

Dinner in honour of General Henri Guisan

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Dinner in honour of General Henri Guisan

COMMANDER IN CHIEF OF THE SWISS ARMY 1939-1945

offered by the Swiss Colony in Great Britain on Wednesday, June 2nd, 1948
at the DORCHESTER HOTEL, Park Lane, W.1.

In the Chair: M. A. RENOÜ

*“ Se bien connaître et se comprendre entre Cantons est
une des conditions de notre existence nationale.”*

Général Guisan.

In the annals of the history of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain, there are many events of great importance and significance recorded.

Famous men in all walks of life have, in the past, been the guests of various Swiss institutions throughout the British Isles.

It is not a characteristic of the Swiss to be demonstrative, they are generous and hospitable, but hero-worship it not in their vocabulary, and yet the scenes which were witnessed at the Dorchester Hotel, on Wednesday, June 2nd, 1948, have seldom, if ever been surpassed. The reception which our war-time General received, by a company of nearly five hundred, was overwhelming in its spontaneity and warmth.

Since the cease-fire was sounded, and our army, which had so faithfully guarded our frontiers, was dispersed, rumours spread in the Colony, that our one-time commander-in-chief might accept an invitation to pay us a visit.

I do not think I am giving a secret away if I disclose the fact, that several bodies in the Colony strove to claim the honour of inviting the General, in the end, however, to please all parties a committee was formed (our countrymen are very fond of committees) and a combined effort coming from the Colony as a whole was made. The invitation was dispatched, and the General graciously accepted, and everybody was happy and contented, at least I imagine so.

Before giving a description of the brilliant dinner party at the Dorchester, it might interest our readers to hear a few details of the programme mapped out for General and Madame Guisan during their visit.

An amazing number of engagements were crammed into the short space of time, and I feel sure, that the General has not been busier even at his “ Quartier Général ” during the war. Here is a short *resumé* of his five days visit :

The General and Mme Guisan arrived at Northolt on Sunday, May 30th at noon. They were received at the Air Port by Lieutenant-Colonel J. G. Rieser, Air and Military Attaché at the Swiss Legation and M. and Mme. Renou. Both the General and Mme. Guisan, on descending from the Swissair machine, were presented with a bunch of lovely flowers by the children of Mr. and Mrs. H. Wasmer, which earned them the usual *accolade*.

The party then adjourned for luncheon to the Myllet Arms Hotel, owned by our compatriot Mr. A. Wiedmer. Two large Swiss flags were flown from the

flag staffs of the Hotel in honour of the distinguished guests. An excellent luncheon was served in one of the private rooms, which was beautifully decorated with flowers. The health of the visitors was drunk in real *Vaudois* wine, supplied from the renowned cellar of the Myllet Arms.

They then proceeded to the Dorchester Hotel, where Mr. G. A. Ronus, General Manager, put an attractive suite of rooms at the disposal of General and Mme. Guisan, with a view over Hyde Park. In the



afternoon they were driven to Shiplake near Henley-on-Thames to attend a reception given by M. and Mme. Claisse-Grellet, at their beautiful home, where so many of our compatriots have been received in the past. A motor-boat took the visitors on a short trip on the river which is particularly lovely in that neighbourhood. After a supper party *en famille* they motored back to town.

On Monday morning the General was taken on a sight-seeing trip around the City where he was much impressed and obviously moved by the bomb damaged areas, and on various occasions he expressed his admiration for the courage and fortitude of the population which had to undergo so much hardship.

A luncheon party was offered by the Swiss Minister, M. Henry de Torrenté, at which some twenty-four guests were present. In the afternoon, the General and Madame Guisan were the guests of M. and Mme. E. A. Grau at their home in Roehampton where a number of friends had gathered. In the evening our visitors attended the "Fête Suisse" at the Central Hall, Westminster, which was reported in the previous issue of this paper.

Tuesday's programme bore a more official character. The General was received at the Royal Society by Professor de Beer, a great friend and admirer of our country, and officials of the Society. The famous Mace, consisting of pure gold was put in front of the General and he was asked to sign the visitor's book which contains many celebrated names, it was an honour which was greatly appreciated.

