

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK
Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom
Band: - (1941)
Heft: 986

Artikel: About "The man in the street"
Autor: F.I.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-686668>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. [Siehe Rechtliche Hinweise.](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. [Voir Informations légales.](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. [See Legal notice.](#)

Download PDF: 04.12.2024

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

dangereuses suggestions, maintenir et sauvegarder l'essentiel d'une liberté que est la pierre angulaire de nos institutions démocratiques.

Cependant, pour que la presse suisse puisse servir efficacement l'intérêt national, il faut qu'elle soit exactement renseignée, non seulement sur l'action publique de ses autorités, mais aussi sur certains faits et certaines circonstances dont la connaissance est indispensable à une juste appréciation de la situation générale. Il faut — ce que l'on avait trop négligé jusqu'ici — qu'il existe un contact étroit entre le gouvernement et la presse, par conséquence entre l'autorité et le peuple.

C'est pourquoi, il y a quelque temps, le Conseil fédéral a décidé de créer, non pas un ministère de la propaganda, non pas un Office de la presse, mais un service de liaison pour les questions de presse, ce qui est très différent. Ce bureau n'aura aucune compétence pour limiter la liberté de la presse ou pour donner des instructions obligatoires aux journaux. Il aura pour tâche de les renseigner, d'améliorer le service d'information, bref de mettre les journalistes à même d'exercer leur magnifique profession en toute connaissance de cause. Il ne s'agit pas d'une main-mise de l'autorité sur la pensée publique. Il s'agit d'une collaboration dans l'intérêt supérieur du pays.

C'est encore une manière de rester fidèle à nos traditions et de sauver une de nos libertés. Il n'est pas d'Etat en Europe qui ne doive, plus ou moins, faire la part du feu, c'est-à-dire la part des dangers qui la menacent. Mais, sur les principes essentiels de constitution, la Suisse reste ferme et inébranlable. Elle sait trop que la seule indépendance qui mérite d'être vécue n'est pas purement territoriale, qu'elle relève encore de l'ordre moral.

Pierre Béguin.

ABOUT "THE MAN IN THE STREET."

When Mr. Wendell Willkie came to England to find out all about the War he said he would not only interview the leaders but also "The Man in the Street." By this I presume he meant not only "Tom, Dick and Harry," but "Uncle Tom Cobley and all."

Now I must admit that the Man in the Street has always intrigued me.

Mr. Willkie, I understand, was very well satisfied with the result of his enquiries. Unfortunately my own experience was not so good. Instead of being welcomed as an enlightened investigator I was accused of being a nose-parker. The first man I met appeared to be a "silent column." The second said something about blue pencils. The third banged the door in my face and told me to go to Hell. Something seemed to be wrong — either my mode of address or my standing.

I therefore tried to solve the mystery on paper and decided that the first Man in the Street must have been Adam. Not the Adam lolling in the Garden of Eden but the sinful man who after making a fool of himself was driven on the streets of life. From this it would appear that the first Man in the Street was a sinner and a fool, whereas according to Darwin's theory he was a gorilla. At first sight not a very promising basis to work from. On further reflection, however, not altogether impossible, because *a*) according to the Bible all men are sinners, *b*) philosophers assert that all men are fools and *c*) instructors in the armed forces

will tell you that the millions of men now training are full of monkey tricks. Well mixed, these three groups make a very representative collection of human society, of which the Man in the Street forms the greater part.

Fortunately, the human being is not only made up of flesh, sin and tomfoolery but has been given a probing mind, a searching conscience and above all, an eternal soul. It is the spirit that finally matters, not the flesh.

The events of the last few months have shown that the spirit of the people is well and sound and that there is not much wrong either with the heart or the soul of the Man in the Street. He has given of his best and is ready to give more. He is imbued with the spirit of service and sacrifice. England's little man has done well. He has not only been immortalised by Strube's clever cartoons but has earned the undying love, admiration and gratitude of us all. Think of the wardens, the fire-fighters and those gentlemen the police. Men in the Street not only in the literal but the real sense of the word.

It may be argued that a policeman is not really a Man in the Street but a public guardian, and that this also applies to anybody in uniform or belonging to an organised body. The fact remains that probably only a short while ago he was a civilian. To draw a line of demarcation is not easy. True, it is difficult to imagine the Archbishop of Canterbury as a mere "Man in the Street." On the other hand what happens when His Majesty the King — as he frequently does — mixes freely amongst his loyal subjects? Would it be wrong to say that he immediately becomes "THE Man in the Street," beloved and honoured by all? From what we know of his lofty character and friendly human spirit it is safe to assume that he would be proud to be acknowledged as such. Not so the Dictators or Sawdust Ceasars. They either become false Gods to their followers or tyrants to those who do not submit to their rule. The Man in the Street in the countries under totalitarian regime is either a robot or a rebel. In the democracies he preserves his individuality and independence.

