London Swiss children's holiday journey to Switzerland

Autor(en): **Fischer, W.**

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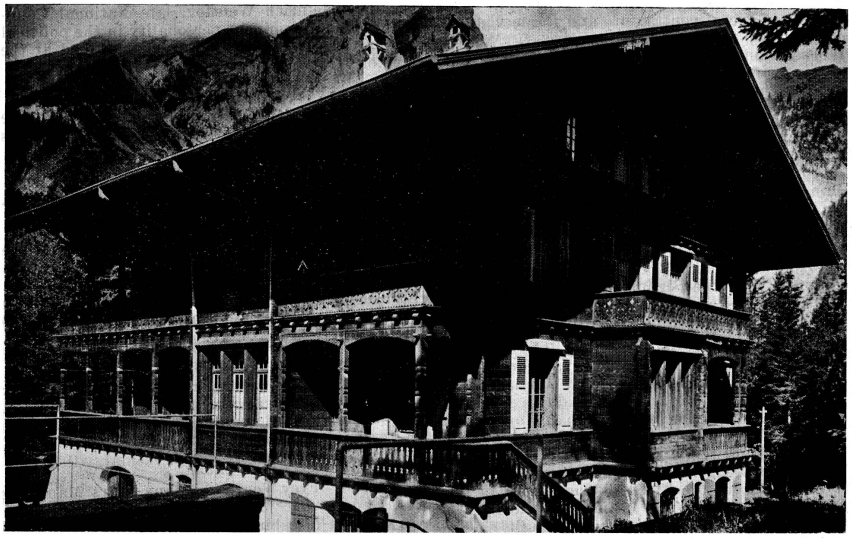
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London Swiss Children's Holiday Journey to Switzerland

organised by the Sunday School of the "SCHWEIZERKIRCHE".



CHALET "BERGFRIED" KANDERSTEG.
Headquarters of the Holiday Children.

November, 1938.

Dear Friends,

Some time has passed since our party, consisting of 28 children and 3 adults, returned from their holiday centre at Kandersteg, Switzerland, and I am writing these lines to give you a short account of our experiences.

We met at Victoria Station on Saturday afternoon, the 13th August. Careful preparations had been made to equip the children, and it was a great moment to see them ready with rucksacks and mountain boots, their eyes beaming with joy. The parents and relatives had come to the station to bid them farewell. The group leaders, consisting of senior children, formed their groups, and presently we took our seats in the compartments which had been specially reserved for us by the Swiss Federal Railways.

The sea was calm when we crossed the Channel. The children spread out their travelling rugs and settled down to watch the sea. Most of them had never been on board a steamer of this size, and they had a good look round.

At Calais the customs authorities were very obliging. They marked the children instead of the rucksacks, which meant that they were "free of duty." After searching round the station for a few minutes, we found the compartments which had been reserved for us in the train. The children arranged the seats in such a manner that they could lie down one beside the other, for the train was to be our home for 14 hours.

At Delle the Swiss Customs Authorities boarded the train and treated us with the same courtesy as the French Officials.

At Berne station, where the train stopped for 10 minutes we met our first Swiss friends, mostly relatives of our children. One friend surprised us with a huge pot of jam.



GROUP TAKEN AT KANDERSTEG.

We reached Kandersteg in the Bernese Oberland at 7.45 a.m. on Sunday morning, and Mr. Burri, who is in charge of the Chalet, was waiting with a horse and cart, in order to take our rucksacks home.

It rained and the mountains were covered with clouds. The Chalet "Bergfried" (Mountain Peace) is about 20 minutes from the station, on a little hill, surrounded by pine trees. We found that it is the finest building in Kandersteg from an architectural point of view, a typical Bernese Oberland style. On the first and second floors there are verandas which are connected with the spacious bedrooms, and from there the snow mountains are visible.

