

**Zeitschrift:** The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK  
**Herausgeber:** Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom  
**Band:** - (1971)  
**Heft:** 1622

**Artikel:** National day reflections  
**Autor:** [s.n.]  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-688507>

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capitalist concepts, is getting on to be dramatic. We launched the first of a series of initiatives to improve old age pension benefits."

These and others are the immediate aims of the Swiss Labour Party. No more than practical socialism in fact—the ideology being left in the background. The Labour Party approved of the Russian invasion of Hungary in 1956 but disapproved of their policy towards Czechoslovakia in 1968. Nevertheless, their affiliation with the high instances of the World Communist Movement are rather weak and the Swiss Labour Party has a strong conscience of national belonging.

It is strongly in favour of increased

public aid to developing countries, more protection of the environment and equal pay for men and women. But these are bandwaggon upon which every other movement has been riding and not the original mark of the Swiss Labour Party. It is fair to say, however, that they were among the first to bring these problems out in the open. The Party may be losing its acumen and appear too compromising for the new militants. Mr. Magnin calls it "*le rassemblement des forces progressistes*", which sounds quite inoffensive. The contents of *La Voix Ouvrière* do however remain quite uncompromising, as it is difficult to read such searing criticism of Swiss things elsewhere.

## NATIONAL DAY REFLECTIONS

### Our Ambassador speaks at the Wimbledon Town Hall

My dear compatriots,

You will not be surprised if one of my dominant feelings today is certain embarrassment. Once more a new Swiss ambassador is addressing you! Over the last roughly 10 years you have seen in my position a succession of faces, one after the other, and hardly had you become familiar with one head of mission than another arrived. It may be small consolation to you that these were the ways of destiny and that these rather frequent changes simply could not be helped. However that may be, I for one sincerely hope that it will be my privilege to stay with you for a number of years to come, in this country which I greatly admire and in this my beloved city of London.

Before I ask your permission to tell you a little more about the ideas that occur to me in connection with our national holiday, I should like to thank most warmly the organisers of today's function and among them, in particular, Mr. Berti. He has once more shown his usual efficiency and circumspection in arranging all the manifold details that have to be attended to on such an occasion. I should also like to extend my thanks to the "Musikgesellschaft Diepoldsau", which not only embellishes our celebration and will delight our youngsters when we get to the dancing, but also conveys to us some of the atmosphere of the old country to which we all remain so deeply attached.

While we are celebrating our national holiday today, lots of things are happening in the world at large. The "winds of change" are blowing again with increased vigour. And since we are living in just *one* world, in one way or another world events are affecting us too, and the fact that we

are Swiss does not provide us with any escape from them.

When Federal Councillor Max Petitpierre became our Foreign Minister in the mid-forties, he coined a new slogan for our foreign policy, and this was "Neutrality and Solidarity". In this way he wanted to bring out the feeling that so very obviously dominated us—as far as the older generation was concerned—during the years of the last war. We had sympathised very profoundly with the immense sufferings that the peoples of the world had to endure in that fateful period, and we had tried, within the limited means at our disposal, to help to alleviate them as much as possible. We also felt that, apart from our duties in this most immediate task of healing the wounds of the war, we had to share in the efforts to build up a new and better world. This conviction led to Swiss membership of dozens of international organisations, humanitarian, scientific, technical and others, where we could make our voices heard and where, at the same time, new avenues of thought were opening up before us.

I think a new stage has now been reached for Swiss participation in world affairs. I said a minute ago that we cannot avoid being involved in them anyway. If any proof of this simple truth were needed, it was supplied—in a most striking fashion—by the hijacking of a Swiss aeroplane by Palestinian guerrillas in September of last year. Much to our surprise we found ourselves a victim and—in our efforts to get out of a most unpleasant situation—an actor on the world stage. This incident inflicted a kind of shock upon our entire population and made us aware that there are no passive bystanders left in the world, which has become a very small place indeed.