After the reception at the Royal Society the General and Madame Guisan motored to Oxford where the General offered a luncheon to the Principal of Merton College and Mrs. Mure. It was a most informal and pleasant little party at which were present besides those already mentioned: Professor Jean Inebnit of Leeds University, Professor Giddey, M. and Mme. A. Renou and Mlle Dunant. A visit was paid to the college and the library, and tea was served at Merton College to which a number of distinguished representatives of Oxford University were invited. This visit was much enjoyed by the General's wife, as her daughter was at one time a student at the Oxford University.

On their return from Oxford, our visitors were the guests of Mr. Ch. Bertschi, a compatriot of ours, at the Berkeley Arms Hotel in Cranford. A very fine dinner was served, some called it a Banquet, and as a pleasant surprise some members of the Folklore Federation, amongst them the Alphorn blowers, the Yodlers and the Fahnenschwinger entertained the company in the beautiful gardens which were flood-lit for the occasion; it was altogether a feast fit for Kings.

On Wednesday, after a short tour through London, the visitors attended a cocktail party at the Legation to meet the members of the Folklore Federation, followed by a private luncheon party at the home of Lieut.-Colonel and Mme. Rieser at which a number of British guests attended.

During the afternoon Madame Guisan paid a visit to the "Schwizerschränzli," where she addressed our young girls. It was very much appreciated that Mme. Guisan, in spite of a very heavy programme found time to get in contact with the youngsters of our Colony. In the evening the General and Mme. Guisan were the principal guests of the Swiss Colony at a dinner offered to them at the Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, W.1.

On Thursday, the day of their departure, the General and Mme. Guisan were received by Mr. & Mrs. Winston Churchill, where they were accorded an extremely warm and hearty reception. Whilst Mme. Guisan gave an intimate luncheon party to some of the Ladies who had received her with so much kindness, the General gave a Farewell party to some of those who had done so much work behind the scenes and who were not to be forgotten by a very grateful General. In the afternoon a number of Swiss with their families assembled at Northolt to bid *bon voyage* to our visitors.

And now we come to the Dinner at the Dorchester Hotel, half an hour before the dinner was timed to start, the guests were received by General and Madame Guisan, and M. and Madame A. Renou, President of the Organisation Committee and Chairman of the evening, in one of the fine reception rooms.

Although informal dress was worn, the majority of the Ladies with their "New Look" attire gave an air of smartness and distinction to the scene to which was added the beauty of the floral decorations.

The toast-master in his red coat and wearing war-medals, announced in a stentorian voice, the names of the visitors; he accomplished his task very creditably considering the "variety" of names.

The tables in the handsome Banqueting Hall, including the top table, at which the principal guests were to be seated, contained a mass of lovely flowers. The Menu cards, depicting on the front page, the photograph of the General in uniform with his signature, and bound together with a silk ribbon in our national colours, added to the colour scheme.

In due course the toast-master announced the entry of the General and Madame Guisan, who were accompanied by the Swiss Minister, Monsieur Henry de Torrenté, M. and Mme Renou, and a number of distinguished guests amongst them: Lord and Lady Willoughby De Broke, Professor and Mme. De Beer, Mr. Derek Mc. Culloch, M. and Mme. Roulin, Président du Grand Conseil de Fribourg, Doctor Meier, a member of the cantonal government of Basle-City, Dr. A. Escher and M. and Mme. E. de Graffenried, Counsellors of Legation. Vociferous applause greeted this entry of the principal guests, the noise was nearly as deafening as the one caused by the Basle drummers two days previously at the "Fête Suisse" at the Central Hall Westminster. Flashlight photos were taken from all directions, in short the scene reminded one of a storm in one of our mountain districts with thunder and lightning.

