

# 83rd fête suisse

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A. RENOU.

President: "Fête Suisse" Committee.

*"Als ich fern dir war, o Helvetia  
Fasste manchmal mich ein tiefes Leid."*

Three cheers! Westminster Hall was nearly full, the attendance exceeding two thousand. My appeals, in the issues previous to the "Fête Suisse" taking place, have thus not passed unnoticed. Perhaps next year we may once again see the "sold out" notice put up in the Entrance Hall, as happened in 1948 when General Henri Guisan attended the Colony's Family Party.

One of the principal aims at a patriotic gathering is to get the audience in the right frame of mind, to create what is called "an atmosphere". This was, undoubtedly, achieved on this memorable evening. From the beginning to the end a cordial "Stimmung" prevailed, which reached its culminating point at the close of the performance when, amidst great enthusiasm, our National Anthem was sung.

By soon after five o'clock, when the doors were opened, a considerable number of visitors had already arrived, taking their seats in the Hall, which, as usual, was decorated with the cantonal emblems. Above the organ the Swiss flag, flanked by the Union Jack, was prominently displayed, whilst immediately in front the banner of the "Bürgermusik" Lucerne was placed.

In my last year's report, I mentioned that Central Hall — which at one time looked rather drab and gloomy — had undergone redecoration and was looking spick and span. One could have wished that the two respective national emblems had undergone the same process; both looked very shabby and dilapidated, and could well have done with a proper cleaning up.

The flower decorations in front and at the side of the platform were very attractive; they were the work of Miss E. Finger, the Swiss florist, who is to be complimented on her artistic display.

In the Foyer young maidens, some of whom were attired in Swiss national costume, sold programmes and little flags, whilst a number of very important looking gentlemen, decorated with *rosettes*, showed the visitors to their seats and made themselves generally useful.

Before the actual programme started, and to make the waiting of the early arrivals less dreary, Mr. E. P. Dick, who had taken his seat at the organ,

# 83rd FÊTE SUISSE

at

CENTRAL HALL, WESTMINSTER

on

THURSDAY, 17th APRIL, 1958

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*Under the Presidency of*

MONSIEUR ARMIN DAENIKER

Ambassadeur de Suisse

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played a Prelude and a medley of Swiss melodies, and I am glad to say that the audience joined wholeheartedly in singing some of the well-known songs which always bring back memories of the time of our youth.

Faintly one could hear in the distance Big Ben striking six o'clock — the time of the opening of the 83rd "Fête Suisse" had arrived.

The Swiss Ambassador, accompanied by Madame Daeniker, and his collaborators at the Embassy with their ladies, the Nepalese Ambassador, Monsieur Manandhar, and daughter (who is also accredited to the Swiss Confederation), and the official guests of the town of Lucerne, took their seats in front of the platform, and Madame Renou, the wife of the President of the "Fête Suisse", presented Madame Daeniker with a beautiful bouquet of red roses.

The lights were then dimmed and the entire audience sang, upstanding, the Swiss Hymn, "Trittst im Morgenrot daher, seh ich Dich im Strahlenmeer" with organ accompaniment; and then followed a Prayer by the Rev. H. Spoerri of the "Schweizerkirche", who asked for God's blessing on this festive day, concluding with the Lord's Prayer.

When the lights were switched on again, there arrived on the stage the Swiss Accordion Group dressed in their becoming "Mälcherchuttli". Unfortunately their number has been considerably depleted during the last few years. Headed by their leader, Mr. A. Gandon, they played with great vivacity a number of folk tunes.

As a soloist, Master Jean-Michel Gandon, the young son of the leader, made his *début* at the "Fête Suisse". He is the possessor of a sweet and clear voice, and his yodelling was greatly enjoyed, and greeted with much applause, which he acknowledged with a neat little bow. Hearts do break sometimes, and so unfortunately do voices; let us hope that this occurrence is still far off, so as to enable us to enjoy his singing on many future occasions.

When the applause ceased, the President of the "Fête Suisse", Mr. A. Renou, made his appearance, and very briefly extended a hearty welcome, in English, French and Schwyzerdütsch, to the large audience, to H.E. the Swiss Ambassador and Madame Daeniker, to the Nepalese Ambassador, the officials of

the town of Lucerne, the "Jodlerclub Pilatus" and the "Bürgermusik" Lucerne.

