

80th fête suisse

Autor(en): **[s.n.]**

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1955)**

Heft 1250

PDF erstellt am: **08.08.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-691647>

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**A. RENOU.**

President: "Fête Suisse" Committee.

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose, might apply to any Fête Suisse performance; we have, to start with, the speeches, which, as the age of the Festival advances are getting each year a little longer, we have music, dancing and singing, and yet in spite of constantly following a set pattern there is always something new which lends a special *cachet* to this big family party of the Swiss Colony. New faces, new songs, dances and music thus succeed in retaining the interest of an often critical audience.

Although the appeal which I had made in a recent issue of this paper for a "Full House" did not materialise, I am nevertheless glad to report that last year's attendance was not only reached but considerably increased, in fact I am told that the 2,000 mark was almost reached, which is very satisfactory.

A large percentage of the audience was recruited from the younger generation, mostly temporary visitors to this country, and for these it must have been an unique experience to make contact with the Colony, showing them that their compatriots in London, in spite of their long absence from the home country are ever remindful of the land of their birth.

To those who are residents of many years standing, this annual gathering too has its appeal, as it affords a welcome opportunity of meeting old friends and acquaintances one but rarely meets in this big Metropolis.

The high light of this successful evening was undoubtedly the homely atmosphere which prevailed throughout, kindling the feeling that we are all children of the same country united for a few fleeting hours in thoughts of that land which has given us so much, and to which we owe so much. More than ever in these troublesome times we must keep together ever faithful to our national motto: "Un pour tous, tous pour un".

Long before the actual performance started the Foyer was thronged with a merry crowd. Handsome maidens, some in national costume, sold programmes and badges, and at various counters cantonal flags, pictures and postcards depicting views from our homeland and delicious "Bärner Läbchueche" could be purchased. Some of the wiser visitors, no doubt remembering previous experiences, started "to feed"

80th FÊTE SUISSE

at

CENTRAL HALL, WESTMINSTER

on

THURSDAY, 21st APRIL, 1955

Under the Presidency of

MONSIEUR ARMIN DAENIKER

Ministre de Suisse

right away, before the usual onslaught on the refreshment counters started in the interval, but of this later.

One of the young flag sellers on my arrival adorned me with the Bernese badge although I had not given her any intimation to which canton I belonged. When enquiring why she thought that I hailed from that canton she cheekily remarked: "Dir heit doch a Gring wi ne Bärner". — Now I know.



By courtesy of Ringier, Illustrated Press, London.

A DELIGHTFUL STUDY.

On buying a "Läbchueche" this time from a maiden from the French part of Switzerland, she asked me whether I had "a strong denture", — how on earth did she know? — After this I refrained from any further purchases lest other peculiarities of my anatomy should be disclosed.

* * *

Shortly after 6 p.m. a bell announced that the performance was to begin; entering the vast hall one could not help but being struck by the decorations which made this otherwise sombre looking hall more attractive. Above the organ was hung a huge Swiss flag and Union Jack, whilst along the balconies the cantonal escutcheons were displayed.

The platform was flanked by lovely spring flowers, and in front, or rather on the floor of the stalls, rows of flowers too were placed which, however, could not be seen with the exception of the first two rows.

The mighty sounds of the organ greeted the audience, Mr. E. P. Dick playing a Prelude followed by Swiss Hymns. The programme mentioned that these were to be sung by the community, the response was not very encouraging, the company not having sufficiently "warmed up", but they made up later on, as we shall see.

When the audience was seated the Swiss Minister, and Madame Daeniker, accompanied by his collaborators at the Legation with their ladies, the President of the Fête Suisse Mr. A. Renou, H.E. Monsieur M. Gundevia, Deputy High commissioner for India, the representatives of the Bernese Government and cantonal authorities, and the Mayor or "Stadtpräsident" of the town of Berne made their entry.

Madame Daeniker, whose birthplace being Berne very appropriately wore Bernese costume, a geste which was greatly appreciated especially by all the Bernese; she was presented with a lovely bouquet of red roses with ribbon in the national colours.

And then the programme started with a few marches by the "Röseligarte Musik", consisting of three musicians (clarinette, double bass and accordion). Their lively performance found an appreciative echo from the Hall, where hearty "Juchzers" could be heard.

Then followed the speech-making part of the evening, which was this year again on a very generous scale. Without wishing to be unduly critical I would like most humbly to advocate for further Fête Suisse Festivals a less oratorical exuberance.

