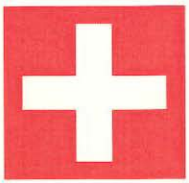
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I.

"SAU NAZI!" WHAT THE SWISS REALLY THOUGHT OF HITLER

by Stephen P. Halbrook[1]

History books record official records which are usually devoid of the ordinary experiences of members of the public at large. To understand attitudes, one learns much from unofficial talk – including sayings, informal remarks, and slang – of ordinary people. The *geistige Landesverteidigung* (spiritual national defense) of the Swiss population against Nazism may be found not just in intellectual, political, and military pronouncements, but also in how people talked or acted in everyday situations.

The vocabulary of *Widerstand* (resistence) was not polite. The Swiss used highly insulting terms in reference to Nazi Germany. Repeating those terms today as part of a historical exercise is not in any manner a reflection on contemporary Germans. Indeed, pejorative terms about a national group frequently fail to distinguish between the oppressors and the oppressed, a very real phenomenon in Hitler's Germany. Nonetheless, the derogatory language used by many Swiss to describe German Nazism epitomizes their total rejection of National Socialism.

The earliest memory of Hitler's assumption of power in 1933 by then eleven-year old Bruno Capol of Windisch is characteristic. Like graffiti spray painted on buildings today, "so at the very beginning of Hitler's takeover we found chalk-cartoons showing a man hanging at the gallows with a swastika and the following words:"

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[1] Copyright © 2000 Stephen P. Halbrook. All rights reserved. An attorney in Fairfax, Virginia, the author holds a Ph.D. in Philosophy from Florida State University and a J.D. from Georgetown University Law Center. His books include *Target Switzerland: Swiss Armed Neutrality in World War II* (Rockville Center, N.Y.: Sarpedon Publishers, 1998), translated as *Die Schweiz im Visier* (Verlage Novalis Schaffhausen/Rothenhäusler Stäfa, 1999) and *La Suisse encerclée* (Geneva: Editions Slatkine, 2000). This is a revision of a paper presented to the Swiss-American Historical Society Annual Meeting, New York City, October 7, 2000. All interviews and correspondence cited herein are first-hand accounts by persons who resided in Switzerland during the period of the Third Reich. The author thanks Therese Klee Hathaway for her assistance in several of the translations herein.

Heil, heil, heil!	Hail, hail, hail!
Hitler soll an's Seil!	Hitler should be hanged!
Und es tönt an allen Ecken,	Here, there and everywhere it roars
Adolf Hitler soll verrecken![2]	Adolf Hitler should be killed!

The statement that Hitler should be killed contains the vulgar term "*verrecken*," which means to die.[3] The English terms "croak" or "kick the bucket" do not convey the even more insulting meaning of the German term. The Nazi onslaught was symbolized by the brown shirt cry outside Jewish businesses and homes, "*Juda verrecke*" (Let Jews croak)![4] Swiss graffiti turned this insult upside down to say: Let Hitler croak!

In the period before Hitler managed to seize power, ruling coalitions in Germany were formed and almost as quickly fell, and for all anyone knew the Führer's government would be just as chaotic and short-lived. The following "Joke of Little Hansli,"[5] which circulated in Switzerland during this early period, expressed in Swiss dialect the strong possibility of a quick change:

Eusi Katz het Kaetzli kha,	Our cats had kittens,
Sieben a der Zahl.	seven in the count.
Sechs sind fuer d'Hitler g'sie,	Six are for Hitler,
Und Eis isch Radikal.	and one is a Radical.

A few weeks later, Hansli was asked to repeat his verse, but he recited a revised version as follows:

Eusi Katz het Kaetzli kha	Our cats had kittens,
Sieben a der Zahl.	seven in the count.
Eis isch fuer d'Hitler g'sie,	One is for Hitler,
Und sechs sind Radikal.	and six are Radicals.

But Hansli, the joke continued, you told it differently before. He replied: "*Inzwischen sind ihre Augen uf g'ange.*" ("In the meantime, their

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[2] Interview with Bruno Capol, Baden, Sept. 27, 1999.

[3] *Collins German-English, English-German Dictionary* (Glasgow: HarperCollins, 1991), 718.

[4] Carl Ludwig, *Die Flüchtlingspolitik der Schweiz in den Jahren 1933 bis 1955: Bericht an den Bundesrat zuhanden der eidgenössischen Räte von Professor Dr. Carl Ludwig* (Bern, 1957), 29.

