

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: - (1945)

Heft: 1043

Artikel: Xmas thoughts and wishes

Autor: [s.n.]

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-691763>

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XMAS THOUGHTS AND WISHES.

My last Xmas homily, twelve months ago, concluded with the following words:

“ Amidst the roaring of the guns and the thunder of exploding bombs, the year 1945 is about to make its entry, what is it bringing us. Will it bring Peace, which we all wish so fervently, or is the slaughter, with its accompanying misery and sorrow, to go on to its last day? Do we have to empty the cup to the bitter end and shoulder the cares and sorrows of the world, witnessing the wildest savageries and cruelties, or will the voice of Peace and Goodwill on Earth be heard once more? ”

Well, God be praised, the fighting in the principal theatres of war has at last ceased, and once more we can enjoy a night's rest after a day's toils, without being disturbed by the shrieking of sirens. Peace has been declared, and duly but soberly celebrated, but has it brought us Peace? Have the expectations and hopes which we uttered on the day when the bells rang from all the churches throughout this land been fulfilled? We were promised that after nearly six years of bitter fighting and untold sacrifice a better and healthier world would arise, a world in which all the members of the human family would live in peace and brotherly love. What do we find?

Political and Economic unrest in almost every country. Nations which bravely fought side by side to end once for all the tyranny of dictatorships have become suspicious of each other; there seems to be an utter lack of co-ordination, no common plan to try and heal the wounds which this terrible war has inflicted on mankind. Not even the biggest optimist expected that conditions would change immediately Peace was declared, and that bitter hatred would turn to brotherly love, but what one dared to hope was, that the victorious powers would make a genuine and determined effort to work out a programme for the salvation of a war-torn world. What has happened instead? Four of the biggest powers are at loggerhead and pull on different strings, let alone all the smaller nations which are eager to catch at least an end of each of the strings. Only a superhuman patience will succeed in bringing opposite opinions and claims under one and the same hat, whether this can ever be achieved seems the least said, problematical under present conditions.

Let us then, dear compatriots, on the eve of a new year, turn our thoughts to the country of our birth, and to all those dear to us. With the exception of a few favoured ones, who, either had a special string to pull, or were lucky enough to find the necessary currency, most of us have now been separated for six long years, and to many of us this separation from our country and our families has become hard to bear.

There seems to be little possibility at present that the stringent regulations as to release of currency will

be relaxed, and unless our relations and friends at home are prepared to give us “ board and lodgings ” free of charge, and supply us with the necessary pocket-money, we have to sit tight where we are.

Not so long ago, the Foreign Minister of this country, in a mood of Christian benevolence, invited all countries which have a grievance against this Empire to come forward and state their objections frankly, with a promise that these would be studied and dealt with according to their merits.

Taking advantage of this big hearted offer, I state in all humbleness, that we Swiss have a grievance, and that we find the treasury regulations, which prevent us visiting our country and seeing our dear ones, after six long and eventful years, in which we shared the privations and dangers loyally, harsh and ungracious. We do not ask for much, we do not intend to take a fortune with us (H.M. Tax Inspector has seen to this) but we desire to visit our homeland not as beggars but as welcome visitors.

We know from experience that Neutrals after any war have a bad Press, and there are surprisingly many people who still hold the conviction that a neutral country is one which is afraid to fight and fattens itself whilst the going is good. Unfortunately some of our countrymen, who have recently returned from their visits, have by their tales, often exaggerated, of a country flowing with milk and honey, done, perhaps unwittingly, a lot of harm, a little more discretion would not have been misplaced.

Self praise and advertising of good deeds are foreign to us Swiss, what services we have rendered to all the belligerents during the last war, and they

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were manifold, we have willingly and unflinchingly given, from a purely humanitarian point of view, and from a high sense of duty towards those who fought for the rights of mankind. Switzerland has always been a haven of rest for all those who have been persecuted, or who were in dire need of help, the finest example is the splendid work done by the International Red Cross Committee in Geneva, which has brought relief and succour to millions of our fellow men in the four quarters of the globe. There are many more instances I could quote, where our country has been of paramount help to the nations at war, but we are not asking for thanks nor for cheap glory, but one thing we object to, and that is, to be accused of selfishness or enrichment whilst other peoples had to fight for their existence.

Contrary to statements made at one time or another that Switzerland has benefitted financially through this war, it must be stated emphatically that Switzerland is not, and has never been a rich country, and is emerging from this war considerably poorer, but thank God, so much richer in esteem for its great humanitarian work.

Let us hope that our endeavours and our achievements will be recognised, in a true and unbiassed spirit, and that it will not be forgotten that in the tragic hour of need, destruction and misery our country has fulfilled a mission of mercy, a mission which will go down in history as one, if not the only redeeming feature of this world war.

Once again, we Swiss abroad, testify anew our deep attachment to our beloved country, expressing our solemn gratitude to the Federal Government for

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their incessant and untiring labours for the welfare of our own people and for having guided the ship of State wisely and courageously past the dangerous rocks of a surging sea.

We equally owe this country, which has always extended to us a generous hospitality, and which has given to many of us a second home, deep gratitude.

We have shared in the past, to a great extent, the dangers of its inhabitants, and also in no slight measure a part of its duties, we have done this willingly and wholeheartedly in the knowledge that they not only fought their own battle, but the battle for Freedom and Liberty, ideals which are dear to us and which are the very foundation of our constitution.

Many of the sons, husbands and brothers of our countrymen have fought with H.M.S. forces in the various theatres of the war, some, alas have not returned, but all of them we shall remember in grateful memory for their services given to their adopted country.

"Peace on Earth and Goodwill on Earth," let this be our motto for the year 1946 and let us look into the future with a stout heart, hoping that this future will be purified and sanctified through almost superhuman sacrifices, and that out of the ruins of a horrible past, will emerge a better and happier world, a world in which the great human family can live in peace and happiness. ST.

REFLECTIONS ON PEACE.

When celebrating the coming of Peace,
We took it for granted that fighting would cease,
After five stormy years, the World and his Wife
Were weary of War, and tired of Strife.

We all had been promised a World brave and new,
Work for all, with good wages, and little to do.
There was freedom from want, and freedom from fear,
With cartloads of food, and barrels of beer.

But somehow these schemes are slow in maturing,
And the affairs of the World are not re-assuring;
There are clouds in the East, whilst in the Central
and West

Diplomatic relations are not at their best.

What is hidden behind the political screen?
If it's fair and straightforward, why can't it be seen?
And why all this fuss about zones, blocs and spheres
When bombers and rockets don't stop at frontiers?

Mankind has sinned, and our civilisation
Stands on its trial and final probation.
There will be no PEACE, if human love is platonic,
Whilst hate, greed and lust are well nigh atomic!

F.I.