

Letter-box

Objekttyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): **- (1943)**

Heft 1016

PDF erstellt am: **03.05.2024**

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"*Terre des Hommes Libres*" is perhaps a unique, at all events an outstanding product of the film industry by virtue of its combination of silent, natural unvarnished scenes and figures with a beautifully spoken and wholly sincere commentary, adorned and accompanied by music so aptly and harmoniously attuned that one hardly missed the roar of the torrent, the echo from the mountain, the mooing of the cattle, the swishing sound of the whetstone against the scythe, or the hammer's rhythmic ring on the "Tengel-eisen"; and who had thoughts to spare could imagine, or read on the faces, the dour humour exchanged in the market place and the joyful badinage of the "Chilbi."

"*Ceux d'en Haut*" presents the soldiers' life in the high mountains. It also is unadulterated fact and actuality, a drama between man and nature. It gives away no military secrets since the steadfastness of our alpine troops is as universally famous as the grandeur of their scenes of action. We are not taken underground; the drama is played on the surface and the "enemy" is the ever present hazard of nature's wildness in the heights and depths of our Alps. Views of grandiose scenery alternate with aspects of the soldier's daily round, on duty and in such recreations as a post in remote hamlets can afford. The main attraction lies in the skiing and mountaineering skill of a reconnaissance patrol of which a detachment gets lost in the mist and is overtaken by an avalanche, the beginning and progress of which are admirably well photographed. There are moments of intense suspense: when the storm envelops the men blotting out their view and their path; when, overtaken by night, they sink exhausted in the shelter of a rock but dare not rest for fear of freezing; in the valley below, where at the peal of the alarm bells a rescue party is hurriedly called out and equipped; at the "sermon," simple intimate talk from man to men, lifted above sects, of one creed in the Maker and of one duty: to discipline self for the service of the universe; the interruption of this simple service for the drafting of the rescue party, followed by a fervent prayer fading out in the sublime infinity of space; the struggling ascent of the ski-shod rescuers laden with sack and rifle, pick, shovel and rope, or trailing a heavy sleigh with provisions and fuel up the steep mountainside; the descent by the rope from an overhanging rock to reach the fallen comrade buried in the avalanche with broken limbs; the lovely dog gripping on to the edge of a cliff too high to jump; finally, the rescue accomplished, hope renewed, a new day's awakening by the kiss of the morning sun on a chain of peaks in snowclad purity ringing with the strains of "Trittst im Morgenrot daher," to join in which we were almost afraid at first, so deep was the spell cast on the audience by this wonderful film.

They all said "Thank you for this splendid treat" and some added "let us have more of this kind" whilst others confessed with a lump of humility to pride in our lovely country's glorious heritage. These are but phrases, but if we are to believe that Switzerland has a mission in the world and the Swiss Abroad are the messengers, then we must be nourished from the source of those high ideals which form the cornerstone of our national life and of the peace which is so fervently desired by all the world. We were privileged by seeing these films in the intimacy of our own people so that we were on level terms and had no need of explaining them to strangers. These films are intended for the Swiss and it is to be hoped that they will be

seen by our compatriots all over the world. Few things will do more to keep the flame of our love for the homeland bright, than such gatherings in the sight and sound of our childhood days. Therefore we beg for perseverance of the "Auslandschweizer Werk" in all its laudable undertakings, pledging it our unstinted support. The Swiss in Great Britain are well placed messengers in this auspicious epoch.

It was a great pity that the only theatre at our disposal was so small, as this obliged us to limit our invitations. We were lucky to find a theatre at all and thanks are due to Messrs Warner Bros for placing their private showroom at our disposal for the occasion.

In the interval between the two films, a collection was made in aid of the British Red Cross Society to show our appreciation of the splendid work done by this organisation. It yielded £8.10.0. r. r.

LETTER-BOX.

R. S. Your table is most interesting but omits vital details. Generally speaking, in Switzerland rationing is differently based: the group system under the "points" is not applied which renders it impossible to make a fair comparison. The fact that bread and flour are rationed is not such a hardship when you realise that other necessities such as potatoes, greens, fresh and dried fruit, fish, etc., are free and in plentiful supply. Personally we think there is little difference between the two countries; distribution is certainly better regulated in Switzerland and queues are practically unknown.

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