[5] Letter from Dr. Gustav T. and Margot Ammann Durrer, November 2000.

eyes have opened.") The assumption that the Hitler regime would soon fall proved to be an illusion. Fate would be sealed by the Nazi consolidation of power, as expressed in the following development.

At the 1934 federal shooting competition in Freiburg, Peter Voser's father was firing when suddenly rang the cry "Special Edition!" The newspaper screamed, "Hindenburg is dead, Hitler is Reichspräsident!" Voser recalls: "The men dropped their pistols, went over to the tent and discussed the event, saying 'Hitler, this *Sau* (pig), now he is fully in power, now there will be war, there will be war . . . .'"[6]

The term "*Sau*" may be used alone or with other words to mean such vulgar terms as "dirty swine," "dirty bastard," and "son-of-a-bitch."[7] The following further vocabulary is pertinent: "*Schabe,*" which means "cockroach,"[8] and the similar sounding "*Schwabe,*" which means "Swabian,"[9] a person from southern Germany. "*Schwaben*" (Swabia in English) is the region and medieval country in southwestern Germany chiefly in the area comprising modern Baden, Wurttemberg, and West Bavaria.[10]

The above terms are used in the following recollection by Swiss Füsilier (Infantryman) Wenk, Stabskp., Füsilier Battallion 69, entitled "*D'Schwabe chöme!*" ("The Swabians are coming!").[11] He first relates:

> In January 1940 we were set up in Höri near Bülach. Our headquarters were in a small, old farmhouse. The bedroom was on the upper floor. We had to leave our backpacks, clothes, shoes and everything else in the farmer's small living room. But we always had our weapons with us because at that time the situation was dangerous.

In the next paragraph, one sees a wordplay with the term "Swabian" that can be either a contemptuous word for Germans or a cockroach or both. Füsilier Wenk recalled, and this is written partly in Swiss German dialect:

> *Nun, eines frühen Morgens wird Alarm geschlagen, und einer ruft: "D'Schwabe sind ibroche!" Alles stürmt im Dunkeln, die Waffe in der*

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[6] Statement of Peter Voser, May 7, 1997.

[7] *Collins German-English, English-German Dictionary*, 565.

[8] *Collins German-English, English-German Dictionary*, 567.

[9] *Id.* at 592.

[10] *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1991), 1508.

[11] Wm. Ernst Herzig ed., *Damals im Aktivdienst: Soldaten erzählen aus den Jahren 1939-1945* (Zürich: Rascher Verlag, 1959), 50.

Hand, in die Stube hinunter. Da steht einer und lacht, dreht das Licht an, und was müssen wir sehen: Tatsächlich, die Schwaben sind eingebrochen, aber zum Glück nur die Käfer. Ich glaube, soviel Schwaben hat es nie gegeben, wie es hier Schwabenkäfer hatte. Alles war voll von diesen Grenzgängern, die Schuhe, Tornister, Hosen und Socken. Nun ging der Kampf über eine Stunde, bis der Feind hinausgeworfen war. Es war noch einmal gut gegangen.

In English, that passage reads:

> One early morning, someone sounded the alarm by calling: "The Swabians have broken in!" Everybody grabbed his weapon and ran down to the living room in the dark. A soldier was standing there, laughing as he was turning on the light. And in fact the Swabians had broken in, but luckily only the bugs. I don't believe that there ever were as many Germans as there were bugs. Everything was full of them, shoes, backpacks, pants, socks. It took us more than an hour to throw out the enemy. We had been lucky once again.

Whether humorous or dead serious, such slang expressions were really directed against the Nazi regime and its supporters. Colonel Rudolf Ursprung explained:

> In 1939 I was studying law at the University of Berne. From 1939 to 1945, the year of my graduation, I served a total of about 23 months on active duty. I spent most of my active duty as lieutenant with the border protection unit in Etzgen, a small village on the Rhine.
>
> The soldiers were forced to dig trenches not far from home, to cut trees to build positions, to sleep on straw instead of working and living on their farms, and all this because the dammed "dirty Swabians" were terrorizing the world from across the Rhine. In our area we called the Germans "Swabians" and the Swabians were put at the same level as Hitler and the National Socialists. The anger against Hitler knew no boundaries, and we cursed the situation created by him and the hardship in which we found ourselves because of him.[12]

