

Address by the Swiss Ambassador to the Swiss living in Wellington

Objekttyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand**

Band (Jahr): **38 (1974)**

Heft [8]

PDF erstellt am: **12.07.2024**

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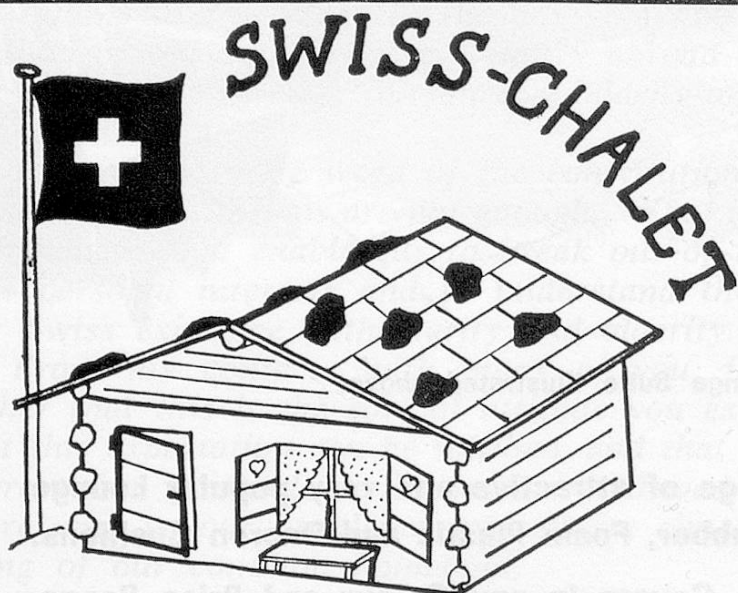
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It is still, I think, a good custom to commemorate our National Day, although the manner in which it has been done and in some instances still is, does not always meet with the agreement of all the Swiss, especially those among the young generation.

We all know, more or less, how the origin of our country started. The Charter dated "At the beginning of the month of August" still exists. What is less known is that the Charter from 1291, was not the first one. It replaces an older one which is lost, and which is supposed to have been drawn up fifty years earlier. There is no doubt that the foundation of our country rests essentially on two events; the opening of the Gotthard Pass, and the decay of the German Empire.

The increasing traffic on the Gotthard—at that time, as today, the shortest way between South Germany and North Italy—brought people living on that Pass, especially in Uri, knowledge of the political organisations which formed in all the towns, north and south of them. They were told by transient merchants, partisans of those movements, of their kind of leagues to which members were bound by the oath. They used the organisations as prototypes and had with them finally, much more persistent success than the townsmen.

What we have to forget, is the idea that naive cow and goat



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shepherds and keepers of pack animals were standing at the cradle of our Confederation. They must have been extremely clever men, with great foresight, still deserving of our full admiration.

In those times, 700 years ago, there was a continually increasing tendency among the free people in Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden, not only to keep their self-administration and self-government, but to become independent. That meant they wished to depend in a direct way from the Emperor and exclusively on him. He was far away, mostly occupied in Germany and in Italy, and when he was a weak man, it was so much the better. The first Canton to get that independence was Uri, in 1231. Schwyz followed in 1240, but the value of the document signed by the Emperor was questionable. The third, Unterwalden, did not even have such a title. The document that let Uri and Schwyz depend exclusively from the Emperor, lost its value in 1273, when a Habsburger was elected as such. The former privilege was changed to a mortal danger. Now they came under the power of their most efficient enemy, and that danger induced them, on the death of Emperor Rudolf I, to strengthen the union and to renew the old Charter. The Charter from 1291, presents still today, some difficulties to the historians. But one fact is certain, the Charter created the basis for the development and the construction of Switzerland, even if the founders were far from having an idea of the consequences of their action. Seen from this point of view, it is understandable and right that the thankful Swiss people fixed their National Day on that day on which that action was probably achieved.

So much for what concerns our origin. Nearly 700 years have passed since then. The small confederation of the three peasant republics were joined later by others and by towns. The territory grew and finally became, more than 500 years later, a State in the modern sense of the word. The development was a slow one. Periods of real heroism and unity changed for others full of disharmony and internal quarrels. Several real wars between the cantons had to be fought, and at the end of the 18th century the country became, for some years, a satellite State of France. The Swiss took a long time to get used to living together, catholics and protestants, and, in the present century, to settle social disputes accompanied by their well-known unrest. But in all those years, the feeling that the things holding them together were more important than those separating them, was never lost. This year we commemorate not only the anniversary of our country, but a centenary, by looking backwards exactly 100 years. 1874 was not only the year of the birth of the Commander-in-Chief of our Army in the last World War, General Guisan, who represented so typically the best quality of a Swiss citizen and soldier; it is also the year of our actual Constitution, which opened the way for the development of our country to a modern State. This, of course, is a typical Swiss manner. Like the Constitution of 1848, that one of 1874, is a compromise with its balance between a central government and the cantons. On the other hand, and this was perhaps the most important

change, it extended the rights of the citizens by giving them the right of the referendum against Bills voted by the Parliament. The Constitution of 1874 was never since then revised totally, but amended many times. It would go much too far to enumerate all amendments, but some of them may be mentioned. The right of the initiative for amendments to the Constitution. The unification of the civil and penal law, the introduction of the social insurance (AHV), the overdue introduction of the vote for women and, last, but not least, the new Article in favour of the Swiss abroad. Our Constitution is not a perfect work, and for an aesthete it must look slightly horrifying, but it is a work of men, with all its qualities and faults. For years there has been talk in Switzerland about a total revision, and there is even a commission dealing with the problem. I, personally, cannot consider the revision as a major problem. What is needed, in my opinion, is first of all a better interest by the people in the development of our State and the will to collaborate by using, but not abusing, their constitutional rights, which are much more extensive than in any other country. Without that interest and without that will, the best laws and the best institutions lose their value. A proof that our system is still working can and must be seen in the referendum in the Canton of Bern, on the 23rd of June this year. A crucial question for which sometimes a settlement no more seemed possible, and which was contaminated by often exorbitant polemics, and even by acts of violence, the separation of the Jura from the other part of the Canton, could, in principle, be resolved by the vote of the people, and not by a revolution.

It is up to all of us to watch that the building with its solid foundation erected by those living before us, may last much longer.

Swissair in April

April 1974 saw the extension of Swissair's DC-10-30 operations to the Far East, West Africa, the Middle East and Madrid. Of the total of Swissair's transport capacity, 57 p.c. are accounted for by long distance services 46 p.c. of which are performed by DC-10s.

The use of DC-10s on the Far East routes resulted in a 40 p.c. capacity increase in that area over last year. The capacity supply in the Middle East advanced 38 p.c., and 11 p.c. in Africa. On the other hand, Swissair cut its North Atlantic flight programme by 16 p.c. in order to save fuel. Overall, the number of tkm offered was expanded by only four per cent over April 1973.

Ton-Kilometers sold rose by 11 p.c., so that the overall load factor improved from 49 p.c. to 53 p.c.

Traffic achieved its highest growth rates in Africa (plus 31 p.c.) and the Middle East (plus 25 p.c.), with cargo doing particularly well (plus 55 p.c., plus 65 p.c.). Far East traffic increased by 19 p.c. overall.