Then came the calm after the storm, when Pasteur Reverdin said grace. Another procession then started, black-coated waiters invaded the Banqueting Hall carrying such delicacies as *Suprême de Sole à la Mode de Chamblandes*, *Poussin en Cocotte de Mézières* with vegetables, which according to the Menu must have come by chartered Swissair machine from Jegenstorf, Vitznau and Broye. (Perhaps?) This was followed by strawberries from Hergiswil, ice-blocks, chipped off the Jungfrau the very same morning, and gaufrettes baked in Basle before breakfast, and concluded with *café Stanser Buebe*. The dinner that has been served recalled pre-war days, and for some fleeting moments it made one forget the meagre rations with which one has to be contented at home.

If the whole evening was a success it was in no small measure also due to Mr. G. A. Ronus for having looked so well after the more material wants of the

company. During the dinner, the Rigi Boys Peasant Band of Vitznau and the Yodler Choir from Stans played and sang some numbers from their extensive *repertoire* which were much appreciated.

When coffee was served the Chairman, M. A. Renou, proposed the toasts to H.M. the King, le Président de la Confédération and La Patrie Suisse, which were heartily responded to, both National Anthems were sung with much feeling. And now all eyes were turned towards the top table, where the Chairman of the evening, M. A. Renou, rose to address the gathering.

In the name of the Swiss Societies in Great Britain and their Presidents he welcomed the many friends, who in such large numbers had attended this festive gathering, especially those who had come from Manchester, Liverpool, Bristol, Birmingham and Leeds, singling out Mr. C. Kunzle, from Birmingham, the sympathetic benefactor and great philanthropist, and Professor Inebnit, a great patriot and Professor at the University of Leeds.

The speaker extended a particularly warm welcome to the newly appointed Swiss Minister, Monsieur Henry de Torrenté, expressing the hope, that his responsible and high mission, which started under such favourable auspices, might prove to be successful and fruitful. He assured the Minister that in his not easy task he could rely on the support and loyalty of the Swiss Colony, a Colony rich in experience, who, whilst admiring and respecting the traditional spirit of British fair play and grateful for an open-hearted hospitality extended to them, is still deeply attached to the country which God Almighty had given them and which they are willing to serve with all their might.

After having read out a telegram of greetings from Mr. A. Bon, dispatched from Portugal, M. Renou ex-

tended special greetings to a number of Vaudois who had arrived from Switzerland to attend the festivities and to M. and Mme. Roulin, Président du Grand Conseil de Fribourg. He welcomed in "Schwizerdütsch" all those who have not forgotten it, and Doctor Meier the representative of the government of the canton of Basle.

In Italian, M. Renou, saluted our brethren beyond the Gotthard, saying that everybody knows and the General best of all, that the "Ticinesi son bravi soldati;" in English, he welcomed the "courageous British born wives of Swiss husbands" and "the lucky British husbands of Swiss born wives."

The Chairman greeted his distinguished neighbours at the top table, Lord and Lady Willoughby De Broke, Professor and Mme. De Beer, Mr. Derek McCulloch (Uncle Mac), all great friends of Switzerland.

To the great disappointment of all those present, M. Renou, was unfortunately unable to welcome the Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill and Mme. Churchill, who at the last moment were prevented from attending.

And now turning to the General on his right, he said:

"Mon cher Général, Notre Général à tous!

Est-il besoin de vous dire notre joie immense, notre très grande fierté de vous avoir parmi nous, ce soir, Vous et Madame Guisan! Il n'y en a pas un ici qui ne vous connaisse, pas une famille qui n'ait votre portrait dans son foyer! Mais maintenant vous êtes là, chair et en os, au sein de cette Colonie suisse de Grande Bretagne, dans cette Salle même où si souvent elle s'est réunie pour parler de la Patrie.

Oui, mon Général, c'est dans cette Salle que nous avons vu les Films de notre Armée; je me souviens de l'un d'entr'eux sur lequel notre dévoué Ami Charles



(Reading from left to right) M. de Graffenried, Madame A. Renou, Prof. De Beer, Lady Willoughby De Broke, General Guisan, Alfred Renou, Swiss Minister, Madame Guisan, Lord Willoughby De Broke, Madame De Beer, M. Roulin, Mme. de Graffenried, Dr. Escher.