The programme is usually a heavy one, not even allowing for *encores*, and if a little more restraint on the part of the various speakers could be obtained the performance would gain, and bring back some of the would be visitors who stay away for this very reason.

The first speaker of the evening was Mr. A. Renou, President of the Fête Suisse, who extended a cordial welcome to the Swiss Minister and Madame Daeniker, warmly congratulating the latter for making her *début* at the Fête Suisse in Bernese costume, then to the audience in general, to H.E. Monsieur M. Gundevia, Deputy High Commissioner for India, and formerly Indian Ambassador in Berne, to Monsieur and Madame Bernath, 1st Counsellor of Legation, the Mayor of the town of Berne, the representatives of the Bernese Government and the cantonal authorities, and the Swiss Press.



By courtesy of Ringier, Illustrated Press, London.

Left to right: COLONEL GYGLI, A. RENO, Mme. DAENIKER, H. E. M. GUNDEVIA, THE SWISS MINISTER.

Some of the visitors to this festival were specially mentioned in the President's speech, namely Monsieur Gundevia, of whom he said: "He was too short a time Ambassador to Switzerland and those who visited the *Comptoir* in Lausanne will recall the very attractive Indian pavilion which was so much admired. This was M. Gundevia's work and in congratulating him once more for it we also want to say how happy we are to have such a good friend of our country".

The members of the Bernese authorities were greeted with the following words: "Ich begrüße die Mitglieder des Regierungsrates von Bern. Eine wichtige Delegation ist zu uns gekommen, nicht weniger als drei Mitglieder, und ich kann nur hoffen dass in ihrer Abwesenheit trotzdem alles gut gehen wird in Bern. Der Hauptzweck dieses Besuches ist der neue Flugplatz zu Bern wo sogar DC 8 landen sollen. Wir wissen alle wie gross der Einfluss von Bern sein kann, und wir wünschen der Berner Regierung Glück und Erfolge, es wird uns alle freuen auch im Winter in Bern landen zu dürfen".

The Mayor of Berne was addressed as follows: "Monsieur le Président de la ville, de la jolie ville de Berne! Je salue Monsieur Steiger en français; c'est que jeune étudiant à Berne j'ai demandé un jour où était la Junkerngasse et ce n'est que quand j'ai nommé la Rue des Gentilhommes qu'on m'a compris. Du coup on m'a aussi expliqué l'origine du "Langsam aber sicher". Les Bernois sont venus au canton de Vaud pour apprendre le français ce qui a pris beaucoup plus de temps que les Vaudois avaient pensé, mais l'ayant appris ce fut pour la vie — lentement mais sûrement. — Consolerez-vous amis Bernois, les Vaudois sont encore plus lents que vous et même aujourd'hui il semble que l'allemand leur échappe.

En bon Vaudois je vous salue, Messieurs de Berne, et vous dis mon plaisir de vous avoir parmi nous".

In the course of his speech, Mr. Renou also mentioned General Henri Guisan and Sir Winston Churchill, who had both recently celebrated their 80th birthday. Then the President alluded to the birthday anniversary of H.M. the Queen, saying: "To us Swiss who enjoy so freely the hospitality of the great British people it is a particular pleasure to offer to Her Majesty, the Queen, our respectful and most sincere wishes (Applause).

Addressing himself to the Swiss Minister, M. Renou concluded his speech with the following words: "It is under happy auspices that you begin your great mission in London. We congratulate you and hope that it will be a very long and successful one. I know of no more worthy cause than the true friendship which unites our two countries". The President's oration was suitably acknowledged.

Pasteur C. Reverdin of the Eglise Suisse followed with an address and prayer in which he said that the Fête Suisse always brings back happy memories of our homeland, and that it was good that it should do so, but it should also be an occasion for deep reflections, and of getting in closer touch with our Lord, thanking him for all the blessings He has bestowed on us in the past, and putting before Him our problems, anxieties and errors. By continued prayers for our salvation and forgiveness we could obtain that peace of mind which would make us useful members of the Christian community.

And now came the moment to which we were all looking forward with pleasant anticipation. The

lights were lowered, and suddenly the spot lights picked out the members of the "Röseligarte Chor, Bärn", who in measured steps descended, not too quickly, à la Bernois, from the gallery on to the platform, amidst the tremendous cheering of the audience and the sounds of the "Bärnermarsch". It was a great and stimulating moment.

The picturesque costumes of the ladies with their pretty bonnets and straw hats, silk aprons in all the colours of the rainbow, and heavy glittering silver chains made a fine picture.

