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The Swiss Observer

FOUNDED BY MR. P. F. BOEHRINGER.

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SWISS DEFENCE LOAN



REPRODUCTION OF POSTER ISSUED IN SWITZERLAND.

JN a lecture on the situation in Switzerland a well-known Swiss professor recently made the following remarks:—

"There are two extremes to bear in mind, the Present and the Future, and both sheer pessimism and sheer optimism are equally dangerous. The absolute pessimist throws away his weapons beforehand; the absolute optimist is caught, unprepared, by the storm. Times as difficult as the present call for a combination of pessimism and optimism: pessimism in preparing plans and optimism in carrying them out."

This point of view was adopted by the Swiss Federal Council when, during a time of serious political and economic crisis, they were faced with the difficult task of raising the necessary funds for the strengthening of the Swiss Defence Forces.

They were somewhat pessimistic about the political situation in general and the military situation in particular, but they were full of optimism as to the Swiss people's willingness to make the sacrifices which it will be necessary to make if the danger menacing the very existence of their country is to be faced.

It is my task to prove to you that the Federal Council's pessimism is not unfounded; the justi-

fication of their optimism lies with the Swiss people at home and abroad.

It would be impossible to lay too much stress upon the fact that, at the present time, Switzerland is in greater and more imminent danger than she has ever been before. This danger is even greater now than it was in 1914. When we consider political events and grouping in Europe we see that in every case Might is triumphing over Right. Treaties which were seemingly concluded for eternity are broken overnight and have no greater value than the paper on which they were written. In 1914 the different belligerents may have envied each other their wealth and possessions — to-day the countries are not only divided by such considerations but are also opposed in another way: there are Victors and Vanquished, Fascists and Communists — all opposing each other more violently than ever before.

Under these circumstances neither our generally recognised neutrality nor our membership of the League of Nations would serve to protect us, unless we also had the will and the means to protect ourselves.

The year 1914 is still near enough to be remembered by the majority of us.

There will perhaps be some who will say that no great power could have any interest in violating Switzerland's neutrality and independence. I would ask these to cast a glance at the map of Europe. They will then at once see that Switzerland is so situated as to be one of the focal points in Europe. The well-known Austrian Field-Marshal, Radetzky, has described Switzerland's position as follows:—

"This European bulwark, Switzerland, holds the keys to the doors of France, Germany, Austria and Italy on one ring."

It would be going too far to give you a detailed geographical study of the big roads leading through Switzerland to her neighbours. It will perhaps be sufficient to say that more than four big roads lead from East to West, and as many from North to South. All these roads have been used many times in the course of history by foreign armies and, because of these roads, Swiss soil has more than once been conquered and occupied by foreigners, the last time by the French Revolutionary armies under Napoleon.

Owing to the technical development in road-building, it would to-day be still easier to use these means of communication. Up to the most recent times, Switzerland's key-position has therefore played a very important part in the plans of foreign Generals Staffs and it would be easy to enumerate many facts giving evidence of this.

Everyone is free to imagine the grouping of our neighbours in a possible future war as he likes, but however they are grouped, one of our neighbours is bound to be the enemy of another neighbour, and as such would wish to attack that other State on its most sensitive point by the shortest route. And this route would invariably lead through Switzerland.

In order to attack another Power through our country the aggressor would have to effect a surprise attack and break through Switzerland with the least possible delay. The progress made in technical warfare is to-day so tremendous that an unarmed, or badly armed Switzerland could be overrun in a few days. An attack made by a foreign Power flying over Swiss territory would be even quicker than one made by ground forces.

Therefore an unarmed Switzerland, which was not in a position to hold up such an attack by land or by air, would be a danger not only to herself but also to her neighbours, against each of whom an attack of this kind might be directed.

Now what steps would a neighbouring State facing such a danger take?

It would try, by some means or other, to prevent any such attack from taking place, or at least to meet it half-way.

Under these circumstances and in the best case, a foreign army would march through our country unopposed. Of course, this foreign army would use our country as a base for its military enterprises and would not be in a position to respect our independence or our personal property.

In the worst case, Switzerland would serve as a battlefield for the two opposing armies, and it does not require much imagination to realise that this would mean the end of our existence altogether.

