

# The Swiss mission and the English press

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Swiss soldiers meet. The archives for folklore in Basle possess several hundred songs which he has collected particularly in the mountain valleys of the Valais, Grisons and Ticino.

In Elm, in the canton of Glaris, the oldest but one inhabitant of that canton, Regula Bähler died at the biblical age of 103 years. During her long life she left her village only on three occasions to make excursions into the neighbourhood.

The first woman to hold the office of "clerk of the court" is Miss Nelly Furler from Ziefen (Baselland) who has just been appointed to that important office by the High Court in Berne.

When the trial opened in Zurich against a large number of persons accused of espionage, infringing military discipline, spreading illicit political literature, attempting to obtain volunteers to fight against Russia, etc., a letter was read from Ernest Leonhardt stating that he and his associate Franz Burri would be personally present to meet the charges. Both are at present fugitives from justice and are believed to be residing in Berlin; they were the editors of the suppressed "Eidg. Korrespondenz."

The following table shows how widely different were the conceptions in our cantons when, on January 25th, the proposed election of the Federal Council by a direct popular vote was rejected by an overwhelming majority. The attendance at the polls was extremely poor considering the importance of this constitutional change. It will be noted that the cantons with a predominant industrial population (St. Gall and Geneva being notable exceptions) were somewhat amenable to the reform while the catholic and inner cantons stood resolutely behind our old landmarks.

	Percentages of votes recorded.	
	For	Against
Zürich	39	61
Bern	45	55
Luzern	22	78
Uri	23	77
Schwyz	24	76
Obwalden	11	89
Nidwalden	12	88
Glarus	25½	74½
Zug	25	75
Fribourg	11	89
Solothurn	37	63
Baselstadt	43	57
Baselland	41	59
Schaffhausen	36	64
Appenzell A.-Rh.	32	77
Appenzell I.Rh.	7	93
St. Gallen	24½	75½
Graubünden	33	67
Aargau	35	65
Thurgau	26	74
Ticino	30	70
Vaud	37	63
Valais	19	81
Neuchâtel	30	70
Geneva	31	69
Total	32½	67½

**THE SWISS MISSION AND THE ENGLISH PRESS.**

Without exception the little comment which appeared in the English press has been throughout friendly and encouraging to the problems which are now under discussion between the Ministry of Economic Warfare and the Swiss Delegation. An understanding and appreciation of our peculiar position is everywhere manifest. An early article in the "Manchester Guardian," March 21st, reveals the kernel of the hard nut to be cracked:

A Swiss trade delegation is arriving here to discuss the future application of the British blockade. Surrounded by Axis territory, Switzerland is in a difficult position. It must import almost all its raw materials, and in order to pay for them it must export. Since last autumn the Allies have stopped all overseas supplies of raw materials to Switzerland, and after the end of April Swiss exports that contain more than 5 per cent. of Axis material will be regarded as contraband. The substantial reserves of raw materials accumulated before the war and during the first war winter are now almost used up. Fresh supplies from Axis countries are allowed in only for the execution of German and Italian orders, with insignificant additions.

The object of the British blockade is not, of course, to prevent a neutral country from satisfying its own needs but to prevent the enemy from obtaining advantages from supplies which pass the blockade. The total blockade of Switzerland indicates, therefore, that the British Government was not convinced last year that fresh supplies would serve exclusively Swiss interests. No doubt the delegation will offer new assurances on this point. Any alleviation in the blockade that might be possible without bringing comfort to the enemy would certainly ease the delicate position of Switzerland in its struggle against envelopment by the "new order."

A less pleasing exposition was published in the "Daily Mail," March 24th, and although the arguments might have been expressed differently nothing — in our humble opinion — can be reduced to an actual misrepresentation; the author might be charged with generalisation in a few instances. We Swiss are at times self-willed and ignor Burns' 150-year admonition

Oh wad some Power the giftie gie us  
To see oursels as ithers see us!

Here is the article; we ignore the head-line which like most of them is mis-leading. If we in Switzerland have exhausted our savings or reserves we obviously have to work or starve and unfortunately we cannot choose our employer:

A Swiss trade mission is here to negotiate for "vital food supplies" and for a larger goods exchange by which Switzerland would acquire certain raw materials for her reserve. "If stocks are not replenished," says a Swiss official in London, "it will be a serious thing for Swiss industry."

At a time when we are committed to the bombing of working-for-Hitler factories in Occupied Europe, the case of Swiss factories — which we cannot bomb, yet which work full blast for Germany — calls for treatment divorced from sentiment.

The plain fact is that, every allowance made, Swiss industry has been unnecessarily zealous in

working for Hitler, and that the volume of this work — extremely valuable in some instances — is augmented by the trade which the Royal Navy is ordered to let through. It is even necessary to go warily with the food supplies, which in the past have had to be disgorged to Hitler in barter for German coal on which Swiss industry could alone continue to hum for the Germans.