To pile insult on insult, the above terms were combined as "*Sauschwob*" in Swiss dialect or "*Sauschwabe*" in high German. The connotation was not only "German pig," but also "German roach pig." A Swiss soldier recalled

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[12] Ursprung to Halbrook, October 4, 1999 (condensed).

that they clipped off the ends of bullets issued for their rifles to make the bullets create deadlier wounds when shot against the expected Wehrmacht invaders. His uncle stationed at Lake Constance quipped, "we have no chance, but we would rather die than fall in the hands of the Schwabe." Germans were often called "*Sauschwabe*."[13]

Max Salm, a teenager at the time, remembers: "In 1940, to counter the Fifth Column, the young were encouraged to join the *Ortswehr* (Local Defense). We had no training except shooting courses from age 15. We were given M1889 rifles. We wanted to shoot as many Germans as possible. '*Sauswabian*' was a generally used term for Germans."[14]

Verena Rothenhäusler lived 10 kilometers from the Rhine, heard alarms at night, and lived with angst. She was in the *Landesdienst*, helped farmers after school and during holidays, and had been trained by her father to shoot a rifle – which she would do if the Nazis came. "My mother called a German '*Saunazi*' (Nazi pig), a term which could also apply to a bad Swiss. We also called Germans '*Sauschwabe*.'"[15]

In Germany, such language would have warranted execution. Sophie Scholl was beheaded in 1943 in part because she and her White Rose cohorts had "most vulgarly defamed the Führer, thereby giving aid to the enemy of the Reich and weakening the armed security of the nation."[16]

Peter Voser recollects of daily life in Baden in those days:

> The Jews were not being harassed, but the Swabians had to pay attention. It was not good to be a German in Switzerland at the time. A German who was criticizing Hitler was okay, but a German who was speaking in support of Hitler would get harassed. At the Gymnasium we had a German who was an ardent Nazi. We irritated him constantly because of that and among other things arranged for him to sit next to our only Jew, who was a great guy.[17]

"I was 13 in 1939," remembers Dr. Hans Widmer. "I grew up in Oerlikon near the railroad station. Father called Germans '*Boche*,' a

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[13] Statement of Mr. Rapold at interview with members of Aktion Aktivdienst, Stäfa-Zürich, June 3, 1999.

[14] Interview with Max Salm, Baden, Sept. 28, 1999.

[15] Statement of Verena Rothenhäusler at interview with members of Aktion Aktivdienst, Stäfa-Zürich, June 3, 1999.

[16] Inge Scholl, *The White Rose: Munich 1942-1943*, transl. Arthur R. Schultz (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1983), 116.

[17] Statement of Peter Voser, May 7, 1997.

derogatory French word.[18] He never called them Germans."[19] Other sources note use of the term "*Sauboche*."[20]

The Cabaret Cornichon in Zürich was a major center of ideological resistance to Nazism, and its outstanding performers such as the legendary Elsie Attenhofer were on the Gestapo's black list.[21] In May 1939, the German Consulate lodged a protest against a program called the "*Rattenfänger*" (Rat Catcher), which involved a Nazi who tried to hypnotize the Swiss and which made liberal use of the word "*Boche*." The Zürich police who investigated the complaint noted: "The expression '*Boches*' is the worst insult that there is for a German."[22] The Cabaret responded that it would not change a single word of its programs, which promoted Switzerland's official policy of "*geistigen Landesverteidigung*."[23]

While such a performance must be seen and heard to be appreciated, lines of "The Rat Catcher" are reproduced in the Appendix herein. The following stanza, which follows a plot of the Nazis overcoming Swiss resistance and establishing an oppressive police state, refer to the speaker's mother:

Wer hät ere de Bolle gstucht	Who took all her money
et toutes les broches?	and all her brooches?
Wer hät namal Devise brucht?	Who needed currency?
C'étaient les boches!	The Germans [*les boches*]!
Jetzt äntli merkts mis Mami gwüss:	Now my mother finally understands:
Les Nazi sont	The Nazis are
encore plus rouge que les Russes!	even more red than the Russians!
Elle a raison . . .	She is right . . .
O lala![24]	O lala

The rhyming of "*les broches*" (brooches) with "*les boches*" must have been particularly enraging to the Germans. Such cabaret resistance to Nazism flourished for the entire period of the Third Reich.

