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WINSTON CHURCHILL IN THE SWISS CAPITAL.

The intended visit of the war-time Premier, Winston Churchill, had been for weeks discussed in the Swiss press, and by the Swiss population.

Those of our compatriots, who have been lucky enough to visit our country recently, have, no doubt, been bombarded with many questions about this eminent statesman, and it must have left no doubt in their minds, that whenever this much looked for visit would take place, he would be assured of a hearty and enthusiastic reception.

No statesman of recent times has ever enjoyed such popularity in Switzerland. During a recent visit the writer was treated to "Winston" cocktails, by the way quite a harmless concoction, and to "Churchill" cigars of a stronger and longer calibre.

The Swiss are generally not a very demonstrative people, but the reception which, some months ago, was accorded to Field-Marshal Montgomery, surpassed all expectations, and was a happy augury for what was in store for another equally famous visitor.

After a few weeks quiet rest enjoyed on the shores of Lake Geneva, Winston Churchill, after having paid a short visit to Geneva where he inspected the Headquarters of the International Red Cross, arrived on Tuesday, September 17th, 1946, in the Federal capital, where he was the guest of the Swiss Government.

Hours before the arrival of the special train, the "Rote Doppelpfeil" of the Swiss Federal Railways, consisting of three carriages, including dining car, was due from Pregny near Geneva, at the Weyermannshaus junction in Berne, thousands of people gathered in the vicinity of the station, where a large contingent of police, troops and boy scouts kept a surging crowd within the barriers.

The journey from Geneva was effected in record time, taking 103 minutes for the distance of 155 km. at an average speed of 88 km. per hour.

The party was accompanied on their journey by M. Paschoud, General Manager of the Swiss Federal Railways. All along the line, large crowds, including school children frantically waving Union Jacks and Swiss flags, cheered the passing of the train; it was indeed a triumphal journey. Miss Mary Churchill,

daughter of Mr. Churchill, spent part of the journey in the driver's cabin.

Punctual to the minute the distinguished visitors arrived at a "Halt" improvised at short notice between Weissenbühl and Wabern, which was at once named "Churchill Station."

On alighting from the carriage, complete with cigar, and giving the "V" sign, Mr. Churchill was vociferously cheered by a vast multitude of people.

He was greeted by the British Minister and members of the English colony in Berne. Mr. Churchill seemed to be visibly moved by the spontaneous reception which he received and for quite a while was unable to find words to express his appreciation.

The visitors then changed into horse-drawn carriages, which took them to the "Lohn" where during their two days' stay, they were in residence as the guests of the Swiss Government.

All along the route through the lovely Gürbenthal via Wabern and Kehrsatz he was loudly cheered by the public who stood three deep to witness the passing of a great statesman, and never let it be said again that the Bernese are "slow," they went right out of their way to express their pleasure, in fact they literally "jumped for joy."

On the arrival of the procession at the "Lohn," Mr. Churchill was received by Dr. Kobelt, President of the Swiss Confederation, and M. Petitpierre, Swiss Foreign Minister, who welcomed him on behalf of the Federal Council and the Swiss people.

A little girl, dressed in the picturesque Bernese costume, presented him with a beautiful bouquet, handing him over a letter of welcome from the Mayor of the town of Berne, and a stained glass window with the picture of the old town of Berne and the figure of the founder of the town, Duke Berthold V of Zähringen (1191). The window bears the inscription "Civitas Bernensis viro noblissimo Winston Churchill libertatis servatori!" (The town of Berne to the great Winston Churchill, the guardian of liberty.)

On the conclusion of the reception the visitors retired to their private quarters, but not before they had cast a glance towards the town where the Münster Cathedral was illuminated in honour of Mr. Churchill.

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On Tuesday morning several horse-drawn carriages called for the visitors at the "Lohn," and in beautiful weather drove them through Belp, over the Hunziken Brücke, and Rubigen to Allmendingen, where, at the Castle of Allmendingen, the party were the guests at a luncheon offered by the Federal Council.