The Swiss Government are determined to face these dangers by adapting the Swiss Defence Forces to this situation, and more especially by eliminating the possibility of a surprise attack. Care must be taken that an aggressor would at once encounter such difficulties on his way through Switzerland as to make it impossible for him to proceed for some considerable time. In a word, Time must be our ally against any aggressor.

For this, we need permanent fortifications, modern aeroplanes and modern weapons with which to meet the highly technical equipment of a possible invading army. We must create, by technical means, an organisation which will enable our main forces to concentrate before the aggressor's attack has gone too deeply into our territory. The fact that we are armed and prepared to meet any aggressor will of its own accord make foreign General Staffs rule out the possibility of breaking through Switzerland, as

such a course of action would prove too costly an undertaking and would take too much time and bind too many forces.

The Swiss Government to-day have no funds at their disposal to draw upon and they must therefore appeal to the people to entrust them with the necessary means to achieve their aim. I think that this appeal does not only concern the people at home, but also the Swiss in foreign countries, and it is addressed to those who are still proud of being citizens of an ancient and free Democracy and who have the possibility of taking part in this financial mobilisation.

This appeal, if it is not made in vain, will have the same significance as a Popular Vote, showing that the Swiss people, at home and abroad, consider the existence of Switzerland as worthy of being defended, and showing foreign peoples that it will indeed be defended.

I hope that the Swiss population the Swiss Colony in Great Britain will take the same place as they have so splendidly taken on similar occasions in the past.*

Ch. de JENNER.

* Subscription forms and prospectuses of the Swiss Defence Loan can be obtained from the Chancery of the Swiss Legation (18, Montagu Place, W.1.) and from the Swiss Bank Corporation (99, Gresham Street, E.C.2 and 11c, Regent Street, S.W.1) as well as from the Secretaries of the different Swiss Societies in London.

NOUVELLE SOCIETE HELVETIQUE (London Group).

Monthly Meeting and Lecture by Dr. Gottfried Keller.

The London Group of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique held its customary Monthly Meeting, on Friday last, at the "Foyer Suisse," 15, Upper Bedford Place, W.C., at which about 50 members and friends were present, amongst them Dr. C. Rezzonico of the Swiss Legation.

This meeting was preceded by an excellent little dinner, after which the current business of the Society was dealt with. One feature of the meeting might well be mentioned here, namely the fact, that the members present voted with acclamation a donation of £21. 0. 0 towards the Relief Fund, which was started by the "Swiss Observer" for our compatriots in Spain.—

The main object of this gathering, however, was to listen to a *causerie* by Dr. Gottfried Keller, London representative of the "Agence Telegraphique Suisse" and *on Printing, Newspapers, Journals and all that...*

Mr. Campart, who presided over the gathering, in the absence of Mr. A. F. Suter, President, introduced the *conférencier* to the audience.—

There are times when an editor is terribly "hard up" for copy, there are other times when week after week articles have to be shelved for lack of space. Unfortunately for our readers we are unable to publish the *causerie* of Dr. Keller *en extenso*, owing to the fact that the "Front page" of this week's issue has been booked by a "higher authority."

Our readers are unquestionably the losers, because the clever *exposé* of Dr. Keller would have well warranted a complete rendering. Bowing, however, to circumstances "beyond control," we shall only be able to give an abridged report of the lecture in question. —

The first part of the *causerie* was devoted to the description of the work of an editor of a Swiss Newspaper, and according to what was said, nobody would envy the job of an editor. It is a matter of "all work and no play," and undoubtedly the English Newspapers with their extensive staff of editors and sub-editors are in a much more enviable position than their colleagues in Switzerland. The lecturer's plea to sympathise with an editor, will undoubtedly find an echo in some of the "bosoms" of his hearers.

Dr. Keller then gave us an exhaustive résumé of the work of a foreign correspondent abroad, and much to the amazement of some of the "Uneingeweihte" he related that the principal part of his work is done between 1 a.m. and 3 a.m. when he dictates over the telephone the news to the New's Agency in Berne. Just fancy, when most of us enjoy the second part of our "beauty" sleep, our friend is busy acquainting our countrymen in Switzerland with the latest news.