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[18] "Boche . . . Jerry, Boche, Hun, Kraut." *Collins-Robert French-English, English French Dictionary* (Glasgow: HarperCollins, 1987), 76.

[19] Interview with Dr. Hans Widmer, Baden, September 28, 1999.

[20] Audience comment, Swiss-American Historical Society Annual Meeting, New York, Oct. 7, 2000.

[21] Elsie Attenhofer, *Réserve du Patron* (Rothenhäusler Verlag Stäfa, 1989), 38.

[22] Elsie Attenhofer, *Cornichon: Erinnerungen an ein Cabaret* (Benteli Verlag Bern, 1975), 155-56.

[23] *Id.* at 160.

[24] *Id.* at 159.

Swiss resistance to tyrants to the north and related colorful vocabulary dates to the First Reich. The attempt in 1493 of the Imperial Diet of Worms to impose a common penny tax on the Swiss and to subject them to the jurisdiction of an Imperial Chamber of Justice sparked a conflict that would complete the winning of Swiss independence from the Holy Roman Empire. Professor Luck writes: "In south Germany, pamphlets and poems insulting to the Swiss appeared, and the name *Schwabe* (cockroach), with contemptuous overtones, found its way about."[25] In the Swabian War of 1499, the Swiss fought the German and Austrian *Landsknechte* (heavy infantry) of Maximilian I, a Habsburg and emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Just as in World War II, the Swiss built fortifications all along the Rhine river and stayed armed and ready for immediate mobilization.[26]

In the winter of 1498-99, soldiers shouted insults back and forth across the Rhine. Albert Winkler explains the incident that sparked the first fighting as follows:

> At Gutenberg, the *Landsknechte* mocked the Swiss by composing unchristian songs that offended the pious Confederates. The final affront came when the German mercenaries offended the Swiss' sexual preferences. The Swabians displayed a cow and called to the Confederates to come over and make love to the animal. The men then mooed like cows and calves. Shortly, the Swiss leader from the state of Uri, Heini Wolleb, took a group of men across the river and burned a house and stall. At this point, the war began in earnest.[27]

Mutual affronts during the period of the First Reich would be repeated during the Third Reich. A Wehrmacht veteran states that, during World War II, the Germans called the Swiss "*Kuhschweizer*" (cow Swiss).[28] Indeed, "*Schweizer*" is defined in part as: "(a) Swiss, (b) dairyman."[29] In any event, Swiss border residents recollect "*Kuhschweizer*" and "*Schwaben*" being yelled across the Rhine.[30] This had been going on for almost five centuries.

The following joke recalled by Gustav and Margot Durrer about a

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[25] James Murray Luck, *A History of Switzerland* (Palo Alto, Ca.: SPOSS, 1985), 108.

[26] On the war, see Feldman and Wirz eds., *Schweizer Kriegsgeschichte* (Bern, 1935), I, Heft 2, 203-76.

[27] Albert Winkler, "The Swabian War of 1499," *Swiss-American Historical Society Review*, XXXV, No. 3, November 1999, 3, 10.

[28] Interview with ex-member of Wehrmacht who wishes to remain anonymous.

[29] *Collins German-English, English-German Dictionary*, 596.

[30] Jürg Stüssi-Lauterburg, "The Threat of Three Totalitarianisms: The Swiss Response," in Leo Schelbert ed., *Switzerland Under Siege* (Rockport, Me: Picton Press, 2000), 33n.3.

border exchange told during the Second World War probably had an equivalent in the 1499 war:

> One morning, at the Swiss-German border, a German soldier handed over a package to a Swiss soldier. When the package was opened, it was found to contain a cow cake (*Kuh Fladda*). The next morning, at the same border, the Swiss soldier handed over a beautifully wrapped package, containing a big piece of Swiss cheese, and a note: "Each country sends its best!"[31]

Combat in the Swabian war involved the use of the "hedgehog" defense and the "push of pike" between massed forces. At Triboltingen, the Swiss claimed to have killed 1,300 Swabians and sustained casualties of only 20. At Frastanz, the Swiss reported 3,000 enemy dead to only 11 Swiss.[32] At Calven, 4,000 Austrians died to 2,000 Swiss. The battle at Dornach resulted in 3,000 *Landsknechte* dead to 500 Confederates. "We are the peasants who punish the nobles," bragged the Swiss.[33] These statistics, whether accurate or not, would inspire Swiss confidence to resist the enemy to the north for centuries to come.

