

The "Frontenbewegung" in Switzerland

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THE "FRONTENBEWEGUNG" IN SWITZERLAND.

When, some months ago, I made a few allusions to the "Fronten" movement in Switzerland, in an article HEIL!, HERE? THERE and EVERYWHERE, which was reproduced in Switzerland, I received various correspondence from people connected with this movement, informing me, that I had formed altogether a wrong conception of the movement, and that some of my statements were misleading. I was told, that my conclusions were influenced by *leaders* which appeared in the principal organs of the Swiss Press, and therefore they were biased.

To this accusation I have a perfect answer: at the time, the above article was written, the "Fronten" organisation had, as far as I am aware, no organ of their own, which expounded their aims, ideas and intentions. As an individual residing outside the boundaries of our country, I was naturally dependent on the views expressed in some of our larger contemporaries at home. I have since been told, that the Swiss Press, with few exceptions, has been antagonistic to the new movement owing to the fact, that almost the whole of the Press at home is influenced, partly owned, or financed by the various existing political parties. I am not concerned with this point, the statement of my informants may be true or it may be exaggerated; to my mind papers such as the "National Zeitung," "Neue Zürcher Zeitung," "Tribune de Genève," "Gazette de Lausanne" and others, tried to take a fair view about this movement, which certainly has created an undeniable stir, especially in the German-speaking part of Switzerland.

There is no doubt that a campaign, which has brought about such heated controversies and discussions at home, should find an echo amongst the Swiss living abroad, to many of which the "Fronten" movement came as a big surprise, owing to the fact, that the stable political conditions in Switzerland for many years, showed no signs of an impending upheaval. In order therefore to seek information and get some enlightenment about this matter, I took the opportunity, on the occasion of a recent stay in Switzerland, to interview some of our compatriots, belonging to various classes, amongst them, some enthusiastically for, some bitterly against it, and not a few absolutely indifferent.—

I am not trying to pass judgement on the merits or the necessity of such a movement, which has reached a point, which, whether we like it or not, has to be reckoned with as a factor, which, sooner or later may have some far reaching consequences. It is as yet far too early to obtain a clear view, and I must satisfy my readers by simply stating a few facts or opinions, which I gathered during my short stay. It has to be remembered that the position in Switzerland with regard to the "Fronten" is by no means a clear one, and still rather confusing. There are at present about a dozen of various "Fronten," in existence; some of which are greatly at variance with each other. The more important ones are the "Schweizer Heimatwehr," which was founded in 1925; the "Eidgenössische Front" of recent date; the "National-sozialistischen Eidgenossen," which are closely connected and influenced by the Hitler movement; the "Neue Schweiz" embracing the lower middle classes; the "Bund für Volk und Heimat," a mixture between some of the old parties and the new "Fronten," and the "Nationale Front," which recently amalgamated with the "Neue Front"; each of the above mentioned bodies have their adherents, and each of them claim to possess the ear of the large masses.

There is, it must be said, a tendency to bring these various parties under one roof, so as to consolidate their position, and thus increase their influence in the political arena; judging from an independent point of view the "Nationale Front" has so far succeeded in embracing a few of the smaller institutions in their fold, whether their endeavours, to form one united front, will be successful, has to be seen.—

It is a curious fact, and has not been denied, that the activities of these "Fronten" coincided with the success of the Nazi Movement in Germany, and with the ascent into power of Adolf Hitler; and here to my mind lies the snag. To many of us Swiss abroad, the wearing of uniforms (apart from our army uniform), coloured shirts, or the salute with uplifted right arm, and the "Heil Hitler" cry, substituted by "Hans," are distasteful, and have estranged us from a movement, which otherwise would have received at least a sympathetic consideration. Whether by coincidence or not the programme of the "Fronten" is in many ways almost identical with the Nazi programme; we have *f.i.*, the "Jewish Question." Colonel Sonderegger, one of the leading personalities in the "Fronten" movement has clearly stated that the Jews in Switzerland must be fought tooth and nail. I have ex-

