Walter Ackermann †

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LA DIFESA SPIRITUALE DELLA SVIZZERA.

1° agosto. Alte le fiamme si ergono e illuminano a nostri monti. Campane cantano a distesa la gloria della nostra terra. S'alzano virili e sereni i canti patriottici. Ovunque, nelle città, nei paesini alpestri, accanto alle rive dei nostri laghi, accanto alle più alte vette, s'esalta oggi l'amore che tutti portiamo verso l'Elvezia nostra. E come i confederati d'allora, dal 1291 giù giù lungo lo svolgere dei secoli, fino a noi, tutti quanti ci sentiamo orgogliosi d'appartenere a tanta patria. E con commozione indicibile che ci dichiariamo, ad alta voce, e con lo sguardo sfavillante, "Svizzeri"! E come allora, unico, deciso, perenne, è il nostro motto: "Libertà — indipendenza." Per noi è una necessità quella di essere liberi. Un bisogno radicato in noi; è atavico, tramandato da generazione a generazione, che nasce col nascere d'ogni figlio elvetico; che non può, non deve, venir stroncato. E per questo imperioso bisogno che combatterono, decisi a vincere o perire, i nostri maggiori; è per questa libertà che oserei chiamare sacra, che i nostri fiumi furono irrigati di sangue, che i nostri campi accolsero, vittime grandiose, i guerrieri elvetici che via via combatterono per salvare e tramandarci questo stupendo dono. A noi spetta salvarlo e tramandarlo a chi verrà dopo di noi.

Sono passate sulla nostra patria le bufere che la storia non risparmia a nessun popolo. Mentre veniva formandosi, la Svizzera conobbe essa pure le guerre civili, le guerre religiose, le invasioni, le insurrezioni. Ma nulla, mai, potè soffocare, recidere l'essenza politica Svizzera che è basata sulla libertà; anzi da queste calamità la patria nostra ne uscì sempre più grandiosa e serena. Sempre più forti si fecero le sue organizzazioni. Sempre più decisa ad affermare, di fronte a ideologie politiche diverse, il principio della libertà, d'indipendenza. Sempre più tenace nel difendere, non solo con le armi, ma anche spiritualmente la terra nostra. Ed è questa un'opera più che necessaria nel momento attuale tanto periglioso. Opera che vuole salvaguardare il patrimonio storico e morale della Svizzera — unico esempio in Europa di uno Stato basato non su unità di razza, di lingua, di religione, ma bensì sulla ferma volontà che ogni cittadino ha di conservare questa patria, che gli garantisce la libertà di vivere, qualsiasi idea politica esso abbia, qualsiasi religione esso pratichi, qualsiasi lingua esso parli.

Essere liberi è privilegio acquistato con il continuo sacrificio di uno per il bene di tutti.

E difendere dobbiamo questa nostra libertà, questa nostra indipendenza, da ogni infrazione straniera, da ogni influenza nefasta. Gravoso questo retaggio nostro, ma splendido, meraviglioso. Nessuno deve sentirne il peso. Tutti dobbiamo invece comprenderne la grandezza e dobbiamo essere fieri d'avere un tale compito da svolgere.

Insegnamo ai nostri bimbi le glorie della patria elvetica. Narriamo loro le gesta dei prodi nostri. Di Guglielmo Tell. Di Winkelried. Di Stauffacher. Di Stanga. Durant. Pestalozzi. Franscini. Così ogni piccolo svizzero imparerà a conoscere la storia della propria patria, ad amare chi l'ha servita con sacrificio. Imparerà ad amarla e servirla, con sacrificio puro, se necessità sorgesse. Diamo loro in mano, spesso, un buon Compendio di Storia Patria; discutiamo con loro i fatti politici; facciamoli partecipi d'ogni avvenimento che interessi la Svizzera; cresciamoli nella scuola di "Liberi e Svizzeri." E quando per forza di cose, questi figli sono costretti ad allontanarsi dalla terra natale, vivere in nazioni straniere, per quanto amiche, alimentiamo sempre, teniamo sempre viva questa fiamma d'amor patrio, facendoli partecipare attivamente alla vita sociale dei diversi circoli Svizzeri che si trovano in quasi tutti i centri stranieri; mandando loro giornali, riviste svizzere; mandando loro, spesso, a mezzo della Radio, il saluto della Patria; facendo loro ascoltare la voce della Svizzera che non li dimentica, che li incita al lavoro, al sacrificio, per la maggior gloria loro e della terra loro, che sa comprenderli e li vanta.

Difendiamola spiritualmente questa nostra Svizzera! Uniamoci sotto l'egida del nostro gonfalone rosso crociato e facciamo che esso sventoli sempre, alto, glorioso. Possente si elevi da ogni petto il grido! "La Svizzera agli Svizzeri."

E.G.L.

WALTER ACKERMANN †.

(The following appreciation appeared in the "Aeroplane" July 26th and was contributed by Mr. F. D. Bradbrooke.)

Walter Ackermann died at the controls on July 20th. He was one of the senior pilots of Swissair, than whom there are none better, but he was also a man of many-sided charm and attainments and my valued friend.

I met Walter first when he brought over Swissair's first Douglas to England five years ago, but I first knew him when I became able to read his books. His English was good, his French excellent, but his writing in German was at times almost great. Besides other works he was the author of *Das Bordbuch Eines Verkehrsfliegers* (The Log Book of a Transport Pilot), *Flug mit Elisabeth* (Flight with Elizabeth) and *Fliegt Mit* (Fly with Me). He was at work on another quite lately.

