

# Welcome to our new Consul

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WELCOME TO OUR NEW CONSUL.

The President and the Committee of the Swiss Benevolent Society, on behalf of the entire Swiss colony, desire to extend a very sincere and warm welcome to our new Consul, his wife and young son.

The arrival of Mr. Theiler and his family in Auckland was cut so short, through delay of the steamer, that only a few of us had the pleasure of meeting them personally. However, we confidently expect that the Consul will shortly have an opportunity of visiting the various districts and becoming acquainted with his numerous compatriots throughout the Dominion. He can be assured of a most cordial and friendly reception wherever, and whenever, he should visit his countrymen. The traditional hospitality of these people is well known to the departing Consul, Dr. Schmid, and will also be as generously extended to Mr. and Mrs. Theiler on every possible occasion.

We sincerely hope their sojourn in this country will be a happy and memorable one, and that the Swiss residents will have many opportunities of meeting them personally, and proffering them their warm welcome and hospitality.

. . . . .  
 "Liebi Landslüt  
 Chers Compatriotes  
 Carissimi Compatrioti  
 Chers Compatriots."

When I was in New York, it was the custom of the official speaker to address thus the gathering of our compatriots, ever since one of them made a 'whale of a row' because his particular language had not been spoken during the Celebration or what-have-you. However, since it would be going a little too far to send my greetings to all our compatriots in their own language, I shall continue the good system used in America and address them in English.

I am very happy to have the privilege and honour to represent the Swiss Government in this country, in fact, I have had my eye on this post for a good many years, it having been my ambition to live for some time in Australasia and to meet the stalwart compatriots who have the distinction to be living furthest away from their Homeland. I trust that I shall have the pleasure of meeting each and every one of you as well as all the sincere friends of Switzerland, of whom there are so many in New Zealand. Mrs. Theiler and my eleven-year old son join me in this.

In spite of the fact that it was very simple to get all the diplomatic visas in order to make the journey to New Zealand, the journey itself was not quite so simple. Nobody could tell me when there would be a boat from where to somewhere else, and there were so many people also under the benefit of 'priority' that I might have to wait "up to 6 months". Since the apparently easy way was not available to me, I decided to do it the hard way, and secured passage from Liverpool to Montreal, Canada. On account of the luggage we were carrying, flying was out of the question, except from Zurich to London. Once in Canada we were told that we had to leave for New York at once because we might be flying to San Francisco in order to get aboard S.S. "Monterey". Sure enough, passages on S.S. "Monterey" had been booked for us, but no space was obtainable on a plane for at least 4 weeks. S.S. "Monterey" was sailing on the 14th June and on the 12th I was still in New York having arrived from Montreal only the previous day, - 4 days' journey away! - and there again was the question of the luggage. On the boat I had been told by an Australian that S.S. "Mariposa" was scheduled to leave on the 17th June, so I decided to have my reservations transferred from the "Monterey" to the "Mariposa". This was no easy matter, but thanks to the savoir faire of a colleague and friend of mine in San Francisco (Vice-Consul Werner Jost) it was accomplished. My family arrived on time, but not the luggage; part of it arrived in San Francisco on the 18th, - one day late - however, Vice-Consul Jost's ingenuity was not to be denied and he sent it by airplane to

Honolulu where it reached us in the nick of time. S.S. "Mariposa" was still in the service of the War Shipping Administration of the U.S.A. and accordingly was not fitted with peace-time amenities, nevertheless, the journey was quite agreeable, particularly after some 800 passengers had left the boat in Honolulu.

Our arrival in Auckland took place under a steady downpour, which lasted all night and well into the morning of the following day so that I am entitled to ask the question "Does it always rain in Auckland?" Thanks to the warm reception and to the much-appreciated assistance given to my family and myself by our countryman, Mr. Ernest Merz, my outlook on Auckland improved considerably, but our compatriots there will have to work very hard on the weather man to convince me that the sun can also shine in Auckland as brightly as it did on the day of our arrival in Wellington.

My first impressions of New Zealand more than confirm my high expectations and I already like very much the land and the people. I only hope that in time I shall succeed in gaining their confidence and goodwill. It is with great anticipation that I am looking forward to the pleasure of meeting you, and until then I say

"Bübet Ech Gott mitenand"

ERNEST THEILER

CONSUL.

. . . . .

Readers may be interested to have some further information about their new Counsellor. The writer is especially interested in his present and future aims, but no less in knowing what he has done before, and so he took the necessary steps to supplement the official data.

