

75th fête suisse

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CH. L. CHAPUIS

President: "Fête Suisse" Committee

Anniversaries in the Swiss Colony are not of a frequent occurrence, but when they do happen, great care is taken, that they should not pass unnoticed.

This year's "Fête Suisse", the 75th of its kind, although celebrated less conspicuously than its predecessors in 1948 and 1949, was a worthy performance in the long sequence of this annual event, which by now has become part and parcel of the London Swiss Colony's life.

I do not intend to refer here to the history of this institution, as this has been related in the very attractive programme issued, as well as in some articles which appeared previously in this paper; but I would nevertheless draw the attention of our readers to the significance of this anniversary. If to-day, this annual function, which was interrupted only during the years of two wars, is still going strong, it is principally due to three men, who have with great enthusiasm and foresight carried on this great and commendable work, namely to the Rev. Emmanuel Petavel, its founder, the Rev. R. Hoffmann-de Visme and Mr. Ch. L. Chapuis.

The "Fête Suisse", with its religious background, has endeavoured to unite once every year our compatriots, regardless of creed and denomination, for a few hours in an intimate re-union to fortify the traditional bonds which keep us together and to strengthen the patriotic feelings which link us with our homeland.

* * *

In golden sunshine, nearly 1,700 of our countrymen made a *rendez-vous* at the Central Hall, Westminster. Long before the programme was due to start a throng of happy revellers, young and old, passed through the portals of this impressive building.

They were greeted by charming programme sellers, many of whom were dressed in our various national costumes, and by young maidens, who sold small national and cantonal flags and pinned them, with a winning smile, on to the lapel of the Gentlemen's coats and the dresses of the Ladies.

Pictures, postcards and many other articles were displayed on various stands, where they found ready purchasers to help to swell the funds, which were earmarked for the benefit of the Swiss Benevolent Society.

And what a bable of tongues? One could hear Schwyzerdütsch, French, Italian and Romantsch,

75th FÊTE SUISSE

at

CENTRAL HALL, WESTMINSTER

on

THURSDAY, JUNE 8th, 1950

Under the Presidency of

MONSIEUR HENRY DE TORRENTÉ

Ministre de Suisse

intermingled with English; it was in the real sense of the word a great "Landsgemeinde."

Shortly before the start of the programme the large Hall, which was attractively decorated with a large Swiss Flag, Union Jack and the cantonal escutcheons, began to fill.

At 6.16 sharp, the performance started with an Organ Prelude, arranged and played by Mr. E. P. Dick, it was followed by the National Anthem, which

MONSIEUR ALEARDO PINI,
Vice-President du Conseil National.

[Photo by Spira]

was sung with organ accompaniment, with deep patriotic feelings.

The Rev. H. Blum then gave a short address, acquainting the audience with the purpose of this Fête and invoking the blessing of God Almighty for our country.

Amidst great applause, the Swiss Minister, Monsieur Henry de Torrenté, appeared on the platform to address the company. Both in English and French he spoke of the significance of this 75th anniversary, saying, that we forgather with our friends to demonstrate thus, that we are a group of people who, whatever fate and way of life, have a strong and indissoluble bond between us.

The Minister then gave a short *résumé* of the history of the "Fête Suisse", its aims and achievements, following it up with a review of the principal events which have occurred in the life of the Colony since the last "Fête Suisse" took place, and the creation of new institutions.

The company then listened with great interest to a remarkable *exposé* of the history of the "Eglise Suisse" since its foundation in 1762, with the concluding words: "Si l'Eglise Suisse se trouve aujourd'hui libérée de ces tâches accessoires, les Suisses de Londres de 1950 ont contracté envers elle une lourde dette de reconnaissance. Ils ne sauraient, sans ingratitude, oublier les précieux services, rendus avec un inlassable dévouement, aux générations qui les ont précédés. L'Eglise Suisse fut et demeure l'un des piliers de notre Colonie."

Monsieur de Torrenté then extended his and the audience's greeting to the evening's "hôte d'honneur" Monsieur Aleardo Pini, Vice-Président du Conseil National, thanking him for having accepted the invita-

tion of the committee to be present on this auspicious occasion. He said "Il me reste encore l'agréable devoir de saluer votre hôte d'honneur de ce jour, Monsieur Aleardo Pini, Vice-Président du Conseil National. Nous sommes tous profondément reconnaissants à M. Pini d'avoir fait le sacrifice d'un temps précieux en acceptant l'invitation de votre Comité. M. Pini n'est pas pour Londres un inconnu. Il fit partie l'année dernière de la délégation des Chambres fédérales, invités par le Parlement britannique. Nous saluons en lui non seulement l'homme d'état éminent, le prochain titulaire de la plus haute charge de la Confédération, mais aussi le représentant du Tessin, ce canton qui nous est cher entre tous et fournit à la Colonie suisse de Londres un important contingent.

