

650 years of Swiss Confederation

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that they too may be able to be among us, when we are celebrating. The setting up of local committees, entrusted with the task of drawing up lists of such isolated compatriots, probably would be well advised. And lastly, as regards those isolated Swiss in New Zealand, who cannot be reached by extending our hospitality, in the last resort, can set up a "Committee of one or two" to celebrate the forthcoming great event of our country. Everyone very likely has access to a good radio, connecting them with the official celebrations in Switzerland and New Zealand, so that after all no-one should feel completely isolated from the celebrations.

SPECIAL SHORTWAVE BROADCASTS FROM SWITZERLAND.

<u>Friday, the First of August.</u>	<u>N.Z. Time</u>
Preliminary broadcast (popular music)	7.45 p.m.
Chronic of the month	8.00 p.m.
Ringling of the bells	8.20 p.m.
Celebration broadcast	8.25 p.m.

Sunday, the Third of August.

Preliminary broadcast (popular music)	7.45 p.m.
Celebration on the Ruetli	8.00 p.m.
Ringling of the bells	8.15 p.m.
Celebrations at Schwyz, including the speeches of three Federal Councillors	8.20 p.m.
Taking of the Oath on the Ruetli	8.50 p.m.
Swiss Psalm	9.20 p.m.

It is pointed out that it should be possible to hear both of these broadcasts in the Far East transmission at 1.45 a.m. of August the first and the third. Advice regarding the meter bands will follow.

SPECIAL NEW ZEALAND CELEBRATION BROADCAST

OVER 2YA WELLINGTON.

The Director of Publicity and the Director of Broadcasting at Wellington have been very kind in offering (tentatively and conditionally) a Special Celebration Broadcast lasting probably 30 minutes some times in the evening of August the second. The Swiss communities of New Zealand are deeply grateful for this token of sympathy and appreciation for our homeland. Time and items of the program will be made known in the July issue of "Helvetia".

Dr. Walter Schmid, Swiss Consul.

Wellington, June 16, 1941.

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650 YEARS OF SWISS CONFEDERATION.

On the evening of the 21st of February the Swiss Federal Councillor Philipp Etter spoke over the Swiss National Link-up about the program for the 1941 Celebrations of the 650th anniversary of the Swiss Confederation. He first referred to the fanfare for the Celebrations which had just been sounded over the radio for the first time and then announced the details of the program of the Celebrations. He spoke in order to tell all the Swiss people in what spirit the Government wished them to approach these Celebrations, which mark the completion of 650 years of federal unity. He said:

"The underlying thought which should inspire us all in this the 650th year of the Confederation is that a people with 650 years of history behind it is strong enough and proud enough to suffer anything, to dare anything and to make any sacrifice to preserve its freedom and independence.

Inspired by this feeling, we must show ourselves to be ready to do two things - firstly, to die for our country, if need be, secondly (and this is perhaps just as difficult), to live for our country, that is willingly accept all the sacrifices, both economic and material, which these difficult times demand of us, accept them with the equanimity of a nation hardened and toughened by the vicissitudes of its long history. The same spiritual forces, which 650 years ago created the Federation, caused it to become great and bestowed upon it the imperishable glory of freedom, must to-day flourish with renewed vigour in the soul of our people.

The very name "Eidgenossenschaft" - literally a "Federation made by oath" - denotes the forces at work in the foundation and history of our Federal union. Our Federation is one of free members who joined together confident in the strength of unqualified mutual loyalty and assistance, in the strength of an indissoluble partnership through good and bad days, and confident in their courage to defend together the union of free men and free lands despite the deceit and evil of the centuries.

And, so that this Federation might endure for ever and be based not merely on the strength of men, our fore-fathers drew it up not only among themselves, but with the Almighty and swore with an oath to keep it. By so doing they raised this Confederation of free men to the dignity of a "Confederation by oath", trusting in the help and protection of God Almighty.

Now in the 650th year of our national history, in this storm-racked year of our union, we would again reflect on the forces which created and sustained the Confederation. Our fathers have bequeathed to us a sacred legacy. It is incumbent upon us to acknowledge this and to make the solemn vow to hand on this legacy to the Swiss who come after us.

First of all, the oath of federation must be sworn again by each one of us, inwardly, deep in our hearts. But it would not be right, not proper, if we did not give reverent expression to it, outwardly and visibly in some central place. Such a celebration is planned to take place on the 1st and 2nd of August, at Schwyz and on the Ruetli. At Schwyz, because according to the investigations of our historians Schwyz took the lead in the foundation of our Federal union; because it is at Schwyz that are deposited for safe-keeping in the Federal Archives all of our Federal Charters and the oldest banners of the young Confederation. There they are kept at the foot of the Mythenberg, which rears up to heaven its craggy peaks like fingers raised in the act of taking the oath. And on the Ruetli, the holy land by the lake-side, where met of old the men of the three "original Swiss Cantons" to take the first oath of federation. In keeping with the tenor of times, the celebrations are to be carried out in quiet earnestness and marked simplicity.

On the Ruetli, at midnight on the 31st July, in the presence of a representative of the Federal Council and of torch-bearers of all the Cantons, the Beacon of the Federation will be lit by the leading Magistrates (Landammaenner) of the three "Original Cantons", which concluded the first federal union. The torch-bearers of all the Cantons will light their torches at this beacon-fire. Then starting from Brunnen, whither they will be ferried over the Lake, they will carry them in relays home to the chief towns of their Cantons. Fire from the Ruetli fire, so that the flame which our forefathers kindled 650 years ago in the heart of the oldest, original Switzerland, may go on burning in all the parts of the Swiss Confederation - the same fire, the same flame.

