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XMAS THOUGHTS AND WISHES.

The fifth War Xmas is close at hand, and with it many old recollections are awakened. Gaiety and merriment were always associated with this time and many a heart was quickened and gladdened by its coming. It used to be the season of hospitality, merriment and openheartedness.

Xmas was not only a festival for the children, but also for the grown ups; it was a time, when we glanced back and took stock of the last twelve months, some with gladness, some with regrets but all with hope that the New Year would give us fresh opportunities. With renewed energy and determination, we were prepared to face the incoming year, trusting that a kind Providence would guard us from disappointments and disaster, and that unfulfilled hopes and ambitions would be realised.—

Once again the Xmas bells will ring, and will bring to a weary world tidings of joy at the birth of our Saviour, who was brought into this world for our salvation and died on the cross through our sins.

With a heavy heart we are celebrating this Xmas, try as we like we cannot feel happy as of old, whilst millions of our fellow men are fighting in the different theatres of war and non combatants are going through untold miseries, their families dispersed, and scattered far and wide, and their homes destroyed.

Many of the hearts that throbbed so gaily, have ceased to beat, many of the faces that shone so brightly have ceased to glow, the hands we grasped have grown cold, the eyes which sparkled have hidden their lustre in the grave.

How many of us have, during these last four years of agony and despair, learned to fold our hands and bend our knees, asking the question "How long, oh Lord?"

And yet, though the darkness and the agony remain, deep down in our hearts there is a glimmer of hope, that the dawn of a better world will and must come.

Surely even if 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, the day will come, when the sword is put back into the scabbard, and when the "cease fire" will be sounded over the desolate battlefields.

Then out of the ruins will emerge a new era, this new world, which has been promised to us so often, purified and sanctified through sufferings and innumerable sacrifices. Its fulfillment lies in our hands. Each of us will have to bear his share, we must all work together in harmony so that future generations can live in peace and enjoy the short span of life which is allotted to us. Then, indeed, the lives which have been lost have not been lived in vain. They shed their blood so that we may live in peace. With a deep sense of gratitude, we will treasure their memory; the simple wooden crosses scattered over the four corners of the globe will become sacred symbols of freedom and liberty which will ever be treasured and never forgotten. —

During this time, it behoves us to let our thoughts wander back to our country and to those dear to us. Surrounded by nations which are fighting with a bitterness hitherto unknown for their very existence, Switzerland, by the Grace of God, has so far been spared the ravages of war.

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The Swiss emblem still flies over a free and unfettered country, freedom of thought and the freedom of the Press are unimpaired.

It is evident that a world struggle of such immensity has its repercussions even in a country which is non-belligerent.

Scarcity of food and scarcity of raw materials, which are so essential to our industries, have made a strict rationing necessary. The restrictions especially in the sphere of foodstuffs are even more stringent than in this country, and the spectre of unemployment looms darkly on the horizon. Our Government is making great efforts to procure the bare necessities of life for the population, which through prisoners of war and refugees has been enormously increased.

Faithful to its tradition, Switzerland has tendered a helping hand to all the belligerent nations, the entire organisation of the International Red Cross Committee in Geneva has been put at their disposal.

Thousands of children of occupied countries have been invited to recuperate within the borders of the Confederation.

A large number of sick and wounded soldiers are nursed back to health and strength in the various clinics, and large sums either from private or official sources are being collected to alleviate the sufferings of thousands who are broken both in spirit and body.

Acting as protecting power for almost all the belligerent countries, the Swiss Government has, through its diplomatic representatives abroad been able to effect or aid the exchange of wounded combatants as well as

of civilian internees, efforts, which lately have gratefully been acknowledged by the various powers.

Our country thus plays a noble part, all the more to be appreciated, because it means heavy sacrifices by our people at home. Switzerland is not, and has never been a rich country, and will come out of this war considerably poorer, but, thank God, richer in esteem for its humanitarian work.

We have therefore, every reason to be proud of our homeland, which in the supreme hour of need has not been found wanting.

To-day, we Swiss abroad, wish to express to the Federal Government, whose labours have never stopped to work for the welfare of our own people, and for all those in need our heartfelt thanks.

They are tackling a tremendous and delicate task with conscientiousness and skill, which has earned them universal appreciation. In all humbleness, we pray to God Almighty that he will as hitherto guide our statesmen and endow them with knowledge and strength.

Anew we testify our deep attachment, and our love to the country of our birth, the country to which we owe so much, and which is ever in our thoughts.

We share to a great extent the dangers of the inhabitants of this country which is giving us its generous hospitality, we also share, in some measure a part of the duties. We willingly do this in the knowledge that they are fighting for the same ideals which for ever have been dear to us. Many of the sons and brothers of our countrymen are fighting with H. M. forces, many, alas will not return, but their supreme sacrifice for their adopted country will not be forgotten.—

Few will be the tears shed for the year of 1943, soon a new year will be heralded in, months of bitter fighting and tremendous efforts are lying in front of us, but through the noise of the battle, we can faintly hear the voice of peace. The reckoning is at hand, the time when the shrieking of the sirens and the roar of the guns will cease is approaching, in that solemn hour to come we will pledge ourselves to start to work for a lasting and just peace in the sacred memory of all those who have laid down their lives.

