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SWISS NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATION

1291



1955

on SUNDAY, 31st of JULY, 1955

at the BATTERSEA PLEASURE GARDENS

This year's celebration of the birth of our country falls into a time when a glimmer of hope spreads over the world.

The deliberations of the four statesmen at Geneva have — at least for the time being — banned the spectre of another big war, and a new hope, that after years of misunderstandings, fear and hatred, a new era of mutual understanding has begun. As on the Rütli, 664 years ago, four men have foregathered in our country to try to solve mighty problems, and to prepare the ground for a more friendly collaboration.

May Geneva, like the Rütli, become a sacred ground where the foundations will be laid for a new charter, this time for the whole world, based on justice and respect for human rights.

When in 1945, the cease fire had sounded over the four quarters of the globe, when the sword had been put in its scabbard, and with it a period of wanton destruction, untold miseries and sufferings had come to a close, a feeling of intense relief swept, like a hurricane from North to East, and South to West.

Alas, the high hopes which then filled our hearts came to naught. Mistrust and greed, wars in various parts of the world, economic upheavals followed, and once again that ugly word war was mentioned.

Let us hope that this time our longings for happier times to come, will reach fulfilment, that the shadows of night have passed, and tomorrow God's resplendent sun will shine over a new, better and more just world, let us be worthy of it and let us join in the work to secure for our children and future generations a brighter and happier future.

Thus this year's 1st of August celebration has a special meaning and a special importance.

* * *

This second open air celebration at the Battersea Pleasure Gardens was this year favoured with splendid weather, which must have come as a considerable relief to the organisers. As the President, Mr. F. Streit, in his closing address rightly said: "To hold a performance in the open is always somewhat of a gamble, as so much depends on the weather conditions", well the gamble "came off", for which we must be grateful.

Considering that a large number of our compatriots must be away holiday-making — there were many familiar faces missing — the concert pavilion was filled to capacity, and there must have been at a rough guess between 1,700 and 1,800 persons present.

The majority of the audience was recruited from

the younger generation, mostly resident in this country for a short period only, and to them it must have been quite an event to celebrate our National Day far away from their native land.

As last year, the stage, as well as the auditorium, was gaily decorated with bunting, the cantonal escutcheons and large and small Swiss flags, including the Union Jack, but why oh why have some of the flags not been given a spring cleaning? In my last year's report I directed the attention to this fact, apparently with no effect, and I am sure they will again be stored in this dirty condition, and resurrected next year exactly in the same delapidated state. If there should be a few shillings left over in the "kitty", I hope it will be spent on giving these flags a good scrubbing.

The wish expressed by the organisers that as many of the visitors should, if possible, wear national costume was followed, and quite a number of young maidens appeared in them, thus providing a gay and colourful touch.

1st of August programmes vary little from year to year, this recent performance, in my humble opinion, has fallen somewhat short of former celebrations, the appearance of the Swiss Male Choir was greatly missed, and so was the reading of the Swiss Pact, in the same impressive way as it was done 12 months ago.

I am fully aware that to organise a performance, at the time of the year when so many of our compatriots are away is exceedingly difficult, and if I voice this personal disappointment, I hope it will not be taken as a complaint directed against the organisers who have tried to do their best under difficult circumstances.

Shortly before the programme was timed to start, the Swiss Minister and Madame Daeniker arrived, accompanied by the President of the 1st of August Committee and Mrs. Streit. The Minister's collaborators at the Legation and their ladies were also present in full force.

Before taking their seats, Madame Daeniker, and Mrs. Streit were presented with lovely bouquets of red and yellow roses by a little girl and a small boy dressed in Bernese costume.

The programme then started with the singing by the entire audience of the "Sempacherlied" and "Roulez Tambours", under the direction of Mr. A. Gandon, followed by a short prayer given by the Rev. H. Spoerri of the "Schweizerkirche" who offered

humble thanks to God Almighty for having so kindly guided the destiny of our country. He asked for God's blessing and guidance for the authorities of this and our country, concluding with the Lord's prayer.