Fer et moi avons passé presque une nuit à couper, à "rappondre," pour qu'il se termine par votre apparition et votre allocution à la troupe! Ah! . . . faire parler un Général au moment où cela plaît aux civils n'est pas chose facile . . . nous nous en sommes aperçus! Mais gentiment vous avez cédé et c'est ici donc que pour la première fois votre voix a été entendue. Il y a déjà 7 ans de cela!

Et que faisait-elle, cette Colonie suisse de Grande Bretagne? Eh bien, mon Général, elle faisait tout simplement SON DEVOIR! Nous avons connu des heures sombres, des deuils ont surgi parmi nous. Nombre de familles suisses ont vu un fils partir pour répondre à l'appel de la vieille Angleterre: plusieurs ne sont pas revenus. Les bombardements n'épargnaient personne . . . nous étions tous solidaires de ces 40 Millions de Britanniques qui, sans éclat, mais avec dignité et courage tenaient, envers et contre tout, sans ne jamais douter un seul instant que l'issue put être autre que la Victoire vers laquelle les conduisait, avec majesté et grandeur, ce grand champion de la Liberté humaine: *Winston Churchill*.

Mais le plus curieux est qu'alors qu'en Suisse vous vous faisiez du souci pour nous, c'était le contraire qui se passait ici. En ces années obscures où rien ne semblait devoir arrêter la marche du Despotisme, nos cœurs se serraient en songeant aux dangers qui menaçaient notre Patrie. Au cours des longues nuits sans sommeil, nos pensées s'envolaient vers vous, vers nos familles, nos Amis, nos villages, nos soldats aussi . . . et jamais je crois avons nous si bien compris ni plus sincèrement répété au fond de nos cœurs ces paroles de la Prière patriotique:

" Seigneur, accorde Ton secours, au beau Pays que " mon cœur aime . . . "

Oui, mon Général, quand de retour au pays on vous demandera? . . . et que faisaient nos compatriotes d'Angleterre, durant la guerre?" répondez simplement: " Ils faisaient humblement leur devoir, comme tout le peuple anglais . . . et ils priaient pour nous!"

C'est une grande expérience que nous avons faites, loin des nôtres, mais en commun avec les citoyens du pays qui nous offre une si large hospitalité. Leur attitude fut une révélation, une Inspiration. Je parle non seulement des Grands parmi eux, mais aussi de ce simple peuple de la rue. Par eux, avouons-le, nous avons découvert que l'âme humaine a un courage singulier, que chez les humbles cette âme transforme en beauté même les épreuves et la peine . . . Oui, la Fraternité et la Foi qui nous unissaient tous devant le danger commun transformèrent les Ténèbres en Lumière!