May this hour come soon, and may it find us ready, and eager to build up a better and worthier world.

ST.

LES ELECTIONS FEDERALES DU 31 OCTOBRE 1943.

D'une manière générale, on s'était accordé à penser que les élections fédérales des 30 et 31 octobre 1943, les secondes de la guerre, ne modifieraient pas considérablement la composition du gouvernement. Les forces en présence semblaient devoir s'équilibrer. Il paraissait exclu que le peuple suisse ait changé d'orientation depuis 1935, c'est-à-dire depuis la dernière fois où il a désigné ses représentants parlementaires dans des conditions tout à fait normales. Nous ne disons rien des élections de 1939 qui s'étaient déroulées sous l'impression de l'ouverture des hostilités, qui avaient été tacites dans la moitié des cantons et qui, ailleurs, s'étaient réduites à la confirmation des députés en fonctions. Elles avaient donc quelque chose d'artificiel et on ne saurait les prendre comme terme de comparaison. En vérité, nous devons admettre, sous

réserve de quelques nuances négligeables, que le peuple suisse a été régi pendant huit ans par les chambres élues en 1935.

Cette fois-ci, la situation se présentait sous un jour assez différent. Tout d'abord, ensuite de l'augmentation de la population qu'a fait apparaître le recensement de 1941, le nombre des sièges a passé de 187 à 194, de telle sorte que la lutte devait s'engager en tout état de cause pour la conquête des sept nouveaux mandats. En outre, non moins de trente-neuf députés avaient décliné une réélection. On trouvait parmi eux des politiciens chevronnés, des chefs de file. Leurs partis respectifs devaient donc désigner leurs successeurs et les faire accepter par le souverain. Mais il semblait que l'enjeu dût se réduire à cela.

Aussi la campagne électorale n'a-t-elle pas été très vive. Du côté bourgeois, on s'est plus ou moins contenté de vanter les mérites d'un gouvernement qui a réussi, dans des circonstances exceptionnellement difficiles, à sauvegarder des biens essentiels: du travail pour tous, un ravitaillement suffisant, l'ordre et la concorde à l'intérieur, la paix sociale, enfin et surtout l'indépendance nationale. Ils ont demandé au peuple de maintenir la majorité des deux tiers qui appuie le gouvernement. Ils ont évoqué les problèmes d'avenir, les questions d'après-guerre, mais de façon assez académique, sans faire de promesses. Quant aux socialistes, ils ont joué le rôle naturel de l'opposition, spéculant sur ce qu'ont d'impopulaire le renchérissement général et les réglementations de toute sorte, annonçant un avenir meilleur, présentant un grand programme doctrinal sur ce que devra être la Suisse de demain, cette "Suisse nouvelle" dont ils se sont faits les champions et qui, tournant le dos au capitalisme tentaculaire, fera régner plus de justice sociale.

Les résultats sont là. Ils sont clairs et nets. Tandis que le bloc gouvernemental a subi un léger recul, les socialistes ont conquis de haute lutte les sept nouveaux sièges, deux autres qu'ils ont pris aux bourgeois, deux autres encore qu'ils ont enlevé à de petits groupements politiques, soit en tout 11 sièges. Partis 45, ils reviendront dès le mois de décembre sous la coupole fédérale au nombre de 56. Le succès est notable. Jamais ce chiffre n'avait été atteint. Il est gros de signification et ce serait pratiquer la politique de l'autruche que de vouloir en minimiser l'importance.

Et pourquoi ce succès? Les restrictions sont impopulaires. Les réglementations étatiques sont supportées avec impotence. Le renchérissement est très sensible aux milieux modestes. Les événements mondiaux inspirent à chacun une angoisse morale, pèsent sur les cœurs et les consciences. L'insécurité générale est démoralisante. On vote donc, par réaction naturelle, avec et pour ceux qui promettent un monde meilleur, la paix universelle, la sécurité définitive, l'abolition de toutes les injustices. On vote contre un gouvernement dont on reconnaît les mérites, mais auquel on est heureux de dire clairement que son œuvre, imposée par les circonstances, devra être abolie, dès le retour de la paix. Tout cela sans compter que les succès russes ont impressionné les esprits et que, sans faire la part du caractère oriental qui explique tant de choses, on conclut de ces succès à l'excellence et à l'efficacité universelles d'un régime que, chez nous, ses admirateurs ne supporteraient pas deux jours.

Bref, quoi qu'il en soit, le groupe socialiste est désormais le plus puissant au Conseil national. Si les