The Swiss Minister, Monsieur Armin Daeniker, in the capacity of head of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain, was entrusted with the customary patriotic address, he said:

Dear Friends, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to see how many compatriots have come to attend the celebration of the Swiss National Day. I extend to you all a hearty welcome.

I wish to greet particularly those who have come for the first time to this celebration, being perhaps also for the first time on this day far from the mother country, having hardly overcome feelings of isolation and loneliness which will not be unknown to their life in this great Metropolis. I greet also the many compatriots who belong to the stock of our Colony, those who represent the Swiss Churches and the numerous societies within our community and are responsible for the various and rich activities in which this Colony has such a high distinction. And I greet further those of our compatriots who happen to be on this auspicious day visitors to this country and have come to join our patriotic meeting. May it be a happy occasion for everyone to win new contacts and to link new bonds of friendship. To the newcomers and our visitors it shall give a lively and lasting impression how vigorously the Swiss Colony on the shores of the Thames maintain and foster the sacred bond of common allegiance, how anxiously they strive to upkeep in our midst the traditions which are so dear to all the Swiss whether they live at home or abroad.

The 1st of August is one of those occasions which we are wont to celebrate in common. At home it has never been declared an official holiday, it is an ordinary weekday without parades nor large processions. We want it to be a day of common remembrance and admonition, which shall remind us of that historical deed whereby — in the late Middle-Ages the foundations of our Swiss Confederation have been laid. We do not know whether the representatives of the three primitive rural communities were then conscious that the alliance which they concluded with their oath would grow in an unbroken line and lead to a modern State, being to-day the source of our strength and pride.

Let this day therefore be an occasion for paying tribute to our ancestors, to their valour and foresight, and for thanksgiving. An occasion for hearty joy which will be the hallmark of the gay bonfires lighting up from hilltop to hilltop and the patriotic songs which to-morrow will fill the air of our valleys; an occasion too to revert our thoughts to all those compatriots who not only at home but all over the world will have their joyful celebrations in the same harmonious spirit.

Let us also gratefully remember the friendly reception, the kind hospitality which we enjoy and the cordial understanding which we meet daily in this country. Swiss patriotism will, by its nature, never antagonise the feelings of other Nations. No-

where will it be better appreciated than by this Nation which never failed in showing open sympathies for our country and giving their support to the national aspiration of other peoples. I am glad therefore that many English friends have come to attend our meeting and welcome them all particularly.

Liebe Landsleute,

Wenn mir die Ehre zuteil geworden ist, am heutigen Tage Worte patriotischen Gedenkens an Sie zu richten, habe ich nicht die Absicht, wie es so oft an Bundesfeiern geschieht, rückschauend auf unsere glorreiche Geschichte an die kriegerischen Heldentaten unserer Vorfahren zu erinnern.

Vielen unter Euch mag es überflüssig scheinen, die Würdigung des Gegenwärtigen mit einem geschichtlichen Rückblick auf die Vergangenheit zu verbinden. Sollen wir nicht einfach uns darüber freuen, dass das Erbe vergangener Generationen so sinnvoll betreut und ausgebaut worden ist? Haben wir nicht allen Grund, damit zufrieden zu sein, dass 10 Jahre nach Abschluss des Weltkriegs unser Land sich eines allgemeinen Wohlstands erfreut, wie es noch zur Jahrhundertwende kaum vorstellbar gewesen wäre? Schweizerarbeit, Unternehmungsgeist, Erfindungsgabe und Sinn für Qualität haben unsere Exportwirtschaft auf der Höhe erhalten und ebenso erfreulich entwickelt sich der Fremdenverkehr. Dank dem Sparsinn unseres Volkes, der vorsichtigen Zurückhaltung gegenüber gewagten Experimenten steht unser nationaler Kredit unangetastet: ja die Schweiz ist wiederum zum gesuchten Kreditgeber geworden und unsere nationale Währung steht wie in festem Alpenstein

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vermuert. Dennoch haben wir unsere Mitwirkung an Werken der internationalen Solidarität nie verweigert und bei der Ordnung des zwischenstaatlichen Handels- und Zahlungsverkehrs haben wir stets ein gewichtiges, allgemein beachtetes Wort mitzureden.

