

M. Motta interviewed

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M. LE PASTEUR RENE HOFFMANN-DE VISME.

Le "Swiss Observer" a porté déjà à la connaissance de ses lecteurs plusieurs témoignages de reconnaissance envers Monsieur René Hoffmann-de Visme, le regretté pasteur enlevé à l'affection des siens et de la Colonie suisse de Londres. Qu'il soit permis, aujourd'hui encore, à un de ses plus chers amis, d'ajouter un hommage d'affectueux respect à la mémoire de cette brillante carrière si brusquement tranchée et à qui reste le souvenir très vivant d'un homme d'action, de cœur et de courage. On ne pouvait le connaître, d'ailleurs, sans être gagné par la cordialité de son accueil et la belle franchise de son caractère.

Les amis qui ont eu le privilège de le voir de près savent avec quelle joie il accueillait une réponse favorable à l'un de ses appels, un petit service ou une offre d'emploi pour un compatriote sans travail et ils ne sauraient oublier l'affection touchante avec laquelle il les en remerciait.

La carrière de René Hoffmann-de Visme fut celle d'un travailleur. Soucieux du devoir et de la tâche qui lui étaient confiés, sa grande paroisse, pour lui, comprenait aussi ses compatriotes d'autres dénominations et la place qu'il tenait dans l'activité de la Colonie suisse de Londres justifiait pleinement l'ovation dont il fut l'objet en 1934 à l'occasion du jubilé de son pastorat.

Tous ceux qui ont traversé avec lui les tristes années de la grande guerre gardent un souvenir plein de gratitude de l'activité qu'il a déployée en ces jours troublés.

C'est surtout aux réunions de divers comités où il apportait dans la discussion des arguments solides, évitant toute personnalité, toute expression blessante et mettant au service de tous les belles qualités de son cœur et de son esprit, que l'auteur de ces lignes a pu apprécier la bonne disposition du Pasteur Hoffmann-de Visme.

Sa collaboration aux œuvres de bienfaisance a été profonde sans compter sa part directe aux bonnes œuvres de toute nature. Oserais-je rappeler à ce propos l'anonyme absolu des billets de monnaie adressés chaque Noël à bien des familles — lettres envoyées de l'East End ou de tout autre coin perdu de Londres afin de ne pas en révéler la source — vrais messages de Noël destinés à faire briller un rayon de joie dans les cœurs attristés. Qu'on veuille bien me pardonner pour en avoir dévoilé le secret.

M. MOTTA INTERVIEWED BY KEES VAN HOEK.

He is a small, squarely set man, this Giuseppe Motta, first citizen in the oldest democracy of the world. For the last twenty-seven of his sixty-seven years he has been, in unbroken record, member of his country's federal government — first as administrator of its finances, later as leader of its foreign policy — heading it for the fifth time this year as President of the Helvetic Confederacy.

Nobody who has ever visited Berne can have failed to see the huge Capitol of Switzerland. Were it not for its proud inscription "Curia Confoederatio Helvetica" one might have taken it for an immense Kurhaus, mistaking likewise for hotels the government offices along that royal avenue bearing the simple name of Bundesgasse.

I had to wait for the President in the antechamber reserved for visiting diplomats, under crystal chandeliers, amongst precious gobelins and heavy brocade draperies.

Soon an usher with a beard like Andreas Hofer showed me into the President's study, on the door of which — for Switzerland is a trilingual country and Motta the Italian speaking member of the government — the legend runs: "Il Capo del Dipartimento Politico Federale," for whether President or not, Motta remains Switzerland's Secretary of State all the same.

Motta's hair is grey and thin but that is the only indication of wearing years of service. His cheeks are rosy, there are innumerable little twinkles round his clever dark eyes, which remain unconquerable young in spirit. He never quite loses his Italian boyishness, but his is a southern exuberance somewhat tempered since he lived his life amidst the majestic spell of eternal mountains.

"I hail from the Ticino," recounts my host, and there is pure music in his pronunciation of the Italian names, "from Airole, the first village when you come out of the Gothard tunnel. My father owned the Hotel de la Poste there, but as every real Ticinesi he also dabbled in politics."

"I went to the Latin school in Acona, afterwards to the Universities of Freiburg and Munich

Monsieur Hoffmann-de Visme était un homme aux idées larges, il aimait à faire plaisir et savait donner, ce qui est plus difficile qu'on ne le pense.

Les cinq dernières années de sa vie ont été des années d'épreuves douloureuses et de soucis croissants. L'homme fort qui semblait un chêne, était accablé par la tristesse de ne pouvoir faire plus que sa santé et ses ressources ne lui permettaient. Mais deux choses étaient demeurées : son attachement pour son Eglise et la Colonie suisse de Londres et sa piété ferme et sincère qui son restées jusqu'au bout sa consolation et son espérance.

Gardons pieusement son souvenir et n'oublions point l'exemple qu'il nous a donné de cette foi profonde et de cette bienveillance envers tous.

THE UNIONE TICINESE SCORES AGAIN WITH THEIR FESTA FAMIGLIARE.

At the Schweizerbund, on the 30th September the Unione Ticinese held their yearly Festa Famigliare. —

The name of Festa Famigliare, is certainly the rightful one for this particular function, as it was apparent that everyone present knew each other, and judging by the more than hearty handshakes, a great number of them only meet once a year, and on such occasion. — I have noticed Ticinesi from Southsea — Portsmouth, and Ramsgate, who have travelled to London that day especially to attend the Festa. A cheer for their zeal, and attachment to the Unione Ticinese.

