

News from the colony

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NEWS FROM THE COLONY

THE NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATION AT WIMBLEDON

The most important annual event of the Colony, the National Day Celebration at Wimbledon, drew more people this year than it had done for a long time. This was due to the fortunate and accidental effect of a BBC radio programme on the *Jodlerklub Edelweiss* from Zofingen on the same morning. The radio programme had actually announced that the choir was going to perform in the town hall of Wimbledon in the evening and this doubtless attracted many Englishmen and outsiders to such Swiss patriotic demonstrations.

The first part of the musical entertainment of the evening was carried out by the youth of the Protestant and Catholic Swiss Churches and their ministers. After a thunderous organ prelude, Father Bossard stood out and said a ten-minute long prayer amid the movement and whispers of a not-yet-settled audience. This prayer was a landmark in the history of our National Day Celebrations by its length. No Minister of our churches had invoked the Lord for so long on a similar occasion! This was followed by the song "We shall overcome", learnt during the recent Irish wanderings of the Church youth and which was sung with fervour. Pasteur Nicod then read the Federal Pact in Italian (his first parish was in a northern Italian province and this made him a fitting choice for this vital function). This reading was followed by another song by the youth groups, upon which our Ambassador, Monsieur René Keller, stepped on the stage for his traditional patriotic address. We have reproduced extracts of his speech elsewhere in this section. Dutiful members of the audience stood at the doors to prevent the general hubbub that accompanied Monsieur Keller's address last year.

When he had finished, the youth of the French-speaking church, who had remained on the stage behind him during his address, performed three songs, one of them being a classic and the other two rather original both by their peculiar themes and the relative anonymity of their authors. Introducing the show, Pasteur Hostettler said that, as *Romands*, they were of Latin blood, a fact which was going to be reflected in their songs. This was true enough. The first of the two arrangements revolved around the Schwarzen-

bach Initiative and told the story of how Herr Schwarzenbach, who wanted to push the Italians back into the River Tiber and build Italian factories for the victims of his designs, was prevented in accomplishing them by the resolute "no" of the *Romands*. The second song was a parody of the history of the fact of Grütli, quiet worthy of the best of Swiss *chansonniers* Giles and Urfer! The performance of the Swiss Church group was concluded with a dazzling flamenco performed by

the guitarist of the French-speaking youth club, Alain Girod, and a final song. Our guitarist was loudly applauded. The applaud had hardly died down when it regained in impetus: the *Ländlerkapelle Gebrüder Reber* from Ostermundigen had appeared on the stage with their instruments. They fired away with their harmonious and plump music, which was soon scanded by the clapping of the 1,200-strong audience. The Jodlerklub performed the next four numbers, producing sounds as deep as alpine valleys and as harmonious as mountain lakes. The *Ländlerkapelle* performed again, and then the ladies of the Jodlerklub. Two alp-horn players performed an overture with the three notes within the range of their instruments while two flag-throwers brandished and flipped the Swiss flag in the air. The first part of the evening ended just after 9 o'clock, after one



Monsieur René Keller delivers his patriotic address



The Männerchor-leader displays the Merton Arms

THE AMBASSADOR'S SPEECH

The Swiss abroad are the guests of their country or residence. Our presence year after year in Wimbledon Town Hall is a fine example of British hospitality. In the name of this gathering I wish to thank most warmly His Worship the Mayor of the London Borough of Merton, Councillor Leivers, and Mrs. Leivers, who are honouring us with their presence this evening.

This celebration has been organised by a Committee presided over with great efficiency and devotion by Mr. Virgil Berti. I should like to express our gratitude to all those responsible for the arrangements, and to the generous donors, too, who have contributed so largely to the staging of this function. This will be a vintage year, with the participation of the Jodlerklub Edelweiss from Zofingen and the Ländlerkapelle Gebrüder Reber from Ostermundigen, who are assured of a warm welcome. We also send our very best wishes to Mr. Friedrich Streit, the former President; I am pleased to be able to tell you that there has been an improvement in his health.

Most National Days celebrate a revolution or a victory which resulted in the birth or the restoration of national sovereignty, very often achieved by blood and iron. But in this sphere, too, Switzerland follows her own path.

