

1st August 1979 - message by the Swiss ambassador

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1st AUGUST 1979 – MESSAGE BY THE SWISS AMBASSADOR

Dear Compatriots:

Our National Day reminds us that our nation is at least 688 years old, which is quite a respectable age. And as most old people do not make a great fuss about their birthdays, our 1st August celebrations in Switzerland are rather modest. There are no patriotic outbursts.

I do not blame our compatriots at home for their lack of fervour. In fact, many of them regard the 1st August as a somewhat boring day; particularly if it rains, spoiling the planned car trip to the nice little restaurant on the shores of one of our beautiful lakes or on a mountain-top from where you can count the bonfires. And even those whose sense of duty leads them to participate in one of the numerous communal celebrations have to make a special effort to get themselves into a patriotic mood. As the evening progresses, and with the help of some glasses of Fendant, Neuchâtel, Maienfelder or Veltliner, they warm up and express their feelings for our homeland loudly and eloquently. At such moments the Swiss at home realise that the old lady, Helvetia, is still in good health and that the country as a whole still enjoys a prosperity which others envy us. There is nothing wrong with that.

You and I, who have lived abroad for much of our lives, are aware that the Swiss colonies in foreign countries have a rather different approach

to the 1st August. It is as if they were more conscious of the day's significance; more conscious, too, of the great privilege of being Swiss. Not that the celebration attracts bigger crowds than in Switzerland (not even in London!) But they come in a different frame of mind.

This, I think, is partly due to two reasons.

One is that separation — often long and even painful — increases one's affection for the land of one's ancestors, and not only in a sentimental sense, although we should not be ashamed of a little bit of homesickness. It is as if there were a natural law that our esteem for our home country grows in proportion to the distance we are separated from it.

The second reason is, of course, the fact that we Swiss abroad have a unique opportunity to widen our horizons beyond our mountains. By integrating ourselves into another country, with its different history, traditions, political patterns, economic conditions, culture and way of life, we discover new dimensions which we do not experience at home. This enables us to see the problems of our time in a wider context and helps us to understand better the difficulties with which all nations are confronted today. And adapting ourselves to the habits and the life-style of another country makes us more aware —

especially if it is a country whose culture has had such an impact on our own — of the fundamental problems of human relations and of society as a whole.

All this is, I think, of great importance for the attitude of the Swiss abroad. Strangely enough, it produces two results which seem to be contradictory but which are in reality complementary: it makes us at the same time more critical and more tolerant towards our homeland as well as towards our host country. Although "comparison n'est pas raison" — as an old French proverb says — we are inclined to compare, for instance, the great individual liberty of the British with the rather narrow priggishness we all too often find in Swiss everyday life, or to compare our cherished perfectionism with the more relaxed attitude of our British friends.

Both tolerance and criticism can be very healthy, particularly when they are expressed and practised in the friendly spirit which characterizes the relations between our two countries.

On behalf of the Federal Council I wish to thank you for your lasting loyalty to our dear homeland and for the solid bridge you are building to our great host country. A very happy 1st August to you all!

Dr. Ernesto Thalmann

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FRIENDLY SOCIETIES ACT 1974

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pursuant to section 91 of the said Act*

NOTICE is hereby given that the Chief Registrar has this day cancelled the registration of Schweizerbund Swiss Club (Register No. 851W) the registered office of which is at c/o Swiss National Tourist Office, Swiss Centre, 1 New Coventry Street, London W1Y 3MG at its request.

The Society ceases to be entitled to the privileges of a registered society, but without prejudice to any liability incurred by the society, which may be enforced against it as if such cancellation had not taken place.

Date: 22nd June 1979

17 North Audley Street
LONDON W1Y 2AP

Acting as Chief Registrar
A. VOLLMAR.