Beaten on the battlefield, Maximilian agreed in a peace treaty signed at Basel to abrogate the tax and the judicial imposition. The independence of the Helvetic Confederation was recognized de facto. There would be no *Grossdeutschland.*

The Führer himself once took note of the derogatory use of "*Schwaben*" by the Swiss. At their June 2, 1941, conference on the Brenner, Hitler and Mussolini discussed carving up Switzerland. "The Führer characterized Switzerland as the most despicable and wretched people and national entity. The Swiss were the mortal enemies of the new Germany . . . . *Die Schwaben am Ende den Krieg doch noch gewinnen würden.*" (In the end, however, the Swabians would still win the war.)[34] Hitler expressed his derision by using "*Schwaben*" instead of the "*Reich*" or "*Deutschland.*"

Alas, the thousand-year Reich lasted only a dozen years. The utter contempt for this Reich and its Führer is expressed in the following joke which the Durrers remember being told in Switzerland:

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[31] Letter from Dr. Gustav T. and Margot Ammann Durrer, November 2000.

[32] John McCormack, *One Million Mercenaries: Swiss Soldiers in the Armies of the World* (London: Leo Cooper, 1993), 33-34; C.W.C. Oman, *The Art of War in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1953), 86, 104.

[33] Winkler, "The Swabian War of 1499," 18, 21, 24.

[34] Andreas Hillgruber, *Staatsmänner und Diplomaten bei Hitler* (München: DTV, 1969), 275-76.

> Hitler was taken for his first ride in an airplane, and became very nervous, to the point that he had diarrhea. Having no bathroom facilities on board, he used his hat to relieve himself and then tossed it out of the window. Later, when landing at the airport, everyone was singing and dancing, but paid no attention to Hitler. "What is being celebrated here?" he asked. "Well, Hitler is dead! His hat has been found with all that remains of him!"[35]

If the above witticism made its rounds on sidewalks, its mockery of Hitler was equaled in a 1942 performance at the Cabaret Cornichon. Two actors are standing in front of the curtain. One of them is selling a newspaper, the *Signal.* The other, a passer-by, notices that a picture is printed on the paper. He says "Is that *him*?" "Yes, that is him"— "I want to cut out this picture and frame it!" — "Why, do you want to hang it on the wall at home?" — "I do not know yet -- either I will hang it or put it on the wall [for execution]."[36]

As on many other occasions, the Nazis violently protested. German Counselor Freiherr von Bibra complained that "there is an unbelievably filthy hole in Zürich at the Cornichon. People there are insulting the Führer in the most impudent and impertinent manner." German General Counsel Voigt characteristically responded: "At any rate, these people are Jews." Von Bibra added:

> That is what I thought! The man compared this to the measures of censorship that the Swiss allow. They say verbatim: "to the gallows with the gentleman, he should hang or be put against a wall and executed." It is clear that this kind of speech is directed against Adolf Hitler. That is what they allow themselves in a so-called neutral country![37]

Opposed to all totalitarianisms, the Swiss had utter scorn for the Hitler-Stalin alliance. When Nazi Germany attacked Soviet Russia, the Swiss rooted for mutual destruction. The following incident recalled by Dr. David Kirchgraber captures the emotions of the time:

> Mr. P, an affable businessman, loved to talk about growing up in the city. He spoke Swiss-German without accent and up until about 1940 pretended to give full support to the red and white flag. Anybody calling

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[35] Letter from Dr. Gustav T. and Margot Ammann Durrer, November 2000.

[36] Elsie Attenhofer, *Cornichon: Erinnerungen an ein Cabaret* (Benteli Verlag Bern, 1975), 210.

[37] *Id.* at 210-11.

him by the common "*Sauschwob*" [German pig] would have been in trouble. I did not even realize that he was from across the border until I noticed that he took a more and more neutral stance. He was one of those emphasizing that Nazism and the German people were two different things. In the beginning, some Swiss citizens tried to make us believe the same. However, during the "*Siege*" (victories) under the very regime they pretended to disapprove of, the majority of Germans living among us showed this to be a rash conclusion.