In 1291 the concept of the independent state was still in limbo. So the Federal Pact cannot be identified with the creation of a state, but it did mark the beginning of a process which was to lead to our modern Switzerland, born with the Federal Constitution of 12th September, 1848. It was not in vain that the authors of the Pact appealed for divine patronage—in nomine domini, amen—for they drew up a document of such quality that its provisions still seem topical today. Indeed, the Pact embodies the fundamental aspirations of man: to be master in his own home, to receive equality of treatment there, and to enjoy security and peace. In more concrete terms, three Alpine communities united in a perpetual alliance to withstand oppression from outside. At the internal level, they affirmed the rule of law. This character of peaceful assembly also marks our way of celebrating the First of August: by prayers, songs, bonfires and Festspiele, all of which have the object of grouping individuals into a patriotic community. Un pour tous, tous pour un—One for all, all for one. The Helvetic plant's capacity to evolve with the times is due to the quality of the seed which was sown in 1291. Switzerland as a republic, the United Kingdom as a monarchy—both countries have provided themselves with institutions which resist the erosion of time because they are basically democratic and ac-

cord a place of honour to the dignity of man. A recent world-wide inquiry carried out by an American institution to establish which were the best-governed countries in the world awarded the first two places to Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Let us accept this opinion modestly and with the determination to show ourselves worthy of it, while acclaiming our ancestors to whom we really owe this flattering judgment. In this context, how can we fail to congratulate those in charge of our Churches in London, whose efforts to achieve ecumenism are helping to strengthen the cohesion of the Swiss Community? And here I should just like to draw your attention to a special service which will be held at the Endell Street Church at 11.15 tomorrow evening. It will be bilingual and interdenominational: Father Bossard, the Catholic priest, will preach, and Holy Communion will be celebrated according to Protestant rites.

The characteristic of early Switzerland still exist today. They have stood the test of time, so it is natural that Switzerland should be a conservative country, watching jealously over her national identity. The ballot known as the Schwarzenbach Initiative expressed the anxiety of the more traditional Swiss in the face of an increasing proportion of foreigners. A majority rejected it, and a majority is also emerging in favour of giving the vote to women. Here we have two proofs of the capacity of our direct form of democracy to adapt itself to the needs of a changing society.

The instinct of the Swiss to conserve what suits them also explains their attachment to their neutrality. To preserve this while joining the European Communities in Brussels once looked like trying to square the circle. But now our leaders are confident that neutral Switzerland will find a place in the European structure which, far from weakening the edifice, will contribute to its political stability.

The same problem arises in the matter of Switzerland's relations with the United Nations. A little over a year ago the Federal Council published a substantial report on this question. While not actually recommending, for the moment, that Switzerland should join the U.N., it came to the conclusion that we ought to pursue our rapprochement with that world organisation. I would advise all those who are interested in our foreign policy to read that report. There is now an English version, and the Embassy will gladly send a copy to anybody who would like one.

So I am ending on an optimistic note. But the future is a matter of actions rather than words, and action is the attribute of youth. Thus tonight's programme takes on a symbolic meaning by arranging that my speech should be followed by the Swiss Church Youth Club.

and a half hours of glorious music from home, with a vibrating National Anthem, sung by all of us in our respective languages while the members of the Jodlerklub stood erect on the stage with every cantonal flag drawn out. The Mayor of Merton, Mr. Leivers, J.P., finally appeared on the stage to express his satisfaction at seeing us Swiss come for our national celebration to the town hall of his borough. He offered a plaque with the coat of arms of Merton to the leader of the Jodlerklub. The mayor had earlier received from the Jodlerklub a beautiful big tankard, and the Ambassador a copy of the "New Swiss Costume Book" with a greeting from the President of the Swiss Federal Yodelling Society. These offerings took place in the Mayor's parlour before the celebration.

There followed an interval while the floor was cleared of chairs and during which the audience enjoyed War-teck beer and cervelas. A reception was held upstairs for the permanent members of the Colony, honoured by the presence of the Ambassador and Madame Keller, the Mayor and Mayor-esses of Merton. The great majority of the attendance downstairs were youths, and they were to hold the dance floor way until midnight.

The band was the Harry Vardon Band, a formation which had been faithful to the yearly family fêtes of the Unione Ticinese for decades. Their music was in the main jerky and swinging to the satisfaction of most. It had less work than usual, because the stage was taken up by the Jodlerklub every now and then so that its advertised programme could be completed. There were many beautiful trios by the lady yodellers, one of them, with portly dimensions, but with the voice of a thrush, twice had to pray to her impatient audience for more quiet.

But this year's was a particularly successful event, thanks to the excellence of our invited musicians. There were some changes with respect to the preceding National Day Celebration. The Corale Ticinese didn't perform and Mr. Bartholdi, who traditionally caters for the event, was absent from the food stands. His shop catered for another function on the same day. Three members of the organising committee assumed particular responsibilities in making the evening a success. They were Mr. Virgil Berti, open and imaginative Chairman of the Committee, who co-ordinated and managed the preparation of the programme; Mr. Jürg Schmid, responsible for contacting and taking care of the artists from Switzerland with releasing extensive information on the event and handling the necessary public relations; and Father Bossard, who took the churches' part of the programme under his control. Miss Sylvia Streit should also be mentioned: she channelled the cash-flow.

(PMB)