pressed to some of the "Frontists" my dislike in persecuting a small, law-abiding minority for purely racial reasons, I have termed it mildly as undignifying for a civilised country in the 20th century, to revert to tactics, which were in use in the middle ages. It has been explained to me, that the agitation against the Jews in Switzerland was exclusively directed to those amongst them, who have recently acquired Swiss nationality, or those, who have as political fugitives crossed the frontier of late. Those Jews, who could prove that their ancestors lived for some considerable time on Swiss territory, would not be interfered with. My reply was, that it is foremost the business of the Federal and cantonal authorities to see, that no political refugee should be allowed to accept a position, to the detriment of our unemployed. With regard to the statement, that Jews with a certain number of years residence will be allowed to go about unmolested, I think is cutting things rather fine, where are some of our young fire-brands going to draw the line?

According to the manifesto of the gallant colonel, members of the Freemason's fraternity should share the fate of the Swiss Jews, (rather an amusing company), but here again it is identical with the Nazi manifesto. I am not holding any brief for Freemasonry, not belonging to the fraternity; on enquiring why they should be singled out for extermination I received the laconic answer, because of their *international connections* (!) — A good many of my friends are masons, and I have found them very law-abiding and patriotic citizens; one may well ask the question what about the international labour movement, the communist "Internationale," etc., etc. Another reason, and to my mind rather a poor one, was given to me, that on the occasion of the discussion in the National Council, about the voting of a credit for supplying the Swiss Army with gas masks, a prominent freemason spoke and voted against the proposal of the Federal Council, hence they must be put on the black list.

There are other items which are introduced from *over the frontier*, such as the opposition to big stores, the elimination of existing parties, etc., etc.

In fairness to the actual movement, it must be acknowledged, that a similar adaption of ideas took place after the French revolution, some of which afterwards proved beneficial to the welfare of our country. That the ascent of Hitler into power, has been nothing short of a revolution, not even a child will deny to-day, and it is therefore logical, that a political upheaval of such magnitude in a neighbouring country, should influence to a certain degree, the minds of our younger generation; although one may put on record the fact, that when Mussolini, with an iron hand gripped the wheel of the sinking ship of state, our *Ticinesi* kept on the whole calm and cool. What, I would like to know, would our German-speaking compatriots have said, if our confederates beyond the Gotthard, would have adopted some of the slogans of the Duce?

The "Fronten" movement in German-speaking Switzerland, is watched by our compatriots of the French and Italian tongue, with a certain amount of misgiving, and not a little uneasiness; it is, of course, quite true, that similar organisations exist in the French-speaking part of our country, *f.i.*, the "Ordre Politique Nationale;" the "Union Nationale;" the "Association patriotique vaudoise," etc., but their character is more adapted to local conditions, and does not bear such a distinctive foreign pattern. —

A clear cut programme of the "Fronten" does not as yet exist, one is left at present in the dark about the ultimate aim of their campaign. One may just as well ask oneself the question at this stage, why, and for what reason has this movement come into existence. The answer has been given by their leaders, they bitterly complain that the existent parties have not sufficiently adapted themselves to the new conditions, that an infusion of new blood, and new ideas has been consistently opposed, and furthermore, that the Government has not shown a clear enough lead, and has adopted in many cases a policy of compromising, when a decisive policy was imperative. It has been said, that the governing machine has been proved to be obsolete and old fashioned.

I am not going to state, that everything in Switzerland, is as it ought to be, there is plenty of room for improvement; but when our friends in the frontist movement make the solemn statement, that Switzerland is politically on the brink of ruin, then I am going to say that their statement is grossly exaggerated. One may agree that a party government, or a party rule, may have its serious draw backs, but one must also state, that Switzerland has at least not fared worse, than countries like England, France, America and others, who still adhere to this kind of government.