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What I have just said should not, however, be interpreted as meaning that we have to throw away all that Switzerland has stood for in the past and start again from scratch. The set of values which we have lived by during the last decades and the centuries-long evolution which has made them what they are will certainly remain of utmost importance to us. It would be a sad day indeed when the Swiss came to the conclusion that the qualities by which they are known throughout the world are just so much nonsense and to be discarded without further ado. My most striking experience since I arrived in this country is the enormous sympathy that I find for Switzerland and the Swiss people wherever I go. Obviously, the remarks I hear about our being such a clean, orderly, well-groomed country are, although very flattering, still somewhat exaggerated. Switzerland is no longer all that clean and orderly.

But from my contacts with the young Swiss in particular I gather that their fundamental character has remained the same. They are visibly and understandably shaken by the richness and complexity of impressions with which they are deluged by modern civilisation and which are difficult to digest and sort out. But I see no inclination on the part of the Swiss population to stop being Swiss and just become diluted in a larger whole.

This attitude certainly does not reflect a lack of interest in the world around us and even less a refusal to participate in the shaping of its future. It is rather a feeling that you need a firm base to stand on if you are to act with vigour, consistency and a sense of purpose.

What, then, are the fields in which the Swiss as a people and Switzerland as a country can deploy their energies for the common good? The first is undoubtedly Europe and the efforts within this framework over the last roughly 25 years to make our continent a better place to live in. Switzerland has from the very beginning taken an active part in these efforts and particularly in the rebuilding of the economic structures of Western Europe. When at the end of the fifties events took a distinctly political turn with the creation of the European Economic Community, we had to remember the time-honoured principle of permanent neutrality which, over the centuries, has stood us in such good stead. So it was another course of action we engaged in. As you will recall, our country was then one of the main protagonists of the creation of EFTA, a simple free trade area in which we have been partners ever since with Great Britain and seven other Western European countries. EFTA, which turned out to be an enormous success, was not meant to be an organisation competing with the Common Market—as the European Economic Community is usually called—but rather a corollary, a complementary organisation, in which free trade was estab-

lished, awaiting a solution to the sympathy that we are following the debate going on in this country, at this very moment, about Britain joining the Community of the Six, together with three other countries, Denmark, Norway and Ireland.

Switzerland's sights are not set difficult political problem of an enlargement of the Common Market. This enlargement now seems to be just around the corner, and it is certainly with the greatest interest and quite that high, but are, in their own right, quite ambitious. What we are seeking to establish with the enlarged Community of the Ten is some sort of free trade zone which would include us in the enlarged Western European market, without committing us to the far-reaching, though rather ill-defined, political objectives of that organisation. We feel that by not letting our hands be tied politically, by following a course similar to that of the other neutral powers in Europe—Sweden, Finland and Austria—we are making a valuable contribution to Europe as a whole, a continent in the very middle of which our country is located. Patient and complex endeavours are under way to achieve a relaxation of tension for the whole of Europe. As we see it, the very existence of neutral states like ours constitutes an element of "détente". More than that, by providing a meeting place in a relaxed atmosphere for all those who are striving for greater European unity—statesmen, educators, scientists or just ordinary citizens—our country might not be a negligible

element in the pursuance of these worthy aims.

Apart from Europe, there is the world as a whole in which the Swiss have always felt so much at ease. It is not for nothing that our countrymen are to be found in all four corners of the earth, where usually—as in Great Britain—they are highly successful and well liked in their host countries. To put it briefly: Much remains to be done to make the world into a more peaceful and prosperous place. War, famine and misery of all kinds are by no means eradicated yet. All the best brains and many helping hands are required to achieve a break-through towards a better existence on this earth. As I said at the beginning of my talk, neither Switzerland nor the Swiss as a people can any longer escape being involved in this process. Ways and means will have to be found to do that in our own way, remaining faithful to ourselves and our best traditions but at the same time devoting our hearts and our hands to the enormous tasks ahead of us.

If there is to be any success in this momentous endeavour, the close co-operation of all the people of good will is clearly called for. This working together for a common objective is at the root of the Swiss Confederation and has stimulated its further development. So this feeling of world-wide solidarity should and will inspire all of us, the old and the young, and we shall not have given up being Swiss—quite the contrary—by becoming even more deeply and sincerely citizens of the world.



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