

# Twelve months of war : reflections by a "neutral"

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fut l'origine de la landsgemeinde. Autre évolution : l'appartenance à la tribu, qui, dans le lointain passé, était déterminée par la race, put désormais, en certains cas, s'acquérir, et cela conférait le droit de porter les armes. Aujourd'hui encore, les citoyens viennent à la landsgemeinde avec leur épée et s'ils ne la brandissent plus au-dessus de leur tête pour approuver un projet, ils élèvent la main, trois doigts tendus, les trois doigts qui tenaient le plat de l'épée en la tirant du fourreau.

Le monde féodal avec ses hiérarchies et ses dislocations avait, au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècle, à peine entamé l'autonomie des Waldstaetten, lesquels se reconnaissaient sujets de l'Empire; c'était presque une simple formalité. Mais l'importance que prit peu à peu la route du Gothard, les intérêts et les ambitions que cette voie commerciale et militaire éveilla, rendirent précaires les libertés des habitants des vallées. Ils mirent leurs forces en commun pour résister aux empiétements des plus dangereux hobereaux d'alors : les Habsbourg.

Le pacte de 1291 vise de façon particulière au maintien des coutumes concernant la justice, selon leur émanation de la souveraineté populaire. La souveraineté du peuple; nous venons d'exprimer ici l'essentiel du régime politique du caractère suisse, celui auquel se rallieront, après bien des péripéties, à travers des siècles de luttes, tous les cantons. Le mot de démocratie le détermine également, mais le sens de ce dernier est plus large, moins précis, car il contient aussi l'idéologie de la Révolution française, basée sur les droits naturels de l'individu, et dont l'interprétation jusqu'à l'absurde conduit au communisme sous toutes ses formes.

La souveraineté populaire est une notion extrêmement claire et, avec bonheur, elle a été reprise par ceux qui ont fait la Suisse moderne en 1848. Il s'agit de distinguer entre les droits civils et les droits civiques. Les premiers sont reconnus à chacun et par enfants du sol, les citoyens. Ils se transmettent par la naissance; ils peuvent encore s'acquérir par ceux qui s'en montrent dignes, mais ils peuvent aussi se perdre. Cette pratique, exceptionnelle il est vrai, du retrait de la nationalité, nous l'avons longtemps délaissée; il faut la "malice des temps" pour nous rappeler combien elle était justifiée. Car être Suisse, cela veut dire, adhérer de tout son cœur à la Suisse. Devant le feu du 1<sup>er</sup> août, nous nous en souviendrons.

(*La Tribune de Genève.*)

## TWELVE MONTHS OF WAR.

### Reflections by a "Neutral."

Last Saturday I attended the matinee performance of "Thunder Rock," that intriguing play at the Globe Theatre. The second act had hardly commenced when the siren sounded. The Manager announced a five minutes' interval and gave the addresses of the nearest air raid shelters for the benefit of those wishing to leave. From a full house only five people retired.

The same evening, a Berlin communiqué, issued by impresario Dr. Goebbels, stated "that panic reigns in London and the country is on the verge of surrender."

Comparing facts with fiction shows, that Nazi "Thunder" cannot "Rock" British character and imperturbability.

\* \* \*

And now let us turn from the Globe Theatre to the stage of World affairs and survey the scenes which have been enacted since the curtain rose on the morning of September the 3rd, 1939.

Instead of a set piece where every actor knows his part the world stage is full of surprises and leaves the audience awe-struck under the cataract of tragic events and the everchanging and terrifying scenes which are enacted before their bewildered eyes.

Drama in excelsis! Poland defeated in a few weeks by tremendous forces and new tactical expedients which have transformed the character of war; Warsaw laid in ruins and a proud and valorous people driven into slavery and captivity. Norway and Holland invaded and subjugated, their beloved rulers living in exile. Little Belgium under the heel of the conqueror for the second time in 25 years, the country having lost its freedom, and its King his soul. Mighty France, despite its vaunted Maginot Line, collapsed and prostrated, stabbed in the back by Italy; its strength sapped by treachery and internal dissension; its capital, gay Paris, the city of a thousand delights, now draped in mourning.

Denmark and Luxembourg under un-invited German protection, whilst tiny Finland, after a prolonged and superheroic struggle, was finally overpowered so that mighty Russia may breathe more freely. Beautiful little Switzerland, like an oasis in the wilderness of desolation, is still free, but has many anxieties and troubles and is determined to uphold her neutrality and liberty at all costs. The Balkans are in turmoil, whilst in Africa and the middle East the storm clouds are gathering ever more threateningly; and hell is expected to break loose at any moment. In the Far East, China is still engulfed in a life and death struggle with ruthless Japan, which, like a mighty octopus, stretches its tentacles ever wider to satisfy its greed and limitless ambition.