Voilà pourquoi nous autres, Suisses de Londres,

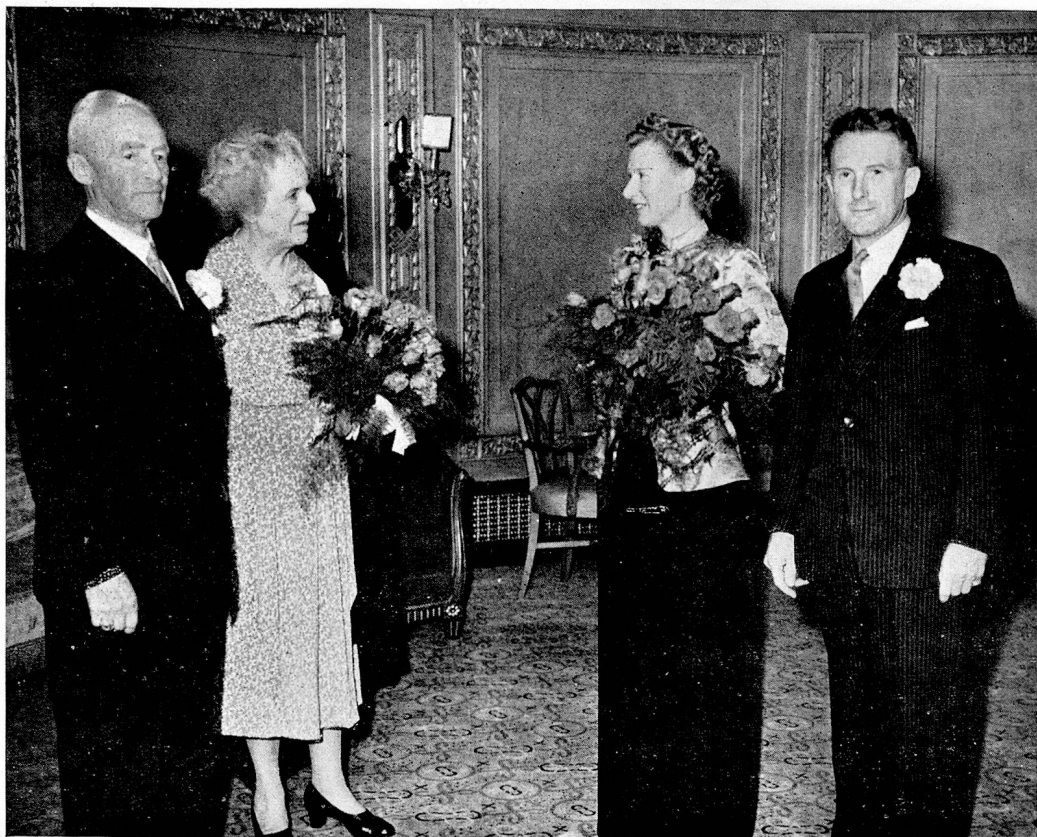
portons dans notre cœur une affection et un respect pour le peuple anglais que *Rien* ne pourra jamais altérer voilà pourquoi aussi nous comprenons mal parfois les critiques légères de ceux qui ont été épargnés et qui ignorent donc à quel prix la Victoire a été acquise. cette Victoire qui a contribué à conserver à notre cher Pays ce qu'il a de plus sacré: *Sa Liberté*! Or, la Liberté n'est pas un droit mais une vertu intérieure, elle est aussi la récompense de l'effort!

Voilà enfin pourquoi nous croyons, malgré tout, forts de notre expérience, qu'une fois de plus les valeurs *morales* finiront par l'emporter, que la Grande Bretagne connaîtra à nouveau les jours heureux que son brave peuple a certes bien mérité, et que de tout notre cœur nous désirons voir grandir les traditionnels liens d'amitié, de confiance et de respect mutuels qui unissent l'Angleterre et la Suisse, une grande Nation et un petit Pays, mais deux nobles et belles patries auxquelles chacun de nous doit tant!

Mon Général . . . ce qui fait que les hommes forment un peuple, c'est le souvenir des grandes choses qu'ils ont faites ensemble . . . et la volonté d'en accomplir des nouvelles.

Voilà pourquoi vous vous êtes souvenu, à l'heure critique, de ce Passé, de ses leçons. Vous avez alors eu la Vision des choses que vous alliez faire, ensemble, ce brave peuple suisse et vous! Seulement voilà, il attendait un Ordre . . . ce peuple. Il y a juste 8 ans, le 3 Juin 1940, dans un Ordre d'Armée, vous lanciez ces mots:

" Notre Fidélité au drapeau et notre volonté inébranlable de combattre jusqu'à la dernière extrémité



General and Mme H. Guisan.

Mme. and M. A. Renou.

RECEIVING THE GUESTS.

prouveront que nous sommes capables de soutenir une guerre avec honneur !”

La gravité de la situation ne pouvait échapper à personne. Au lendemain du miracle de Dunkerque, cette magnifique page d'Histoire que nous avons un peu vécue, nous Suisses de Londres, il fallait inspirer l'Armée, les Hommes, les Femmes et les Enfants d'Helvétie.

Puisque les Autorités se taisaient, le Commandant en Chef de l'Armée décida de parler. Puisant une fois de plus dans le Passé, il s'inspira des " Eidgenossen " de 1291. Et c'est vers cette Prairie du Grütli que le 25 Juillet 1940, sur un seul et même bateau, l'ensemble des officiers supérieurs de l'Armée se dirigèrent. Suivant leur Chef, ils montèrent vers ce Sanctuaire de la Patrie où flottait le Drapeau du Bataillon 87, celui d'Uri !

