

# Comment

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EDITOR: Mrs. MARIANN MEIER

Advisory Council: R. J. KELLER (Chairman)  
GOTTFRIED KELLER (Vice-Chairman)  
O. F. BOEHRINGER, J. EUSEBIO, A. KUNZ,  
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# COMMENT

## WHY SHOULD WE?

The Swiss citizen is no friend of big words. He is sceptical when he hears fine sentiments expressed on festive occasions. At a time when one thinks in blocks, in continental communities and world powers, when nations literally reach for the moon and the stars, it seems to many that the National Day of a small nation has no more significance than perhaps a jubilee of a large company or a special event in a society. To be reminded on the First of August that we owe gratitude to our ancestors, is no longer acceptable in these dynamic modern times. And as to thanking God for protecting our country — well, doesn't that seem rather old-fashioned?

The word patriotism has acquired a bad flavour. In Switzerland as elsewhere, the critics are rampant; there is social unrest, even though its forms may be less demonstrative than elsewhere. Some of the criticism voiced is well informed and well founded, and many a change for the better has been brought about.

Just where do we stand on 1st August when we celebrate our National Day in a few weeks? If all we do is to go to our respective celebrations, sing "Trittst im Morgenrot daher" and listen to the Federal Pact, dance and enjoy ourselves, we might as well stay at home and forget the day altogether. Mothering Sunday, the Day of the Sick, Remembrance Week, National Day of Thanksgiving and Prayer are in the same category. They are of little significance if, for the rest of the year, we ignore the sick and the afflicted, forget the good of the country, lack in courtesy and consideration and push prayer aside.

The argument is often heard that "to do good" was only a kind of insurance premium. But to that one could say, provided it is done humbly and really benefits somebody, it is still better than not doing it at all.

Likewise, there will be many reasons why you may not buy a National Day Badge. Nevertheless, we should like to recommend a purchase. You have read on the previous page what the National Day Fund stands for and what it plans to do with this year's collection. The Swiss in Great Britain, too, will have a chance of buying the badge whose design you saw overleaf: a red and white silk cord from which hangs a "golden" cube made up by four crosses. Last year, the collection made by the Swiss communities in Great Britain amounted to about £230. This year, the price of the badge will be 4/—, less than the price of a packet of cigarettes. The societies at their meetings, the Embassy and Consulate, Swiss schools and other institutions will have badges for sale, and there is a chance to buy them at the National Day Celebrations on 1st August.

After what I said earlier, the question is inevitable—"Why should we buy one?" Not as a must, not out of patriotism, and most certainly not to please the writer who is a member of the *Bundesfeier-Spende*; (for the first time in its history, the organisation has elected four compatriots living outside Switzerland))

But simply because the money is needed badly for a good cause. And if, in the process, we remember for a moment all we have reason to be thankful for as an individual, and as a Swiss we shall be the richer.

It was none other than Churchill who said in the 'twenties: "To give something, however little, is the best way to feeling rich".

MM

## AUSTRIAN STATE VISIT

### Bundespräsident Jonas in Switzerland

On 19th May, the Austrian Head of State paid Switzerland an official visit. 69 year-old Dr. h.c. Franz Jonas, his wife, accompanied by the Foreign Minister and Mrs. Waldheim, as well as a number of diplomatic personages arrived in Berne (via Zurich) in a "Balair" Fokker Friendship aircraft. In Zurich, the party had been received by Federal Councillor Spuehler, Switzerland's Foreign Minister. In spite of cold and showery weather, 1,000 people awaited the visitors on the Belpmoos, Berne's airport, Austrians and Swiss. A guard of honour was formed by soldiers of a *Rekrutenschule* in Thun, and the President of the Swiss Confederation and Mrs. von Moos welcomed the guests officially. Members of the Berne cantonal and municipal Councils and a number of important personalities, both Austrian and Swiss, were in attendance.

In the afternoon, the guests were given a cordial welcome at the "Federal Palace", after a drive through the beflagged town where enthusiastic masses gave the President and his party a warm welcome. The relationship between Austria and Switzerland have always been cordial. This was expressed in the official addresses at the *Bundeshaus* given by the illustrious visitor and Federal President von Moos. The day ended in a banquet offered by the Swiss Government at the Berne *Rathaushalle*.

Our women readers may like to hear that Mrs. Jonas received a gold wristwatch and Mrs. von Moos a *petit point* evening bag. The Austrian President was presented with a modern table clock and Minister Waldheim with a clock, too, whilst the Swiss *Bundespräsident* was given a group of horses in Augarten porcelain.

On the second day, Federal Councillor Tschudi accompanied the visitors to Geneva to pay a visit to CERN. In the afternoon, at the wish of Dr. Jonas, the party visited Bienne and the Omega watch factory. The reason for the request was because of a special aid campaign the Bienne people had organised for the badly-hit Florisdorf district of Vienna at the end of the war. In the evening, Dr. Jonas gave a banquet to the Swiss Government at the Bellevue-Palace Hotel. That afternoon, the Foreign Ministers of the two countries had a meeting to discuss various European problems of interest to both countries.

Federal Councillor Celio accompanied the Austrian party to Zurich. On the way, a wreath was put on the grave of Otto Kunz, initiator of the above-mentioned campaign "Biel hilft Florisdorf". The Aargau authorities welcomed the visitors. A visit to Escher Wyss company in Zurich preceded a reception by the Zurich authorities, and afterwards, the guests left for home, not without expressing gratitude for the warm welcome and what Switzerland had done for Austria.

(Agence Télégraphique Suisse.)

## SWISS-ITALIAN LORRY DISPUTE SETTLED

During the past few months there have been difficulties in connection with the road traffic between Italy and Switzerland. The Italian Minister of Transport and the head of the Federal Department of Communications and Energy, Federal Councillor Bonvin, met in Lugano and were able to come to a settlement after several hours of negotiations. Italy grants Switzerland 250 return permits a month for the so-called three-country traffic. Switzerland on her part will put suitable rolling stock at Italy's disposal for the combined road/rail transit transport through Switzerland. The new ruling which settles the "lorry battle", has come into force on 1st June.

(A.T.S)