Mr. Renou, who has undoubtedly the gift of speech-making, striking always the right note on such occasions, moved that nasty little instrument of a microphone away from him; unfortunately he moved it not far enough, so that his speech came through twice with a rather disturbing echo. He concluded his address by wishing everybody a pleasant and enjoyable evening. Everyone — including those who heard him "twice" — paid him a well-deserved tribute.

For the last few years the little children of both churches ("Eglise Suisse" and "Schweizerkirche") have taken part in the programmes, which is only right, because they are the new generation, to whom we look to carry on when the present one has gone.

This year it was the turn of the children from the "Eglise Suisse". A number of boys and girls of tender age sang and danced delightfully, although one or two looked rather bewildered. It is, of course, no joke to appear before a large audience in a vast hall, but they gave us quite a few enjoyable moments, and the applause they earned was well deserved.

I have often felt, in the past, that apart from yodelling and brass and accordion music playing, the programme of the "Fête Suisse" should also include some items of classical music, if only to show our English friends, who attend this festive evening, that in this sphere our country is rich in talents, both in vocal and orchestral music.

This want was filled this time by the appearance of a young and charming Swiss soprano, Miss Hazel Schmid, who, you will recall, made her *début* in the Colony on the occasion of last year's 1st of August celebration at the Wimbledon Town Hall, when she registered a notable success.

Miss Schmid, a former pupil at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, won the Prize given for the best interpretation of French classic songs. She has been awarded a French Government Scholarship and is at present studying in Paris with the noted singer, Pierre Bernac, a singing teacher of International repute. Since we heard her last she has acquired a richer volume of voice without losing any of the delicacy, charm and simplicity of the art of Lieder singing.

She rendered two songs, "Se Tu M'Ami" by Pergolesi, and one of Schumann's loveliest songs, "Der Nussbaum". It was an attractive performance by reason of the pleasant quality of her voice and her good sense of phrasing. It was a delightful experience to listen to her, and Mr. Michael Pilkington served her with unflinching discretion and understanding.

Long and sincere was the applause which greeted her fine singing.

Then came the turn for our visitors from Switzerland. The members of the "Bürgermusik" of Lucerne received a thunderous ovation when they appeared on the platform. This band numbering sixty men — all amateurs — was founded in 1922 and is one of Switzerland's leading brass bands. Its conductor is Dr. André Winkler, who I understand received his musical training in England.

They started their performance with a breezy March, "Frisch voran", composed by the conductor, followed by Jäggi's Overture in Es Dur, which was played in fine style. This band certainly possesses very serviceable technical equipment, and a full and rich tone, and its conductor has them well in hand.