. . . . Et dans le silence de cette heure inoubliable dont l'Histoire parlera longtemps encore, votre voix de Chef a retenti, calme, sereine et vous disiez :

“ J'ai tenu à vous réunir en ce lieu historique, terre symbolique de notre indépendance, pour vous mettre au courant de la situation et vous parler de soldat à soldat.

Nous sommes à un tournant de notre Histoire. Il s'agit de l'existence même de la Suisse.

Ici, soldats de 1940, nous nous inspirerons des leçons et de l'esprit du Passé, pour envisager résolument le présent et l'avenir du pays, pour entendre l'appel mystérieux qui monte de cette Prairie. . . .”

Puis votre ordre fut clair et précis :

En avant et tout droit !
Vorwärts und geradeaus !

L'écho de ces paroles prononcées au cœur du Secteur 4, en face de ces montagnes qu'à tout prix vous alliez défendre, se porta de sommets en sommets comme un nouveau Feu de 1er Août ! La Flamme était rallumée, le pays tout entier la vit, il en comprit la signification. Dans ce coin de terre " où chaque enfant naît soldat," le peuple entier répondit :

“ A vos ordres mon Général !”
et des cœurs émus, troublés peut-être, ajoutèrent tout bas : “ . . . et merci !”

Bien au delà des frontières de notre Patrie on comprit que la consigne était sans équivoque !

Ainsi, mon Général, dans le vieux et noble Livre de l'Histoire de la Patrie Helvétique, vous avez ajouté une grande et belle page. Elle a pour titre :

Général Henri Guisan

Commandant en Chef de l'Armée suisse
1939 — 1945.

Les Générations à venir la reliront avec émotion et fierté ! Quant à la nôtre, dont font partie plus de 400,000 Suisses de l'Etranger, elle vous dit très simplement, mais du fond du cœur :

“ Merci notre Général !!!”

Il y a cent ans, notre peuple entier prononçait ces mêmes mots ; ils s'adressaient aussi à une grande figure, celle du Général *Henri Dufour*, ce noble Médiateur qui transforma une guerre civile en l'union magnifique de la Confédération des 22 Cantons. Pour commémorer ces faits historiques, aucune présence ne pouvait être mieux indiquée ni plus précieuse que celle de son très digne successeur.

En venant à nous ce soir, mon Général, vous avez de même ajouté une page lumineuse au Livre d'Or de

notre vieille Colonie suisse de Grande Bretagne, et c'est pourquoi,

Monsieur le Ministre, my Lord, mes chers Compatriotes, je vous demande de vous lever et de boire tous ensemble :

A LA SANTE ET AU BONHEUR
de Monsieur le Général et Madame Henri Guisan !
Qu'ils vivent !”

Long and hearty applause greeted the excellent oration of M. Renou.

He was followed by the Swiss Minister, who thanked the Chairman for the kind wishes extended to him, assuring him, that he had no other ambition than to uphold the excellent relations which existed so prominently between the Colony and his predecessor.

In addressing the General, he referred to a meeting which he had with him in Paris previous to the last war, whilst acting as Chargé d'Affaires, when he had the pleasure of receiving him together with the chiefs of the French Army. Already at that time, the Minister said, dark clouds threatened the peace, and although the General was only holding the rank of Army Corps Commander then, it was murmured that if ever the Swiss Army would be obliged to mobilise, Switzerland would not hesitate in the choice of a General. Two years later, the Federal Chambers had entrusted him with the defence of our country. Monsieur de Torrenté referred to his address, to the devotion, affection and attachment which he evoked not only in the Army but also in the entire population.



General Guisan speaking at the " Fête Suisse " at Central Hall.

He continued by saying :

“ Je vous retrouve, mon Général, aussi jeune, aussi alerte, avec ce même esprit de décision qui caractérise le chef, que lors de notre rencontre à Paris. C'est que les responsabilités écrasantes qui vous ont été confiées par notre peuple, vous étiez de taille à les assumer; vous avez supporté allègrement un fardeau qui aurait excédé les forces, la résistance physique et morale de tout autre. Vous êtes entré vivant dans l'histoire, après avoir, comme dit l'apôtre: “ combattu le bon combat ” et achevé votre œuvre.

