

M. Micheli on "Switzerland and the world crisis" : a lecture at the N.S.H.

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Dass es einen gibt, der es wagt, seinem Volke ein Opfer aufzuerlegen, da sich alle fürchten, ein Opfer zu verlangen, von sich wie von den anderen.

Dass es einen gibt, der die Menschen meisseln will nach seiner Sehnsucht, wie der Bildhauer den Marmor.

The hero feels inwardly that Fascismus, in spite of its enormous capacity for doing heroic and wonderful things, in spite of its success in lifting a whole Nation out of the rut of economic and cultural damnation, is a tragic weapon and that it can succeed only if it puts itself high above all other considerations.

He who is not for, is against Fascismus. There is no middle path, no compromise possible and all other consideration must be and are subordinate to this first principle.

Hence and seeing Fascismus deals, as far as its human raw material is concerned, human beings, each imbued, if not gifted, with the power of thinking and, therefore, each thinking occasionally differently from the other, bitter conflicts.

Conflicts which are one-sided, because Fascismus can remain true to itself only as long as such conflicts remain one-sided.

The other side of the medal makes a very sad picture. Here we have the Liparian Islands and their prisoners, here we have Matteotti! Here we have 200 human beings doing 1,200 years of imprisonment, here we have stiletto and tortures, needles under the fingernails, feet in boiling water, ropes around necks, or, to quote the author:

"Kanäle voll Blut, ja, voll Blut.....doch an den Ufern blühten Recht und Ordnung."

Yes, orderliness and enjoyment of common rights, but only as far as the Duce considers good for you! No right of free speech, hardly of free thought. Spying everywhere, every private house harbouring spies. And over it all the Duce.

It is a very disturbing problem this trying to appraise this Benito Mussolini. Unless we grant a priori, that he is unlike other, ordinary mortals, that he has been called by providence to rule Italy, that his powers which enable him to maintain his system and to bring untold blessings to his people, are really quite exceptional powers and not to be judged by ordinary standards, we would rather be excused passing judgment at all. We busy ants with our strictly limited outlook, as against the godlike self-opinion of the Duce.

This difficulty of bringing our thoughts into line with the colossal vistas without which the Duce could not possibly have done half the work he actually has achieved, frightens us. So does the paraphernalia which surrounds him. When our Journalistic Congressman goes to a Tea Party given by the Duce in honour of the international conference, he walks up the staircase between two rows of black-clad young men, their arms folded over the breast, a stiletto their only, but sufficient alarming weapon. These young men, we are informed, are the bodyguard of the Duce, they are interested in nothing else, not even in love! Their lives are yielded up to the service of the Duce!

From the above extracts and comments, you will gather how intensely interesting this new novel by Felix Moeschlin is.

It left in me a whirlwind of conflicting emotions and it will be some time before my thoughts have clarified themselves. Perhaps the author is right when he makes his hero say:

"Es handelt sich nämlich noch nicht um die Wahrheit. Wir sind viel zu früh. Es handelt sich nur um die Macht. Wer siegt, hat recht. Und wenn die Kommunisten siegen, dann haben sie recht. Die Wahrheit kommt erst viel später."

"Matteotti und ich, wir sind zu früh. Ich glaube wir werden noch eine Weile zu früh sein, vielleicht immer. Christus muss immer wieder ans Kreuz geschlagen werden, sonst wäre er nicht Christus. Ein siegreicher Christus, das ist kein Christus."

More and more disturbing thoughts, not necessarily final ones, not necessarily even correct ones, but... disturbing ones.

Like a clarion call from our silvery, snow-capped mountains, like a crystal-clear, strong and icy draught of refreshing mind-cleansing water, came that really excellent speech of Dr. Bauer, Editor of the Basler Nationalzeitung, who, one evening last week, over the Swiss Beromünster-Radio-Station, talked about

"Die grosse Mission der Schweiz bei der moralischen Abrüstung"

in the course of which speech, Dr. Bauer called upon Switzerland to assert itself in the counsels of the various Nations, so as to bring them back to a proper focussing of the most vital questions and to work together for peace and understanding. Switzerland, a League of Nations in existence and which could and ought to serve as a model for the larger League of Nations or the Federated States of Europe. Thanks Mr. Bauer! After reading "Barbar & Roemer" your speech came as a wonderful tonic and I only wish it could be translated into English and broadcast over here or made to appear in the English Press.

M. MICHELI on "SWITZERLAND and the WORLD CRISIS." A LECTURE AT THE N.S.H.

A confident message of hope regarding Switzerland's ability to weather the worst economic storm, at present raging all over the world, was conveyed by Monsieur Louis H. Micheli to the London members of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique who were present at the last monthly meeting. The lecturer, who will so shortly leave us to join our Legation at Washington as acting Councillor, gave the N.S.H. by his causerie a last and most enjoyable proof of the active interest he has always taken in the society's activities.

M. Micheli prefaced his observations regarding the Swiss position with a comprehensive survey of the chaotic economic and financial conditions prevailing in every part of the world, of the shrinking international trade, the growing economic nationalism and trade barriers, the lack of confidence resulting from such factors as reparation and war debts and finally the monetary earthquake that has overtaken England and so many other countries.

That Switzerland could not hope, and in fact did not escape very severe repercussions of the world crisis was fully admitted by M. Micheli. The comparative detachment which Switzerland managed to maintain before the Great War had become more and more impossible in our age of ever growing international interdependence. The lecturer had recently undertaken a journey of enquiry and observation in Switzerland, and there he heard the same tale of great anxiety regarding the future wherever he went. Our export industries apprehend growing difficulties in the foreign markets and especially in Great Britain, hitherto, their mainstay and chief customer in a world ever less prepared to receive our goods at reasonable prices. And now on top of the depreciation of the pound-sterling, which acts like a 25 per cent. import duty, we have to contend against the fierce temporary dumping duties to be followed by a permanent British tariff.

Still there were grounds for congratulation and hope for Switzerland, the lecturer continued.

Thanks to the solid financial policy of the Federal Government, the careful handling of the monetary situation by the National Bank, the sound business practices both of our important banks and our industries, and last, but not least, the skill, adaptability, industry and reasonably good will of the Swiss workers, we had not only withstood the impact of the world crisis up till now remarkably well, but we could also hope to maintain a tolerable position in the international economic network by a period of redoubled effort, hard work and frugality. The relatively small banking failure in Geneva served only to underline the inherent strength of the more important of our banking institutions. Despite our large credits frozen up in Germany there was an ample liquidity in the Swiss banking position, the possession of a record gold reserve being an additional reassuring factor. The Swiss authorities and public opinion were absolutely united in the determination to maintain the Gold standard unimpaired.

Dr.E.

SWISS TARIFFS IN SIGHT.

M. Schulthess, the President of the Swiss Board of Trade and a member of the Federal Council, speaking at a big assembly on Sunday on the economic situation in Switzerland and the Protectionist tendencies abroad, made the sensational declaration that the Swiss Government might be forced to ask Parliament for liberty of action (plein pouvoirs) — similar to the urgent measures against invasion taken by Switzerland during the war — to protect the Swiss market against foreign goods.

M. Schulthess dealt with the complete change of the commercial policy of other countries in the direction of exorbitant Protectionism as justifying his thesis.

Doubtless the latest legislative measures of England and France and the German-Swiss negotiations have influenced his attitude. Never since the war period has a Swiss Minister spoken as M. Schulthess spoke. All the Swiss papers devote much space to comments on this statement.

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