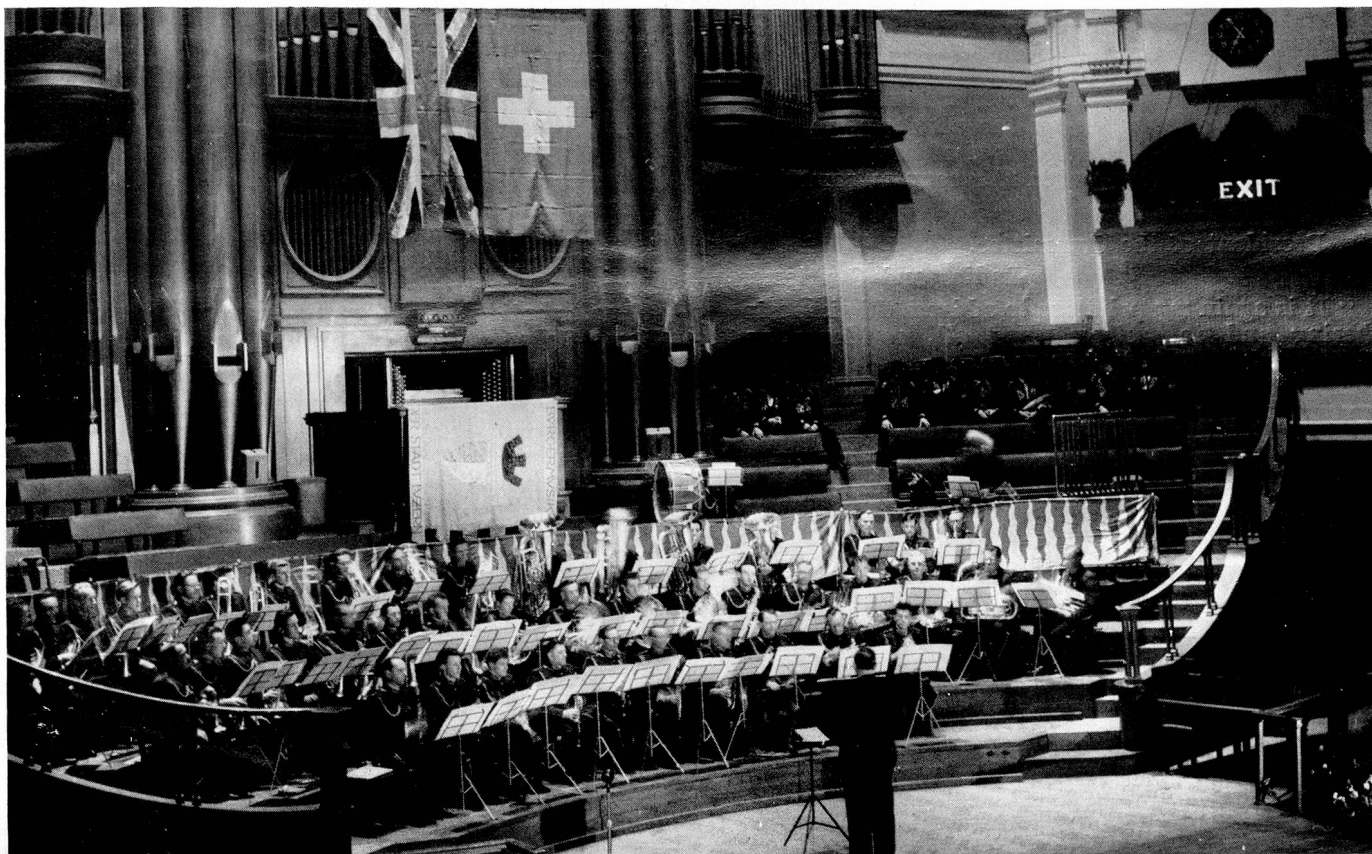
The warm applause which they received must have shown them how much their playing was appreciated, and how much we liked to see our countrymen from the ancient and historical town of Lucerne.



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Right to left: H.E. THE SWISS AMBASSADOR AND MADAME DAENIKER.





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#### BUERGERMUSIK OF LUCERNE.

Next appeared the "Jodlerclub Pilatus", also of Lucerne, which numbered about twenty men, accompanied by an "Alphornbläser" and a "Fahnen-schwinger". They were under the conductorship of Mr. Max Lienert, who is also well known as a composer. This choir enjoys no mean reputation at home, having appeared with great success at various regional and federal yodelling festivals.

They received an equally hearty reception as their colleagues of the band, as, dressed in their most becoming and richly embroidered "Aelpler" costumes, they lined up and began to sing the songs which have made them famous wherever they have appeared at home and abroad.

They sang of spring, of love, and our glittering mountains, of the silvery lakes and sun-kissed hills, which, after the recent dreary, dull and cold days, brought thoughts of the warm sunshine coming and the budding trees and flowers.

The choir rendered three items, "Der Frühling isch cho", "Waldheuerjutz" and "Wach auf und sing".

Loud and hearty was the applause accorded to them; by their melodious singing they brought a refreshing whiff from the alpine regions which are so deeply engraved in our hearts.

Thus ended the first part of the programme, and an interval of one hour was announced. This year extra accommodation had been procured so as to eliminate the rush which on former occasions gave reason for complaint. Whilst this was certainly an improvement, it was, however, not entirely satisfactory, the main reason being that the serving staff was not large enough. It must, of course, be realised

that it is by no means easy to feed nearly two thousand hungry mouths in just under an hour, and the question of perhaps extending the interval should be studied.