Je ne veux pas anticiper sur le jugement que porteront sur vous les générations futures; vous me permettez toutefois de souligner d'abord votre foi en la Providence, votre conviction dans la justice de la cause que vous défendiez, votre confiance dans le droit et la justice, votre sens de l'équité, votre sollicitude pour le pauvre et le déshérité; le bien immense que vous avez dans les rangs de notre armée et dans notre peuple en aidant de tout manière les moins favorisés; votre respect des institutions démocratiques et fédératives. Pour toutes ces tâches vous aviez en Madame la Générale Guisan une collaboratrice d'un dévouement inépuisable et permettez-moi de l'associer à ces sentiments de gratitude.

De tout cela il ressort que vous êtes non seulement un grand soldat, mais un grand citoyen. Je me proposais à cette réunion traditionnelle de la Colonie suisse de Londres d'exalter le patriotisme, l'esprit et le courage civique, et voilà qu'il me suffit d'évoquer votre glorieux exemple plus vivant que le plus éloquent discours.”

The fine address of the Minister was unanimously cheered.

Lord Willoughby De Broke, in a short address, expressed his pleasure at having had an opportunity to be present on such a conspicuous occasion; he said that he was glad that it had fallen to his lot to be of some service in connection with the arrangements made for the Swiss Folklore Festival in aid of the R.A.F. Benevolent Fund, and concluded by paying a high tribute to the humanitarian efforts which our country has made to soften the burden of prisoners of war.

The toast to the General, on behalf of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain, was entrusted to Mr. A. Stauffer, Editor of the “ Swiss Observer ” who, after an introduction in English, addressed him in “ Bärndütsch.”

He expressed the sincere thanks to General Guisan for his conspicuous services rendered to our country during those fateful years in which he was in supreme command of our army.

The speaker said, that the knowledge, that our faithful army was in such competent hands was a great consolation to all Swiss living abroad, who in spite of hardship and danger never lost faith that the day of retaliation and “ settlement of accounts ” would unalterably arrive.

“ Our Government, Parliament and our compatriots at home ” he continued, “ have already expressed their thanks to you, in, it is true, a more effusive manner, but with these simple, and perhaps all too modest words, I tender you, my General, the supreme thanks from the “ Cinquième Suisse,” thanks which come from the innermost recesses of our hearts.”

During a lull in the speech-making, the Alphorn blowers, the Flagschwinger and one drummer went into action, and thus provided a welcome diversion. I

do not think that the Alphorn was ever blown before in one of the palatial Hotels of the Metropolis, but quite frankly I prefer to hear it back home in the mountains.

The next speaker then was announced in the person of Oberleutnant Henry Wasmer, who spoke in “ Schwizerdütsch ” and French on behalf of all those who had had the honour to serve under General Guisan, during the Frontier Occupation 1939-1945. The cheers which greeted the speaker when he rose, were undoubtedly partly meant for our popular army.

He recalled an event when he addressed the General “ more or less personally ” namely during an inspection of the Field Artillery Group 24, in which unit he held the temporary command of a Battery. Mr. Wasmer went on to say that this evening he had again the honour to stand in front of the General, not to be inspected but to speak on behalf of a great number of officers, non-commissioned officers and ranks, who, at the outbreak of the war in September 1939, left their working places and responsibilities abroad to obey the Federal Council's Mobilisation Order. The speaker related the great impression which the efficient and minutely prepared decentralized mobilisation made upon those who reached their mobilisation places, which proved that both Government and Army command were fully prepared and had foreseen the conflict.

Using the mother tongue of the General he said, amongst applause, that it was he, who had forged our little army together and brought it to such a degree of training and combat, which made it, though small, a reliable fighting force.