On Monday morning we had our boots nailed, and in the afternoon made our first excursion towards the Golitschen-Alp. The weather improved, and on Tuesday we went to the Gastern-Valley, and on Wednesday to the Oeschinensee, a mountain lake at the foot of the snow-covered "Blümlisalp;" the rocks come vertically down to the lake which is completely shut in. On Friday we undertook the first whole-day excursion. We got up at 6 a.m. and left the chalet shortly after 7 a.m. After 4 hours steep climbing we reached the Golitschen-Alp. The weather was glorious and the visibility extraordinarily clear. The crevasses on the glaciers of the Blümlisalp and the Doldenhorn could be seen, and some of the children even detected mountain climbers crossing the snow fields, but they just appeared as tiny black spots. We cooked the soup ourselves, in large round pots, and afterwards made tea. When towards the evening we descended to Kandersteg, we were all sunburnt, but enriched by impressions which we shall never forget. At sunset we witnessed the "Alp-Glory." The setting sun threw its last rays on the snow-crowned peaks, and for about half an hour they appeared in a fiery red. The scenery was indescribably beautiful!

On Saturday the open-air play "William Tell," written by the well-known poet Schiller, was shown to Swiss children at Interlaken. A kind friend had offered to pay the expenses and we gladly accepted his invitation to travel there and to see the re-setting of those historical events which led to the foundation of Switzerland. Everything was most realistic, even horses, cows, and goats appeared on the scene, arranged on a near-by hill! About 2,500 children had come from all parts of Switzerland, and those of our party who knew the Swiss dialect had plenty of opportunity to exchange opinions.

During the second week about 15 children visited their relatives in Switzerland. Those who stayed behind at the chalet made excursions to the Blue Lake, to Liebigen, to the Oeschinensee, and adjoining valleys.

During the third week the party was complete again. For several days the weather was unsuitable for longer excursions. However, 12 children who were good climbers were anxious to see a glacier. After making careful inquiries we decided to climb to the alpine hut on the Fruendenhorn glacier, which belongs to the Blümlisalp chain, about 8,900 feet above sea level. After 5 hours serious climbing we reached the glacier. It was a great experience for the children to walk on ice and snow. Almost vertically below us was the Oeschinen lake, partly hidden by clouds. Towards the evening it started to snow. Two mountain guides attached the children to their ropes, and after a descent of two hours we reached the Oeschinen Lake safely.

We were due to leave Kandersteg at 9 p.m. on the 2nd September. We had glorious weather, and as far as the eye could see the snow mountains were visible in all their beauty. The children spent the day strolling through the village which had become so dear to them, in order to say "Good-bye" to the villagers and the shopkeepers who had sold them many a souvenir at a reduced price! As we walked to the station in the evening, farewell greetings: "Auf Wiedersehen"! were heard from right and left.

Sister Marty, as well as Mr. and Mrs. Burri, who were in charge of the chalet, accompanied us to the station. Without their co-operation we should certainly not have derived the benefit and joy which was ours, and I should like to take this opportunity of thanking them most sincerely for their valuable help.

At Spiez, Thoune and Berne, relatives came to the station. Then the children made their beds as soft as they could in the speeding train, and as we crossed the Swiss frontier they were nearly all asleep. Some of the senior boys, however, told me that they could not sleep, and on the suggestion of the conductor, we moved to a first-class



ON A MOUNTAINEERING EXCURSION.

compartment. We pondered over the eventful 3 weeks we had spent at Kandersteg. Several times we had been saved from accidents, and we were conscious once more of the protecting care of God in whose name we had undertaken the journey.

We crossed the Channel during excellent weather, and without difficulty or delay passed through the customs and passport office at Dover.

The parents were anxiously waiting at Victoria Station, and it is difficult to describe their joy as they saw us again. A group of children suddenly formed a circle and started to sing a Swiss jodel song which they had learnt at Kandersteg. Afterwards one after another shook hands, and the party dispersed.

I cannot close this report without a word of appreciation to our friends. We are particularly thankful to Mrs. E. Niklaus, who acted as mother to the party, for the kind and devoted help she rendered to the children in the preparation and during the actual journey and stay in Switzerland. Then we should like to thank the many friends here and in Switzerland who, by their financial help, have contributed to make this journey possible. They can rest assured that the impressions which the children took back from Switzerland will enrich their lives for many a day to come. We feel confident that the children who did not belong to our school have also benefited by this journey, and we hope that they will be encouraged in the life of faith we have presented to them.