Auch in politischer Hinsicht hatten wir die Genugtuung, in letzter Zeit einer neuen Wertschätzung unserer Neutralität zu begegnen. Bekanntlich haben wir uns nicht leicht dazu entschieden, unsere Neutralität in dem Sinn auszubauen, dass wir verantwortungsvolle Kontrollaufgaben an fernen Kriegsfrenten übernommen haben. Wie immer man über solche Mandate denken mag, die Art und Weise, wie wir sie auszuführen bestrebt gewesen sind, hat uns jedenfalls die Anerkennung aller Beteiligten eingetragen.

Abermals haben sich auf Schweizerboden die verantwortlichen Staatsmänner von zwei politischen Welten getroffen, um in ernstem Ringen Mittel und Wege für eine weltpolitische Entspannung aufzudecken. Immer wieder hat man uns versichert, dass kein anderes Land für solche Konferenzen ebenso günstige Voraussetzungen zu bieten hätte. So hat unser Land einen bescheidenen, aber nicht zu unterschätzenden Beitrag für die Sicherung des Weltfriedens leisten können.

Wenn neuestens die Neutralität als grundsätzliche Maxime zur Diskussion gestanden hat, wollen wir aber uns bewusst sein, dass die permanente Neutralität der Schweiz sich nicht auf andere Länder übertragen lässt; denn das Wachstum und unser Festhalten an der Neutralität

ist nur aus der historischen Entwicklung und deren engem Zusammenhang mit dem Föderalismus und der Demokratie zu verstehen; sie ist nicht ein Verhalten, zu dem wir uns aus Zweckmässigkeitsgründen entschieden hätten.

Gerade darin aber offenbart sich der Wert geschichtlicher Besinnung, dass sie uns ermöglicht, das Wesen der aus der Vergangenheit übernommenen Einrichtungen besser zu verstehen und gegenüber den Tagesfragen einen sicheren Stand zu gewinnen.

Wenn wir unter diesem Lichte den Bundesbrief von 1291 lesen, muten uns die Nöte jener Zeit ebenso wie die staatsmännische Bedeutung jenes Pakts erstaunlich zeitgemäss an. Die Männer der drei Talschaften wollten nicht, beim Fehlen einer festen Reichsgewalt, ihre verbrieften Rechte verschachert sehen. Angesichts der Arglis der Zeit nahmen sie ihr Schicksal in die eigene Hand und gelobten sich gegenseitige Hilfe gegen jedes Unrecht, "gegen jeden Angriff von innen oder aussen". Von dieser Position der Stärke ausgehend wollten sie fortan auch keinen ausländischen Richter auf ihrem Boden mehr dulden. So finden wir in den Bestimmungen des Bundesbriefs bereits das Prinzip der kollektiven Sicherheit und der obligatorischen Schiedsgerichtsbarkeit, um deren Verwirklichung unsere Zeit noch ringt, im Keime niedergelegt.

Gewiss war es den einfachen Bauern des XIII Jahrhunderts nur um den Schutz ihrer unmittelbaren Rechte und Interessen und den Zugang zum Gotthard zu tun; sie dachten wohl nicht daran, ein neues Staatswesen zu gründen. Da sie aber dem Geist ihres Pakts treu geblieben und stets bereit gewesen sind, ihn mit dem Einsatz ihres Bluts zu besiegeln, hat sich das werdende Staatswesen gefestigt und für alle Zukunft bewährt.