The *Bordbuch* was his masterpiece. In it he tells of his early flying in the Swiss Air Force, but his intense pride in his profession of *Streckenflieger*, a Pilot of the Line, inspires most of a really excellent book. He saw the future of air transport, but he gloried most in the trail-breaking which he was lucky enough to do. In 1928 he pioneered Strecke 12, 500 miles non-stop Zürich—Berlin, in single-motored Dorniers without radio, and flew it daily for a season with a regularity which would still be good.

Lately, as he confessed to me one day, 13,000 ft. up over unbroken French clouds, he was discontented with "bus-driving." The great days of Route 12 were gone. He knew the skyways of Europe to the point of boredom, and Switzerland had no colonial routes to build. He admitted the temptation of a prospect with K.L.M.

The *Bordbuch* was written in a very different frame of mind. His pride of craftsmanship appears in his chapter on the American Experiment, when the air mails of the U.S.A. were taken from the commercial lines and entrusted to the Army Air Corps, with deadly results. Bureaucrats and financiers had, in their criminal ignorance and at a moment's notice, made Army pilots try to replace specialists in regular air transport. This murderous and unscrupulous injustice to both — as Walter saw it — roused him to one of the most grimly scathing passages I know in any language.

But besides this rare anger, his pride of skill and sense of adventure he had poetry and a gentle philosophy. This is well shown in a chapter of the *Bordbuch* which he allowed us to reproduce in *The Aeroplane* (p. 418, Oct. 5, 1938), although it loses by amateur translation.

Soon after he had flown his first half-million kilometres, in 1933, he wrote: "Yet how little you have up there, for all your lordliness. You sit for hours in a motor-roaring solitude, a dozen instruments in front of you and oil-steam in your nostrils. You are banned from the magic garden below; you set foot only on one aerodrome then the next. You live equally in Berlin, Vienna, Amsterdam or Paris — and nowhere." He was a fervent admirer of Kipling, and the effect was evident in some of his writing.

Like most of his countrymen, he was a bold and skilful ski-runner, but he was an exception among them in being also a fine horseman. I like to think that in the very few days he spent in England, out of hundreds of journeys hither, he got some hunting with friends. One of my most pleasant memories of him will be his boyish delight after one very good day of long, hard runs. The other men in the house had in turn to lead him out of their rooms back to his own, where he was supposed to be changing for dinner, and stem the flow of enthusiasm from the sportsman-poet-novelist-philosopher who was Walter.

We teased him to say that the dogs were wagging their tails. He retorted: "Ah no, I know it was hounds — but Himmel, I have already forgot what they were wagging!"

Not long ago we were talking of his romantic novel, *Flug mit Elisabeth*. Its altogether laudable moral tone was much approved by religious leaders in Switzerland. By it they showed that aviators and other heroes need not be abandoned characters as, the reverend gentlemen implied, they usually were. Walter got hundreds of approving letters, which embarrassed him, for he used to say with a grin that the reality was quite otherwise. He thought that at his advanced age — he was 35 — one had missed the moment for marrying.

The day after his death I learned that he was to have been married a week later to Fraülein Erna Fisch.

Such men are the salt of the earth and, with our sympathy, we would like his bethrothed and friends to know that Walter was appreciated also outside his native Switzerland. He will be remembered in some English homes with real affection.

NOTES AND GLEANINGS.

By KYBURG.

The Freedom of the Press: We all know that freedom of thought and expression are fundamental necessities for a democratic people and must be jealously guarded against insidious attacks from above and from below. We know too that both Fascism and Bolshevism, as we know it, can exist only as long as the people at the head of such states effectively control the Press and keep the individual's thought shut up.

From *Freedom* of the Press, however, we must dissassociate what is mere Licentiousness, or the Freedom of the swine, as Goethe once said.

Freedom in itself, as we know, means discipline, or as we Swiss used to say,

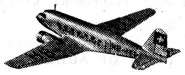
"We are a free people, we only do what we are told to do."

I was frankly very pleased to read the following in "*Tablet*" 22nd July, because it was high time one of the worst offenders against good taste and worst mis-users of the Freedom of the Press should be brought to book and shown up publicly as the "corrupter of souls and ruiner of homes." Perhaps, some other sensational papers might take a warning,

Catholic Press Victory:

The famous libel case in which the *Paris-Soir* sued the *Echo Illustré* for fifty thousand Swiss francs damages, ended last week in a decision in favour of the Catholic paper. The *Echo Illustré* is a small Swiss Catholic weekly belonging to Mgr. Besson, Bishop of Lausanne and Geneva. On February 25th, 1938, it reproduced under the heading *Pourissoir* an article written by Mgr. Schaller in the Berne Catholic daily *Le Pays*, and denouncing the bad Press "which we should fight as one fights incendiaries and poisoners." The writer blamed the *Paris-Soir* for its low moral tone, its sensational head-lines, its suggestive illustrations, its propaganda in favour of divorce and free love, its dubious tales, its mystifications and its plagiarism.

As soon as the libel case was made public, the Swiss Catholic bishops, the Social Commission of the Protestant Consistory, numerous patriotic associations, professional jour-



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