As we look back, we know for a certainty that our faith has not been in vain, but that we have been divinely guided, step by step. Indeed, we discovered that the true Christian life centres in the persons of the Lord Jesus Christ, who offers to be a living guide to all who want to follow Him. In this assurance we also face the future which is so uncertain. We feel confident that He who was able to guide us in our expedition will also protect us during the coming days.

Yours sincerely,
On behalf of the Organizing Committee,
W. Fischer.

LA POLITIQUE.

Avant une votation fédérale.

Le 22 janvier, le peuple suisse devra se prononcer sur la clause d'urgence. C'est une votation d'une très réelle importance, bien que — pour une fois — aucun intérêt matériel ne soit en cause et qu'il ne s'agisse ni d'accepter un nouvel impôt, ni de prodiguer de nouvelles subventions.

La clause d'urgence est prévue par la constitution fédérale. Ou du moins la constitution déclare que " les lois fédérales sont soumises à l'adoption ou au rejet du peuple, si la demande en est faite par 30,000 citoyens actifs ou par huit cantons. Il en est de même des arrêtés fédéraux qui sont d'une portée générale et qui n'ont pas un caractère d'urgence." C'est l'article 89, alinéa 2, de la charte nationale qui s'exprime de la sorte. Le texte est fort clair pour quiconque n'a pas l'esprit déformé par l'opportunisme politicailleur et l'ergotage juridique. Il veut dire, de toute évidence, que seuls les arrêtés fédéraux dont l'exécution même et l'efficacité seraient mises en péril par un retard, fût-ce de quelques mois, peuvent bénéficier de la réserve en question et être soustraits à la sanction populaire.

Le législateur n'a nullement eu dessein de limiter sur ce point, au point de vue qualitatif, les droits des citoyens. Il n'a pas voulu donner au parlement la faculté de se passer de l'avis de la nation, lorsque cela lui conviendrait, par exemple lorsqu'il aurait l'impression, fondée ou non, qu'un arrêté risquerait de n'être pas agréé par le souverain. La restriction de l'alinéa 2 de l'art. 89 ne signifie rien de semblable. Elle s'applique uniquement aux arrêtés qui n'auraient point d'utilité s'ils n'entraient pas immédiatement en vigueur, parce qu'ils comportent des mesures de protection, de sauvegarde, qui ne souffrent pas de délai si l'on veut qu'elles servent à quelque chose.

Mais le parlement — et avec lui le Conseil fédéral — a abusé gravement de ce qu'on nomme la " clause d'urgence," dont l'on parle comme si elle constituait une procédure normale, utilisable en tout temps, au gré des préférences des législateurs. Un très grand nombre de mesures que le peuple n'aurait peut-être, ou probablement, pas approuvées, ont ainsi été adoptées sans recours possible, parce que l'arrêté qui les instituait était muni de la fameuse clause. Cette politique de la facilité et du mépris des droits populaires a soulevé, à la longue, une grande réprobation dans le pays; et l'on est forcé maintenant de corriger une erreur dont l'on a vécu confortablement durant plusieurs lustres.

Mais la réforme proposée ne donne qu'une demi-satisfaction aux partisans des droits populaires. C'est encore un de ces compromis, une de ces cotes mal taillées, dont nous faisons en Suisse une consommation décidément excessive, en attendant que les événements eux-mêmes, en bouleversant notre organisation de fond en comble, nous obligent à aller beaucoup plus loin, et à opérer enfin un redressement digne de ce nom.

Le texte sur lequel les électeurs auront à se prononcer dit que l'urgence ne peut être déclarée que si la mise en vigueur de l'arrêté ne souffre pas de délai. Mais la porte reste ouverte à des interprétations tendancieuses et arbitraires du parlement. En délimitation plus rigoureuse eût été nécessaire, si l'on voulait sincèrement empêcher les abus déplorables dont l'on a été témoin à maintes reprises sous la coupole fédérale.

De plus, avec une totale absurdité, on a adopté une formule selon laquelle il faudra la moitié des membres des deux chambres — et non des votants — pour décider l'urgence. L'expérience a déjà prouvé que ce calcul exposera à des surprises désagréables, un bon tiers des députés, quand ce n'est pas la moitié étant, absents au moment des votes.