The future most certainly belongs to the younger generation, the day is theirs, but they must not close their ears to the advice of those, who have for generations honestly striven to maintain the honourable position which our country enjoys all over the world. That mistakes have been made, nobody will deny, as long as humanity exists, mistakes will be made, that super-

human being, who can govern with divine powers, has not yet come into being, but the fact that errors have been made, should not be used as a lever against people, who are directing the destiny of our country in a troublesome time, and they should not be branded as a band of incompetent old women and busy-bodies.—

One bright spot in the endeavours of the "Fronten," is the one, to remedy the laxity existing in the naturalisation laws; and here they deserve the wholehearted support of every Swiss citizen, who has the welfare of his country at heart. The present position is a farcical one, and will remain so, as long as this most important matter is left at the discretion of the cantonal and local authorities. The deciding factor *who* should and *who* should not enjoy Swiss citizenship, should be left to a Federal Dept. The granting of naturalization papers, for, in many cases, ridiculously small sums, has degenerated to nothing less than a "Kuhhandel," and most of the troubles, we had to contend with, in the last few years, can be traced back to the laxness with which this matter has been treated. The Federal Council has shown here a leniency which is simply amazing. For months and months, agitators of foreign origin, were allowed to preach without the slightest interference, — revolution —; as a result we had to register the disgraceful happenings at Zurich, Fribourg and Geneva.

If the "Fronten" succeed in bringing radical changes in this direction, they will go a long way towards gaining the sympathies of those, who at present are standing aloof.

Hand in Hand goes the vigorous campaign against the Communists and Marxists, the "Fronten" demand a sweep with an iron broom, and rightly so. For centuries Switzerland has kept an open door, has given an asylum to all political fugitives, and it would be expected, that these people, who were hounded out of their respective countries, should be grateful for being able to enjoy the hospitality of a free country. Nothing of the sort; with a few exceptions, they have started to poison the minds of our working classes, they have continued to preach the dogmas, for which they had to leave their own country, they have sown the seeds of class hatred, they have insulted, ridiculed and besmirched the honour of our army, and as a recompense for their mischievous work, they have entered the council chambers of our constitutional governing bodies.

On some rare occasions they have been told to behave as good boys, or they would have to quit. — I have been given to read some of the shorthand notes taken from speeches which were held in public, which made my blood boil, and yet if one of these foreign agitators calls at the "Gemeindekanzlei" of one of our smaller communities, with a bundle of banknotes, he will be welcomed with joy, into the fold; should a question be asked in Parliament, the reply will invariably be, that the Federal Authorities are incompetent in the matter, and that the sovereignty of the cantons must not be violated. — Liberté, Egalité et Fraternité!!

Will the "Fronten" movement in Switzerland succeed?; to answer this question is entering into the realm of prophecy, a very dangerous thing to do, where politics are concerned. My humble opinion is, that if the various organizations succeed in finding a common basis, whereupon they can build up one united Front, they might, in spite of a lively opposition from the various parties, make their influence felt.

If they succeed in burying the hatchet amongst themselves; if they are able to get rid of some of their imitations borrowed from alien sources, and which are foreign to us, then perhaps our country will be the richer for this additional party. I say deliberately party, for it is in fact nothing else, although the "Frontists" will not have it called by that name.

There are some people who feel inclined to ridicule this movement, simply treating it as a prank of some young irresponsible people. This is certainly a mistaken policy, these "Frontists" have something to say, and they are going to say it, and a chance should be given to them to state their case; whether we agree with it or not, is another matter.—

One thing, however, worries me, and that is the fact, that our country, like the rest of the world, has and is still passing through a most critical time, is it, one may well ask, in the interest of the country to be split up in innumerable parties, institutions and organisations? is a political *renaissance* at present the most important one? I would have thought, that the economic position is at the moment of much more vital importance. There exists at present, in industrial and commercial circles in Switzerland, a deep apprehension, and never before have I heard responsible people express themselves in such gloomy terms.

To fight this spectre, which is knocking at the door, one "Front" only, is required, the "Front" which is willing to make a sacrifice for the common good, the "Front" which is putting the interest of the country above the one of the party.

In spite of the turbulent and uncertain times, I have the conviction, that our people at home, are still imbued with the old spirit, the spirit which has made our little country a respected nation, and that common sense will enable them to carry on, and that the Swiss emblem will continue to flow over a free and unfettered country.