Not only were the costumes good to look at, but also the maidens from Berne looked attractive in them. Full of smiles they modestly acknowledged the spontaneous reception accorded to them, and without delay they began to sing, first in "Schwyzerdütsch", Herm. Suter's "Im Aargäu", followed by "Sol Natal" by Jaques-Dalcroze, both beautifully rendered.

Then several couples entertained us with typical peasant dances, accompanied by the "Röseligarte Musik". Their pas-à-deux and lively "hoppers" was enjoyable to watch, and proved that they are not only fine singers but equally fine dancers. Having given us this extra turn, they were joined again by the other members of the choir, and with much vigour they sang this time in Italian, "Mazzolin di fiori", by H. Keller, followed by "Lingua materna" in romanch.

Their ensemble, diction and richness of tone from pianissimo to forte was remarkable, all the more as this choir is not under the baton of a conductor. It was really a most gratifying performance which was



By courtesy of Ringier, Illustrated Press, London.

THE "ROESELIGARTE CHOR BAERN".

greeted with thunderous applause. These simple and unassuming folk tunes recalled to many of us happy memories.

Then Monsieur Armin Daeniker, the Swiss Minister appeared on the platform amidst great applause.

The Minister, speaking in English, thanked Mr. Renou for his words of welcome saying that he esteemed it an honour and privilege to have been asked to preside over the 80th Fête Suisse. "I have had," he said, "in the course of my career often the pleasure to address our colonies abroad, but never like today, when greeting this vast assembly, had I such a mighty and edifying impression of the common bond which unites us all".

Monsieur Daeniker continued by saying that we should in the first instance remember the generous hospitality which we enjoy in this country and pay our respectful homage and congratulations to Her Majesty the Queen on the auspicious occasion of her birthday which she has celebrated on this very day.

"In expressing our gratitude", he continued, "we recall the many fruitful contacts which exist so happily between this great Nation and Switzerland. Through the course of history our political institutions and our cultural life have met with sympathetic resonance in this country. The mutual appreciation and admiration shown for the national ideals and traditions of each country are the safest guarantee that the bonds of friendship between the two peoples will never be impaired or darkened" (Applause).

The Minister mentioned that we owe it largely to the committee of the Fête Suisse that this festival in spite of its venerable age has lost nothing of its vigour and still keeps its central place in the life of the



By courtesy of Ringier, Illustrated Press, London.

THE SWISS MINISTER IN CHARMING COMPANY.

Colony. He extended hearty greetings to the singers and musicians who had come this long way from Switzerland to bring us a breath of genuine Swiss air and evoke in our hearts, with their gay and thoughtful songs, memories of the times when we were young.

"More than a demonstration of common allegiance", the speaker said, "and of the common solid bond of loyalty towards our country, the Fête Suisse shall be a manifestation of joy and gaiety, of that spontaneous joy which we feel when meeting true and good old friends and of that sincere gaiety which takes us back to the days of our youth when we felt safely sheltered in the bosom of the family and the country and of a common patrimony. To those many hundreds of the younger generation who have come to London for their professional training, I would like to say that this festival is theirs too. They will find that homelike atmosphere which perhaps they miss. They are welcome to the Swiss colony with its many ramifications of social and cultural life, and they will have a chance to meet young people of their own age who, while born in this country, remain faithful to their allegiance. They are glad to learn more about Switzerland which they mostly know from casual visits only, and are eager to co-operate with you in the true helvetic spirit.

The Minister then continued his address in "Züridütsch" during which he warmly greeted the official representatives of the Bernese Government and the Municipality of Berne. He referred to the manifold patriotic manifestations, the great work done by the Swiss Colony in various spheres and the love, which the Swiss abroad have for their country, a love, he said, which is deeply rooted in their hearts ever inspiring and stimulating them to still greater efforts for the benefit of our colonies abroad.

In conclusion, Monsieur Daeniker, addressed himself in French to our "romands", who, he said, for more than one century formed the majority of our colony praising their spirit of solidarity, their high principles and patriotism, finishing with the following words: "Nous leur en savons gré, à nos confédérés romands, car en manifestant cet esprit de solidarité au sein de la Colonie, ils ont été guidés par le même principe qui détermine l'attitude de la Confédération envers le monde. La neutralité ne saurait se suffire à elle-même si elle ne trouve pas son complément et s'associe à l'obligation de se montrer solidaire. C'est bien notre mission, notre vocation dans le monde, et elle fera honneur aux générations qui s'en montreront dignes".

The Minister's oration was acknowledged with long applause.