Monsieur le Conseiller national, je vous souhaite la bienvenue à la 75ème Fête Suisse et je vous remercie d'être venu nous apporter le message des autorités fédérales. Tous nous nous réjouissons d'entendre par vous, ce soir, la voix de la Patrie."

The Swiss Minister's oration was acknowledged with great applause.

The next item on the programme was reserved for the younger generation of the Colony, they presented a play entitled "Le Serviteur impitoyable", a parable adopted by Pasteur Roland de Pury (Neuchâtel) from the Gospel according to St. Matthew, chapter 18, v. 21-35. This piece was chosen, as it was thought, that the church has a message to bring to the Colony, the message of God's pardon, which should encourage us to pardon also our neighbours. This performance, played with great sincerity, received due acknowledgement.

Our young actors were followed by the well-known Swiss baritone, Paul Sandoz, who was specially invited



"THE SWISS NATIONAL ANTHEM"

[Photo by Spira]

Left to right: Mr. Paul Sandoz, Mme. Ch. Chapuis, Mr. A. Pini, Mr. and Mme. H. de Torrenté, Mr. Ch. Chapuis and Rev. H. Blum.



"THE PRESIDENT, MR. CHARLES CHAPUIS, HAS SOMETHING TO SAY."

[Photo by Spira]

In the background: Mr. A. Renou, The Swiss Minister, Mr. H. de Torrenté, and Mr. A. Pini.

from Switzerland to take part in the programme. He is the owner of a rich bass-baritone voice, and accompanied by his wife on the piano, he sang "Air de Démétrion de Bérénice" by Haendel, and Schumann's "Die beiden Grenadier". Both songs were excellently rendered and received an enthusiastic reception.

Mlle. Marie Amsler, violon, and Anton Doski, alto, played Halvorsom Passacaglia, on a theme by Haendel with great skill. Whether such a large hall is suitable for a performance of this kind, is a debatable point, their playing, the following day, at the Dorchester Hotel, was much more effective.

Then came life and colour into the programme, the Swiss Accordion Club, numbering 17 players of all ages and both sexes, appeared amidst much clapping, dressed in national costume, and under the clever leadership of Mr. A. Gandon, played with great vivacity and enthusiasm Marches and Valses, which created a very real and homely atmosphere and earned them well deserved applause. I have never heard them play better, and I wish here to congratulate the players and their untiring leader on their enjoyable performance.

Frl. Linely Bühler, an attractive "Bärner-meitschi" in Bernese costume, rendered two Yodel songs, which "brought the house down". I noticed, that previous artistes were presented with bouquets of flowers, Linely Bühler, unfortunately was forgotten, and I herewith will try to make amends for this omission, by saying, that no flowers could have sufficiently rewarded her for her fine performance.

Thus ended the first part of the programme and an interval of one hour was announced, during which refreshments could be procured in the two Foyers. The onslaught on the tables containing cakes, biscuits, sandwiches, strawberries, tea, coffee, etc., was as fierce as ever, and woe to the one who was caught in the middle of the "Battle for food." The catering ar-

rangements were again entrusted to the Family A. Schmid, of the Glendower Hotel, who very efficiently accomplished the not easy task of filling nearly 2,000 hungry mouths in a very short period of time. They, and their co-helpers are to be congratulated on their efforts; within a short space of time all the good things vanished, and not a crumb of cake and not one single strawberry was left.

Whilst this "battle for food" raged, the Swiss Accordion Club played untiringly Swiss melodies, to a large audience who afterwards sought sanctuary in the concert hall.

The second part of the programme started with a performance of the Corale Unione Ticinese, who, under the conductorship of Mr. P. De Maria, sang a number of Ticinese folk songs. They were dressed in the becoming Ticino costumes, and they sang as well as any nightingale in Berkeley Square. If I am rightly informed, it is the first time that they have appeared in a programme of the "Fête Suisse", and I am sure, that everyone, who heard them will share the hope, that it will not be the last time, by their lusty singing they have captured our hearts. I noticed an elderly Gentleman near me, evidently a Ticinesi, whose eyes were moist, can a better compliment be paid to our friends of the "Corale"?

The almost riotous applause had hardly died down, when Mr. Ch. Chapuis, the President, introduced the guest of honour to the audience, in the person of Monsieur Alcardo Pini, Vice-President of the National Council, to whom a sincere ovation was accorded.

