

80th fête suisse

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80th FÊTE SUISSE

Eighty years have passed by since the "Fête Suisse" met for the first time.

Looking up old records it appears to have had a very modest and simple beginning, and meant to be purely a family party, where young and old, rich or poor could spend a few hours together in good and close fellowship.

Through all the succeeding years this annual party has happily conserved its intimate character, it has made no pretention to be anything else than a gathering of all the members of the Swiss community, hailing from all parts of our country, and giving them an opportunity of getting to know each other, to cement old and make new friendships, and to enable them to be in thoughts with our brethren beyond the sea.

From these small beginnings, the "Fête Suisse", year after year, has gained in importance and popularity. Whilst, during the first years of its existence, modest and small quarters were chosen for its reunions, later on larger halls had to be acquired, until some years ago the annual venue place had become the Central Hall, Westminster, providing accommodation for well over 2,000 people.

For the first few years, no entertainment was provided, apart from community singing, but with an ever increasing attendance it was found advisable to introduce a fixed programme, which for a great number of years was executed by local talent.

Unfortunately two wars greatly reduced the number of our Colony, and it became increasingly difficult to recruit enough talent to provide an entertainment on a larger scale, and it was found necessary, especially in recent years, to "import" artistes from our home country. As I mentioned before, this fact in a way is to be regretted, as the "Fête Suisse" thus has lost a little of its former more intimate *cachet*, but it has become unavoidable as the flow of young compatriots of ours to this country has almost ceased.

Various societies, such as the Swiss orchestra, the Swiss Institute, the Swiss Gymnastic Society, to name only a few, have gone out of existence, and performers, who formerly supplied the various items on the programme have become either too old or have left us.

So it came to pass, that in 1949, for the first time programme support on a big scale was asked for and received from the "Chanson de Lausanne", which proved a great success, and as the French say "l'appétit vient en mangeant" the following year again artistes from Switzerland were engaged in the person of Paul Sandoz, the well-known Swiss baritone,

Mlle. Marie Amsler, violinist and Frl. Linely Bähler, "Jodlerin". In 1951, the "Stadtmusik Solothurn" provided the chief items on the programme, and in 1952, that excellent choir "Chanson du Rhône" gave a memorable performance, followed in 1953 by the "Laendlerkapelle" and "Jodlergruppe" Wattwil. In 1954, we had the privilege of having again our old friends the "Chanson de Lausanne", and the "Musique du Folly".

This year now another treat is in store for us all, after protracted negotiations it was found possible to engage the "Röseligarte Chor, Bärn", consisting of about 20 singers, dancers and musicians and they will be dressed in the Bernese costume. As mentioned in our last issue, this well-known choir was founded in 1937 by Hugo Keller, and has acquired in a relatively short time a no mean reputation both in Switzerland and abroad, as interpreters of Swiss folk songs in all our four national languages. The name of the choir was chosen in honour of Professor Otto von Greyerz, author of the song book "Us em Röseligarte", and of many novels and plays in Bernese dialect.

I hope I shall not be accused of fostering "Kantönligeist", if I make a strong personal appeal especially to my compatriots hailing from the canton of Berne and the "Mutzenstadt" to come along to give our friends a roaring welcome, not one "Bärner", nor "Bärnerin" should be missing at the Central Hall on April 21st. This pressing invitation, of course, applies to all my compatriots from whichever canton they originate. I feel certain that this choir will convince them, that not all the Bernese are as slow as their reputation makes them out to be.

It has been whispered to me that we shall hear our good old "Bärnermarsch", and that delicious "Bärnerläbchuche" will be obtainable. Furthermore a number of important personalities are expected to accompany the choir, such as the President of the Government of the Canton of Berne, the Mayor or "Stadtpräsident" of the town of Berne, one or two members of the cantonal Government and Parliament.

The newly appointed Swiss Minister, and Madame Daeniker, who have in the short time in which they have come in contact with the members of the Colony already become very popular, will honour the gathering by their presence.

At a recent meeting of the organisation committee of the "Fête Suisse", I had asked the impertinent question, whether it would be at all possible to bring at least a couple of bears from the bear pit in Berne to the Central Hall, the President very obligingly informed me that the question would be studied very carefully. I consider that these bears

would be quite safe as it is not likely that any "Züri Leuen" will be in the vicinity, but with regard to the safety of the audience I can take no guarantee.

Although the choir from Berne, will obviously be the "pièce de résistance", we shall hear on the programme that well-known and brilliant pianist Albert Ferber, who can always count on an appreciative audience, then such old friends as the Swiss Male Choir and the "Corale" of the Unione Ticinese will appear, and last but not least the youngsters of the Colony will provide their share of the performance.

I need hardly stress the point that the presentation of such an ambitious programme entails very con-

siderable expense, and in order to meet this it is most important that the Central Hall should be filled to capacity. The committee has not neglected anything to ensure us of a jolly and enjoyable evening, they have done their duty, and it is now up to us to show them our appreciation by turning out in full force.

Once more may I appeal particularly to all Bernese not to miss this opportunity of meeting their "next of kin", with whom we will join in singing the "Bärnermarsch" beginning with the words:

Träm, träm, träderidi, alli Manne stande i,
Die vor der Aemme, di vo der Aaar, etc.

ST.

British Parliamentary Delegation Visits Switzerland.

A British Parliamentary Delegation was the guest of the Swiss Government recently.

On Friday, March 18th the delegates visited the Maintenance Base at Zürich Airport and were very

impressed by the cleanliness of the workshops and the quality of control work. They also visited the Swiss-air aircraft engine test plant, which was built by Heenan and Froude of Worcester England and is one of the most up-to-date in Europe.



From left to right:— Wing Commander E. E. Bullus, M.P. (Conservative), Journalist; Dr. Somerville Hastings, M.P. (Labour); Lord Burden, C.B.E. (Head of Delegation), Mayor of East Ham (Labour); Lord Sempill, A.F.C. (Conservative); Engineer and Aircraft Specialist; Mrs. Jean Mann, J.P., M.P. (Labour), Member of the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party since 1953; Mr. F. F. A. Burden, M.P. (Conservative); Mr. Jost of The Swiss Government; Mr. Koenig of The Swiss Government.