Für uns sei die mutige Entschlossenheit und der Weitblick unserer Vorfahren nicht nur ein leuchtendes Vorbild, sondern eine Zuversicht, welche uns im Gelöbnis bestärkt, einig und geschlossen der Arglis der Zeit entgegenzutreten.

Je ne voudrais pas manquer de dire quelques mots à nos compatriotes de langue française. N'est-ce pas le trait distinctif de nos colonies d'être composées de compatriotes de langues différentes, de refléter en elles cette richesse de notre patrie commune, l'unité dans la diversité? Mais cette variété ne s'attache pas uniquement à la langue que nous parlons — ou elle ne serait qu'apparente; elle est plus profonde. Tant nous sommes attachés à notre sol natal que malgré une longue histoire commune, nous restons bien différents d'un canton à l'autre. Ainsi que le dit le Général Guisan: "Nous ne voulons pas nous fondre dans le même moule! Il serait aussi vain d'unifier les Suisses que de tenter de niveler leurs montagnes". Qu'est-ce donc qui nous rassemble en un seul corps aux membres bien articulés? Est-ce l'attachement commun à nos institutions, Est-ce l'appartenance politique ou l'expérience historique que? Rien n'aurait pu forger un lien aussi solide et résistant à travers les siècles si ce n'est l'esprit de solidarité qui est déjà à la base de ce premier pacte et s'affermi à chaque épreuve au cours de l'histoire. La structure fédérale caractérisant notre vie constitutionnelle, le respect de l'individualité de chaque



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partie composante, la recherche continuelle d'un équilibre interne, l'absence de tout rapport d'hégémonie et de subordination, ont tous été des éléments à favoriser l'évolution dans ce sens de sorte qu'un auteur romand, G. de Reynold, a pu dire: "Le patriotisme dans une Confédération est une grande amitié; elle n'est jamais égoïste, les apports individuels créent l'oeuvre commune".

J'ai été heureux en arrivant dans ce pays de voir que la vie de la Colonie est précisément si profondément inspirée par ce même esprit de solidarité. Nulle part comme dans nos colonies l'interdépendance entre les membres me paraît aussi évidente, chacun portant une part de responsabilité pour le bien général. Parmi les diverses et multiples activités de cette Colonie nulle certes ne lui fait plus grand honneur et ne répond à une si digne tradition que l'entre-aide volontaire entre ses membres.

Nel parlare della nostra Colonia, non potrei far meglio, terminando, che rivolgermi ai compatrioti ticinesi. Come l'integrazione tra elementi allemanici, francesi ed italiani è uno dei piloni della vita costituzionale svizzera, l'apporto dei confederati ticinesi è essenziale alla vitalità della nostra Colonia. Noi dobbiamo all'Unione Ticinese di vivificare ognuna delle nostre feste con le sue produzioni e soprattutto le sue canzoni gradite al nostro cuore come il ricordo radioso dei vostri paesaggi pieni di sole. L'attaccamento alla patria comune, l'armonia nei vostri ranghi e l'animazione che, tradizionalmente, voi portate in seno alla nostra Colonia, sono un fulgido esempio per noi altri confederati.

The Minister's excellent oration was acknowledged with great applause.

The solemn reading of the Swiss Pact, delivered in French this year rendered by the Rev. C. Reverdin of the Eglise Suisse.

Then a lighter vein came into the proceedings. After a short introduction by a young member of the Corale of the Unione Ticinese, this well-known and much appreciated mixed choir, dressed in their national costume, gave us a number of songs of their native canton, all rendered with great vivacity.

It is surprising how these simple tunes, telling us of the beauty of this heavenly little corner of our country always succeed in bringing a sense of nostalgic longing to its hearers, some of the melodies sounded gay whilst others were sad, all were sung very melodiously under the conductorship of Sig. L. Bruni.

I have hardly attended any Swiss social function in which yodelling did not find a place in the programme, it is an art which often leads to controversies. Some seem to enjoy it only in the natural surroundings of our mountains, whilst others like to hear it anywhere, even on the concert stage. Whatever one fancies the inclusion of yodelling which few can really master efficiently has come to stay and has become almost a national institution.

