

News from the colony

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NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATED IN THE NORTH

The 1st of August, 1973, 682nd anniversary of the Swiss Confederation, is a date revered by even the most modest of Swiss, an event which conjures the image of ringing bells, bonfires brightly burning on mountain summits. This date is still rich in meaning to many compatriots in Britain after many years away from the homeland. This explains the full support for a function which honours those humble men of the remote past who did not hesitate to place, with God's help, the seal of perpetuity to this unique act of state, known as the "Bundesbrief".

It was in memory of this occasion that we of the Northern Counties of England once again met at the Cottons Hotel near Knutsford.

People gradually began to fill the hospitable and warm rooms of the hotel, a welcome haven to all those who had a long and dreary journey behind them. The inviting and richly-stocked bar was a special attraction – a happy start to the evening. We could see amongst us a sizeable group from the Yorkshire Swiss Club which had organised special transport from Bradford and Leeds. It was also most pleasant for us to greet our Consul-General and Madame Born and so have the opportunity of a few words with them; their presence on such occasions is always very much appreciated – more so as we all know how manifold and exacting their many duties of office must be and how difficult sometimes it must be for them to be with us. We intermingled in animated and friendly conversation, aperitifs freely circulating, making us forget all notion of time.

We then gradually moved to the neighbouring rooms tastefully decorated with lampions and the large Consular Swiss Flag prominently displayed in the background. Specially admired were the lovely table arrangements, with bannerettes and decorated with red-white ribbons, offered and personally put in place by our President who, to our great fortune, is a well-known "rubanier". The buffet-dinner consisted in the main of Monumental St. Galler Schueblig, specially flown in by Swiss-Air, very sincere thanks being expressed to its manager, Mr. A. Weber. We had a good selection of salads followed at the very end by the traditional strawberry-tartlets... as a matter of fact I heard that some were lured to this evening to have the possibility of a bite at them. Wines could be had, at a price, from the bar, a good and rich selection. Everything ended with a good cup of coffee.

Also this year the Committee was able to engage Mr. Hans Bertulett and in the course of the evening we were gladdened by his brilliant concertina playing, folksongs and sometimes helped along by discreet recorded music. Our good friend "Hans of Switzerland" turned out to be an excellent toastmaster.

Our President, Mr. Peter A. Senn, opened the official part of the evening by welcoming everybody present, specially singling out our Consul General and Madame Born; also Mr. Bernard Simon who with his family came all the way from London to be with us; the members of the Yorkshire Swiss Club who attended "en force"; Mr. A. Weber the man behind the Schueblig; Mr. H. Bertulett the musician, singer and toastmaster. His words were warmly received and he then invited our Consul General to address us.

He did this in his usual clear way, easily understood and introduced us to the many problems with which Switzerland is faced. There is still the unsolved question of the Jura and the impact of foreign labour and the influence it may have on the Swiss way of life. Today's educational system and how it can best be harmonised in the light of Cantonal and Federal Government. How our Country tackles – quite successfully – the sometimes interlocked problems of water, air and soil pollution and environment in general.

He made us aware what the overheating of an economy can create, a situation of great expansion and boom, overshadowed by a rampant inflation. Mr. Born touched also on matters of a more political nature, such as our position in relation to the European Community and how our trade has now been firmly linked, in a favourable way, with its member states. He continued by explaining to us that we are now active members of many specialised committees of the United Nations without that endangering our status of the perpetual neutrality, our support for the developing countries and our special interest in European security and all it stands for. He concluded by brushing on various aspects, particularly important to the Swiss abroad, such as the working of the Old Age and Survivors Pensions, the Military exemption tax and its discontinuation after a certain stay abroad, and the right of vote in Swiss affairs, under certain conditions, thus dispensing with this bad feeling of being a second-class citizen. He finished with a thought for how much everyone of us should be grateful for what history gave

to our country.

His words were very well received and warmly applauded, after which everybody stood up to join in the singing of our National Anthem and listen to the Botschaft of the President of the Swiss Confederation.

This year we also gave our children the chance to take a more active part in our celebrations and, unknown to us, a great activity had taken place in the quiet just outside the hotel, when under the loving and watchful eyes of some of our members, lighted Swiss Lampions, kindly offered by our Consul General were handed over to them. Led by the music of our "Hans", a procession was soon formed, and joined by the rest of the company we reached the place where a huge 1st of August fire was burning, creating almost daylight and warmth for many of us. Soon fireworks started, supervised by the usual professionals, and for a long time great animation reigned amongst grown-ups and alike until the flow back to the hotel started, where drink and dance were awaiting us and happy and invigorating fellowship to last to the very end. In this way the first, almost timid departure went almost unnoticed but eventually everybody had to leave, happy to have been able to partake in such a wonderful function and thankful to the Committee and the few ones for having arranged everything in such an efficient way.

Epilogue which really is a prologue... the previous evening, several of our friends had the opportunity to meet in the lovely residence of our Consul General at Bramhall, Cheshire, and enjoy the warm and generous hospitality of the lady of the house, Mrs. Trudi Born, who also on such occasions supports so brilliantly her husband's activities. To this cocktail party were invited the Consular Corps and notables of the City of Manchester, local government and representatives of its cultural, industrial and commercial life. Also some members of the Swiss Committees of the Manchester, Yorkshire and Liverpool Societies were there. Specially noted were the Lord Mayors and their ladies of the cities of Manchester and Leeds; what a thrill for the many Swiss present to be able to shake hands with Mrs. Davidson, the Lady Mayoress of Leeds, the first and only Swiss Lady Mayoress in these lands and to have some homely conversation in "Schwyer-Dutsch" with her.