When the news of the attack on Russia came over the radio on June 22, 1941, we were all standing with our friend P. in the most popular modern swimming pool of the area, in a romantic little valley away from hustle and bustle. Everybody became quiet, everybody was thunderstruck. Then Mr. P's baritone voice sounded across the glistening water: "Yes, in a month we will be in Moscow!" He said "we" and everybody looked even more bewildered. "Hopefully, many of them will die" ("*verräbled*" [croak] in the original Swiss-German dialect) said someone, and another in the vicinity called out "Nazi!" My father, beside himself, struck the water with his fist and shouted "*Jawoll*!" (yes!) into the bitter applause triggered by the response from the bathers. . . . A young man collected his uniform and called up to the loudspeaker: "Let them devour each other!"[38]

No one attempted to drown "Mr. P," but an incident of resistance in Davos could have resulted in a drowning. A disproportionate number of Germans resided in Davos, which had long offered sanatoria for tuberculosis patients. Cornelia Rogger, a teenager at the time, remembers:

The war was raging in Russia. A 15-year old German school boy said to me: "We will invade Switzerland and we will take your fur coat for our army!" I replied: "You murderers. I'll burn my coat before I give it to you!" I saw him a few days later at the swimming pool. He said: "I hope you're not mad at me." I knew he could not swim, but I pushed him into the pool anyway and ran away. Someone rescued him. The German consulate telephoned me to come and answer for my act. I refused.[39]

Everyday resistance in Davos took other forms. In 1999, I interviewed 99-year old Anton Bueler-Smulders and his son, who was six years old at the time of the following. They both remembered Dr. Becker, a Dutchman

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[38] Dr. Med. David Kirchgraber, St. Gallen, *Erinnerungen an Vorkriegszeit und die Mobilisation 1939-1945* (unpublished mimeograph, 1989).

[39] Interview with Frau Cornelia Rogger, Davos, Jan. 21, 2000.

who worked at the Dutch Sanatorium in Davos, and who regularly walked Tanky, his well-trained, dark brown poodle. When a Prussian-talking German would pass, Dr. Becker would snap "Heil Hitler!" Whereupon the dog would raise his leg and pee![40]

Everyone in Davos knew about it, thought it was funny, and did not like the Germans anyway. The German Nazis tried to have this regular insult interdicted, but the police refused to do anything. The police warned Dr. Becker to watch out, as the Germans could shoot him, but he paid no attention. He was a tall man with long arms extending to his knees. Dr. Becker was a local hero!

Dogs were elsewhere used to express anti-Nazi sentiments. One informant recalls: "I saw a man who had his dog trained in a special way. He would put a dog biscuit on his nose and say, 'This is from Hitler.' The dog stayed still. Then he would say, 'This is from Churchill.' The dog jumped and swallowed it."[41]

As the corkscrew on the Army Knife reminds us – not the one issued, but the one actually used – the Swiss are serious about their wine. The following was related by Alice Renold-Asper, who served in the Women's Auxillary Service. In 1940, a military parson from Solothurn left home, admonishing his mother: "If the Germans come, start a fire under my wine cellar! No Germans shall drink my wine!"[42]

Dr. Peter Voser related his own experience as follows:

> We knew war would come. I was 17 and lived in Baden, the midpoint of the Limmat Line, the defense of the Swiss army. The authorities requested that the population invite soldiers for coffee in the winter of 1939. My father and brother were in the army, and soldiers visited every evening. They spoke about whether we could resist Germany.
>
> Champaign was very expensive, and Father had 6 bottles in the cellar which he got from a client. As spring approached, we thought the Germans would attack. We thought what a pity if the Germans got our champaign. So we drank them all! That summer, Father returned from the army and said, "Now I will have a bottle of champaign. Peter, fetch

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[40] Interview with Anton Bueler-Smulders and Tony Anton Maria Bueler, Schwyz, Sept. 26, 1999.

[41] Interview with Sigmund Widmer, Andreas Dolfuss, and Jean Planchere, Stäfa, Sept. 29, 1999.

[42] Interview with Alice Renold-Asper, Baden, Sept. 28, 1999.

me one!" I responded: "I thought the Germans were coming. It was better that Swiss would drink the champaign than the Germans!" At first Father was angry, but then said that it was alright.[43]

When the Nazis conquered France, they decreed the death penalty for any person who failed to surrender all firearms. This would have had special significance in Switzerland, where every man had been issued a rifle for militia service. While the Nazis may not have decreed the death penalty for failure to surrender the fruit of the vine, they certainly seized all they could. A typical bottle from occupied France has the label "Henri Abelé Reims Champagne" and is stamped in red: "*Réservé à la Wehrmacht – Achat et revente interdits.*"[44] (Reserved for the German army – purchase and resale forbidden).

