

Switzerland and the rights of the victors

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It was not his own inclination, but the feeling that he "fitted nowhere" which made him take to writing after the collapse of his institute for the education of the poor at the Neuhof. His literary work, some of which has been unpublished to this day, was born of sheer need, and his rustic novel, *Lienhard and Gertrud*, remains above all the imperishable monument to a faith in the human heart which could be shaken neither by outward hardship nor by ingratitude and humiliations of all kinds.

Pestalozzi's educational principles are founded on the conviction that man, as the creation of God, has his place in the immutable process of nature, and hence must be educated in accordance with the fundamental laws of natural development. Even education, he declares, can do nothing but "lend a hand" to nature as God's creation. Like the plant, the child first requires physical care; the mother is its first physical and spiritual nourisher, the "sanctuary of the home" the soil in which all education has its roots. It is nature, not the conclusions of rational reflection, which is the educative mission of the mother. For that reason Pestalozzi makes the humble wife of the village mason the prototype of the mother in her educational function. Yet even in his view, education is not exhausted in a loving care which would accustom the growing human being to be sustained and cared for all his life. True motherly love is "thoughtful love", and as such it sets the child on its path to the supreme goal of all education - the power to help and educate itself. Because Pestalozzi had himself learned that nobody on God's earth can help the human being unless he can help himself, it was, from his time at the Neuhof on, his central aim that even the humblest of the humble should be put in a position to help themselves and maintain themselves in their own station. Posterity rightly honours in Pestalozzi the friend of the despised and the outcast, and as the defender of the defenceless, who found, and taught others to find, the essential dignity of man in every human being, even the weak in mind and the erring. But what Pestalozzi as a social educator had in mind as the ideal of the human community was not merely the welfare state, which seeks to relieve every one of its citizens of as much moral responsibility as possible. It was rather the living community of active human beings who, each in his station, should do all that lay in his power for himself and for others.

The troubles of the revolutionary period made Pestalozzi realize that a sovereign people without political education is a child playing with fire and threatening the house with ruin every moment. But true humanity is the foundation of every healthy state, and man is only a citizen in proportion as he is a man. We have recently been the horrified witnesses of the depths of inhumanity to which nations can sink when they reverse that truth. The only thing that can preserve our world from future catastrophes of unimaginable horror is the warning which Pestalozzi gave to the peoples of Europe at a time of crisis not unlike our own:

"For a continent in a state of intellectual, moral and political degeneration, there is no salvation save by education, by the education of humanity, the formation of men".

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SWITZERLAND AND THE RIGHTS OF THE VICTORS. Translation from the "Journal de Genève"

As soon as victory was won, the Allies let it be known that they would take all the necessary steps to prevent the national-socialist leaders from finding a refuge in neutral countries, and their successors from being able to organise, sooner or later, a new hegemony with the help of funds which, on the eve of defeat, they were able to deposit in a safe place. Switzerland had good reason to applaud that policy. Although generous, and always ready to grant asylum to persecuted peoples, she would not help criminals to escape the punishment they deserve. While resolved to justify the confidence which foreigners have always shown in her by entrusting her with the safeguarding of their property, Switzerland was not willing to play the part of a receiver of war-loot, or to become involved in a war of revenge in which she would be amongst the first to suffer. She has said so time and time again in her press; her Government has confirmed it in a diplomatic note. She made it plain that she was ready to co-operate in plans for moral reconstruction and general security, and she is still of the same mind.

However, as time goes on Switzerland finds that her intentions are not in conformity with the wishes of the Allies, and it seems as if it will be difficult to arrive at any conclusion. In fact, it is clear that the victors will not be satisfied with the recovery of the booty accumulated by the Reich at the time of their precarious victories, and with the sequestration of the property of war criminals and other persons responsible for the conflict. They go very much further. They despoil all Germans, whether good or bad, at home or abroad, regardless of whether they served under the national-socialist regime or whether they fought it at the risk of their lives. Through the military government of occupation they declare that they now own all German property without any distinction. They expect that decision to apply not only in the territories which they control or over which they exercise authority, but also in foreign lands, especially in neutral countries which have not joined the United Nations Organisation. They have not even troubled to advise Switzerland officially of that decision, made more than a month ago. Apparently they think that she will accept it without even discussing it.

However, Switzerland is discussing it and will continue to do so. She is prepared to negotiate, but she is too conscious of her own sovereignty and independence to agree to the enforcement in her own country of a law which she has not made and which is founded on the rule of force. Does that mean she is presumptuous? No, simply that she remains faithful to the values which she has always upheld. She took the Atlantic Charter seriously. She does not consider the preamble and the first Articles of the San Francisco Charter simply as examples of style. She was told that the Allies were fighting for the "sovereign equality of all nations, great or small". She knew that she herself was resisting in order to defend that same truth. She will have to suffer many hard blows from the Great Powers before they can shake her faith and before she loses the confidence and hope which are the essence of her being.

The Swiss Government, in agreement with public opinion - except those whose line of conduct has always been dictated by foreigners - has adopted a policy of fairness and honesty in this matter. They went so far as to divulge in any way that was useful, the professional secrets of lawyers and bankers, thereby setting an example which would certainly not be followed by those very persons who accuse them of weakness. The Government has also made careful and scrupulous inventories of all German property in Switzerland. They have asked foreign observers to control our methods of work and investigation. They have fully carried out their duty.

Switzerland is reproached because she remembers that Germany has deceived her and that she too has claims to bring against Germany. Because she is anxious about the fate of Swiss subjects who have come back from Germany in a state of abject poverty, deprived of the fruits of long years of work. Because she is unwilling to despoil foreigners who have been Switzerland's guests for long years, who have legitimate savings, like the Swiss people by whose side they have worked in peace. Because she refuses to confuse, by an intolerable simplification, criminals and good citizens, and will not strike at the same time at Nazi leaders and at those who, like many syndicates, benevolent societies, religious organisations, and brave opponents of Hitler, have exported their capital to Switzerland so that it might not be used to serve the designs of the Fuhrer. Because she wishes to make a distinction - inspired by a simple sense of justice - between the guilty who took flight and who tried, unsuccessfully, to prepare havens for themselves in Switzerland, and the persecuted people who requested hospitality in order to represent in Switzerland what is best in Germany and what could be used in her peaceful reconstruction.

Switzerland will always refuse to have any part in these simplifications. She has her own laws and she intends to apply them in full sovereignty. The law of the victor is often arbitrary, we know full well. But Switzerland will see that its power does not extend inside her frontiers. For her it is a question of national dignity and it is undisputable, because the independence of a small country is indivisible.

P.S. On the occasion of the broadcast on Saturday, 23rd February, the Swiss news commentator stated that it was intimated that if the Swiss Federal Council were pressed to transfer to the Allies all the assets in Switzerland of Germans, whether innocent or guilty, the Swiss people would compensate all innocent Germans from their own resources.