous nos compatriotes en Suisse sauraient faire leur devoir pour conserver le magnifique héritage que nous devons à nos ancêtres et que nous irions tous comme un seul homme pour défendre. La Patrie et nos libertés, tous unis par notre maxime nationale

UN POUR TOUS, TOUS POUR UN."

Two verses of "Roulez, Tambours" were sung, the Orchestra giving the lead as before.

The next speaker, Mr. G. Eusebio, President Unione Ticinese, represented Switzerland south of the Alps. He said:—

"Sono sensibilissimo del privilegio riservatomi questa sera di porgervi il benvenuto del Comitato promotore di questa celebrazione comune dell'anniversario della fondazione della nostra Confederazione.

So di interpretare il desiderio dei miei colleghi quando vi dico che avremmo cento volte preferito, se le condizioni ce l'avessero permesso, trasportarvi all'ombra delle nostre montagne sulle cui falde, in questa sera solenne, brillano i fuochi di gioia. —

Questa migliaia di fiamme, vampanti verso il cielo, non sono che un misero simbolo della ardente volontà nostra di conservare integra la nostra indipendenza, di rendere eterno il nostro concetto di libertà; il massimo godimento sociale derivato da un severo adempimento del proprio dovere ed un salutare rispetto del diritto del nostro prossimo.

Per mantenere intatta questa nostra libertà i nostri antenati, nel corso di sette secoli, fecero quando necessario il massimo sacrificio consentito all'uomo, diedero la loro vita. Non ha alcun dubbio che, se le circostanze dovessero chiedere questo sacrificio da noi, noi saremo pronti.

Questa sera vi abbiamo chiamati a raccolta per festeggiare la fausta ricorrenza; non abbiamo gran che da offrirvi ma dato che si tratta di offerte volontarie spero le saprete apprezzare al loro giusto valore.

Nell'esortarvi a divertirvi quindi, vi prego tener presente la nostra comune di risoluzione; Essere vogliamo un popolo di fratelli — Liberi e Svizzeri! Evviva la Svizzera!"

The last words of the speaker were the signal for the curtains to be withdrawn. The "Ladies' Vocal Group of the Unione Ticinese" was assembled on the stage, every member in beautiful and colourful National Costume. It was apparent to what trouble they had gone to prepare their production and singing of Ticinesi Folk Songs and a special word of thanks is due to them.

Another welcome was made by Mr. A. Tall, who spoke as follows:—

Chars compatriots!

In nom dal comitè d'organisaziun as spordscha ün sicèr bainvgnü ed as giavüsch üna allegraivla saira.

Per la prüma vouta eschan nus svizzers unids quà per celebrar insembel nossa feista federala e per la prüma vouta nell' istorgia dellas funcziuns svizzras in quaist pajais figürescha nossa chara lingua materna sül program.

Daspö il mais da favrèr da l'an passà, quel memoraivel di, ingio cha nos rumantsch gnit elet cun üna granda magiorità sco la quarta lingua naziunala svizzra, aise gnü fat in tuot nos pajais sco eir nellas colonias e secietas svizzras al ester grand sforzs per ceder ad ella il spazzi e l'importanza ch'ella deserva. Sco ün bun exaimpel voless manzunar l'exposiziun naziunala a Turich, ingio as chatta sün tuot las indicaziuns las quatter l'inguas üna dasper l'otra, sco simbol da quatter razzas chi fuorman ün'unica naziun e chi vivan insembel in pasch ed harmonia. Nus non havain in nos pajais ingünas minoritas e nus rumantschs non havain il resentimaint d'esser la frcziun cun ün' importanza inferiura. Nus eschan il prüm da tuot tuots svizzers, e buns patriots, sainza ingüna differenza che lingua cha tschantschain, chi sja tudaisch o franzes, talian o rumantsch. Eu non voless finir meis per pleds sainza as dumandar: Pensaivat vus als fös da libertà chi ardan quaista saira sün tantas da nossas muntagnias e pensaivat vus als pleds dal ino alla patria chi vain chantà quaista saira da tants compatriots in nos pajais natal e chi tunan:—

"Svizzra da cour t'salüd, tü ferm friun e
s-chüd da libertà

Vi sur il muont inter glüsch' our dal fraid
glatschèr

Tia bandera cler Helvezia."

Eu ingrazch fich als members del coro mixt rumantsch postüt a nos amis da lingua tudaischa, chi as dettan üna granda fadia per render il pitschen program rumantsch ün success.

Viva nossa patria svizzra, viva la grischa.

A group of Romantsch Singers concluded this address in the fourth National Language by singing "Chara Lingua della Mamma." To this group also we say "thank you" for coming along and producing something which must have taken many hours to prepare and rehearse.