Peter Voser's uncle, a doctor who was too old for military service, planned a special wine tasting for the Nazis. He had a beautiful home with a garden, and was sure the Germans would come and take it over. He prepared for his guests by putting poison into three bottles of his best French wine. He planned to invite them in and to drink the poisoned wine with his guests. He waited until the war ended to discard the wine.[45]

When an Axis dictator finally croaked, the Swiss were there to smile. On April 28, 1945, Mussolini was executed and strung up by his heels on a lamp post. The news was received by Corps Commander Herbert Constam, who was the highest ranking Jewish officer in the Swiss military and one of Commander in Chief Guisan's most trusted officers. Constam telephoned his wife and sang out: "Mussolini is dead. *Ciao*!" He then hung up. He was saying "so long" both to his wife and to Il Duce, the latter in a contemptuous manner. This was related to the author by Constam's secretary and phone operator, who overheard the remark.[46] Query whether Constam used the vulgar term "*verrecken.*"

The demise of the Nazi dictatorship may well have given rise to numerous jokes, any one of which could have originated much earlier out of a sense of wishful thinking. The Nazi Trinity – shall we say Three Stooges – committed suicide rather than face responsibility for their actions, although the following joke could have been told at any time during their reign:

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[43] Interview with Dr. Iur. Peter Voser, Baden, Sept. 28, 1999.

[44] Personal collection of author.

[45] Interview with Dr. Iur. Peter Voser, Baden, Sept. 28, 1999.

[46] Interview with Frau Robert Braunschweig, Bern, Sept. 28, 1999.

> When Goering died and went to Hell, he was brought before the throne of Satan, who stood up and heartily welcomed him. Himmler was also given the same cordial welcome when he arrived in Hell. Finally, when Hitler arrived and was brought before the throne, the Devil did not rise to greet him. When questioned by his subjects regarding this, he replied: "Oh, I know that fellow. If I were to get up, he would immediately steal my seat."[47]

German Intelligence provides an informative source for what the Swiss thought of the Third Reich. A remarkable intelligence report distributed by the *Oberkommando der Wehrmacht* (OKW, Armed Forces High Command) dated November 17, 1939 – a few weeks after Hitler invaded Poland, launching World War II – contains a candid assessment.[48] The following is the entire report with this author's commentary:

> a) Reliable sources tell us that the *Swiss Government is without any doubt neutral* and strives to implement the country's neutrality and the resulting obligations in public life.
>
> b) *Reportedly, however, the Swiss population is very hostile towards Germany*. People are of the opinion that Germany caused this war with its ruthlessness. After all, the demands for Danzig and the Corridor could have been met by way of negotiations. It was not necessary to pull the entire world into disaster.

It is fully consistent with the law of neutrality that the government be formally neutral but that the population is free to take a position. Official neutrality was necessary for survival, but the Swiss people were anything but morally neutral. The report continues:

> The Swiss population believes that Germany is alone responsible for the inconveniences and the financial damages caused by its mobilization. For these reasons, 90% of the population have a negative attitude towards Germany, 5% are indifferent, and at best 5% have a positive attitude.

This was written before the worst "inconveniences" were inflicted on the Swiss. After Western Europe fell in 1940, Switzerland was surrounded

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[47] Letter from Dr. Gustav T. and Margot Ammann Durrer, November 2000.

[48] Bundesarchiv/Militärchiv, Freiburg am Breisgau, Deutschland, RW 5/357, Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, An Auswärtiges Amt (Informationsabteilung) über Inf.A.A. (mit I Nebenabdruck), 17.11.1939.

by the Axis, under constant threat of invasion, and the victim of economic blackmail. The negative attitude toward Germany could have only increased. The following is telling:

> Reports show that the 5% with a positive attitude towards Germany would have to fear for their jobs should they in fact dare to support Germany. Reich German citizens are reportedly called bad names such as "*Sauschwob*" (Swabian pig) and "*Nazihund*" (Nazi dog), German business people are threatened with boycott. In the recent past, a number of such upright Germans have been expelled from the country. The 140,000 Reich Germans currently living in Switzerland are considered dangerous because, under pressure from the Reich, they identify with Hitlerism. Neither French nor British citizens have this problem because their home countries do not exert any similar influence.