No responsible persons here fail to understand Switzerland's position in this war as compared with 1914-18, when she was able to do business with both sides and to hold a balance that enhanced her chances of independent survival.

To-day the Confederation is surrounded by the Axis save for a 30-miles strip of Vichy France, and even this gap is German-controlled. To say that Hitler has Switzerland all sewn up is to state the bare truth.

Everyone, too, is deeply cognisant of the work being done by Switzerland as forwarding centre of parcels and mail to prisoners of war and to residents of lands under Nazi domination.

And there is the major service which Switzerland is rendering in representing Britain and many other countries in Axis capitals since United States diplomats left those cities.

We do not overlook, either, the fact that a considerable section of the Swiss Press has refused to sacrifice its independence of judgment; a stand that has time and again brought forth Nazi bullying which leaves no doubt as to what is in store for the Swiss if Hitler is victorious. "They would be absorbed into the Reich, with a patch (perhaps) going to Italy."

The Swiss will lose their 650-years-old freedom should the Axis win, and the great majority sense this with dismay. But if we understand and sympathise, the Swiss must understand our position too. It all turns on the *degree* and the *readiness* of Swiss help to Hitler.

Faced in this critical hour by Hitler's insensate drive for war output from every corner of the Continent, we must be realists: our first care, to stop bullets, whatever shape they may assume, from entering the breasts of those fighting for us.

The Germany deliberately abstained from invading Switzerland so as to keep it as a vast factory for themselves, and the stratagem has encountered no set-back. There is the story, too well authenticated to be invented, of the question commonly asked of the Germans by the Swiss: "Why have you left us alone?" To which the German answer is: "Why shouldn't we? By leaving you alone we have 4,000,000 prisoners who work for us and who feed themselves."

In a Switzerland "left alone" deliveries to Germany are not impaired by sabotage, go-slow and labour troubles, as in the occupied countries. "All the great engineering factories are working day and night for Germany," reported a recent observer.

"The great watch-making industry now piles up precision instruments for the Nazis. Other factories turn out farm implements for use by the millions of prisoners of war working on the land throughout Greater Germany and the occupied countries."

"An avalanche of milk products goes to the Reich, which also bespeaks all Swiss dyes and chemi-

cals, silk and cotton goods that it requires, and these are among the leading industries of the Confederation. It is even said that the banking industry is keeping ahead of the game, thanks to big deposits by the Nazi chiefs."

None of this is controverted by the Swiss official quoted at the outset, and who says: "Swiss industry has been able to work full time until now, thanks to reserve stocks. Factory employment is satisfactory: unemployment figures are at a minimum — partly owing to the mobilisation, it is true."

The latest factory to open, and doubtless to work full time, is an aeroplane plant on Lake Lucerne, which will concentrate on a machine able to take off from most unfavourable ground; and very useful too . . . maybe for the Germans, who have before now "requested" deliveries from Switzerland's two months' stock of war material which we allowed her to import and maintain by an agreement of October 1940.

For do not imagine that the Nazis have benefited only from the Swiss factories (which numbered over 10,000 before the war). The Nazis have availed themselves of stocks of food, grain, oil, sugar, and fats which we allowed the Swiss to accumulate under an agreement of July 1940.

At one moment Switzerland had a reserve of 500,000 tons of oil and petrol. Said the Nazis: "As there is no longer any danger of your having to defend yourselves because we don't mean to attack you, you don't need this reserve." And that was that. The Swiss got coal in return — to shovel into those working-for-Hitler factories.

"Collaboration" grew to be so close last October that we had to restrict imports into Switzerland to foodstuffs, fodder, and certain items solely (we hoped) for home consumption. We did this because Switzerland had concluded a commercial treaty by which Germany got cattle, milk products, fruit, and raw materials like manganese and iron ore, each of great value to the German arms industry. We wanted some of these things.

Few Swiss outside certain influential circles care for what they are doing. Report tells of general sympathy for Britain and the Allies, and this despite our usual propagandist shortcomings. It is in fact, the old familiar story: "We want you to win because we know that if you don't we'll lose our freedom. But we've got to humour the Germans because if we don't they'll make it hot for us."

The Swiss say that any slackening of work for the Germans would spread unemployment, whence would come unrest, upon which a Swiss Fascist Party, all ready and enjoying very high patronage, would rear itself into power. There is no illusion, despite bold sayings, that armed resistance could be more than a token affair.

No one expects the Swiss to start resisting at this time of day. What is at issue is whether the Swiss are giving all of which they are capable towards their own liberation; whether they *need* to go so all-out in response to German demands; whether the profit motive is as absent as they would have the world believe.

Despite a measure of rationing and a Hitler-imposed black-out, the Swiss must know they are as lucky a people as any in Europe; let them, then, go

to their own consciences for answers to such questions.

