

Did you know?

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OSKAR RECK, PRESIDENT OF THE NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE SPEAKS OUT AT THE ASSEMBLY OF THE SWISS ABROAD

The foreign observer of Switzerland who follows her policy and her publicity, cannot help getting ambiguous impressions. Whether, in the end, he forms a pessimistic or confident opinion depends largely on the choice which he makes from amongst a host of contradictory statements. He is mistaken, however, if he thinks that the difficulty of evaluation is only the consequence of distance. The multitude of open criticism is the expression of doubts and spreading uncertainty also inside Switzerland. It is true that we live with an unshakable order of things and on an enviable level of civilisation, but the faith that Switzerland has a perpetual subscription to fortune, has begun to totter. Worries of development appear more and more clearly also in our democratic small State and can no longer be waved aside with a deprecatory gesture.

It would be wrong, however, to pretend that present appearances which cast a shadow over the image of Switzerland, are without example in recent Swiss history. The generation is still with us who remembers clearly the social upheavals at the end of the second world war. And the two decades between the world conflicts are still so close that our contemporaries cannot but yet be aware of the violent conflagrations regarding new forms of State and economy. At that time, traditions and principles were in jeopardy, and the fight between views were often more violent than today; but it also created more distinct boundaries, from the question of social structure to defence policy.

The present state of our country is marked by apprehensions of quite a different nature. We realise that democracy with its federative structure and its foreign policy of neutrality is practically as good as unassailed; but at the same time, grave faults are visible in the present order; faults discernable in an ever more rapid process of development. We have had to agree that a federalism which neglects intercantonal co-operation on one side and allows the Cantons through their own fault to deteriorate into administrative provinces of the Confederation on the other, is no longer the best system to progress. Many were the requests, but finally the demand for a governmental policy became inevitable, a policy which clearly states an order of precedence of public needs, so that the limited means at the disposal of a small State should no longer be scattered. The "Mirage" business not only uncovered unstatesmanlike methods and conceit of those responsible, but also revealed the problematic ability of a Militia Parliament to supervise administration. In this picture of Swiss problems of today also falls the spreading tendency to make more and more demands on the State, without being ready at the same time to affirm the well-known and inevitable consequences of such demands.

Even this short and most incomplete description of the present position justifies the critical deliberations in Press, Radio and Television completely. Its lack would be the surest sign of denying democracy. Complaints regarding the rigorous execution of this watchman's task may at times be senseless; but concern with regard to the quality of this supervision is justified. The fact that the Swiss development problems which need looking into, are

generally little attractive, but need a great deal of expert knowledge, easily and mistakenly lead the critic to let loose on less important events and developments. When the will to sensible political proportioning lacks, and when the only question is what may be exploited most effectively, distortions appear at the cost of civic information. What can be bought outweighs the important fundamentals, and criticism which should be a public service, becomes mere business.

In the present state nothing seems more important than the effort to confront the modern social and civilisatory progress of development with the traditional institutions and habits. We need a most extensive inventory, exactly as has been forced in Parliament to prepare a total revision of the Federal Constitution. With this, a task of the magnus proportions of a *Bewährungsfall*, opens up not only for Press, Radio and TV, but also for Political Parties and civic societies. Only through thorough and uninhibited preoccupation with the fundamental problems of development of our small State, can Swiss political life get new impulses. People with a frightening self-sufficiency alone will deny that such new impulses are a necessity.

(Summary of the talk in German.)

DID YOU KNOW?

Similitude of Two Titles.

The title "Defenders of the Liberty of the Church" was conferred in 1512 by Pope Julius II on his powerful Swiss allies in recognition of their military assistance. Julius II, whose pontificate was much devoted to political and military enterprises, formed in that year the "Holy League", an alliance in which Henry VIII of England was a member and which proved the beginning of the real history of Henry's reign.

The title "Defender of the Faith" used by the sovereigns of Great Britain was originally conferred nine years later, in 1521, on Henry VIII by Pope Leo X, Julius's successor, as a reward for writing his book in reply to Luther's famous address attacking the doctrinal system of the Church of Rome. This was in the early years of his reign and long before the papal supremacy was challenged by Henry himself. In spite of the shocking record of his conjugal relations, the long list of noble victims and the deaths of such men as More and Fisher that make his rule a veritable reign of terror, Henry VIII was a monarch of great diplomatic gifts and had a life-long interest in all matters of religious faith and church government. His quarrels with Rome, brought to a head by the divorce of his first wife, were solely with the Pope and not with the doctrine of the Church. This schism from Rome, culminating in the suppression of monasteries and in the acceptance of the Reformation, made Henry VIII's reign perhaps one of the most important in English annals and of European history.

The title "Fidei Defensor" was withdrawn in 1538 but re-conferred by the English Parliament and borne ever since by all Henry's successors.

The Swiss, (in addition to the title which they never used), received from the Pope a sword and a ducal bonnet of red velvet richly bejewelled and lined with ermine, known as the famous "Hat of Liberty". Moths, alas, have made a good meal of this hat, and the Society of Antiquaries of Zurich have in their keep what little the insects have left.

P.S.

("Swiss Observer" 19th June, 1937.)