

Musings

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central bastion, St. Maurice as Southwestern bastion and Sargans as Eastern bastion. In addition, another chain of fortified positions had to be built right on the political and geographical border of the country.

Major Schlegel said that at the beginning of the present war, the Swiss army was immediately and completely mobilized and its strength on September 4th, 1939, amounted to nearly 500,000 men.

He then gave a very interesting exposé about the new defence scheme which, at a later stage had to be planned and organised and which was called the "Réduit national." The organization and equipment of this "Réduit national," which took place during the years 1940, 1941 and 1942, were mainly carried out by the troops who were successively called up.

The speaker then mentioned that at the end of 1941, Switzerland, with a population of 4,265,000 inhabitants, was able to mobilize 806,000 people for her defence. This figure included besides the army proper all the auxiliary services, armed and unarmed, as well as the women's auxiliary service. To this figure should be added the strength of the Home Guard, making a total of more than 920,000, or one fifth of the total population.

In conclusion, Major Schlegel gave a few figures, showing the enormous financial sacrifices our country has made in keeping our army up to the maximum strength and our territory inviolate.

In his closing sentence he said "when a nation with a population of 4,300,000 agreed to shoulder a very heavy burden in order to maintain its independence it was because the Government and the leaders of the Army prepared the citizens in good time to face the dangers of a world war. It was also because we were convinced that we were thereby accomplishing a valuable mission in Europe, and above all because we have ever prized our centuries-old independence and are deeply attached to our way of democratic life, in which we see the very foundation of our liberties."

Loud applause greeted the speaker for his very interesting and lucid exposé.

The President, before closing the meeting, thanked both the speakers in "Schwyzerdütsch" for their contribution to an enjoyable evening.

Close of the Meeting 9.15 p.m.

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MUSINGS.

Adapted from J.P.'s dialect poem published in the "Swiss Observer" 25 August, 1944.

Sometimes in quiet solitude
Our mind the past surveys,
And dormant mem'ries are renewed,
Reviewing bygone days.

Much good and fine we recollect,
Much beauty we recall;
Why, on this pleasing retrospect,
Did shadows ever fall?

In youthful days, now far away,
Time never seemed to fly;
But now that we are turning grey,
How swiftly years go by.

O happy home and childhood's hours,
When skies seemed always blue
And all we hankered for was ours
As if it were our due.

We learned a trade, became recruit,
Our hopes were high and fair,
But dreams and plans bore little fruit,
Most vanished in thin air.

How thrilling our first lover's tryst!
We waited, hoped and feared,
Those blissful days, for ever prized,
Too quickly disappeared.

When we set out the world to roam,
The world so wide, yet small,
What did we seek we lacked at home,
What urge held us in thrall?

Our thoughts oft to the homeland stray,
So bright, so neatly planned,
May God protect it ev'ry day,
That well loved Switzerland.

J.J.F.S.

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Continued from our issue of January 26th, 1945.

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