Ernest Theiler, born in Olten in 1902, is the youngest of the four children of Mr. and Mrs. Josef Theiler, Lucerners living in Olten, where Mr. Theiler senior was stationed as "Zugführer der S.B.B." He attended school and Commercial High School in Olten, and left there in 1919 for Geneva, in order to perfect his knowledge of the French language.

After three years he had his first active contact with the Swiss army in the Rekrutenschule at Herisau.

After a short stay in Zurich, he went to Spain in order to learn the beautiful language of Cervantes, of Don Quixote fame. As he wished to go further afield, he then went to Brazil where he was in Ilheos (Bahia) for two years, with a Swiss firm in the cocoa export trade. There he learnt the language of Goes Camoes, namely, Portuguese.

In 1927 he entered a contract with a Manchester firm to act as their representative in South America, and in this capacity he travelled through Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Jamaica, Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

In 1933 Mr. Theiler entered the consular service where his first appointment was to replace temporarily Dr. Walter Schmid in New Orleans for 5 months. After that he went to New York where he became Secretary of the Commercial Department of the Consulate General; he gradually took over this department, and from 1941-46 he was in charge with the rank of Vice-Consul, and in this capacity he earned the appreciation of the Swiss commercial world. During the war he was also asked to take over the office of a Swiss cargo commissioner in New York.

In 1934 he went to California, and while there he married his charming fiancée, whom he had met in England and who had travelled to California via Australia.

Consul Theiler combines a thirst for knowledge with an eagerness for work, and it is puzzling to know how he finds time for his personal hobbies - stamp collecting and photography. Besides these, he likes fishing and is an accomplished bridge player. At the same time he enjoys a game of good old "Jass".

Mrs. Theiler is an excellent tennis player, but finds it very difficult now to hold her own against her husband, although she has the advantage of a few years on the youthful side over him.

Their 11-year old son John, who is encouraged by his father to become a "constructional engineer" - to use John's own words, has all the makings of a fast athlete. He is fond of table tennis and of card tricks. He likes games, and is convinced that Switzerland is the finest country in the world; also that Schwyzerdütsch is, next to English, the most important language; he just knows just a few words, but apparently not the right ones, since they seem to be his dad's despair!

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SWISS DEMOCRACY.  
By Arnold Lunn.

(The following article is reprinted from the February issue of "The Spectator" by courtesy of the Editor).

Aristotle maintained that Democracy is only a transition stage between oligarchy and dictatorship. Representative government can, in other words, only endure if representation is limited to men of property. I might be inclined to agree with Aristotle but for the success of Democracy in Switzerland.

Swiss Democracy differs in many important respects from our own. In the first place, Switzerland is governed by a permanent coalition which has lasted since 1848. The Bundesrat is unhampered by any doctrine of collective responsibility. The Socialist member feels free to advise his party to vote against a measure sponsored by every member of the Bundesrat. If a Bill un-animously approved by the Bundesrat is rejected by the Federal Assembly the Bundesrat placidly accepts the decision. The executive NEVER resigns. Their duty is to govern Switzerland in the interests not of any particular party but of the Swiss people as a whole. Concessions have to be made to EVERY party from the Conservatives to the Socialists. One of the illusions of political thought is that Democracy necessarily means party government. I said something to this effect at the Alpine Club in the course of a lecture on "Switzerland Revisited". The president, Mr. Leo Amery, formerly Secretary of State for India, made the following comments which I quote with his permission. "The British system works well in England because of our national dislike of extremists and our genius for compromise. It has been an almost unmitigated disaster for most of the continental countries which adopted it. It will never work in India. If the Hindus had the majority they would give no jobs excepting to Hindus. Mutatus mutandis if the Muslims had the majority. I have for years advocated something like the Swiss system for India".

The stability of the Swiss Government is due, among other things, to the influence of the peasant, for unlike so many of our urban intellectuals, the peasant is a realist, and knows that you cannot reap without sowing, and that you have to work as well as vote for a higher standard of living. In other Democracies the interests of the country are often completely subordinated to those of the town; but no government in Switzerland would dare to disregard the interests of the peasant. Both the peasants and the trade unions exercise great influence, with the result that both town and country get a fair deal.

Whereas in other Democracies the Left Wing parties are traditionally hostile to the army, and inclined to pacifism, in Switzerland, thanks again to the realism of the peasant, there is no pacifism and no conscientious objection. But perhaps the most important factor in the stability of Swiss democracy is the