

General Guisan's memorial and the "Ruetlirapport" of 1940

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DAY OF THANKSGIVING, ATONEMENT AND PRAYER

Sunday, 17th September.

Copy of a prayer written by the Mother Superior of a Convent, a woman of many responsibilities and interests, and containing much for all of us . . .

Lord, Thou knowest better than I know myself that I am growing older and will some day be old. Keep me from getting talkative, and particularly from the fatal habit of thinking I must say something on every subject and occasion.

Release me from the craving to try to straighten out everybody's affairs.

Keep my mind free from the recital of endless details, give me wings to get to the point. I ask grace enough to listen to the tales of others' pains, help me to endure them with patience. But seal my lips on my own aches and pains, they are increasing and my love of rehearsing them is becoming sweeter as the years go by.

Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally it is possible that I might be mistaken.

Keep me reasonably sweet, I do not want to be a Saint, some of them are so hard to live with, but a sour old woman is one of the crowning works of the devil.

Make me thoughtful but not moody, helpful but not bossy.

With my store of wisdom it seems a pity not to use it all, but Thou knowest, Lord, that I want a few friends at the end."

GENERAL GUISAN'S MEMORIAL AND THE "RUETLIRAPPORT" OF 1940

The Commander-in-Chief of the Swiss Army during the second world war, General Henri Guisan, was not only a great soldier, but also a man who knew Swiss independence, how to secure national unity and how to preserve it in times of great stress. On a lakeside square at Ouchy below Lausanne, now stands an equestrian statue, a monument to the General. The Bronze memorial was created by the Zurich sculptor Baenninger and stands overlooking the beautiful scenery, once so dear to Henri Guisan, a true Vaudois. The unveiling took place at the end of May, two months before a memorial stone was handed over on the Ruetli Meadow, to commemorate the famous "*Ruetli-Rapport*" of 25th July 1940.

The personality of the General stands out from among the difficult years of active service, an important epoch in Swiss history, when the whole country was ready and willing to follow the General.

In 1940, during the crucial days of the French surrender, General Guisan did not share the opinion that the war was over. He knew that the Army still had a vital mission to fulfil and was determined to stand firm against any aggressor. A new plan of military operations was worked out and accepted by the Federal Council. Exactly a month after the French surrender, General Guisan ordered all commanding officers down to the level of battalion commander to the Ruetli Meadow, where the new plan calling for a *Réduit National* was revealed.

It is fitting to remember those events today, and whilst the Swiss nation pays homage to the memory of

General Guisan, whenever his name is mentioned, it is also right and proper to have a memorial to remind future generations of the man who was able to lead the country at a time when Switzerland was completely surrounded by belligerent nations.

At the two commemorative ceremonies in Lausanne and on the Ruetli, the highest authorities of the Confederation, the Cantons, the Army, the Churches, were present, as well as men and women who had played a part at the time, and members of General Guisan's family. At the end of the impressive ceremony on the Ruetli, a Manifesto issued by the Parties of the Federal Assembly was read in the four national languages:

"We want to be free and to remain free.

We want to keep strong the Confederation who protects our freedom, and shall thus master the future.

Our federation is strongest when all co-operate in the democratic order of things, respect the laws and take part in the defence of the country in the best possible manner.

Of the Family of Nations we merely demand the right to live as a country and acknowledge our duty to co-operate and to contribute in the fight against need, for humanity, freedom and peace in the world.

We appeal, therefore, to our citizenesses and citizens and more especially also to our youth, to remember the task of the Confederation, to further the unity of the nation and to work for the future of the country according to her responsibilities."