Pour le recours au Tribunal fédéral, nous croyons fort bon que l'on y renonce. Confier à la haute instance judiciaire, qui a d'autres chats à fouetter, le droit de déclarer inconstitutionnelles des dispositions décrétées par le parlement, c'est lui conférer un pouvoir politique, contrairement à nos usages et à nos conceptions.

Léon Savary.
(Tribune de Genève.)

A RIGHT WORD AT THE RIGHT MOMENT.

Our attention has been drawn to an exchange of correspondence in the "Manchester Guardian."

We consider that the letter of Mr. E. R. Zingg expresses the view of almost every Swiss citizen, at any rate we agree with every word of it, and we feel sure that our readers share our opinion.

SWITZERLAND AND AN AGGRESSOR.
Resistance to the Last.

To the Editor of the Manchester Guardian.

Sir, — The letter from a Swiss business firm quoted by one of your correspondents in the " Manchester Guardian " of December 22 asks for rectification. I also am a 100 per cent. Swiss subject and the managing director of an important Swiss manufacturing and export firm, and at the same time an officer in the Swiss Army. I am in agreement with the contents of the letter up to the last paragraph, which is as follows :—

" This will be the dangerous moment when Herr Hitler can cut in; when he can give our industries the support that others refuse to give, when he gives to starving workmen their daily bread, buttered with his ideas, the danger is great that they will swallow both, digest one and think the other over, and finally come to the conclusion that there must be something in Herr Hitler's ideas as they see the palpable result."

This argument is absolutely unsound. We employ many workers, men and women, but these 100 per cent. Swiss democrats would never be content with mere bread and butter in exchange for their freedom and homeland. This can be seen daily in every Swiss newspaper, from those of the extreme Left to those of the extreme Right. As an officer of the Swiss Army I have known the Swiss soldier well for the last twenty years during my annual military service. I have done my service with Swiss troops speaking German, French, Italian, and Romansch in various parts of Switzerland, but not one single man of these would abandon his homeland for bread and butter. He would rather die of hunger than allow himself to be conquered by any other nation without a fight.

The Biblical phrase, " Man does not live by bread alone " counts with every Swiss. Should Switzerland be attacked from any side, even by the strongest Power, then the last man, woman, and child would take up arms to defend the homeland to the last because we prefer to perish with honour than to submit ourselves to a foreign Power. Centuries of Swiss history has proved this and in the future it will be the same. A typical example of this spirit is the suggestion, recently made by the young women of the Canton of Zurich, that every house, village, and town should be razed to the ground before being abandoned to the enemy so that the aggressor would find only ruins.

Our country endeavours to live in the friendliest relationship with all States, but it would never allow itself to be overcome without resistance. This is the determination of every Swiss, irrespective of standing or religion. Should fate decree that one day our country should be called to arms, then Switzerland would show its worth, even, were it necessary, fight alone against the mightiest Power. Switzerland will observe the strictest neutrality in every conflict, and is resolutely determined to maintain it by its excellent army. Here is the truth in regard to the attitude of the whole Swiss population. —Yours, &c.,

E. R. ZINGG.

Berne, Switzerland, January 4.

PERSONAL

We extend heartiest congratulations to our compatriot, Mr. M. Albrecht, of 20, Palmeira Avenue, Westcliff, for having been appointed a Director of Messrs. C. Czarnikow Ltd, 21, Mincing Lane, E.C.3.

Mr. Albrecht has held the General Procuration of the Company for several years past.

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* * *

The marriage of Miss Helena Simmen and Mr. Gustave Jenne, will be solemnized Saturday, 14th inst, at the Church of St. Anne and St. Agnes (Swiss Church), 9, Gresham Street, London, E.C.2, at 2. p.m.

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON.

A course of five Lectures on *Some New Investigations on Old Combustion Engine Problems,* will be given at *The Institution of Civil Engineers,* Great George Street, Westminster, S.W.1, by *Professor G. Eichelberg,* Professor of Mechanical Engineering in the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich, at 5.30 p.m. on January, 23rd, 26th and 30th and February 2nd and 6th, 1939. Admission free, without ticket.

ELECTRIC LAND.

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Mary E. Brandwood.

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