

# A Chance in Viewpoint: better mutual understanding between Switzerland and other Nations

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businessmen and in the course of time the Bahnhofstrasse began to overshadow the old centre in the Rathaus district, evolving into an economically important business area and into Zurich's show window. The Air Terminus in the Main Station has since linked Zurich directly with the international airport at Kloten, while there are traffic projects which will eventually connect the city with the European motorway network.

(“Zürich”).

#### A CHANGE IN VIEWPOINT: BETTER MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN SWITZERLAND AND OTHER NATIONS

This is the theme of an article by Wolfgang Höpker in a recent issue of the German weekly, “Christ und Welt”:

“Cosmopolitan Switzerland”, he writes, “Europe's mediator by virtue of its geographic position at the hub of the continent, sees and feels itself to be a kind of model for the Europe of tomorrow — a land in which varied peoples have integrated into a single nation, in which these divergent groups settle their differences peacefully. With many ties to the rest of the world, confident in their own future, the Swiss restrain their own aggressiveness, turning inward instead to the isolation of a small neutral nation. In conservative insistence upon an historically-founded uniqueness, they strive more strongly than ever to maintain their Helvetic individuality in the face of our rapidly changing world. Engaged in constant self-analysis, Switzerland today seeks to come to terms with the tensions created by its international role on the one hand and its defensive position on the other; the suggestions which have been offered for the resolution of this problem run the gamut ‘from Seldwyla to Utopia’.”

Höpker then goes on to discuss Switzerland's international relations, and to clear up an old misconception: the stereotype of the self-satisfied Swiss who have remained insulated from the world, who have enriched themselves in the course of two world wars, and yet arrogate to themselves the role of “schoolmaster to the world”. The reality of the case is quite otherwise, and is perhaps most clearly portrayed by the current Swiss National Exhibition in Lausanne. The “EXPO” is well calculated to open the eyes of non-Swiss visitors to the fact that Switzerland, “today a highly industrialized and super-modern country, was constrained by the force of circumstances — by its glaring lack of natural resources — to develop the highest work-standards and to make a virtue of necessity. But even though Switzerland has become rich, extremely rich, by dint of industrialization and tourism, it still holds to a traditionally puritan way of life (which achieved its highest expression in the works of Zwingli and Calvin). This is particularly true in small matters, where great restraint is exercised. In larger matters, however — when it is a question of voluntary contribution to worthy causes, or international aid — Switzerland is capable of digging down deeply into its collective pockets”.

The writer then goes on to speak of the “malaise of the small nation”, which is the subject of so much discussion in Switzerland today: “It is the feeling that, in this era of huge power-blocs, a small country is in danger of being relegated to the fringes of history, of becoming nothing but a football caught up in the game of international power-politics. Precisely because Switzerland is small, it needs the outside world, the free world, and it

needs a substantial dose of ‘world citizenship’. This is the formula which will successfully alleviate the small nation's malaise. The extent to which Switzerland is open to the world from an economic point of view is illustrated by its per-capita export rate of more than 1,700 francs, which puts it in second place in the world, immediately behind Belgium. Switzerland's per-capita import rate, on the other hand, is the highest in the world. In addition, there is the nation's role of ‘banker to the world’; Zurich, Basle and Geneva are financial centres for transactions of world-wide scope. At least a third of the Swiss gross national product arises directly from economic relations with other nations . . . Of course, seen as a totality, the Swiss Federation displays many contradictions which are difficult to reconcile (particularly in matters pertaining to European integration). But the need Switzerland feels to re-assess its position in terms of the rapidly changing world does not in any way weaken or alter its policy of ‘perpetual neutrality’ (which does not imply a neutrality of opinion on matters of significance, but rather a strongly armed defensive neutrality). However, even in this sphere, the old formulas seem on the verge of losing some of their strength in the face of the realities of this last half of the twentieth century. Awareness of this, and proof of the fact that the allegedly so self-assured and self-satisfied Swiss are quite capable of self-criticism, is demonstrated by the current Swiss National Exhibition on the shores of Lake Geneva”. A similar conclusion was reached by the Munich newspaper, the “Süddeutsche Zeitung”, which commented: “True, Switzerland is and will remain the sole European nation which made the transition from the nineteenth to the twentieth century without a rupture, but, as to the concerns and problems which face them, Switzerland and the rest of Europe find themselves today at the same level of development”.

[O.S.E.C.]

#### ZUVERSICHT

Wer würde der Dornen wegen die Rose nicht pflücken  
Wem könnte der Sorgen wegen das Leben nicht glücken  
Wo die Sonne scheint, kommt der Schatten hin  
Du siehst am Himmel Wolken ziehn  
Folgt nicht dem lichten Tage die Nacht  
Der ein neuer Tag entgegenlacht  
Welkt nicht die Blume, um frisch zu erblühn  
Kommt nicht das Glück nach Sorg und Mühn  
Es ist der stete Wechsel auf Erden  
Erkenne ihn und Du kannst glücklich werden

MIRJAM KRAUS.

#### SWITZERLAND, A COUNTRY WELL SUPPLIED WITH LIBRARIES

The Federal Statistics Bureau has just published a complete list of libraries in Switzerland, divided up by cantons and communes. The total amounts to 5,820.

They are particularly numerous in the big towns. Zurich has 442, Basle 207, Berne 259, Geneva 109 and Lausanne 107. This list gives a fairly accurate picture of cultural life in Switzerland.

[O.S.E.C.]