The torch-bearers of the nearer Cantons are to stay at Brunnen till the time for their departure; the torch-bearers of the more distant Cantons are at once to start on the journey home. The organisation of this torch-race has been taken in hand by the Swiss Association for Physical Training, and I have to thank the Association heartily for its co-operation.

Early on the morning of August 1st the celebrations will be begun by a salvo of 21 guns and by the pealing of the church-bells of Schwyz. In the afternoon the official guests will arrive at Seewen. Participating in the functions will be the whole of the Federal Council; delegations representing the Federal Parliament, the Federal Court, the Federal Insurance Court and other Federal authorities; the Governments of the three original Cantons in corpore; all the other cantonal Governments will be represented by delegations with their official apparitors; the Commander-in-Chief and other Army chiefs; representations of the national churches and of student-bodies; and the troops parading in honour of the occasion. From Seewen the procession will move off to Schwyz, where the Landammann of Schwyz will address the official guests and the people in the Town Square on behalf of Schwyz and the other original Cantons. Then, before the march-past of the troops, the Commander-in-Chief of the Army will speak to the Nation on behalf of the Army. Immediately after will take place the unveiling and handing over of the new frescoes in the Federal Archive Building, and similarly of the Defence Monument which has been endowed by a group of Swiss residing abroad.

From 7.45 to 8 p.m. in Schwyz and everywhere else throughout Switzerland the bells will ring, then at 8 p.m. on the Town Square at Schwyz the actual Independence Celebrations will commence. The torch-bearers from the Ruetli will arrive and will light the beacon-fire of Schwyz. At exactly the same moment the celebrations will begin in the chief towns of each Canton, the torch-bearers from the Ruetli will appear and light the local fire. The short address given at Schwyz in the three national languages, as well as the accompanying musical items and patriotic songs will be transmitted by radio and loudspeaker to all places where the celebrations are being held in the chief towns of the Cantons, so that the functions in all the Cantons will proceed harmoniously as an organic part of the central celebrations held in Schwyz. If they so wish, the other towns and villages of the country can similarly join up with the celebrations at Schwyz.

At 9 p.m. will begin in Schwyz the first performance of the play specially written for the Celebration of the 650th Anniversary of the Confederation by Caesar von Arx, music by J.B. Hilber. This play has three tableaux - the periods of genesis, development and trial - and will give to the Swiss of 1941 the message of those who took the oath in 1291. It is a virile, austere and solid play, and I am convinced that it will make a deep and inspiring impression on all who see it. Subsequently it will be performed every Saturday and perhaps every Sunday in August and September, and I hope that by seeing this play large numbers of our people will be filled with confidence, joy and courage.

On the 2nd of August the day will begin with an open-air religious service. Early in the afternoon the people and guests will proceed to the Ruetli to attend the Ruetli Celebrations. There the Tell Society of Players from Altdorf will perform the Ruetli scene from Schiller's "William Tell", and perform it exactly as the poet arranged the scene. First the men of Unterwalden come upon the scene; then the men of Uri will descend from the cliffs and the men of Schwyz will cross over the lake in their boats to the Ruetli, to swear to one another eternal loyalty and co-operation. All the people assembled on the Ruetli will pronounce the words of the oath:

"We wish to be one united nation of brothers; we will never be divided in any distress or danger. We will be free as our fathers were. We will die rather than live in slavery."

After the performance of the Ruetli scene follows one speech only - that of the President of the Confederation. The National anthem will conclude the proceedings, and as these will be broadcast over the National Link-up, all Swiss at home and abroad will be able to attend the celebrations in spirit and renew the union of 1291 in their own hearts.

Meanwhile we will celebrate together the 650th anniversary of the existence of our Confederation by doing our duty with unswerving loyalty, going about our work sheerfully and carrying out our daily task in the service of our country. For the Ruetli fire must not burn bright only on the great festival days of our land. It must burn steadily in the hearts of each one of us Swiss and shed its warm and peaceful light every day on each fresh task and sacrifice."

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SWISS NEWS SUMMARY

During the present session the National Council has held a debate on the question of food and raw material supplies. Federal Councillor Stampfli read a report on the position of food rations and intimated that cheese supplies at the end of February this year were larger than at the same time last year. He stated that sufficient potatoes and vegetable supplies would be forthcoming to carry Switzerland over to next winter. The necessary steps would be taken to lower the price of fodder.

On March 27th 1941, an agreement facilitating trade relations between Switzerland and Spain was signed in Madrid by the Spanish Foreign Minister Suner and Professor Keller, Delegate of the Federal Council. The liquidation of Bank Clearings was also signed and the commercial delegation then left for Lisbon to resume trade negotiations there.

The Swiss War Food Office announced on March 19th that owing to the very strong and continuous north wind (Bise), the soil had been badly dried up and that it was essential that farmers should roll the surface of the soil and thus allow the water to rise to the roots of the young plants.

The same Department announced that as from April 14th the price of bread will be increased by four centimes. Thus the kilogram will cost 52 centimes instead of 48 centimes. Since the outbreak of war the price of bread has increased by 9 centimes.

The Federal Council has also decided to raise the price of beer from 6 to 12 centimes per litre; the new price will be in force as from April 1st.

M E M B E R S H I P :

We welcome the following new member:

Mr. John Schneiter, c/o.P.O. HAMILTON.

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CORRESPONDENCE:

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