

Editorial...

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Editorial..

Achte eines Jeden Vaterland, aber das Deine liebe!" Respect everybody's 'fatherland' but love your own. And what if you have two 'fatherlands'? Well then you love them both!

I can't remember when I first was told of this 'civil commandment' and which of the Swiss philosophers coined the words, but I have remembered them well. Recently I had two occasions to talk about 'love for homeland' in public, as I was invited to speak on Switzerland at a gathering of the Te Awamutu Rotary Club and at a meeting of the Te Pahu Country Woman's Institute. I remember fulfilling the same task for a Primary School class in Hamilton some 44 years ago and I remember the lovely handwritten 'thank-you-letters' I received from approxi-

mately two dozen eight-year-olds that enjoyed hearing of cow bells and Swiss chocolate.

These days my talk about Switzerland is more comprehensive, but I still tend to highlight the positive aspects rather than dwell on the negative.

Modern living and 45 years in New Zealand with only few visits back to the country of origin, demand that I describe that small Country of our forebears in two parts: as it was then, and as it is now. Time in the lives of people has the ability to make them remember the 'good times' rather than the 'bad times' and so it is understandable that my recollection of 'early days in Switzerland' is somewhat tainted by rose-tinted glasses. However I try to counteract this hazard by talking candidly about life as a young mountain peasant farmer's son during the

dark years of the second World war with aspects of hardship, anxiety and austerity. One of the visual aids I use during my address is the large Swiss flag I usually unfold as I face 'my audience'. It's always a proud moment when I explain the white cross surrounded by a red background in contrast to the red-cross on a white background and the 'Henri Dunant'-connection between the two.

Explaining the dense population of Switzerland with diversity in language, culture and religion is standard procedure as well as pointing out the relative lack of natural resources made good by the picture-book beauty of the country as a tourist destination.

Pointing out the principal Cities of Bern, Zürich, Basel, Geneva and Lausanne is as easy as talking about the more prominent mountains, rivers and lakes of our country of origine. When it comes to describing transportation in Switzerland I tend to relive the enjoyment we always had when travelling on the Swiss Federal railways, or on one of the 'hundreds' of yellow postal cars, chairlifts to higher altitudes, cable cars, lake steamers, or to and from the country by the national carrier 'Swissair'. Looks of disbelief are common when I explain that there is a Swiss merchant navy consisting of some 20 large ocean-going vessels and nearly three hundred river barges which operate from foreign ports and from the port of Basel on the Rhine River.

I especially like to show parallel aspects of both of our countries, Switzerland and New Zealand, and when pointing out differences I like to do so in a gentle and positive way.

Using the most topical decision of the day, by the New Zealand Government to concentrate the defence capability away from air-power, I explained to my listeners that the self-governing system of democracy in Switzerland demands that Swiss voters decide at the polls on June 10 how to alter the law about Swiss peacekeeping troops in foreign countries under the mandate of NATO, of which Switzerland is not even a member yet. Explaining such differences gives me occasion to describe the binding mandate the Swiss Government has in regard to

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the people's right for referenda or the people's right to start a binding initiative if sufficient numbers of voters can be mobilised to support such a venture.

These days most of 'my listeners' know about Swiss Neutrality but most of them (like so many Swiss themselves) know little about the many 'Swiss aid programmes' in action around the world.

Swiss military aid to promote World peace started in a small way in 1953 and has grown, especially since 1998, at which time the costs for this venture amounted to some 22 million Swiss Franks. This year they amount to 67 million. - Did you know that five Swiss military officers help to ensure peace between North and South Korea?

Since 1953 some 2700 Swiss military personnel have worked on 'peace duties' in places like Kosovo, Namibia and in countries of Asia.

Only recently have I myself read about the 'birth' of the "Swiss Foundation of World Affairs", an organisation with the aim to publicize the many 'less-well-known' aspects of Swiss Aid abroad.

This new 'body' is stationed in Washington, the Capital of USA, under the directorship of Peter Ziegler and has taken up it's mandate during May this year. Besides publicising Swiss activities of 'Aid in foreign countries' the organisation will help to facilitate study tours for young Swiss research experts in America. The annual budget of "Swiss Foundation of World Affairs" amounts at present to one million Swiss Franks and it has a 3/4 input from private Swiss firms, thereby ensuring the neutral aspect of the organisation.

A case of our country of origin 'doing good' and letting the world know about it.

Swiss Club Secretaries,
Please note....

The next issue of
HELVETIA
is to be a 16-page double
issue for July and August.

Cultural Exhibitions and Festivals from Switzerland

(As advised by the Swiss Embassy)

Why make Prints ? This Exhibition shows the development of printmaking in Switzerland, since 1960, in over 70 works by 51 artists. The works document developments from screenprinting, to the experimental woodcut, engraving, lithography and, finally, the involvement of the computer.

Dunedin 14 May - 24 June 2001 at Otago Museum, 419 Great King Street.

TEATRO DELLE RADICI

The Magdalena Aotearoa Trust is hosting a three week visit to New Zealand (unfortunately only to Wellington) from 9 - 30 June this year by the renowned theatre director **Cristina Castrillo** and actors from her company **Teatro delle Radici**.

- Originally from Argentina, Cristina is now based in Lugano, Switzerland, where she teaches and directs a dynamic and highly original form of contemporary theatre, and creates works with **Teatro delle Radici**.

- Well known in Europe, the company has also toured extensively in South America and Africa. Cristina herself taught an inspirational week-long workshop in Wellington in 1994 (hosted by the then QEII Arts Council) and has always wanted to return to New Zealand. Engagements for the company in Australia this season have made this year's return visit to Wellington possible.

- The **Magdalena Aotearoa Trust** is a worldwide organisation the activities of which focus on effective networking for women performers based on a sharing of knowledge. It is open and non-competitive, and especially interested in young and indigenous performers.

- While in Wellington the Group will be offering workshops, forums and performances, and will meet with local actors, artists, students and lovers of theatre. The programme is as follows:

Performances

Stranieri (the four actors in the Group plus 12 New Zealand performers)

19 and 20 June at 8.00 pm

Studio 77, Victoria University of Wellington, Fairlie Terrace, Kelburn
(Ticket prices t.b.a.)

Umbral (group only)

27 and 28 June at 8.00 pm

Te Whaea Theatre, School of Dance and Drama, Newtown,
\$22.00 waged, \$15.00 unwaged

Concert for Cristina (Local performers performing for Cristina)

29 June at 8.00 pm

The space, 146 Riddiford Street, Newtown
\$8.00 waged, \$5.00 unwaged.

For information on workshops, forums and bookings: Magdalena Aotearoa 04/385 0777 or magdalena@actrix.gen.nz

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