The March and "Laendler" played by the Swiss Accordion Club released in our hearts the joy we all feel when we think or hear of our dear Homeland; this joy, that night, was enhanced at the appearance of Mr. F. von Bergen who showed his well-known, excellent standard of yodelling. Be it said that he came on the stage in the dress of a "Mälcher" from the Oberland. The Accordion Players were wearing their embroidered jackets and caps as well. These items in a lighter mood were followed by "O mein Heimatland," sung by the Swiss Choral Society; by singing "Addio la Caserma" as an encore, the Audience was happy to realise that the Swiss Choral Society is once more alive and full of vigour.

The Potpourri of Swiss Folk Songs was a novelty and we congratulate Mr. R. Senn on fulfilling his two-fold task of playing the piano and leading the Community Singing. Everybody enjoyed the singing, the more so because the "sympathique secrétaire" did announce beforehand that only one verse of each song would be sung!

The Orchestra then played the "Infanteriemarsch" after which, Mr. W. Meier, Chairman of the Organising Committee came to the microphone. He had the pleasure of introducing the Swiss Minister, Monsieur C. R. Paravicini, who addressed the assembly in the following terms:—

" This, the First of August 1939, is the six hundred and forty-eighth return of the day which figures in history as the birthday of the Swiss Confederation.

The original parchment of the " Bundesbrief " says that it was " at the beginning of the month of August 1291 " that the three communities round the Lake of the Waldstätten signed and sealed the Pact of eternal alliance. Historical research, however, bears out the belief that it is the first day of the month that must be attributed to that event, the precise date being given as seventeen days after the death of the Emperor Rudolf, Head of the House of Habsburg. And so it comes about that each year the First of August is a day of celebration, not only in Switzerland but all over the world. For I think that there is hardly a country on the globe where the memory of Switzerland's birth is not recalled by a rally of her sons, some hundreds or thousands of miles away from our mountains, where the First of August fires are burning to-night.

And here in London we Swiss do likewise.

During the past ten years, circumstances quite unrelated to our own feelings and inclinations obliged the London Celebration, as a gathering of our Colony, to be abandoned, and we had to leave it to the initiative of the various Swiss Societies and Clubs to arrange for some national festival amongst their own circles.

But this year, when — owing to the anxieties and perils of our time — everyone of us longs to show his readiness to do his duty towards his country, it would indeed have been unpardonable to allow this day to pass without a common reunion and a common manifestation — here in London of all places, where we pride ourselves on being one of the largest and most important Swiss communities outside our own frontiers.

We are not here to-night simply because we feel it our duty, towards ourselves and our country, to show our loyalty as Swiss citizens; we are here because, in disquieting times like these, we feel the need to spend a few hours " at home " in the comforting and encouraging company of our own people.

So let me put in a word of thanks here, in your name as well as in my own, to the Chairman, the Secretary and the Members of the Celebrations Committee, who have for weeks spared neither time nor trouble to revive the official First of August Celebrations in our Colony and who have so admirably succeeded in ensuring us all a really happy evening.

A happy evening? Perhaps there are some of you who feel inclined to retort: " You say yourself that we live in anxious times, full of menace and danger. How can we enjoy ourselves and be merry when anxiety and the threat of peril surrounds us?"

And yet I repeat: " A happy evening." For happiness is not made up of merry-making and idle pleasure. Happiness can be found in good and bad times alike. There was a philosopher who said to the Athenians: " Happy is he who does his duty, and knows that he has done it well."

No matter what anxieties, dangers and worry these times may hold, we shall be happy to-night and to-morrow and in the days to come if we do our duty towards our Country. The First of August is the day when every Swiss is expected to remember his duty, and if any of them should ask me to tell him what I consider it to be, I would say: " To do the best you can, according to your ability and conscience, to be worthy of those men who, six and a half centuries ago, laid down the foundations for the Country to which you have the good fortune to belong."

And I would ask him if he had ever read, from beginning to end, that first " Bundesbrief," which I spoke, about a few minutes ago.

To do this, he would not need to be a Latin scholar. There are translations into all four of our national languages.

There on one single page, he can find — in the clearest and simplest terms, set down in the form of a Pact, the fundamental laws and rules to be respected and obeyed not only by the confederate communities but by everyone of their citizens individually.

It says therein, that the folk who live round the Lake are a People who mean to live in liberty, governed by their own authority and not by foreign masters; that they will help each other, with thier lives and property, to defend anyone of them who may be attacked by a foreign foe.

And it says that differences and disputes amongst themselves should be settled peacefully according to the terms of their Pact, and that anyone breaking the Pact should make reparation and, if need be, be brought to justice and obliged to keep the peace and work loyally with his compatriots, as had been solemnly sworn.