It was a happy thought to give our "very young ones" from the "Schweizerkirche" an opportunity to present themselves. They enacted a little play which had as its background the song "Es wot es Frauele z'Märit ga." Some of the little ones who, perhaps for the first time faced a large audience were a little shy and bewildered at the beginning, but they soon settled down giving us a charming performance, they were followed by the girls of the "Schwyzerchränzli" with songs, one of which included a "Yodel" solo delightfully rendered by a young lady.

When the applause with which the performance by the "Younger Generation" had been acknowledged subsided, the members of the Swiss Male Choir made

their entry on the platform, followed by their popular conductor Mr. E. P. Dick.

They sang two songs in French, "Chant du Printemps" by E. Lauber, and Jos. Beret's "La Montée à l'Alpage" followed by one song in German "Morgen im Walde" by F. Hegar. This choir has in the past given us much pleasure by their fine singing, and once again they have shown what accomplished singers they are. All the songs were rendered with feeling, restraint and perfect harmony, and both the conductor and the choir are heartily to be congratulated. The applause which greeted their performance was well deserved.

Again the younger generation had its say, namely the "Jeunesse de l'Eglise Suisse". These young men gave a "Chant mimé", the underlying theme being an old French song "Le Roy Dagobert", they expressed through their words and acting the adventure of the King up to his death. A delightful little performance which earned the acclamation they deserved.

This concluded the first part of the programme, and then came the interval. Whilst hitherto everything went smoothly and in an orderly manner, pandemonium suddenly broke out, and can best be described as the "sausage battle". With considerable ferocity the attack on the refreshment counters began, especially on the front where the "Wienerli's" were located, supplied by our friends the Bartholdi's. It is true they were delicious, but did it really warrant fighting for them like savages? The elbowing became at times quite dangerous, the youngsters especially distinguished themselves by their fierce attack. As I have mentioned before when reporting about former Fêtes Suisses nobody doubts that the Swiss can be gallant fighters, but surely there are worthier causes to fight for than "a couple of sausages".

Once again I would earnestly invite the committee to study the question of providing refreshments also on the second floor (which has been done on a previous occasion) so as to relieve the "pressure" below. I shudder to think what would have happened if strawberry tartlets, with cream, would have been in season, some of us would have got more than we bargained for. The family Schmid, who were in charge of the catering did their best to withstand the onslaught and their calm at the heights of the battle was the only redeeming feature in this not very edifying spectacle.

The ringing of the bell for the second part of the programme came as a welcome relief, the "battlefield" became deserted, leaving behind all sorts of *débris* consisting of partly consumed sausages and rolls, which in the heat of the encounter, were knocked out of the hands of the consumers, hairpins and buttons.

When the "warriors" had taken their seats again, apparently none the worse for their experience, the "Röseligarte Musik" gave us a Pot-Pourri of Swiss melodies, and this time, I am glad to say, everybody joined in most heartily.

And now our brethren from the sunny Ticino made an appearance bringing once more a little colour into the proceedings. Dressed in their colourful costumes the Corale Unione Ticinese sang very vivaciously a number of *Canzonette* which we all very much enjoyed. This happy band of singers hardly

need any special introduction having given us in the past so much joy; in fact no Colony affair without their collaboration would be complete. The songs they rendered in the melodious Italian language brought vividly to many of their hearers happy memories of holidays spent in this lovely part of our country. The singers, and their efficient conductor Sig. L. Bruni, were warmly and deservedly applauded.

It is a far cry from folklore to classical music, but that both make good companions was proved by the piano recital which followed, the artist being Albert Ferber, who enjoys no mean reputation in the music world of this country.

He played three items by Debussy, Dr. Gradus and Parnassum (from Children's corner), "La Fille aux Cheveux de Line", and "Toccata"; Chopin's "Impromptu F. Sharp, No. 2", and "Andaluza" by De Falla.

Albert Ferber has fluent and obedient fingers which might well be the envy of many a pianist, technique and musical feeling are evenly matched.

Debussy's, "La Fille aux Cheveux de Lin", and "Toccata" could scarcely have been more brilliantly played, it was in these works that his imagination had fullest play.

His most successful item on the programme, I consider was Chopin's "Impromptu, F. Sharp No. 2", which he played with brilliance and poetic feeling, his phrasing was highly musical and his tone consistently ingratiating.

Our compatriot is a richly gifted artist with a



By courtesy of Ringier, Illustrated Press, London.

OUTSIDE THE HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT.

technique that could make him a virtuoso pianist if he wished to travel in that direction.

