

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK

Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

Band: - (1936)

Heft: 768

Artikel: Swiss National Day : 1st August 1291-1936

Autor: [s.n.]

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-694358>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. [Siehe Rechtliche Hinweise.](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. [Voir Informations légales.](#)

Terms of use

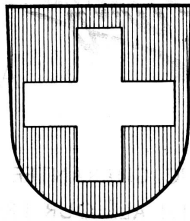
The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. [See Legal notice.](#)

Download PDF: 30.01.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

SWISS NATIONAL DAY

1st August



1291 - 1936

In a time full of anxiety, political upheavals and universal distress, when the spectre of war is threatening the peace of a tired and torn world, our country is celebrating to-day the six hundred and forty-sixth anniversary of its birth.

It behoves us, who are far from home, to let our thoughts wander back to the land of our fathers; alas! we shall not see the fires lit up on the mountain tops at eventide, nor shall we hear the church bells ringing; but deep down in our hearts we shall, if only for a few fleeting moments, share the emotions of our kinsmen across the sea.—

There is no need nor justification to celebrate this day by noisy demonstrations, and to kindle patriotism by sentimental orations; the times we are passing through are grave and full of dangers, and demand more than ever that unity which is so continuously proclaimed by innumerable speakers at our many festivals at home.—

The Swiss newspapers will be full of reports of patriotic speeches made throughout the length and breadth of the country, in which unity and love of our country will be praised; and at least for one day in the year it will appear that no discord exists in Helvetia's realm.

It is a glorious vision but, alas! it fades like a Fata Morgana into grey mist, when compared with facts. There is much to be praised and to be proud of in our country, but there is also much to be condemned, and we Swiss who live far away from our native soil, can often judge better about conditions prevalent at home, than those who are permanently living in the midst of party strife and political upheavals.

Those of our countrymen, who keep in close touch with the political and economic situation of our country will agree that the outlook is far from bright.

More than ever is party strife alive, and ugly things are both said and written. Passion and class hatred are poisoning the life of our country.

ROULEZ TAMBOURS

Who, amongst our compatriots, does not know that fiery and inspiring song of our French-speaking compatriots, which has, long ago become the common property of our Nation. This patriotic song is celebrating its 80th birthday anniversary, and it is well worth remembering, when, and under what circumstances this martial tune first saw the light of day.

"Roulez Tambours" ... originated during the Neuchâtel dispute in 1856-57, which not only created a great stir in Switzerland, but throughout Europe. — In contrast to the other 21 cantons, which constituted the Swiss Confederation, and which were without exception of a purely republic character, the canton of Neuchâtel, which entered the Confederation in 1815, was still a principality under foreign jurisdiction. The King of Prussia was in fact called amongst his other titles, Prince of Neuchâtel and Count of Vallangin. When a hundred years ago the regeneration movement swept away all reactionary governments in most of the cantons, the republicans in the canton of Neuchâtel revolted against its rulers, but the revolution was put down by force. The small but active republican party did not lose heart; the discontent with the representatives of the royal dynasty grew rapidly, and many adherents were won over in various parts of the Jura.

During the great and far reaching political events of 1847 and 1848 a new and vigorous revolution broke out, and the Government was promptly chased over the boundary. A new constitution was proclaimed, which was more in keeping with the one of the Swiss Confederation. Prussia, which at the time, had its own troubles, seemed to take but little notice of the happenings, treating the matter very contemptuously; but nine years after this event, the royalist party, under the leadership of Colonel de Pourtales, tried to re-instate the old régime. In the night of the 2nd to the 3rd of September, his troops stormed the Castle and took possession of the town of Neuchâtel. The republican Government was arrested, and put under lock and key; but

On more than one occasion revolution has been openly preached and advocated. Politicians and responsible men in whose care lies the destiny of our country have been accused of bribery and corruption, and the interests of certain bodies and concerns are pushed forward to the detriment of the community.

In the economic sphere the outlook is equally bleak; huge and alarming deficits in the Federal, cantonal and local administrations are continuously reported, banks and important industrial concerns, which at one time stood as firm as a rock, are in difficulties and have to be assisted by the Federal treasury; favourable commercial treaties with foreign powers are repudiated by the latter or renewed under less favourable conditions.

The warning note has often been sounded by responsible authorities at home, but they have been treated as scaremongers and confirmed pessimists.

It is of course said, that other countries are in the same boat as ourselves or even worse off, it may be so, but it is all the same a poor consolation. We have a splendid example of what a country can achieve, if it has the will to pull together, in the country which is extending to us its hospitality; when this nation seemed to be heading headlong to disaster, a wave of patriotism and self denial swept through all ranks of the community, with the result that the stormy tide was weathered and the ship was safely steered into the harbour.

This can only be achieved by unity and the firm will to subordinate party and personal interests to the welfare of the whole community, it requires a firm determination and courage, but courage conquers the world.