It was, therefore, not surprising that some yodelling items were again included in this year's programme. As on previous occasions a performer in this special art of singing had to be "imported", and this time the choice fell on Frau. M. Jauslin, who I believe, judging from the costume she wore,

hails from the Baselland. Before she ascended on the stage she had presented the Swiss Minister with a large bunch of "Alpenrosen".

Frau Jauslin sang unaccompanied two items: "Euri Heimets' Schwizerland" by Grollimund, and "Wach uf Schwizerland". She has a very powerful voice, no doubt, ideally fitted for outdoor singing, but one somehow missed a warmer tone in her middle and lower registers. Her rendering was much applauded and obviously enjoyed by the audience.

An interval was then announced, and those who were lucky, and patient enough, could obtain a cup of tea. The catering establishments in the Pleasure Gardens being now open for the first time on Sundays to the general public, were somewhat at a loss to cater for the immense crowd which assembled on the shores of the Thames. Perhaps next year, if we foregather again in Battersea Park some arrangements can be made for better catering conditions.

The second part of the performance started again with community singing, and was followed by the appearance of the members of the Swiss Accordion Club, consisting of five players of both sexes, under the leadership of Mr. A. Gandon. They were all dressed in Swiss costume, the ladies especially looking very charming.

They played very vivaciously a number of "Ländlers's" and "Polka's", which induced some members of the audience to blood-curdling "shrieks", a sure proof that their performance was appreciated.

This time a soloist made his *début* in the person of Master M. Gandon, the little son of the conductor, who gave us a yodelling song, although his voice was less powerful than that of his fellow yodeller, he sang

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very sweetly and with much composure, and earned a well deserved applause. The tablet of chocolate which was presented to him by a member of the audience, was a fitting acknowledgement for his performance, and how charmingly he acknowledged the applause accorded to him.

Once again Frau M. Jauslin appeared, and this time she rendered two yodelling songs, entitled "Summer Morge", and "Schwizerjodellied". After her performance she was presented with a bouquet of carnations, and rightly so.

When the applause had subsided, the Corale presented a further collection of songs which were, as before, much enjoyed.

The programme of the afternoon then came to a close, and Mr. F. Streit, the President of the 1st of August Committee rendered thanks to the Swiss Minister, and Madame Daeniker for having honoured the gathering with their presence, he also voiced his appreciation to the donors, who had so generously supplied the funds so that our National Day could be celebrated in a dignified manner. Mr. Streit extended a "grand merci" to the performers and his colleagues in the committee, especially to Miss S. Morosi, Hon. Secretary, who had worked very hard to make this celebration the success it undoubtedly was.

I understand, that the dance held at the Criterion Restaurant, which was honoured by the presence of the Swiss Minister and Madame Daeniker, was equally a great success.

And now, dear compatriots, as I mentioned before, we are living at a time when great changes, affecting the thoughts and actions, the habits based on tradition and experience, and even our ideals, are making themselves felt and are taking place, whether we like it or not.

It is a period, during which we see the old order which has served up till recently and has achieved what we are wont to call our modern civilisation, slowly, but inevitably make room for a new arrangement which is, as yet, hidden from our eyes, but for which we all, each according to his idea, strive and yearn.

We Swiss, on this 1st of August, 1955, feel that we too are subjected to all those tormenting, conflicting, perplexing and anxious currents of thoughts and actions arising from them. We see our, on the whole smoothly and peacefully working, democratic way of doing things, assailed by happenings beyond our frontiers.

Switzerland to-day is a nucleus of what Europe tomorrow, and the whole world later on might be and we are ready to sacrifice everything rather than that oasis of sanity in the heart of Europe should be destroyed.

And in this spirit we will remember the Rütli oath, and that motto from which springs our whole achievement, political, economical and cultural, and which we have a right to be proud to-day.

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