The men who put their seals to that parchment knew that liberty could only be founded on justice and that those who wished to be free must live upright lives and abide by the law.

And so, after swearing fidelity to each other, after promising to help to maintain their freedom, they proceeded to set down the rules and laws for the Swiss people to follow.

If you, the Swiss citizen of to-day, six hundred and fifty years after these words were written, do as those first confederates swore to do, then you may be certain that you are not failing in your duty towards your country.

And the men of the three Waldstätten swore their alliance for all eternity.

Six or seven centuries are only an infinitely small part of eternity, it is true. Yet that alliance, founded on freedom, justice, honesty and faith, has lasted longer than any alliance ever concluded between men in the history of the world.

Our Confederation exists to-day after having grown in the course of time to its present natural and unalterable frontiers. Switzerland has withstood the fury of all the storms which have ravaged Europe again and again. She has not only existed, she has lived, she has played a great and valuable part in the community of nations ever since she struggled for and won her freedom.

We have been entrusted by our forebears with the care of the most precious heritage that man could wish for. And we shall hand this heritage on to our descendants as we received it, inviolate, united and strong, come what may."

The Minister's words made a deep impression.

The singing of the National Anthem accompanied by the Orchestra concluded the official part of the Programme.

Despite the enormous crowd, dancing started fairly punctually to the alternative tunes of the " Saracenes Dance Band " and the " Ländlerkapelle " of the Swiss Accordion Club.

Some fifty prizes for a raffle had been presented by a number of generous donors. Their distribution took place during an interval, Mme. C. Chapuis, " en costume de Montreux," picking the lucky numbers and M. Bingguely, Hon. Sec. of the Committee, making the announcements.

The catering arrangements were in the experienced hands of Mr. and Mrs. Alfr. Schmid to whom we say " thank you " for providing satisfaction to the " Inner man " of young and old alike.

A number of Swiss girls in National Costume sold programmes and the official First of August Badges, whilst at a stall near the entrance, in charge of Mrs. W. Meier " s'Baselbieterli," who was aided by two other charming ladies, unique woodcarvings from Meiringen, beautiful picture postcards and souvenirs specially produced for the National Exhibition in Zurich, and like all other articles specially brought to London for the occasion, could be purchased at reasonable prices.

We were also delighted to admire the many charming ladies who attended in their lovely Swiss Costumes and who were not afraid of the crush, or of the rain.

The overwhelming interest and the attendance have proved well enough that there is room in London for the celebration of our National Day, and be it said in this place how thankful we are that the organisers undertook the venture, and succeeded so admirably. Let us, therefore, give them our full encouragement for future arrangements.

M.S.

A SWISS EVENING AT THE MYLLET.

Mr. Widmer, the proprietor of The Myllet Roadhouse, celebrated the first of August by giving a special gala dinner and dance last Thursday evening. The evening was a great success.

The roadhouse is situated in Western Avenue, Hanger Hill, Harrow. It is beautifully designed and tastefully decorated with large spacious bars and a comfortable restaurant.

During the course of an excellent dinner (the minestrone was the best I have tasted) the regular dance band was replaced by The Swiss Accordion Orchestra who gave us a number of real Swiss waltzes to the great delight of all present. Three graces in costume sang some charming Swiss songs and the English dance band gave us the Lambeth Walk as danced by six different nationalities.

Later, there were novelty competitions, and the evening ended with a delicious Swiss onion soup at midnight.

Mr. Widmer's cook comes from Thurgau and his kitchen certainly lives up to the Swiss tradition,

The company present enjoyed themselves immensely and the evening was a thorough success.

The Myllet is well worth a visit.

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11h. M. le Pasteur Emery.

MARIAGE.

Le 5 août 1939: Georgette Henriette Valtriny de Paris, et F. H. Rohr de Lenzburg (Argovie).

BAPTEME.

Le 5 août 1939: Graham, Richard Hewitt, fils de Harold et de Annette née Rohr.

* * *

Les cultes du soir sont supprimés pendant le mois d'août.

Pour tout ce qui concerne le ministère pastoral, prière de s'adresser jusqu'à nouvel avis à M. le pasteur U. Emery, Foyer Suisse, 15 Bedford Way, W.C.1 (Phone MUSeum 3100).

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Sonntag, den 13. August:

11 Uhr vormittags: Gottesdienst, Predigt von Pfr. E. Bommeli über 12, 13-17: Der Mensch und der Staat. Lieder: 162, 307 und 84.

Musikalische Einlage während des Gottesdienstes: Violine und Orgel, Allegro und Largo v. Vivaldi, vorgetragen von Herrn Müller und Hirschi.

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