M. Pini said, he had come from Berne the bearer of a message, but first of all, he would acknowledge the extremely cordial welcome accorded to him, by saying "Thank you, Swiss of London." He thanked the President and his committee very warmly for their invitation which he had been encouraged to accept by

the memory of his first visit to London, last year, when he accompanied the Swiss Parliamentary Delegation. "Moreover", he said, "Man always falls on the side to which he is leaning, and I have a leaning towards this country."

He paid homage to the Swiss Minister, "the man from the mountains", exclaiming, "I salute the son of the Valais" and also paid a compliment to Madame de Torrénté, who he said, had some connection with his own canton of Ticino. Continuing, he said, "I would like to express my admiration for this Metropolis which, only last evening I saw from the air like a blazing jewel, a town which was the core of world resistance, and the heart of a nation in the drama of reconstruction, a beacon of peace and freedom." (*Long applause.*)

M. Pini saluted the Swiss Colony, "those sons of Switzerland, those ambassadors of work, endeavour and patriotism, whose moral virtues are the virtues of the Swiss people at home."

The speaker gave a special salute to his Ticinesi countrymen, whom he addressed in their native tongue, and whom he praised for having maintained the Ticinese traditions of hard work for "the grandeur of the motherland."

He then spoke of our homeland with eloquence and feeling, and with a touch of poetry of the Suisse alémanique and of the "Suisse romande" and then of the beauties of the country. Of the Suisse alémanique, he said, that she gave a striking example of the triumph of private initiative, of order, of courage in every undertaking, whether commercial or industrial. Speaking of the "Suisse romande" he described the exquisite charm of her lakes, of the sunny landscapes of the "éclat de l'esprit" of her rôle in the spiritual and artistique renaissance, which represents in Switzerland the magnificent contribution of French civilisation.

M. Alcardo Pini then said that the Federal authorities follow closely the destiny of the Swiss Colonies abroad. He pointed out the necessity for forming young *cadres* to maintain the tradition of emigration. "The Swiss Parliament," he said, "follows with sympathy the life of the Swiss abroad, and are grateful to those who are working to maintain the links between the emigrants and the motherland, it is their duty to persist in the spirit of neutrality and solidarity which commands the unanimity of the Swiss people, a spirit of conciliation between all ideas is indispensable in a true democracy."

Lastly, the Speaker re-affirmed that Switzerland which had ensured its prosperity by constant efforts, was determined to follow its destiny with the determination of the mountaineer who is used to hard struggles, saying, that, "the spirit must be the master of brute force." Man must convince himself that, in life, the spirit is the great factor, the Swiss must seek victory in liberty, if he wants a refuge he will find it in human conscience."

M. Pini concluded his oration by the words: "Vive La Suisse! Vive la Colonie Suisse de Londres!"

Those fine words by our eminent guest were voraciously cheered by the entire assembly.

Mr. Paul Sandoz then sang a further group of songs by Jaques-Dalcroze, Doret and Kaufmann, followed by Mlle. Amsler, violon, and Anton Doski,

alto, who played the lovely "Suite Montagnarde" by Emil de Ribaupierre.

The Swiss Male Choir, under the able conductorship of Mr. E. P. Dick, sang "s'Chilchli" by E. Grolimund, "La Chanson du Ramoneur" by Doret, and J. B. Schmoelzer's "Waldabendschein", the latter being especially finely rendered.

And then came the "Grand Finale", arrayed on the platform, behind the Swiss Banner, were the artists who had taken part in the programme, and on the first chords of the "Cantique Suisse" the entire audience rose, and sang this beautiful hymn; never have I heard the "Schweizerpsalm" sung with such patriotic feelings.

It was a befitting closure to a great and impressive anniversary.

* * *

May I be allowed, on the occasion of one of the important milestones passed in the history of the Swiss Colony in London, to pay a well deserved tribute to a personal friend of mine, Mr. Ch. L. Chapuis, affectionately known to many of us as "Carlo", ably assisted by his charming wife, who has taken such an active part, either as a collaborator or as head of the "Fête Suisse" committee, he has done his job well, and now, when he asks us to relieve him of his extracting duties, I think we ought not to press him unduly to assume further heavy responsibilities, but to let him part, accompanied with our most sincere thanks for all he has done for us in the past.

During all these many years of hard, and may I add, successful work, he was ably assisted by another of our compatriots, Mr. Jules Zimmermann, who has unobstructively, worked very hard, to make these annual events a success.

The Swiss Colony, as a whole, owes much to these friends of ours, staunch patriots, who have, in good and bad times, stuck with great determination to their appointed tasks, they should be a shining example to our younger generation showing what hard work and a deep conviction of patriotism can achieve.

This 75th Anniversary of the "Fête Suisse" will, I am sure, leave but pleasant memories behind, and all those, who have been privileged to attend will not easily forget one of the most pleasant functions held in the Swiss Colony of London.

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