The following morning, which happened to be the 1st of August, an interview was broadcast by the B.B.C. in which Mr. Born explained the historical background of our national celebration, a fitting start for our own evening function at Knutsford.

E. BERNER

Swiss General Manager



A compatriot, Mr. Pierre Rene Spittler has recently been appointed as the new General Manager of the St. George's Hotel, Langham Place, London. This hotel which is part of the Trust Houses Forte group occupies the top six floors of a fourteen storey building just opposite All Souls Church and the West End headquarters of the BBC. Other London hotels in the Trust Houses Forte group are: Grosvenor House, Brown's, Cavendish, Hertford, Hyde Park, Kensington Close, Russell, Waldorf, Meurice.

Prior to his present appointment he was manager of the Upper Reaches, Abingdon, a Trust Houses Forte hotel. Mr. Spittler was General Manager of the Royal Trafalgar in 1970 and of the Royal Kensington in 1969, both of which he opened. During the course of his career in this country he also worked at the Dorchester, Mount Royal Hotel, Savoy and the Bull Hotel, Long Melford.

At 42 Mr. Spittler is now in charge of a luxury and select hotel with a plush restaurant on the top floor, offering a panoramic view of London. The restaurant is frequented by an

international clientele and business executives. He is in charge of a staff of 120 and is responsible for the welfare and comfort of his guests. The 83 rooms are equipped with bathroom, radio and television. The entire hotel is air-conditioned.

Mr. Spittler's commune of origin is Douanne, in the vineyards above the Lake of Biel. His hobbies include theatre and skiing, a sport which he practises every year at Davos. Born in Lausanne, he began his hotel training at the Beau Rivage, Ouchy, and at the Kulm Hotel, St. Moritz. He is at present one of four Swiss managing hotels of comparable importance in London. We wish him plenty of success in furthering the prosperity of the St. George's and the Trust Houses Forte group.

A FRENCH MINISTER AT THE SWISS CHURCH

On Sunday, 29th July, the two Swiss Protestant parishes of London packed the church at Endell Street on the occasion of Pastor Nicod's farewell sermon. Rarely had one witnessed such an important congregation during the past years. This was also the Rev. Denis Muller's last appearance. He had assisted Mr. Nicod for the past two years. Following a moving service, both knelt down before the altar for a laying-on of hands and benediction by Father Bossard and the Rev. Uli Stefan. Many parishioners remembered that a similar ceremony, applied to all those in the congregation who had willed it, was carried out at Rev. Dietler's farewell sermon earlier this year.

Mr. W. H. Worpe, Vice-President of the Consistoire, then said a few words conveying to both ministers best wishes for their careers. Pastor Nicod was offered a coffee set given to him by the parish and the Rev. Muller received a book of all the historical sites of Britain.

The following week, the service was conducted by the new assistant minister, Marcel Christinat. A week later, the Rev. Michel Languillat had arrived from Toulon to take over. The French-speaking Swiss church in London is now in the hands of a French minister. Arriving in London during the heat wave of early August, he found the weather as stifling, if not more than on the Riviera and in Tunisia and Algeria, where he had previously exercised his ministry. He will doubtless learn soon enough of the sullenness of the British weather. But in the meantime, he experienced the long distances of London and the time spent in travelling by all who have to work in the capital. His ministry here will certainly be different from Tunis and Algiers. We wish him all the best for this new phase of his career and all the support and prayers of his new parish.

PMB

THREE SWISS GIRLS LOSE EACH OTHER IN SCOTLAND

Hitch-hiking can be an interesting way of travelling provided one is not in a

hurry. Not only is it free, but one occasionally gets the gift of a meal or a bed. Of course, this is more likely to happen to young and sympathetic people — especially lone girls. But relying on the generosity of motorists also has its drawbacks. The less lucky hitch-hiker may be forced to contemplate the same piece of open country while he waits hours on end for a lift. This wait can occasionally last for a day or more as motorists tend to be less and less benevolently inclined towards hitch-hikers and their bulky gear.

Girls have it easiest. They are more readily picked up by motorists because they apparently consider the risk of being mugged reduced. Some motorists never miss an opportunity for female contact. Uncertainty on just how far this contact going to be pursued leads girls to team up together when they hitch-hike. Unless they are holidaying with their boyfriends, they always operate in two's or three's.

This is not without inconvenience. Three girls who last month tried to hitch a ride to Scotland can testify. Their adventure resulted in a nationwide police alert and plenty of comment in the Swiss press. The three girls, all compatriots, were making for Edinburgh, where two of them were to work as au pairs. Hitching their way up north, they were offered a lift for two by a motorist. The offer being accepted, the third girl was left by herself. Preferring for her own security to take a bus, she arrived after the others at Edinburgh one Monday evening. The youth hostel where the three were supposed to meet was full. The girl left a message for her friends and sought a bed in one of the other three youth hostels of the town.

They were apparently booked as well. She left a message for her friends in each of these premises and found some cheap accommodation elsewhere.

The following day she continued her search for her friends but without success. She explained her problem to the police, who were however unable to assist her and didn't contact other authorities. As no message had been transmitted the other two girls were also getting worried. After unsuccessful efforts to find their lost friend, they notified the police, who in turn informed the Swiss Honorary Consul, Mr. Otto Hartmann.

By Wednesday night, there was considerable concern all round. The lost girl's father had been notified and it was decided to make a nationwide television and press police message. This was made on Thursday and referred to the lost girl being possibly abducted by a male motorist. But she had in fact left Edinburgh and headed for Fort William, where the three had planned to be on Thursday. It was there that contact was eventually established between her and the Consulate. The three girls' excursion had to end on that day because the two who had remained in Edinburgh had to begin work. The other returned to Switzerland where she deserved a good rest from these emotions.

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