

On the threshold of a new year

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ON THE THRESHOLD OF A NEW YEAR

What are we going to take with us from the old year? What had better be forgotten, and what shall we try to improve in the new year? So much may change during the next twelve months, in our personal lives, in our homeland, in our country of adoption, in the world.

Will it be for better or for worse? What can we do — minute figures in the multitudes of the universe? Where are our responsibilities? The thought is frightening. Or it would be, were it not for the knowledge that there is an Almighty Power to guide us and protect us.

Gonzague de Reynold wrote his "Grandeur de la Suisse", published in 1940 by the Editions de la Baconnière in Neuchâtel. In it appears the "Prière des 22 louables Cantons". On 23rd April 1966, the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad celebrated its Golden Jubilee in the presence of Monsieur de Reynold, Architect of the movement. The festive commemoration in the venerable Chamber of the Basle Cantonal Parliament included the reading of the Prayer in its original.

For the Swiss outside Switzerland a new chapter has started, and new tasks and responsibilities lie ahead, now that the special Article for the Swiss Abroad has been firmly anchored in the Federal Constitution. Gonzague de Reynold has expressed the needs of the twenty-two Cantons that make up the Swiss Nation. It is a prayer of trust and hope, one for protection, wisdom and clarity of mind. We need all of this as individual human beings, too. So let us remember it as we hail the unknown new year.

THE PRAYER OF THE 22 COMMENDABLE CANTONS

Lord, God of our forefathers and God of ourselves, God of our children and of all the generations to the end of Thy Eternity:

Lord, hear the prayer of thy sons, the 22 commendable Cantons.

If we are the confederates, it is because we have sworn in front of Thy cross, on faith and honour, that our alliance may last, if it pleases Thee, forever.

Thou art, Lord, witness to that alliance, seal to our pacts and bond in our union.

That is why we have placed ourselves under Thy protection.

We beg Thee for peace, not of the kind promised in vain by men, but Thy own which is the peace of mind once our hearts accept Thy will.

We beg Thee for freedom, again not that which is proclaimed in the laws made by men, but that which Thou hast put in front of us like a golden ladder leading us to Thee.

Make our narrow minds and our small hearts understand, Lord, that peace and liberty dwell within us like an inner grace and not without like written treaties or political claims.

Accord us the strength to master ourselves: then we shall be free and shall have peace; liberty which will follow us into slavery and peace into war. And we shall learn to be happy, without having good fortune.

Lord, avert from us the scourge of war; but should it come to us, let it meet with stone and iron.

Lord, teach the Swiss not to be enemies of Switzerland, not to let the dead suffer in their graves.

Teach them not to prefer appearances to reality, lies to the truth, not to create idols with high-sounding words, not to admire themselves and never to believe themselves better than others.

Dispel the confusion in our minds by the clarity of Thy Spirit. May Thy Word inspire our speech. Thy Wisdom our actions and Thy Commandments our laws.

On the summits of our mountains, the tops of our hills, the crests of our forests, the steeples of our cities, the roofs of our houses, lavish Thy blessing with the softness and abundance of snow which, after the North wind begins slowly to fall.

And when it has fallen for a long time and covered everything, may the sky clear up and the sun shine.

Shed thus Thy Light on our peaks so that they will teach us to ascend each day higher towards God. Amen.

IT HAPPENED IN THE CANTONS OF TICINO AND VAUD

TICINO

In 110 years, the population of the Ticino increased by 65%, that of the whole of Switzerland by 126%. Demographically speaking, the Southern Canton is one of the oldest. For every 1,000 Swiss under 19, there are 313 in Switzerland, 268 in the Ticino. The next age group, 20-39, is much the same both nationally and cantonally. Between 40 and 59, for every 245 per thousand Swiss there are 273 Ticinesi, and over the age of 60, the picture is even sadder: 152 in Switzerland and 175 in the Ticino. Its birth rate is one of the lowest, its mortality rate only second to that of Appenzell AR.

The cantonal budget for 1967 estimates revenue of 13m. francs and expenditure of 45 million francs. 362 students at universities and technical colleges received scholarships amounting to 2 million francs. The 16,000 Protestants of the Canton now have their own Church Synod constituted in Bellinzona in October.

The first waterpower generator in the world (built by Brown Boveri) has become operational at the Bavona

station of the Maggia power works. At the end of October, the new double-track line across the old wooden bridge from Melide to Bissone was opened, and with it, some of the delays which sometimes affected the whole European network can now be eliminated.

At the old church of **Besazio** (thirteenth century), valuable frescoes of the Giotto School have been discovered. **Castagnola** together with Viganello have built the first lake water filter plant in the Ticino to ease the drinking water position. The town of **Lugano** owns the new Verzasca power works which was opened in October. Its construction cost 164 million francs. A new hospital is to be built above Lugano at a cost of 57m. francs; it will have eleven floors and house 3-400 patients.

VAUD

10.8m. francs was the estimated deficit in the accounts for 1965. They were released to the Vaud Parliament in August and showed a surplus of 13.6m. francs. The budget for the current year estimates a shortage of 14m. and that for 1967 a very small surplus.