There are, may it be said, still large numbers amongst our countrymen who are striving hard to stem this tide of distress and dissatisfaction, and I am convinced that in the end common-

already the following day, the republican forces under the command of Colonel Denzler, re-captured the Castle. Eight royalists were killed, 26 wounded and 480 made prisoners. The King of Prussia at once demanded that all prisoners should be set free, and made other demands, asserting his rights over the principality of Neuchâtel. His demands were couched in such language that no self-respecting country could enter even into preliminary negotiations and war seemed to be inevitable.

On January 2nd, the Prussian Army received marching orders, the South German States having granted free passage to the King's forces. A wave of war enthusiasm swept over the whole of Switzerland, the whole population stood like one man behind the Federal Council, volunteers flocked to the colours from all parts of the country. On December 30th Parliament unanimously elected General Dufour commander in chief of the Federal forces. He assembled at once an army of 30,000 men and threw them on the threatened frontier. Extensive fortifications were erected, all the Rhein bridges were fortified, Schaffhausen and Eglisau on the lake of Constance were armed with guns. The entourage of Klein Basel was fortified and manned with heavy artillery, 78 pieces in all. General Dufour's plan was, to be on the defence at Basle, whilst his forces were to attack the Prussians at Schaffhausen. It was in these days of national enthusiasm, that Aniel's song:

Roulez tambours, pour couvrir la frontière,
Aux bords du Rhin, guidez nous au combat.
was first sung by our French-speaking compatriots.

Diplomatic relations between Prussia and the Confederation were broken off, when some of the others Powers made it known that they disapproved of a settlement of the dispute by armed force. France intimated, that, should Prussia cross the frontier, they would at once occupy the cantons of Neuchâtel and Geneva, and Austria would do the same with the cantons of Ticino and Grison. In order to avert these dangers, negotiations were started, after Switzerland had agreed

sense as well as love of our motherland will triumph and our beloved country will once again tread the path of prosperity, but to achieve this end unity and sacrifice are a dire necessity.

The history of our land is full of glorious deeds and achievements, and in the darkest times men of good will and farsightedness have led the country from darkness into the light.

We have every reason to be grateful that we have been spared the horrors of war, and our homes and our dear ones have escaped destruction. Do we appreciate these facts in full, should this not encourage us to work in harmony together for the betterment of our national existence? The banner of liberty still flutters over a free country, the liberty of opinion and press are still jealously guarded as a sacred inheritance.

Let us then, dear compatriots, on this, our national day, renew the oath which our ancestors far back on that sacred ground on the Rütli have sworn, to stand together as firm as a rock in stormy and fair weather. Then the sun will shine once again over the silvery mountains, and over a free and unfettered country, once again the motto "One for all, all for one" will celebrate its resurrection, and thousands of our countrymen all over this earth will look back proudly to the land which in memory is for ever engraved in their hearts.

Then, we shall feel the significance of the fires which blaze up in the darkness of the night, and the ringing of the bells which spread their harmonious sounds from hamlet to hamlet, and from the depth of our soul will emerge the gratitude to the Lord of all creation who has in his infinite goodness watched over the destiny of our country.

Then we can sing with a grateful heart, with our national poet, Gottfried Keller "Lasse strahlen Deinen schönsten Stern, nieder auf mein irdisch Vaterland."

ST.

to release the royalist prisoners, on condition that they left the country until the dispute was settled. On March the 5th, 1857, the plenipotentiaries on France, Austria, England and Russia assembled in Paris and agreed on terms which were put before the two belligerents. The Swiss Parliament accepted these terms on the 11th and 12th of June, and the King of Prussia made his acceptance of the conditions known on the 19th of the same month. The latter, however, only agreed to the terms after Napoleon and the Government of Great Britain had put some considerable pressure on him. Switzerland had every reason to be satisfied with the settlement. The King of Prussia renounced all rights over the Principality of Neuchâtel and the canton of Neuchâtel was declared an independent canton of the Swiss Confederation. Switzerland had to bear the costs of the September events, and agreed not to prosecute any of the participants who had taken part in the rising. The only souvenir Switzerland inherited from this "bloodless war" was that striking song: "Roulez Tambour."

PERSONAL.

We deeply regret to inform our readers of the passing away of Madame Helène, Leslie de Bourg, wife of M. W. de Bourg, Counsellor of Legation.

We extend our sincere sympathy to M. de Bourg and his family in their sad bereavement. Mme. de Bourg was the daughter of the late Mr. W. Denny, shipbuilder of Dumbarton and Lelia Lady Samuelson.

The Funeral Service will take place on Tuesday next, August 4th (twelve o'clock), at St. Columbus Church of Scotland, Pont Street, W.

* * *

We regret to announce the death of Madame Louise, Sophie Rohr, the wife of our popular compatriot F. H. Rohr, of 10, Buckingham Palace Road, S.W.1, who passed away last Friday, the 24th inst. at the age of 58.

The funeral took place on Wednesday, July 29th at Golders Green Crematorium, M. R. Sauty