

MEETING IRLANDE

Today is a great day and I am happy to meet you there in this beautiful country to commemorate what happened 50 years ago on that terrible night.

Dear Fred, I am especially happy to see you again in Ireland, this green shore where at that time we disembarked you and some of your unfortunate companions, just off Galley Head.

Green is the colour of hope and life in this land was for you the happy sequel of the terrible experience that had an impact on all of us, in different ways.

Just a few days ago I was talking about that rescue operation, with the Swiss Maritime Office as well as with the Suisse-Atlantique navigation company. This experience made a profound impression on everyone and nobody ever forgot it.

I think that a small country like Switzerland can be proud of its sailors, who behaved the way it was expected of them.

The whole crew of the Celerina, from the captain to the last deck hand did a sterling job. They all worked with their hearts and guts, conscious that each second was precious and could alleviate the drama taking place on that little yellow dot, your life raft floating in the middle of the North Atlantic ocean on that night of 23 September 1962.

But we merely applied one of the most fundamental principles of navigation, the Safety of Life at Sea.

If we succeeded in our mission, it was also thanks to all those who helped us in the background. I am thinking of the other ships that relayed information and of the people on the ground or in the air who sat before their radio transmitter, their desk or their plane's control panel.

For a long period this rescue was considered as the most successful one in the north Atlantic, due to the number of persons rescued.

76 were on board the airplane, 48 of them could be saved from the icy waters of the Atlantic. We cannot commemorate this successful rescue without paying our respects to the 28 that perish during this tragedy. Their family and friends can be sure that we will not forget them.

GO RAIBH MILE MAITH AGAT

Prononcé à la française :

GE RAIV MAILA MAA A-GAT

Thank you