

The Swiss celebrate their national day

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words and gestures. Strangers would stand fascinated by his tales, not daring to show their incredulity even when he got to the famous story of how he shot a pelican on the shore by Locarno. There was not a day's hunting in his history he could not recount with unhesitating accuracy and in the utmost detail. That trip to the Magadino end of the lake, seventeen years ago today? Ah yes, it had been a dry summer. And he had shot seventeen wild ducks with one salvo from the small cannon on his *spingarda*, and they had come back that night with twenty-three ducks and a wild goose. Towards his fellow-hunters and fellow-fishermen he was true to the age-old principle of never betraying the true proportions of your success and failures, and once when a particularly brazen covey wanted to see the three pheasants he had shot, he was forced to display the same pheasant at the window three times, each time turning it to present it at a different angle . . . It was a form of harmless deception he practised with mischievous gusto and with a wary twinkle in his eye.

The casual tourists and the other strangers who had settled on this mild and delightful shore would watch him pass in his boat, standing up to row as he always did, his pipe hanging from gums now almost devoid of teeth, his face burnt by the sun, his beret on his head, his deep-set eyes ranging over the waters he knew so well. They hailed him, they exchanged a joke with him, they asked him if he had any fish to sell. They watched him go, leaving ripples in the water, a genuine part of the eternal picture of this lake and its mountain setting. And the day came when they missed him. And the next day, and the next day too. Holiday-makers returning to the south at the time when the camellias and the mimosa bloom waited for the familiar figure in the boat, but waited in vain. Word went round among the visitors, and his wife was wearing black and often went, bowed and wordless, to the little cemetery above the lake road.

Life is an eternal exchange, even in a southern landscape that to so many means long days of leisure beside sunny waters. There are things that grow more frequent, like water-skiers tracing their white patterns across the water or the coloured lights of Locarno that are reflected over blue-black depths at dusk. But he was one of the other category: of the things that grow rarer, like the speckled trout and the kingfisher.

(By courtesy of "Switzerland"
Revue of S.N.T.O.)

THE SWISS CELEBRATE THEIR NATIONAL DAY

In many parts of Switzerland, there used to be bonfires at summer solstice time, either on 21st or (even more usual) on 24th June. In Central Switzerland, fires were lit also on St. Peter's and St. Paul's Day on 29th June. Since the end of the last century, all these fires are now lit on the National Day. This has another meaning, as well, for when the foreign overlords were rejected by the people of Switzerland in 1291, bonfires were lit as an expression of joy at having gained freedom.

Quite a number of celebrations were spoilt by inclement weather, and some of the speeches had to be dropped and the fireworks omitted. There were still picturesque processions in some of the towns, headed by mounted groups in historic costumes. A rather newer tradition is the *Jungbürgerfeier*, a ceremony during which the young men and women who have come of age at 20 are being

accepted as fully-fledged citizens. Some of these civic practices had a new significance, as quite a number of young Swiss women have now got the vote in local matters, so for instance in Chur.

The celebrations in Geneva and Lausanne were chaired by women this year, in Geneva by the Municipal President and in Lausanne by the President of the Municipal Council. At Bure, there were unpleasant incidents when separatists clashed with pro-Berne elements. In Basle, the time of the celebration was changed from afternoon to evening with the result that several times the usual numbers participated. The organisers kept to the venerable old *Münsterplatz*, and it was the bells of the Cathedral and the sounds of the traditional trombone ensemble from the St. George's tower, which opened the function. In Schaffhausen, usage has it that a wreath is deposited at the soldiers' memorial. In St. Gall, on account of rain, the remembrance service was held at the Municipal Theatre, and actors recited patriotic verse and prose by Schiller, C. F. Meyer and Gottfried Keller. At Schwanden, the celebration was combined with the 65th Cantonal Rifle Shooting Contest, and Federal Councillor Tschudi, whose *Heimatgemeinde* it is, gave the main address. At Altdorf, scenes from the Tell *Festspiele* were incorporated, and the whole Gotthard traffic was diverted so as not to interfere with the observance of the National Day. The celebration at Brunnen was televised. It was there that the two *Bundesriefe* of 1291 and 1315 were written according to historians.

Federal Councillor Celio spoke in Zurich, and his speech was criticised at a second meeting of an "anti-authoritative Committee". The President of the Confederation addressed the nation over radio and television. He appealed to the people to solve mounting contrasts solely with reason and without force. He said youth should be acknowledged as partner, but young people were mistaken if they thought they could use force in the name of freedom in a democratic State. He also felt that Switzerland could be much more humane, and in this the young would be able to participate.

Councillor of States Dr. F. Leu, Lucerne, said on the Ruetli that today's problems should be solved in the Ruetli spirit of 1291. 28 members of the Swiss Youth Parliament spent six weeks at the Pestalozzi Village at Trogen, trying to get to know various spheres and personalities. As an example: they had discussions with workers, staff and management of an industrial concern, and on 1st August, each of the participants spent the whole day sharing work and National Day Celebration on mountain farms in the district, so as to get to know their problems, too. The following week was divided between an R.C. centre at Morschach and a Protestant one on Boldern.

Federal Councillor Gnaegi received a group of young Americans who took a message of congratulation and good wishes from President Johnson and the American Nation to the Federal Palace; they were in Switzerland with the American Field Service. Federal Chancellor Buser received over 100 members of the Swiss Club of Freiburg (Breisgau), who visited Switzerland for the day. They had coffee at Langenbruck, lunch in Berne after visiting the Parliament Chambers, a meeting at Castle Oberhofen where the Director of the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad addressed the party. Then followed a trip to Interlaken, Brienz, Bruenig, with tea in Lucerne before returning to Freiburg.

(Compiled from news received by courtesy of
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