He certainly has my deepest sympathy, it so happens that my editorial duties keep me up sometimes to this "ghastly" hour, as he termed it; the difference, however, between he and I is, that he has finished by 3 a.m. dictating, whilst the "dictating" starts with me soon after this unearthly hour. —

The audience greatly enjoyed the very interesting *exposé* of the League of Nations Council sitting which took place at St. James's Palace early this year, reviewing the arrival of States-

men from many countries. Having been an "outside" onlooker on that memorable occasion it brought back vivid remembrances to me; and some consolation too, as it seems that I saw as much, as some of my more fortunate colleagues who were provided with entrance cards.

For the majority of the audience, the most important part of the *causerie* was undoubtedly the one dealing with the English press, and for the benefit of the readers of this paper we publish this part *en extenso*. —

"In a third and last part of my "causerie," I am going to sum up in a few words the impressions I have of the English Press. Such a review has, of course, to start with *the paper*: The Times. For the Times seems to me to belong to England as much as does the Crown. You may think that such a comparison is exaggerated, but I dare say that the Times is something like a king among the English newspapers. Its size, its paper, its print, its prize distinguish it from the rest of the papers. The Times can afford to charge 2d. a copy, for it has tradition and might, has a name and a lot of influence. The Times is a might that makes its own policy, not depending on any party or concessions whatsoever. The Times is, of course, conservative in its policy, but, as I say, independent of the conservative party. All the articles are unsigned, for the idea is that the name of the paper shall give it its name and authority, shall make the article valuable, not the name of the contributor, even if the contributor happens to be a cabinet minister or a professor or some other big noise. He who can afford to study the Times gets the best information in the world, for the system of information the Times has cannot possibly be beaten.

It takes, as you know, hours to study the Times carefully. There is, therefore, only a small and select number of readers who regularly read the Times: bankers, industrialists, government officials. The circulation is relatively small: it is believed to be round about 100,000, whereas the big sensation papers like Express and Mail have a circulation of 2 millions.

Daily Express and Evening Standard are papers, which, as you know, belong to Lord Beaverbrook. The Express addresses a class of people who want to get their information in big headlines. Headlines that you look at and forget quickly, comments that are written in somewhat sloppy style. Much news of the law-courts, much sensation, much society-talk and sport. The Express is the paper for the Underground: during the half hour you travel you get all the sensation you want and you get something to talk about during your lunch-time. As far as politics are concerned, the Express as well as the Standard, believe in Splendid Isolation. Both papers are Lord Beaverbrook's gramophones, the Standard addressing a class of readers which are perhaps a bit more intelligent than the regular Express-readers.

Morning Post and Daily Telegraph do not differ very much from the Times. They are both well made up, nicely printed, of good appearance, solid, English. Both papers are very well informed, the Telegraph being well connected with the City and through Mr. Gordon Lennox with the Foreign Office. The Morning Post is considered to be more or less the official conservative paper. Their route and direction, as far as politics are concerned, is, more or less, a constant one. As far as authority and name are concerned, I would place the Daily Telegraph and Morning Post in the rank of cardinals, giving the Times the rank of the pope.

Among the big provincial papers I should like to mention the Manchester Guardian, which can be compared with the Frankfurter Zeitung as it used to be before Hitler came into power. There is tradition there too and authority. The Manchester Guardian is the main paper of a rich industrial town, liberal-democratic, not anti-semitic.

News Chronicle and Star are the two liberal papers, that at one time were under the influence of Lloyd George. They are now under the influence of Lord Reading and are both backed by Jewish capital. News Chronicle has become well known abroad by its attitude during the Abyssinian war and by the very combattant but cleverly written articles of its diplomatic correspondent Vernon Bartlett.

The Daily Mail is a chapter by itself. Brought into being by the late Lord Northcliffe, it was thought to give to the people what they want: sensation and plenty of it. The Mail is even more of a sensationmonger than is the Express. Its headlines that sometimes are nearly as big as half a page kill the interest of the reader. He reads what the Mail gives him and does not want more. The Mail is one of the best paying papers in the world, for one has to admit that it is well written and quite cleverly made up for its purpose. Its level, in my opinion, is lower than the level of any Paris Boulevard paper.