ST.

US DER HEIMAT.

Wie mänge kennt da schöne Wäg
Vo Gimmelwald uf Stächelbärg!
Es isch ganz gäbig abezlaufe
Nur z'plätzewies a bitzli gäch
Durch dunkelgrüni Tannewälder
Wo z'Sunne i de Gipfle spielt
U zwüsche mossbedeckte Bänder
Gar siblerhell es Bächli springt,
Wo d'Matte si voll Blümeli
Gold Sunnerösli, Hahnefuess,
Wyss sametigi Katzetälppli
Und dä, so giftig, Isehuet;
Gloggebluemli, Baldrian,
Ankebälli, Enzian,
Es het ere vo alle Arte
I däm schöne Gottesgarte.
Die ganzü Gäged isch so prächtig
Es freut ein jede Schritt u Tritt
Rings um d'Bärg gross und mächtig,
Ganz gewaltig nimmts ein mit! —

Un ufs Mol in einer Nacht
Isch verwuestet all die Pracht! —
Uf einisch hets amene schwüele Obet
Es schüssligs, fürchtigs Gwitter gä!
Ganz grässlig het der Sturm ustobet
Grad so als wett'r d'Wält wägnäh! —
Het ganzü Wälder usegrupft
U mit Wurze, Härd u Felse
Wüetig d's Täli abegstüpft!
Het Brügge, Wäg u Stäg mittreit
U se mit heillosem Lärme
Dem Sefinebach i Rache gheit! —
Dä natürl, nid am Schärme,
Seit zum Sturm: "Muesch de nid dänke
I lös mer söttige Dräck ahänke!
So öppis isch nid leicht z'verdäue! —
Druf het er eifach d'Wuet usglo,
Uf alles ringsum ineghaue,
Het unerchant u fürchtig do
U Platz gmacht, afa abezwänge,
Sich alli Müeh gä z'Site z'spränge,
I einem furt, grad wie verschosse,
Höch über beidi Bort us geschosse,
U z'letscht mit Polter d'Bäum u Steine
Uf Stächelbärg lo abegheie! —

Dert het au scho der Schmadrübach
E grüslige Verwüestig gmacht!
U alles wäg gnoh dene Bure!
Mi tüe die Lüt gar grüslu ture!
Es choschet ganz enorm viel Geld
Bis all's isch wieder härgstellt!
Dum, liebi Lüt, tüet öppis büte,
Lönts Z'Härz dürs Portmonaie lo lüchte!! —

H.E.

DER BERGSTEIGER.

Ein junger Mann schreitet einsam daher
Auf schmalen Pfad dem Fels entlang,
Hinauf zu der Hütte zum ewigen Schnee
Führt ihn der Glückliche, mühsame Gang.

Hin zu den Sennen, zu Mutter Natur
Weit weg von dem Rasen und Hasten,
Fern von der Menschheit Ueberkultur
Sich Leib und Seele zu rasten.

Leicht wird der Rucksack, froh sein Gemüt
Ein Jauchzer befreit die beengte Brust,
"Viel schwerer die Bürde, die unten er liess"
Das Echo stimmt bei und teilt seine Lust.

Durch harzduftende Wälder über feuchtfriischen
Moos

An saftigen Weiden, wilden Klüften vorbei
Mit leichtem Herzen, nur tapfer drauf los
Ueber Felsen über Triften, Stock und Stein.

Donnernd und schäumend stürzt ein Bach sich
hinab
Natur's herber Zeuge von Wildheit und Kraft,
Die schimmernden Berge in der Neige des Tag's
Grüssen mit wunderbar, rotgoldener Pracht.

Gesund ermüdet erreicht er die Hütte
Zufrieden mit sich und der ganzen Welt,
Wohl solchem Wanderer, das Gott ihn behüte
Er geniesst das Schönste, ohne viel Geld.

H.E.

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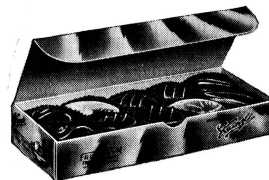
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