

EMBARGO: 29th April 1980, 15.30

THE SPEECH MADE BY HER MAJESTY QUEEN ELIZABETH II
ON THE RECEPTION HELD AT THE FEDERAL PALACE ON
29TH APRIL 1980, BERNE

Mr. President,

I am most grateful for your kind words of welcome. I am delighted to be the first British Sovereign to make a State Visit to Switzerland. Of course, my husband knows your country and my eldest son, following in the footsteps of countless other British winter sports enthusiasts, has come here to ski. It is therefore with special pleasure that I have accepted your kind invitation to come and see for myself something of your lovely country.

But there is a deeper reason for my visit. You have referred to the friendly relations between our two countries. That our relations should be so close is remarkable when looked at against the background of our widely differing histories. You have built a nation in the heart of the great continent of Europe, undeterred by pressures on all sides. The British are an island people, whose destiny has been shaped by the sea. But we also have a great deal in common. We both depend on commerce and trade for our existence; we share a common love of law and order, and a common desire to live in peace with our neighbours. Perhaps most important is our mutual commitment to the preservation of the freedom of the individual for which man has fought through the centuries and which is becoming more difficult to maintain in this complex modern world.



In addressing these words to you, Mr. President, I am addressing the Swiss people who, through their wise use of the ballot box, have demonstrated over the years their devotion to the ideals of democracy, and who, by their hard work and Christian steadfastness, have turned this land into a haven of peace, justice and prosperity.

The way in which the Swiss people have created unity out of diversity is an example to us all. You have managed to preserve those very differences - of language, religion and culture - which in many countries have been a recipe for conflict and separation. Over the centuries, as Sir Winston Churchill and your own Fritz Wahlen recognised, you have achieved that harmony which we in the rest of Europe should have as our goal. Indeed, it is a harmony the whole world might seek to emulate.

Although the British image of Switzerland has traditionally been one of snow-capped mountains and happy holidays, we have become more and more aware of the Switzerland of scientific and technological innovation and of industrial and commercial excellence. Your distinguished contribution to literature and the arts is becoming ^{ever} better known in the British Isles.

Throughout the world, the name of Switzerland is synonymous with charity and a deep concern for humanity. And with good reason. Wherever in the world there is distress, whether it is caused by earthquake, flood or man-made disaster, we can be sure to find abundant evidence of Swiss compassion. How fitting it was that a Swiss citizen, Henri Dunant, should have been the recipient of the first Nobel Peace Prize; and that the organisation

which he founded and which has itself been awarded the Prize three times, should have as its symbol the Swiss flag with inverted colours: a red cross. Many of my people will remember all their lives the help they received from the Red Cross during the last war. I am very pleased that I shall be able to visit the Headquarters of the International Committee in Geneva during my stay here.

I have spoken of our mutual commitment to freedom. I am therefore especially looking forward to visiting the meadow at Rütli which has so much in common with our own Runnymede, where that great charter of English liberties, the Magna Carta, was signed in the year 1215.

In offering you this copy of the Magna Carta, Mr. President, I would not wish to suggest that the Swiss people have anything to learn from it. It is, rather, a token of the high esteem in which the people of Switzerland are held by my countrymen and I do not think there is a better way in which I could symbolise the bedrock on which the friendship between our countries so securely rests.