Everything with the Mail is tendency, sensation. In its kind I would nearly call it genial, for it flatters the masses and their sometimes low instincts. Reading it is no work and no profit.

neither does it need any brain. Reading it is comparable to reading a thriller of Edgar Wallace's.

Papers like the Daily Herald (labour) have difficulties in existing, for they want to be serious. They cannot afford to charge more for a copy than the Mail does and yet they do not want to deal in sensation only. No wonder that one often hears about financial difficulties of this type of paper.

The same man who created the Daily Mail, also created the illustrated papers like the Daily Mirror, Daily Sketch, and so on. They address a public that can neither read nor think; a public that is only able to look at pictures. They are the papers preferred by ladies and landladies, by women who travel to town for shopping. They contain, what most women want: fashion, society chat, recipes for cooking, advice on how to make a nice pullover for Grandpapa. They inform their readers about the latest hat that has been created by the Duchess of Kent, about the frock that Lady Somebody wore on occasion of such and such a ceremony. They also show pictures of the Prime Minister in slippers, of the King in plus-fours and they know that the masses simply love these things. They eat, like Lyon's for rather low-brow, people.

A lot more could, of course, be said about the English Press. I ought to mention the system of the letters to the editor, which is a very good and clever sort of exhaust valve that enables the readers to let off steam, and which at the same time does not hurt anybody. I ought to mention the Sunday Press, particularly the valuable papers like Sunday Times and Observer, I ought to speak of *Garvin* and *Scrutator*. Furthermore, I ought to speak about all the magazines like Strand Magazine, like Tatler, Bystander, Vogue, about serious periodicals like New Statesman, and Nation, like Spectator, about the rather comic ones like the Saturday Review of Lady Houston but I am afraid it is impossible for me to go into all these details.

I may add, that funnily enough, England and Switzerland are the two countries where there is proportionately the biggest number of newspapers. Whether this is an asset or not, I leave it to you to decide. In Switzerland the number of dailies is more than 400, in England more than 3,000. The number of weeklies, periodicals and illustrated papers, I have not been able to ascertain exactly, but I know that the same applies to these as to the dailies: Switzerland and England have got the biggest number of them.

There is a saying, that every country has the press it deserves. Whether this is true or not, I cannot say. All I can say is that press work is interesting, though sometimes trying work and having tried to explain to you the difficulties under which we sometimes work, I think I may ask you in the name of all my colleagues to be lenient when passing sentence on a paper."

The last sentence of the title of this lecture closes with the word "and all that" which gave an opportunity to one of the members present, and a good friend of mine, Mr. W. B. Sigerist, to sum up with a very clever impromptu speech, the impression he gained by listening, first to the speaker, and secondly to the various persons who took part in the discussion.

Mr. Sigerist has no doubt decided ideas about journalists in general, because he recited one of his own poems dealing with this much maligned profession, although perhaps his conception is none too flattering it well deserves publishing if only for his subtle wit. Here it is:

DER JOURNALIST.

Wer sitzt bei jedem Gala-Feste
Mit weissen Schlipps und weisser Weste
Im tadellos geschnittenen Frack
Mit einem Freibillet im Sack
Am Platz wo es am schönsten ist?

Der Journalist.

Wer rennt und rast und rettet, siehtet,
Wie Schiller das so schön gedichtet,
Vom morgen früh bis Mitternacht,
Wo er sich schwarzen Kaffee macht
Bis dass ihn seine Muse "kissed?"

Der Journalist.

Wer hat ein Hirn, das so phantastisch
Gewandt, gerieben und elastisch
Die Wahrheit knettet, siebt und windet
— Was es nicht weiss dazu erfindet —
Bis dass der Brei verdaulich ist?

Der Journalist.

Wer weidet sich an Konferenzen,
An Streik und Krieg und Pestilenz?
Wer spitzt den Bleistift voll Entzücken
Wenn sie Europa neu zerstückt
Der Nazi und der Bolchevist,

Der Journalist.

Wer wäre meistens auf dem Hund,
Wenn nicht vom lieben Völkerbund
Die Herren mit den satten Mägen
Sich ständig in den Haaren liegen,
Woraus ihm Milch und Honig fliesset?

Der Journalist.