The almost never ending applause inducing him — though against the rules — to give an *encore*, proved sufficiently how much his playing was appreciated, and I hope that all those who so fervently applauded him, will in future also attend some of his recitals periodically given at Wigmore Hall.

“The Röseligartechor”, which for one reason or another, had in the meantime been tucked away again in one corner of the gallery, instead of placing them at the back of the stage where they would have been in full view of the entire audience, appeared again. They very delightfully rendered further songs in “Schwyzerdütsch”, French and Italian, all sung with much delicacy. How lovely was sung Maerki’s “Rosezyt”. A big hit proved to be the “Grindelwaldnerlied” by Krenger and Mantegazzi’s “Sacra terra del Ticino”.

The organizers of the Fête Suisse have certainly been lucky in their choice by bringing this choir to London; by doing so they have provided us with a first class entertainment, which will leave behind nothing but pleasant memories. A hearty “Vergält’s Gott” to our friends from “Bärn”.

As a Grand Finale, the audience and performers sang upstanding and with organ accompaniment the “Hymne Suisse”, a worthy ending to a worthy entertainment.

In his closing words, Mr. Renou, President of the Fête Suisse, expressed sincere thanks to all who had made this 80th festival such an undeniable success.

May I be permitted, at the close of my report to tender a hearty *merci bien* to the Committee, and especially to its President, Mr. Renou, who has once more proved his great abilities as an efficient and painstaking organiser. In his arduous task he has been ably assisted by all his colleagues, who well deserve to be especially mentioned. They are: Messrs. Nater, Speckert, Dick, Zimmermann and Wyler, the latter having been so helpful in making arrangements for the transport of the choir, Pasteur Reverdin, Pfarrer Spoerri, Miss Wyss and Mrs. Meier.

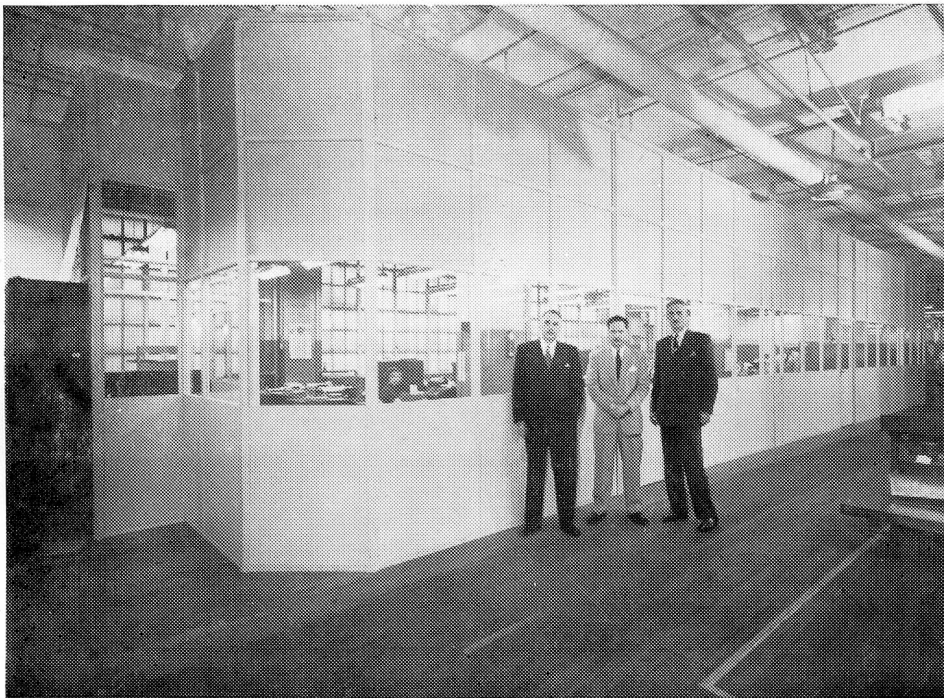
Equal gratitude is due to the charming programme and badge sellers, stall holders, the “Fäschtwirtschaft”, and, of course, the artists who took part in the programme. If I have left anybody out, I must plead forgiveness it has certainly not been done intentionally.

This fine and inspiring evening has knitted us again closer to each other; as before our thoughts during this memorable performance have travelled back home to that country which we so proudly and affectionally call

“La Patrie”.

ST.

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Mr. R. E. Balcer, Representative in the Rolstore and Partition Division of our associate company, Acrow (Canada) Ltd., is seen here with two executives of The Northern Electric Co. Ltd., of Canada inspecting an installation of ACROW MOVABLE STEEL PARTITIONS which we recently completed for their company in Montreal.



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