One can only learn by experience, and the few shortcomings which occurred will, I am sure, be corrected in future. It must be pointed out that this year's attendance was larger than those of the last few years, and this was bound to affect the service. The chief attraction in the food line were the Bartholdi "Wienerli's"; it is a pity that some were not hot enough, but there were many other attractive refreshments to be had. All in all, the firm which was entrusted — for the first time — with the catering tried hard enough to come up to scratch. Complaints, where Swiss are concerned, will never be eliminated, and grumbling is considered to be a prerogative of our countrymen.

Whilst the battle for food raged, the accordionists in the concert hall were ready to invite those who had sought sanctuary there or had finished with the refreshments to take part in the community singing. Young and old joined in very heartily and with much zeal.

The second part of the programme started with a performance by the "Corale" of the Unione Ticinese, who, under the baton of Mr. L. Bruni, sang a number of Ticinese folk songs. They were attired in the decorative costume of their canton, and they sang as melodiously as any "Nightingale in Berkeley Square".

Our countrymen from the South brought the sun; their carefree, spontaneous singing was soon tugging at the heart-strings of the listeners. There were some new numbers very well rendered, such as "Bella ti vidi nascere", and very much enjoyed was the lively

“Zoccoletti”. The “Corale” made their exit, amidst prolonged applause, with their signature tune “Ciau”.

The Swiss Ambassador, Monsieur Armin Daeniker, then made his appearance on the platform, receiving a cordial reception — a sure proof of how popular he has become since his arrival in this country some three years ago, he said :

“ Mr. President of the Committee,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

“ It is again my privilege to address this imposing gathering and to welcome you all, residents and visitors, and to convey to you the greetings of the Embassy and the Swiss Government. Annually during the last 83 years our compatriots in this great city have met one evening in Spring. At first this meeting was meant to provide an opportunity to talk as in a family circle about the then far distant homeland. Always, they have been anxious to manifest on these occasions their common allegiance, their bond of common origin, in a spirit of warmhearted friendship. Generations of compatriots from all sections of the colony have faithfully maintained this tradition of an annual patriotic meet. Recalling in our thoughts those who have preceded us in this Hall and held this rostrum in previous years, let me also remember those whom we were wont to see amongst us during these last years and whom we miss because they have either returned home or have for ever departed from our midst.

“ To those of you who have joined us for the first time and who still feel strangers in this vast Metropolis, this meeting — a symbol of Swiss harmony and solidarity — will demonstrate that our colony is a living reality. You will become still more conscious of this fact when you penetrate the life of our many societies, the churches and charitable institutions, and share in the intense work which is going on in its

circles. Let me remind you that the Swiss community wants a contribution from everyone towards this common effort, and that in return it will assure to each of you its moral support and the comfort of friendly companionship.

“ It is my pleasant duty to thank again the organisers of this Fête, first of all M. Renou, who spared no effort in making it a success and enriching it again with many new features. Let me also thank the members of the Committee, all those who supported them, and — last but not least — the artists themselves, particularly our charming compatriot Miss Hazel Schmid, M. Gandon and his son, the Unione Ticinese, and our guests from Switzerland, who offer us the enjoyment of Swiss music and folk songs.

“ I greet particularly also our English guests — amongst whom I include of course the Scottish and Welsh that may be here — who, tonight, are amongst us. We are all conscious that the benefits of liberal hospitality which this country imparts so generously on our Swiss community have their deep roots in a feeling of sincere sympathy and understanding. Ever since I have had the opportunity, during these last three years, to travel in this country and to penetrate different strata of its society, I have been struck and surprised to find British people so closely acquainted with our country, not only its scenery, which they naturally admire, but also with many of the historical places, its culture and the various emanations of present-day life.

“ With so much goodwill we can draw on a fund of inestimable value. We are a small Nation in this crowded world. Our history has traced for us definite lines of conduct which we shall not trespass without serious risks for our National integrity. Providence has allowed us to lead a life of our own, to rely on our own resources and to keep aloof from entangling alliances. Long ago we have renounced any ambitious plans for political power and leadership on the Con-



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JODEL CLUB PILATUS.