There were present all the members of the Federal Council with their ladies, Federal Chancellor Dr. Leimgruber, the French Ambassador, Monsieur Hoppenot, the British Minister, Sir Maitland Snow, the Papal Nuntius, Msgr. Bernardini, Monsieur P. Ruegger, Swiss Minister in London, Minister W. Stucki, Monsieur Burckhardt, Swiss Minister in Paris, Army-Corps Commanders de Montmolin, Frick and Labhardt, Dr. Seematter, President of the Government of the canton of Berne, Dr. Bärtschi, Mayor of the town of Berne, etc., etc.

Dr. Kobelt, President of the Swiss Confederation, in a few words welcomed Mr. Churchill, to which the latter replied.

Then started the triumphal drive through the Federal capital.

Flags and bunting gave the town a festive appearance, all the schools and most of the offices were closed for the afternoon. The streets on the route were densely packed, and all the windows of the houses which the procession was to pass were occupied by expectant spectators.

Shortly before 4 p.m. the carriages crossed the borders of the town, in the first carriage sat Mr. Churchill with Monsieur Petitpierre, Swiss Foreign Minister. He was accorded a tremendous ovation, cheers and clapping of hands accompanied him all along the route, and at times his carriage was almost smothered with flowers. Mr. Churchill seemed to be very moved by the hearty reception, and time after time he gave the V sign.

On entering the Square of the Town Hall, the "Berne Stadtmusik" played the British and Swiss National Anthems.

Thereafter, an official reception followed. The Federal, cantonal and municipal authorities were present, amongst them Dr. Kobelt, President of the Swiss Confederation, Federal Councillors de Steiger and Petitpierre and General Guisan, the Presidents and Vice-Presidents of the Federal Chambers, and all the members of the Cantonal Government, and Dr. Bärtschi, Mayor of the Federal capital.

Dr. Seematter, head of the Cantonal Government, expressed to Mr. Churchill the pleasure and pride of the population of Berne to have him in their midst, saying amongst other things that young and old are aware that in the greatest hour of danger he carried the banner of democracy and liberty undaunted and together with his valiant allies gained victory over a tyrannical foe. "We are proud," he said, "to wel-

come you to-day in the ancient Town Hall of Berne, which has been the seat of the Bernese Government for centuries. We thank you most heartily, Mr. Churchill, in democratic simplicity, for all that you have done during the world war and for the honour which you have rendered us by your presence."

Mr. Churchill, in rendering thanks for his reception, said: "The overwhelming welcome you have given me will be an encouragement to me to carry on, and will remain in my memory for the rest of my life.

"The cheers I have just heard were not for me as a man, but for my country, for old England, for the British Commonwealth of Nations. With them you associate the resistance offered by freedom against tyranny in every form. It is not possible in these days to divorce freedom from the readiness of those who value it to die in its defence.

"I have not been the enemy of any nation, I have not been the enemy of Germany. But I have always been the enemy of tyranny. To-day the danger is not past. The world outside this sunlit, happy country is dark and stormy. It is my conviction that the Western World will stand together ever closer in common pursuance of the principles for which we fought."

Mr. Churchill concluded his address with some references to William Tell and to the glorious history of our country which has always found men ready to fight against oppression and tyranny, and before resuming his seat he said in French: "Vive la liberté; vive la justice, vive tous les hommes de bonne volonté, et vive la Suisse!"

He was loudly cheered by the entire audience rising from their seats.

After paying a short visit to the "Grossratssaal," where the members of the Council had assembled in special session, he left the Town Hall to return to the "Lohn," again all along the route he was wildly cheered.

In the evening a reception was held at the British Legation to which the members of the Federal Council, the Diplomatic Corps and Federal, cantonal and municipal authorities were invited.

This concluded the séjour of Mr. Churchill in the Federal capital, and on Thursday, he left for Zurich, where he delivered a speech to the students at the University, which has been widely published in the English press.

The Swiss people thus have expressed their heartfelt thanks to the man who has in the darkest hour of the war unflinchingly carried on his heavy burden and never submitted to failure, his courage and his enthusiasm has saved the world from tyranny and oppression, and if Switzerland is to-day still a free country it is thanks to Winston Churchill, and it must have been to him a source of satisfaction that his glorious services to mankind have been acknowledged again outside the realms of his own country.

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