It is said that everybody has an equal chance in life, whether he wears a cap, a bowler or a top hat. Some people assert, however, that wearing an Old School Tie makes a lot of difference. I suppose that explains why some other folk use distinctive neckwear. For instance, the communist sports a red bow to match his fiery creed whilst the fascist advertises his mournful doctrine by wearing black. Curiously enough, Stalin, Hitler and Mussolini prefer neutral tints in place of their own party colours, whilst Laval hides his black intrigues under a spotless white cravat.

To the student of human nature the Man in the Street provides an unending source of material. Here he finds humour and tragedy, love and hate, greed and charity, wisdom and foolishness. In short, life itself — good, bad and indifferent, or the World, the Flesh and the Devil.

If clever politicians, Newspapers or the Ministry of Information want to know "which way the wind is blowing" they canvass the Man in the Street. The foundation of the State rests on the rank and file and not on what is called high society. The backbone of the country is the Man in the Street. It is to him that the Government looks for support. If properly led and wisely guided he will never let them down, what he lacks in knowledge he makes up by instinct. Once

he knows that he is fighting for a just cause he will never surrender but with grim tenacity will see the thing through to the bitter end or to glorious victory. The insignificant little man of to-day may wear the George Medal to-morrow. Our modest companion in the bus or in the train may be the next Prime Minister, the great scientist or the famous philosopher of the near future. And last but not least:— the Man in the Street of to-day may be the Unknown Warrior of to-morrow at whose national shrine at Westminster Abbey his grateful fellowmen will not only pay humble homage but seek fortitude and inspiration for generations to come.

F.I.

APPRECIATIONS.

(We wish to express our sincere thanks for the tangible support which continues to be extended to us by many well-wishers, whose letters constitute a much-needed tonic. Ed. S.O.)

25th Feb. 1941.

Dear Sir,

I am pleased to see that you are still able to let us have an issue of the Swiss Observer now and then and am always pleased to receive it.

As I fully realise all your troubles and difficulties, I have pleasure in enclosing cheque for three guineas, every little helps.

With best wishes, Yours sincerely,
R. Weber. An Old Swiss

* * *

March, 1941.

Dear Mr. Boehringer,

It was a great pleasure to see the S.O. again and I fully appreciate your kindness in taking so much interest in its publication.

My annual subscription should be renewed about New Year — I gladly send you two pounds.

Kindest regards from your sincere compatriote,
Marie Louise Dupuis.

* * *

Similar "bouquets" have been received from Mr. K. O. Keller, Miss Imhof and Mr. R. Weist.

FROM OUR POST-BAG.

3rd March, 1941.

Editor of Swiss Observer.

NEWS AT RANDOM.

In your last number we find a reference to the answer sent by the British Government of the 15th February to the protest of the Federal Council anent the bombing of Basle and Zurich.

We are intrigued by this answer since it is neither fish, flesh, fowl or good red herring.

If the proofs of responsibility were not conclusive why was responsibility accepted?

There never was any doubt about the responsibility of the R.A.F. in connection with their flights over the South Western part of Switzerland to attack their Italian military targets, but the dropping of bombs on Basle and Zurich cannot be laid to their charge unreservedly.

Two questions seem to arise:

- 1) why was responsibility accepted on inconclusive evidence, and
- 2) why was the Federal Council satisfied with less than a clear and full apology?

In justice to both Governments one would have liked to see the matter probed to a definite result. —

While in the foregoing remarks we have as it were been tilting at the British Government we raise in the following remarks a *prima facie* case against the Federal Council.

According to your "record of News" from the English Press the arms and equipment of interned French soldiers "were surrendered to Germany."

What difference can the *repatriation* of these French soldiers make to the general principle that arms and equipment of internees have to be immobilised, in trust, by the neutral country for the duration of the war.

It will be on record how this same question was treated in the 1870/71 war and in the meantime the man in the street is distinctly worried by the facts stated by you.

J.J.E.

* * *

14/1/41.

The Swiss Observer,
Sirs,

Through courtesy of the Swiss Consul in Wellington, we received some time ago a copy of your periodical, and have read some rather interesting news, particularly relating to present conditions in Switzerland.

The committee of our Society decided recently to subscribe to your paper, and I have pleasure in enclosing a money-order 12/- being in advance for one year.

Will you kindly forward the Observer regularly to the above address.

We trust sincerely that all our compatriots in London are spared from misfortune, during the distressing time England now passes through.

Yours faithfully,
Swiss Benevolent Society in New Zealand.
E. Merz, President.

* * *

3rd March, 1941.

The Editor,
The Swiss Observer,
Dear Sir,

Can you tell me, when giving information of the Cantons of Vaud, Neuchâtel, etc., why you refer to them under their German names? (See for instance bottom paragraph, front page, your issue February 22nd, 4th paragraph, second column, same page). I have yet to learn that German is the official language of Switzerland, and it seems to me that the correct procedure for you is to use French names for French Cantons, and German names for German Cantons. Also there is no Grosse Rat in the Canton of Vaud, there is a Grand Conseil.

I think it would please all French speaking Swiss if you would kindly attend to this matter, which may seem trifling to you, but to which others attach some importance.

Yours truly,
Chas. Lehmann.

(We must certainly plead guilty; the Editor has no intention of inflicting his particular vernacular on the readers.)