

1st August on 3rd August

On the 3rd of August about 150 People celebrated the Swiss Independence Day together with the Swiss contingent in Nahariyya.

On 1st August 1291 some farmers living in the valleys of the central European Alps decided to rule themselves and to get rid of the nobles. This very day, so tells the history, some brave men met on a steep meadow – the Rütli – at the lake of Lucerne to found a confederation. After defeating the nobles the farmers of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden lit bonfires on the ridges to let the other valleys know about their freedom, a tradition that is remembered every 1st August. The self-rule of the farmers in the mountains spread in the area and after defeating the powerful house of the Habsburgs, who tried to regain control, the growth of the country, which is today known as Confoederatio Helvetica, began. In the following years the Swiss Confederation spread in all four directions from the German speaking parts into areas where people speak French, Italian and Rumantsch.

Some 711 years and two days after the foundation 10 Swiss Military Observers gathered in Nahariyya to celebrate together with the Civilian and Military Staff of UNTSO and their dependants.

After a warm welcome in all the four official Swiss languages by Capt Beat Klingelfuss, SNMO, the Chargé d’Affaires of the Swiss Embassy in Tel Aviv, Claude Altermatt, spoke to the audience. After an address by Col Bertrand Bourgain, DCOS UNTSO, the official part of the Celebration was closed with the playing and the singing of the National Anthem in German and French.

Some 220 grilled sausages with Rösti and salad, 20 kg of Swiss cheese and a lot of wine later Capt Donat Ledergerber, OGG-D, invited the audience to remember the foundation of Switzerland at the bonfire on the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. The children received a Lampion to guide the way.

Returning from the beach, the guests were awaited by a dessert buffet and of course the Swiss folklore band who accompanied the whole evening. After a couple of dances the band played ”Happy Birthday” to Cdr Timo Jautsen, CMPO UNTSO HQ, who opened the raffle by receiving some Swiss chocolate. Ellen Byrne, IRL, helped Maj Graziella Gander and Capt Stefan Fahrlander to draw the tickets to give away plenty of watches, chocolate, knives and other traditional Swiss souvenirs. The highlight of the raffle though was certainly a flight to Zurich generously donated by Swiss International Air Lines.

After the Duty Officer in OGL had guided the last guests to the gate, the Swiss observers closed the evening over a glass of wine, with some pride of the successful evening and even more pride of having sung the National Anthem in German and French without any damage to the ears of the audience.

Come again next year!

By Capt Stefan Fahrlander, MAO OGG-T



The raffle table



Swiss UNMO Maj Graziella Gander and the cheese



The guests.



The traditional Swiss orchestra.



The children with the lampion.



The bonfire on the beach.



The Swiss contingent.