At 9 o'clock Mr. O. Gambazzi ascended the platform, and with a few well spoken words welcomed everyone, and introduced the newly born, well supported, and after Thursday evening, we must add, efficient Swiss Accordion Club, upon which solely rested the duty of entertaining for the entire evening for the first time since its birth. A couple of well selected and rightly played pieces of Laendler Musik executed with eight accordions brought enthusiastic clapping and cheering from the audience. Other numbers interpreted by four selected accordianists supported by the leader Mr. Gandon were also received in a similar manner.

Miss Niederhaeuser, the charming yodlerin of the Fête Suisse, kindly consented to give three or four numbers. Accompanied by Mr. Gandon the melodious voice echoed throughout the Schweizerbund. Many thanks to Miss Niederhaeuser,

and I obtained my degree at Heidelberg. I started my practice as a lawyer in my native village, was elected at twenty-four member of the parliament of our Canton, four years later of the Federal Parliament in Berne."

— You represent the Italian element in the Swiss Confederacy? I had asked.

"We are all Swiss to the bones, but we cherish our Italian tongue. One could not imagine Switzerland without its Italian element, for Switzerland is the political synthesis between German, French and Italian culture, as well as between the Catholic and the Protestant religion. In the last century the "Sonderbund" of the Catholic against the Protestant cantons, proved an antagonism which has now completely disappeared, we all live together in peace, toleration and friendship. The present Government counts five German, one French and one Italian speaking minister."

In many of the political discourses which Motta has collected as "Testimonia Temporum," at the occasion of his 60th birthday, he has elaborated upon his deep belief in the good of democratic thought. "Switzerland means liberty, it is the very air the Swiss breathe" is one of his most popular sayings.

And in his speech at the sixth centenary of the historic battle of Morgarten he refuted the idea of German-Swiss, French-Swiss, Italian-Swiss, as there is only one Swiss nation "enemy of uniformity, friend of mother cultures."

After Motta, in 1920, had taken over the portfolio of Foreign Affairs, he found the war's aftermath confronting him. With France the dispute over the Free Zones of Savoye arose, the changed Rhine regime asked for vigilance, the murder of Vorowsky and the unhappy verdict of the Lausanne jury which acquitted the murderer, brought the Government in conflict with Soviet Russia, like a recent murder, that of the Nazi plotter in Switzerland, caused friction with the German rulers.

It was no paradox that Motta, whilst proclaiming his dissatisfaction with the Lausanne verdict, and condemning political murder as an attack at the roots of the most fundamental conceptions of the Swiss state, refused nevertheless to correct the sovereign verdict of the people's

and I hope to have the opportunity of hearing her again shortly. Mr. Gandon's solo playing was too much for already restless feet. — The room was invaded by dancing couples. Two well-known accordianists followed Mr. Gandon's solo, and gave a variety of dance-tunes, till ... happy surprise ... the Two Zigeuner stepped in, in full costume and thrilled the audience with the melody brought from a violin and a guitar. The two dance accordianists of the Swiss Accordion Club saw the evening pleasantly to a close.

I am sure that the Festa Famigliare, was this year and will always be a great success; that it was this year I have no doubt, first of all because I was there myself and thoroughly enjoyed it, and secondly I only had to see the broad smile worn by the elders of the Unione Ticinese.

C. F.

ERRATUM.

We wish to correct a regrettable printers' error which appeared on the second page of our last issue in the article headed "An Appreciation:" the word selfishness occurring in the sixth line of the fourth paragraph should read "selflessness."

We apologise for the feeling of perplexity caused thereby to our readers.

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jury, although the Soviets threatened to boycott all international conferences on Swiss soil.

— Are you an enthusiastic supporter of the League of Nations? I asked Switzerland's wise little man.

"A very convinced supporter," corrected the statesman diplomatically. He is proudest over his intervention which saved the League from a deadlock on its proposed help to the Jewish refugees, resulting in the creation of a special High Commissionership.

A strong religious sense has always been the keynote of the Swiss national character. All the official correspondence between the federal and the cantonal authorities close with the time honoured phrase "We recommend you, like we recommend ourselves, faithful and dear confederates, to the protection of the Almighty."

This sense has also been the keynote of Motta's life. It was a maxim of Alexandre Vinet, that great philosopher of the philosophers canton of Vaud — that Christianity has been the eternal seed of liberty throughout the world. Motta has added his "It does not imply conservatism, on the contrary, it means everlasting progress."

I shall not soon forget the unusual turn which our political conversation in the cabinet of Switzerland's president took, when I was about to take leave. The midday sun shone over the snow-clad peaks of the Bernese Oberland, mirrors turned towards eternity, to the unsurpassed beauty of which the windows of his room give an unhampered view.

My host came to talk about the two paintings of Pietro Chiesa which adorn the walls of his study. On one of them a little child basks in the sun, on the other women go a-praying in a rural wayside chapel. They throw an intimate light on the character of the statesman who chose them as inspiration for his own daily toil!

"I had almost forgotten to tell you the most important," he smiled, taking a photograph from his breast wallet, showing his ten strapping children, one already an army cadet, one a nun. For such is Motta, there is a warm glow in his kind eyes as he speaks about his wife and children, like every other family nucleus of the State.

Berne, June 1937.