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**CORALE UNIONE TICINESE.**

continent. It is our good fortune that we have not to participate in the grave decisions about the harassing problems of present world-politics, nor to share the anxieties and sacrifices which such responsibilities entail for the population of a great Power. The very smallness of our country has allowed us to concentrate on the maintenance of our patrimony, on the development of our political institutions and civic liberties, on education and humanitarian work. We offer our good offices and the hospitality of our soil whenever it is asked for and might be useful in paving the way for international rapprochement. Let us hope that whenever there will be another summit conference, it will be held on wholesome helvetic soil; and we are happy to reciprocate, in a disinterested way, the friendly feelings shown to our country and people.

“It is one of the special advantages and even the pride of a small State — particularly a confederate State like ours — to preserve and even foster the peculiarities, the individualities, of its component parts. It is the privilege of this reunion, for which we are so grateful to M. Renou, to welcome each year a group of confederates from one of our cantons. After the Valais, Berne, Vaud and Fribourg, it is to-day the turn of Lucerne. I feel particularly happy to greet on behalf of this large audience the Bürgermusik of Lucerne and the Yodelclub Pilatus and to thank all their members for having come from so far to entertain us. We wish them and their families a pleasant time in London. I am sure they will enjoy their stay in spite of the wintry skies.

“No doubt, all those of us who had the privilege either to live in or to travel through Lucerne will keep the memory deep in their heart. Whenever I had the pleasure to board a steamer from the quays of this lovely town, I was struck anew by the beauty of its situation. I wholeheartedly subscribe to the statement

I found in an old English chronicle, that ‘Lucerne is the centre of the finest natural scenery that Switzerland has to show. A richer harmony of beauty and grandeur, of grace and simplicity of the loveliest pastoral and the massive mountain scenery, no spot in Switzerland has to present’.

“But apart from the scenery, it is the harmony and beauty of the town itself, the happy blending of old and new which remains so deeply inscribed in our memory. The ancient walls and covered bridges, the towers, the Gothic, Renaissance and Barock churches, the palaces, all are witness of a glorious past and a deep-rooted faith.

“The entry of Lucerne into the Confederation was decisive for its historical development. Without this important market town and this powerful rampart against the might of Austria, the three Waldstätten would hardly have survived. It was Lucerne which, in 1386, had to bear the brunt of the onslaught of the Dukes of Austria at Sempach; ever since that day Swiss independence had been made secure. It was with Lucerne, and Zürich and Berne afterwards, that the Swiss Confederation came to rely, for better or for worse, on that combination of towns and peasant communities which, although sometimes a source of conflict, ultimately made for its strength and prosperity. It was Lucerne, so closely related to the primitive cantons, which for centuries was meant to serve as mediator between disparate elements, between the inner and the outer orbit of the ancient Confederation. Lucerne is the stronghold of conservatism, but with its windows wide open to the world; always a centre of learning and to-day also of international cultural life, a pillar and a pearl of our country!

“Liebe Landsleute,

“Ich möchte nicht ermangeln, auch an unsere Luzerner Miteidgenossen ein paar Worte der

Begrüssung auf Schweizerdeutsch zu richten. Es ist von jeher Brauch gewesen, an der alljährlich abgehaltenen Fête Suisse eine Abordnung aus der Heimat zu empfangen. Heute ist die Reihe an Luzern und damit sind Sie Zeugen dieser imposanten Kundgebung der Treue an die angestammte Heimat geworden. Ein vor kurzem in Zürich verstorbener Schriftsteller, Fritz Ernst, hat in einer Rede ausgeführt, dass 'bei der Ungewissheit, die zu unserem Leben gehört, nur die Treue zu uns selbst, so wie die Natur und die Geschichte uns geprägt haben, das Geheimnis der Geheimnisse bleibe.' 'Wer in diesem Zeichen ausgezogen ist, dessen Reise wird gesegnet sein und wenn ihm zum letzten Mal der Abendstern aufglänzt, möge er mit müden Lippen das Geständnis wiederholen dürfen, dass es ihm hie unten immer wohlhergegangen ist, darum, dass er ein Schweizer war.'

