

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: - (1961)
Heft: 1382

Artikel: The Fête suisse in danger
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-688773>

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THE FETE SUISSE IN DANGER

In the presence of H.E. the Swiss Ambassador, Monsieur Daeniker, a meeting was recently held at the Swiss Embassy to discuss the future of the Fête Suisse. It was presided over by Mr. Alfred Renou, who has remained as young as when I first met him seven years ago.

There is no question here of hiding the alarming fact from our readers; that this old and precious institution of our Colony, the Fête Suisse, which has been running year after year with much the same success for over three-quarters of a century, is in deadly danger of disappearing. As Mr. Renou frankly pointed out, last year's accounts show a loss of more than one hundred pounds, and such a sad experience cannot possibly be repeated.

The huge popularity of the Fête amongst Swiss people in Great Britain and their English friends has been continually on the increase, and the value of this spectacular event has greatly helped to enhance the cultural prestige of Switzerland. Nevertheless, the cost of production of the Fête — due to factors beyond the Committee's control — has become so prohibitive that drastic alterations must be made.

For instance, Mr. Renou sadly announced that his Committee must temporarily abandon the idea of inviting a folklorique singing group, and other economical measures will also have to be taken.

The purpose of the meeting at the Swiss Embassy, therefore, was to consider a programme which, without being too costly, would continue to respect the dignity of tradition besides attracting more people — particularly young people. MM. Nicole, Kunz, Bonvin, Jacomelli, Thomas, Meyer, Brun and Speckert took part in a very animated debate, examining a proposition to introduce dancing and discussing the question of films and drinks as added attractions.

As Mr. Renou justly underlined, unanimity exists on one point, namely, that the Fête Suisse must carry on. Trouble starts when it comes to *Under what form?* At present it has been decided to postpone the date of the Fête to October. Cabaret artists will be invited in place of the folklorique group of the past. Also, Westminster Central Hall will probably be abandoned in favour of the Royal Festival Hall. Yet, as things are to-day, the future of the Fête Suisse is far from secure. It is a shame, when one thinks of the enormous work accomplished by Mr. Renou and his Committee through the years, to realize that work alone is not enough in these curious times in which we live. P. H.

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