

New Zealand press tribute to Switzerland : an example of democracy

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NEW ZEALAND PRESS TRIBUTE TO SWITZERLAND.

The Hawke's Bay "Herald-Tribune" on 23rd January published the following able and sympathetic write-up on Switzerland, under the heading

AN EXAMPLE IN DEMOCRACY,

"For those people who may be inclined to lose faith in democracy the example of Switzerland affords real encouragement. This small European country rarely comes into the news. Nothing happens in Switzerland to make headlines because its people live a peaceful, orderly life. It was said by Gibbon that history is little more than the register of the crimes, follies and misfortunes of mankind, a truism that is borne out by the little attention that the rest of the world pays to Swiss history. But Switzerland has for centuries stood in the midst of the wars and revolutions that have made European history a story of recurrent tragedy. Perhaps if more attention were paid to the achievements of this small country in the art of government and the preservation of its freedoms, mankind could learn something of how to avoid the crimes, follies and misfortunes which fill our history books.

First, it is to be noted that Switzerland is a democracy that works. It works because within it the rights of individual human beings are respected, and because the Swiss have never sought to enslave their neighbours, and have zealously guarded their personal freedoms against the enlargement of the powers of the State. Aided by nature, they have withstood every threat of invasion, but they have done this only by maintaining a citizen army and a national unity that could not be overawed by armed might. Refusing to be drawn into the conflicts which have surged round them, the Swiss have, with unbreakable resolve, always adhered to the principle of neutrality. In the two great wars of this century they incurred some hostility from their immediate neighbours because they would not abate this neutrality in the slightest degree, and thereby have commanded world admiration.

It has not been without cost to themselves that the Swiss have remained outside international conflicts. National life in Switzerland, during the last six years has been as severely restricted as in any of the countries at war in order that no offence should be given to the belligerents of either side. Trading difficulties have caused food shortages, and normal trading activities have been disrupted.

Yet Switzerland, as the official central headquarters of the International Red Cross, has lived up to her reputation of providing relief and help to the victims of the war she herself avoided. Refugees poured into the country in increasing number as the war progressed, and at the time when hostilities ceased in Europe, Switzerland was providing shelter for more than 100,000 war victims. Since the war ended elaborate plans to give aid to the war-ravaged countries have been prepared.

A recent official report stated that the Swiss programme of relief and reconstruction of war-stricken European countries includes the organisation of medical groups to fight epidemics abroad, help for bombed-out families in the purchase of necessities, hospital care in Switzerland for child war victims, relief for children in foreign lands, the organisation of repatriation convoys in transit through Switzerland.

The Swiss Government is expected to contribute up to 100 million francs in cash or kind to the fund which the people are building up. Every person in Switzerland will be called upon to make a substantial gift as a thanks-offering for having been spared the horrors of war. Such foodstuffs as can be spared have been sent across the frontiers to help relieve starvation, and many thousands of unfortunate children have been brought in from adjoining countries and provided with hospitality and much-needed food.

Six centuries of democracy and more than a century of peace have made the Swiss more than ever determined not to surrender their freedom. The German Swiss in the north speak the same language, have similar racial origins and many inherited traits in common with the Germans of the Reich, but there the resemblance ends. The country provides a unique union of Germans, Frenchmen, and Italians into one cohesive nation which is resembled only by the conglomerate association of races comprising the United States of America.

American observers, looking at the Swiss, find that the European nation has in some ways more highly-developed standards of democracy than those that have been found possible in the New World. A British observer writes that politically the Swiss have come through the war without serious internal or external trouble. There have been no important constitutional changes. The country has been governed by decree under special powers granted to the Federal Council in 1939 "for the protection of the country and the maintenance of its neutrality". These have lately been reduced, and will shortly be rescinded. Thus Switzerland emerges from the period of world-shaking conflict with her national unity unimpaired and her democracy untainted by the political poisons of Communism and Fascism."

BAAR HEISST BAARER KIWIS WILLKOMMEN.

Der Einladung folgend versammelten sich letzten Samstag im "Roessli" mehrere Dutzend der Sippengenossen der Schicker und Anverwandte und Bekannte zur Begruessung der beiden Neuseelaender-Baarer, Gebrueder Schicker, die im Militaerurlaub als Neuseeland-Milizen ihre Heimat besuchten. Eine rassige Tanzkapelle und Jodlerin vom Blickenstorfer Einschlag sorgte fuer die musikalische Unterhaltung. Herr Korporationspraesident Karl Mueller, dessen innige verwandtschaftliche Beziehungen zum Geschlecht der Schicker bekannt sind, eroeffnete den Redestrom mit einem herzlichen Willkomm der anwesenden Schickersippe und besonders der beiden strammen Milizen, die als Teilnehmer an den Feldzuegen der neuseelaendischen Armee in Afrika und Italien der Heimat einen Besuch abstatteten. Vom aeltesten und juengsten der Sippe wurde der Freude ueber den unerwarteten Besuch der jungen, praechtigen, frohgesinnten Stammesgenossen Ausdruck gegeben. Herr Buergerschreiber Franz Hotz ueberbrachte ihnen in einem poetischen Vortrage zum bevorstehenden Abschiede die herzlichsten Glueckwuensche von Buergerrat und Schreiber an alle Baarer in Neuseeland, der nachstehend wiedergegeben ist.

Herr Alois Schicker, als aeltester Sohn des im Jahre 1909 nach Neuseeland ausgewanderten Ehepaars Alois Schicker-Utiger, verdankte die ihnen gebrachte Kundgebung und gab seiner Freude ueber die Schoenheit des Schweizerlandes und der Froehlichkeit seiner Stammesgenossen Ausdruck und schilderte in schlichten Worten einige Erlebnisse der langjaehrigen Kriegsdienste, die mit dem Besuche des Papstes in Rom endeten. Mit Verwunderung vernahm die feuchtfroehliche Gesellschaft, dass in Neuseeland die Wirtschaften jeden Tag abends 6 Uhr und waehrend des ganzen Sonntages geschlossen werden. Die Schweizerseite schien den jungen neuseelaendischen Milizen selbstverstaendlich besser zu gefallen. So vergingen die Stunden in Abwechslung froehlicher Rede und heiterem und munterem Tanz, bis die Polizeistunde den Beginn des Eidgenoessischen Bettags ankundete, der uns alle zum Dankgebet fuer das schoene, friedliche und froehliche Vaterland einlud.