"Das ist das Bekenntnis eines Landsmannes, der einer der besten Europäer unter uns gewesen ist. Es ist auch das Bekenntnis der Schweizerkolonie in diesem gastlichen Lande, das sie durch die heutige Kundgebung ablegen möchte, ein Bekenntnis, das unseren Zusammenkünften je und je zugrunde gelegen hat. Seit mehr als 90 Jahren versammelt sich die Kolonie alljährlich um gemeinsam der Heimat zu gedenken; damals waren es einige hundert, heute sind wir mehr als 2000. Möget Ihr, wenn Ihr in die Heimat zurückgekehrt seid, von diesem Bekenntnis der unverbrüchlichen Zugehörigkeit zum Vaterland durch die Landsleute in London Zeugnis ablegen, damit man sich dort ihrer bewusst sei und sie gebührend würdige.

"Der Besuch der zwei Luzerner Vereinigungen ist uns sehr willkommen und wir danken Euch, dass Ihr an unserem Fest mitgewirkt und ein Stück heimatlichen Gutes mit Euren Melodien und Gesängen mitgebracht habt. Grüsst uns Eure Stadt Luzern und den schönen Vierwaldstättersee!"

The oration of the Ambassador was loudly cheered by the entire company.

Miss Hazel Schmid then made her second appearance in the programme; this time she had chosen Fauré's "L'Hiver a cessé", and "Nicolette" by Ravel. The rendering — as an *encore* — of Gounod's "Au printemps" testified to her musical feelings, and "Nicolette" to her ample technique.

This short recital, with Mr. Michael Pilkington's eloquent co-operation, gave pleasure and satisfaction; each song was decisively stamped with its appropriate mood, and there was no lack of ring in her tone or passion in delivery.

Miss Schmid is at the beginning of her musical career, a career which promises well; she possesses a fine instrument — a voice of easy delivery — and we hope to hear her on many future occasions. The lovely bouquet with which she was presented was well deserved, and so was the applause which was so spontaneously given.

The next item on the programme consisted of a humorous song, entitled "Le Mélo-Mélo", by four young gentlemen of the "La Jeunesse de l'Eglise Suisse", which caused much amusement.

The last two numbers were reserved for our visitors from home. The "Bürgermusik" started with a March by Karl Küpfer, followed by a Potpourri, "Durch's Schweizerland", containing a number of very popular melodies, amongst them the "Bärnermarsch", no doubt, as a special compliment to Madame Daeniker, who, like the writer, hails from the

"Mutzenstadt". As soloist appeared a young boy, who sang both feelingly and delightfully. The band concluded their performance with a March, "Bannertroue", by Lüthold. All items were much cheered.

The "Jodlerclub Pilatus" followed with three yodelling songs, "Gwattstützler", "Nach den Bergen", and "Morgebärgjodel", which were much enjoyed, whilst a "Fahnenschwinger" and an "Alphornbläser" delighted the audience by their clever performance. Long and hearty was the applause which they received.

Thus the programme with all its many variations came to its conclusion, and, as a Finale, the band intoned our National Anthem, which was sung, unstanding, by the entire audience with great enthusiasm. A memorable evening, which I am sure will always be remembered by all who were present.

\* \* \*

I noticed that at least one of the performing artists was presented with flowers — a mark of appreciation which was certainly well deserved; but thanks are especially due to the ladies and gentlemen who have so efficiently organised this year's festival, and if they have perhaps not received appreciation in a more tangible way, they can rest assured that their efforts have been very much esteemed.

A special compliment is due to Mr. A. Renou, President of the "Fête Suisse" committee, who had accomplished an arduous task with great credit; in his strenuous work he was ably supported by Messrs. W. Wyler, X. Speckert, C. Nater, J. Zimmermann, R. E. Cottet, E. Bonvin, E. P. Dick, Rev. C. Reverdin, and by a large number of "backroom" girls and boys.

The waves of patriotism ran high; it has been mentioned to me that patriotism does not pay; that may be so, but do we really want to drag these most sacred feelings down to a "business proposition"? Let us — and God grant us this — still cherish and treasure the feelings of attachment, love and gratitude to our country, which has given us so much — in fact, has given us all that is worth living for. But it must not remain a patriotism which is conveniently displayed on some festive occasion, it must be a patriotism which is based on a deep and sincere conviction, and then alone we can live up to, and be worthy of, our national motto:

UN POUR TOUS, TOUS POUR UN!

ST.



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