The Swiss come here wanting more shipments of imports.

If, on the contrary, Britain finds it necessary to cut down navicert and export licences, thanks to which Switzerland has been able with her own fleet of ships to carry on overseas trade through Lisbon, Marseilles, and Genoa, the Swiss should fully grasp the reason: because Germany can collar anything it fancies that goes into Switzerland, and does.

The Swiss people emerged in 1291 under a pact binding them "in view of the bad times and for their better protection and defence, to stand by one another, with counsel and with action, with life and with property, with united force all who threaten oppression and injustice."

Britain respects this, if Germany does the opposite; the same Britain of which the *Revue de Lausanne* writes: "Britain never caused Switzerland the slightest alarm, military or economic. If she had only Britain to trouble her, Switzerland's existence would always have been peaceful."

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Other references in the Press are content with personal data such as the "*Irish Independent*," March 30th:

Head of the Mission is Switzerland's greatest industrialist, Herr Sulzer, Chairman of the world famous Sulzer Brothers' heavy industries at Winterthur, which have branch-factories as far afield as Egypt and South America and which, incidentally, have made Diesel submarine motors for quite a number of States. During World War I Mr. Sulzer, now well in his sixties, was Swiss Minister at Washington.

American born William Rappard, son of a wealthy Geneva industrialist and a leading economist in his own right — he once taught at Harvard and is now professor in Geneva — is another member of the delegation. And so is that young Catholic scholar, Professor Theo Keller of the Commercial University of St. Gallen, financial expert of the Berne Government.

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In a lighter vein is the following from the "*Evening Standard*," April 4th, reprinted from the "*Londoner's Diary*" — an informal gossip column about people who happen to be in the limelight:

Professor William Rappard, a member of the Swiss economic mission to London and a former lecturer in economics at Harvard University, gave an outspoken address on Anglo-Swiss relations before the City Swiss Club on Thursday night. He was talking at a dinner meeting at the Dorchester, at which all six members of the mission were guests.

It is significant that Professor Rappard spoke in the presence of the Swiss Minister in London, Mr. Thurnheer, and that his talk could not have been intended as propaganda to influence the success of the economic mission because he was addressing 200 of his fellow-countrymen. The British Press had not been invited. I was there as the personal guest of the energetic secretary of the City Swiss Club, Mr. H. Bingguely.

Professor Rappard, a tall, well-built man with white hair and a white moustache, spoke in English.

He said that there was a tremendous difference in Swiss feeling now compared with 25 years ago.

. . . . .

Describing life in Switzerland to-day, Professor Rappard said that there were very few taxicabs and motorcars. All petrol comes through Germany, "an indication that it is not over-abundant." Geneva has 7,000 vacant apartments; every house seems to be either to let or for sale.

In London, Professor Rappard has been struck by the carefree appearance of the people. It is the same in Switzerland. "Is this indifference or fortitude?" he asked. In either case, he believes that the Governments in both London and Berne take a graver view than the man in the street.

The City Swiss Club is composed of business and professional men established in this country, the secretary told me. . . . .

### A MONUMENT TO GIUSEPPE MOTTA.

The Federal Council have given their blessing to the idea thrown out by the "*Pro Ticino*," the well known association of the Ticinesi living outside their Canton, for a monument to be erected in Berne and for the endowment of a Swiss Foundation in memory of the late Dr. Giuseppe Motta, Federal Councillor. The City of Berne have offered to make available a site in the vicinity of the Federal Chambers, which will be either the terrace garden in front of the right wing of the building, facing south, towards the Alps and the Ticino, or in the Courtyard between the Federal Chambers and the Bernerhof (Finance Ministry), where it could be more easily reached by the public from the Bundesgasse than on the terrace. The object of the Foundation will be decided upon by the Federal Council in consultation with the "*Pro Ticino*." This decision will be taken later when the result of the collection to be made in Switzerland and abroad will be known.

A committee has been formed under the chairmanship of Federal Councillor Celio, to take charge of the organization of the collection. An appeal has been received by the Swiss Societies in London.

Although in the present difficult times appeals to one's generosity are numerous, it may confidently be expected that the Swiss people, both at home and abroad, will respond as generously as is their wont to make the scheme a success.

For thirty years Dr. Giuseppe Motta went from his home to the Bundeshaus to attend to the affairs of state, unassumingly just as any ordinary citizen. Yet his work, especially for the foreign relations of our country, was wise and farsighted. To-day, Switzerland stands an island of peace and goodwill in a world at war. "With malice toward none; with charity for all . . ." this is the spirit with which Motta's foreign policy was imbued, and which to-day still protects our homeland.

Contributions to the collection may be made through the Societies in the Colony or to the Editor, who will pass them on to the Legation. The names of contributors will be entered in a scroll which will be encased in the monument.

J.E.