And meanwhile, human progress is at a standstill, civilisation in jeopardy and Christianity is made a

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mockery. What a tragedy, what madness and stupidity!

\* \* \*

But amid all this terror, convulsion and upheaval, Great Britain, aided by her loyal Dominions, still stands upright and serene. Hitler's time-table has been upset and the oracle has become a delusion and a snare. Hitler's boastful plans and vile machinations will be frustrated. British pugnacity and genius will overcome all difficulties. John Bull's proverbial vigour and dogged tenacity will see this thing through.

If Neutrals, drenched by German propaganda, could come to England they would be amazed to find how erect Britain still stands, how undaunted her purpose and how formidable the quality of her amphibian fighting power.

As usual, the British have been slow to tackle their job and to realise the full magnitude of their task. In consequence, the hearts of many friends abroad were filled with misgivings and despair.

But the hammer-blows of Norway and Dunkirk, the desertion of King Leopold, the lamentable fall of France and the entry of Italy in the war have roused the spirit of the nation, which is now wide awake and ready for the fray. Since Mr. Churchill said that he could offer nothing but "blood and toil, tears and sweat" the people have responded by giving him of their best and are willing to give more. The heart of the nation is sound and under providence of God and the Premier's inspired leadership, the successful issue of this gigantic struggle cannot be in doubt. But eternal vigilance is not only the price of liberty but also of victory.

The present phase of the war is critical. Mighty battles on land, sea and in the air are pending. The armed forces have already shown their mettle:— the Army in France and Belgium, the Navy at the River Plate, Narvik and throughout the Seven Seas, whilst the glorious Air Force "has gone from well to better, daily self-surpassed."

The middle East may prove the pivot of the war and Hitler and Mussolini should reflect that the desert and the sea have been the grave of many ambitious plans.

Whilst Great Britain has received some hard knocks, nothing decisive has so far been lost. On the other hand, some miracles have happened, such as the evacuation of the B.E.F. from Dunkirk, the frustration of Hitler's design to secure the French battle fleet and the great defeat of Germany's massed air attacks, which may well prove to be one of the decisive events of the war. We shudder to think what might have happened if Goering had used his Luftwaffe to similar purpose and in equal strength twelve months ago.

All things considered Great Britain has much to be thankful for and we derive real satisfaction and confidence from Mr. Churchill's proud words, when he said:—

"We see Britain erect, sure of herself, master of her fate, and with the conviction of final victory burning unquenchable in her heart."

F. I.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

August 27th, 1940.

The Editor,  
Swiss Observer.  
23, Leonard Street, E.C.2.

Dear Mr. Editor,

Re article: REPATRIATION OF SWISS, 29.6.40.

To avoid any misunderstanding in the minds of some readers, it might be an advantage if you were to publish an addendum to this article to the effect that "permanently resident aliens, who have qualified for this status, do not have to report at the local labour exchange when changing their employment or occupation."

On account of repeated queries on this point, I have had the above information confirmed by the Swiss Legation a few days ago.

Yours truly,  
J. Pfaendler.

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Tuesday, September 3rd, — City Swiss Club — No Meeting.

Wednesday, September 11th, at 7.30 p.m. — Swiss Mercantile Society — Monthly Meeting, at Swiss House, 34/35, Fitzroy Square, W.1.

Friday, September 20th, 1940, at 6.30 p.m. — Nouvelle Société Helvétique — Monthly Meeting to be followed by a talk by Mr. G. J. Keller on: "Three days' Tour in the Southern Defence Areas," at "Swiss House," 34/35, Fitzroy Square, W.1.

## Divine Services.

Dimanche 1er septembre 1940: à l'Eglise Suisse, 79, Endell Street, W.C.2.

11h. Culte. M. M. Pradervand.

### SERVICE FUNEBRE.

Le 26 août 1940, Henri-Albert SANDOZ, âgé de 50 ans.

Pour tout ce qui concerne le ministère pastoral, prière de s'adresser à Monsieur le pasteur Marcel Pradervand, 65, Mount View Road, N.4. (Téléphone Mountview 5003). Heure de réception à l'église le mercredi de 11-12h.30.

Sonntag, den 1. September 1940: in der Schweizerkirche, 9, Gresham Street, E.C.2.

11 Uhr. Gottesdienst. Mr. W. Fischer.

There will be no Nähverein meetings during September.

Für alle Amtshandlungen wende man sich z.Z. an Pfr. M. Pradervand, 65, Mount View Road, N.4. (MOU 5003)

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