

U R G E N T

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T E L E F A X

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 A : D M F Information
A l'attention de Monsieur
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 Nombre de pages, y compris cette feuille: 5

Concerne : Toasts du CF Villiger

Voici les deux allocutions du Conseiller fédéral Villiger en retour, traduites et adaptées, comme vous nous le demandiez.

L'Ambassadeur de Suisse

Edouard Brunner

 Signature : _____
 


Toast by Federal Councillor K. Villiger
on the Occasion of a Dinner
with Secretary of Defense Cheney

Monday, February 5, 1990

Dear Mr. Atwood, ladies and gentlemen,

I am extremely pleased to have this opportunity to visit you here in Washington. While a trip to the United States is probably an experience for every European, it is definitely one for a Swiss.

It's not just the sheer size of your country, not just the many faces of its landscape and its people which move us: for us Swiss it's also the various similarities between our histories which link our two countries.

Passed along by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the democratic model of the cantons of the Old Confederation, helped to inspire the American Revolution. And, conversely, the example of the United States of America left its mark on the Swiss Confederation of 1848.

Later on, the modernization of the Swiss army in 1874 was strongly influenced by experiences from the American Civil War especially concerning the massive use of troops and the role of the railroad and the telegraph.

Battle experience in the Civil War also had a positive effect on a political career in Switzerland: Emil Frey, from Basel, fought as a volunteer with the rank of major on the side of the Union,

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before going into politics in Switzerland, where he became President of our Parliament and then one of my predecessors as head of the Military Department from 1890 to 1897.

And it is with a special bow to the military that I can remark that even the cultural links between our two countries are symbolized in this Embassy by works of a prominent Swiss artist, Frank Buchser, portraying - of all great Americans - two generals, Sherman and Lee...

Mr. Attwood, ladies and gentlemen,

The revolution for freedom which began more than 200 years ago on your soil is repeating itself today in that part of Europe where freedom and democracy have been suppressed until now.

The postwar arrangement of Europe is in transition. The liberation of the Continent to which your country and your people contributed so much 45 years ago and ever since will perhaps soon be complete.

With this opening come insecurities, too, which could endanger the stability we have experienced up to now. But stability should never become a substitute for freedom. We therefore face the challenge today of building for the Old Continent a new and stable political order based on the values of democracy. The United States has its legitimate place in this process, just as much as a country such as mine which, although not a member of an alliance, has, through its armed neutrality, contributed to maintain peace on our continent and to strengthen Western ideals.

We remain strongly committed to a future of openness and cooperation, a goal I know we share with you. And it is to this common goal as well as to the future of Swiss-American relations that I would now like to raise my glass.

Toast by Federal Councillor K. Villiger
on the Occasion of a Luncheon
Given by Deputy Secretary of Defense Atwood

Monday, February 5, 1990

Dear Deputy Secretary Atwood,
My dear Mrs. Atwood,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank you for the kind words you addressed to my country and to me. I am very pleased to have the opportunity to be with you in Washington.

In view of the latest developments in Eastern Europe, this visit could not have taken place at a better moment.

We live in an extraordinary time. Where recently a wall divided the continent, today the borders are open. Where highly armed troops faced each other with distrust, today the demand for the scaling down of forces becomes louder and louder.

It is clear that this change presents us all with a new situation. Military and national security questions are being more intensively and more openly discussed than before.

The task of a defense minister has not, of course, become easier. On the contrary! Pressure on the military budget is increasing everywhere. In public opinion and in Parliament the consciousness of the threat is decreasing. People see the changes in Eastern Europe, hear the explanations of political intentions. But they do not see the enormous weapon potential that is available. The warnings to remain vigilant are, under the circumstances, of course, not very popular.

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Obviously, we Swiss are also interested in seeing that the current negotiations on arms control and on confidence-building measures in Europe are successful. A European country such as ours has the greatest interest in stable and secure relations on the Old Continent.

We hope that the present efforts of the 23 will lead to a more even military balance of power with more defensive military structures. I also hope that the requests of a small state with an army organized as a militia will find the necessary understanding in the circle of negotiating partners.

Dear Mr. Atwood, ladies and gentlemen,

It is always somewhat bold for a Swiss to draw parallels between his country and the United States. I am quite aware that between a world power and a small neutral European country there are indeed some rather significant differences.

But there are also important similarities, especially our mutual ideals of freedom and democracy. These have left deep impressions on the history of both countries. Just as 13 cantons of the old Confederation defended their independence from external threats, so did your original 13 states gain American independence by fighting.

Today we have before us the task of seeking together solutions to the great challenges which Europe sees itself confronted with. I am pleased I was able to participate today in an exchange of opinions with you on the most important questions of our time. I am convinced that a close American/European partnership and co-operation will contribute to the success of our efforts.