The speaker, particularly stressed the fact, that it was the General, who had inspired the people and the army, thus giving them confidence in themselves. He recalled the fateful 25th of July, 1940, the day when General Guisan ordered all high ranking officers of the army to the historical soil of the Rutli, to explain to them his conception of the “ Reduit National,” and where he told them about the great dangers and the possible great sacrifices which our country might have to face.

Oberleutnant Wahmer concluded his address by saying that, when a few days later the General's Order of the Day was read to all units, all ranks tacitly renewed their oath to defend, under his orders, our beloved country to the last drop of blood.

This oration was heartily cheered by all those present.

And now came the great moment of the evening, hardly had the toast-master announced that the General wishes to address the company, when pandemonium broke loose, never before have I witnessed, during all those years of reporting events in the Colony, such enthusiasm. With an unprecedented *élan* the entire audience stood up, waves and waves of cheers and clapping greeted our General, who was visibly touched by this spontaneous and sincere ovation. When silence was restored the General announced that he did not intend to deliver a great speech, he said that this splendid gathering reminded him more of a happy family party, and his oration would therefore be given as a sort of *causerie* during which the father of a family addresses his children. On behalf of his wife and himself he extended “ un grand merci ” for the overwhelming reception which they had received, which he said will long remain a treasured memory. In thanking the various speakers for all the praise they had bestowed

on him, he expressed, especially to the Chairman, M. A. Renou, his appreciation for the efficient manner in which his short stay in London had been organised, he said, amidst laughter, that he never had a better l'Etat-Major, not even during the last war.

The General then paid a high tribute to his countrymen living in Great Britain for the way in which they had shared the dangers with the British people, and for their unswerving loyalty to their motherland.

He voiced his admiration for the heroic deeds of the British army and its Government, which in the darkest hour stood steadfast under the inspired leadership of its Prime Minister, Mr. Winston Churchill. (Loud applause.)

General Guisan, then related incidents which occurred at his Head-Quarters, when reports were received of an imminent invasion by the German forces, of which the army command was fully informed thanks to the efficient work of the Swiss Intelligence Service. He gave a short *resumé* of interviews with high German officials to whom he made perfectly clear, that the Swiss army was determined to defend our country against whoever tried to violate our neutrality.

Concluding his most interesting address, the General related in a humorous vein some of the contents of the big mail which he received at his Headquarters, of wives who wanted their husbands, or girls their sweethearts released which caused much hilarity.

On resuming his seat the General once again received a great ovation.

Thus one of the most memorable events celebrated in the Swiss Colony in London came to a close, an evening which will linger for many a day in the memory of all those who were privileged to attend.

The gratitude expressed to our General, for his immeasurable services rendered to our country was sincere and has deeply touched both the General and Madame Guisan, and I can do no better than to reproduce here contents of a letter, which Madame Guisan had written on their homeward journey in the plane and addressed to the Chairman :

“J'emporte le plus beau, le plus émouvant, le plus lumineux souvenir de cette suite de joie, de beauté, des jours passés à Londres. Il me semble avoir rêvé. J'ai laissé entre vos mains mon amitié qui me semble vieille de plusieurs années.

Que je suis reconnaissante pour tout ce que vous avez fait pour le Général; il y avait dans votre accueil, dans celui de vos amis suisses et anglais quelque chose de trop merveilleux, il y avait ce qu'on trouve si rarement dans la vie : toute la Loyauté, tout la Générosité, toute la divine Bonté,” and then :

“Chers amis que j'aime tant, aimez-vous bien, soyez heureux, restez toujours ce que vous êtes et que Dieu vous bénisse. M. Guisan.”

ST.

ALPENROSEN-CLUB.

Letzten Donnerstag veranstaltete der “Alpenrosen-Club” in der Pavior's Hall, Westminster, einen Tanzabend, an welchem ca. 250 Personen teilnahmen. Gemütlich verbrachte die “Schweizerfamilie” einige Stunden beisammen und der Abend darf als wirklicher Sympathie-Erfolg bezeichnet werden. Sicher darf der Alpenrosen-Club auch zu den Unterhaltungs-Clubs gezählt werden, wo Schweizermädchen “allein” hingehen dürfen.

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