Again, this candidly acknowledges Swiss rejection of Nazism, including the colorful linguistic resistance. Further, the Swiss were alert for the Fifth Column, which would pose a threat throughout the war. The report would be incomplete without some kind of attack on Jews:

> In addition to that, Jewish emigrants in their blind hatred are inciting people against anything German and, of course, they are not open to any objective arguments. The reports point to Zürich as the stronghold for intelligence.

This charge would escalate throughout the war. Goebbels' propaganda machine regularly attacked Switzerland as a land of "mountain Jews" and under Jewish influence. Again, the report notes the Swiss verbal abuse of anything German:

> Sources tell us that the hatred against Germans is so great that Swiss driving German cars are exposed to insults and are in danger of the population refusing to help them.
>
> According to reliable sources, even Professor Staehelin of Basle, who recently issued an expert opinion for Germany on poison gas found in Poland, was attacked in the Swiss press.
>
> c) We have learned that *the Federal Council is striving to impose a neutral attitude on the press*. General Guisan recently warned the press in this regard and threatened censure should the press fail to comply.

Press censorship would be adopted in order to decrease the chances of provocation of a Nazi attack as well as to deny intelligence to Nazi operatives. At the same time, the military was making all efforts in preparation to resist such an attack. The threat of censorship was superficial:

> Reportedly, the press showed a certain reluctant restraint after that, but the tone towards Germany was still spiteful and nasty. Reuter and Havas are dominating the newspapers. The German Press Bureau is represented almost exclusively with army reports. As for the rest, news favorable to Germany is weakened or not reported at all.
>
> Reportedly, *Paris Soir* appears daily with an edition of more than 100,000, while the German press is allegedly able to sell only 300 papers a day. The only paper sympathizing with Germany, the *Neue Basler Zeitung*, reportedly has few readers in Switzerland. Swiss papers carrying German pictures are in danger of being canceled.

Again, through its newspaper-purchasing tendencies, the population was expressing its support for the Allies and opposition to the Nazis. National Socialist indoctrination had no chance in Switzerland:

> d) Given the population's attitude, German propaganda is showing little effect. According to the reports, the Swiss simply do not believe the Germans anymore and even think that the German radio is lying.
>
> e) *The attitude of the Swiss General Staff towards Germany reportedly is not unfriendly*. The officers were very impressed with [Germany's] successes in Poland.

Certain members of the General Staff were traditionally oriented toward Germany, but not Nazism. They would soon change their attitudes or be weeded out. At that very time, General Guisan had already made secret plans with the French military for joint resistance should Germany attack south of the Maginot Line through Switzerland. Most telling is the following:

> We have, however, learned that the Swiss military routinely refers to the Führer by using the most obscene terms. A recently issued army decree threatens persons who insult foreign heads of state with draconian punishment so that the public grumbling should stop.

What a pity that the intelligence report did not list some of the "obscene terms" for the benefit of future historians! The referenced decree may have

been a sop to deflect provocation of an attack, but no draconian punishment would ever be meted out and the heads of the Axis states would be the subjects of insults until they met their demise – and even after. Meanwhile, the Swiss stood with the victims of Nazi aggression:

> f) Reports show that Poland enjoys great sympathy all over Switzerland. In order to help, some Swiss have set up a charitable organization called "Pro Polonia." According to information received, the press keeps describing the destruction of Warsaw caused by the German bombardment and the suffering of the Polish population. This too shows the attitude set against Germany.
>
> g) France and England are said to be appreciated because the Swiss reportedly assume that Switzerland will retain its current size if the Western forces win, while they fear that the German-speaking part of Switzerland will be annexed by Germany if Germany wins.

Since Hitler came to power, the Nazis had been printing maps showing a "*Gau Schweiz*" – a future Nazi administrative unit – as part of a "*Grossdeutschland*" (Greater Germany).[49] Fear of annexation was fully justified. The Nazi intelligence report ended with observations about the Hitler-Stalin alliance and the Swiss attitude toward Germany and the Allies:

> The Russian-German friendship pact had a similarly unfavorable effect, in particular in church circles. Those circles are speaking of a pact with the devil.

The Swiss mood can best be described as:

"*Frankreich wird geliebt,*	"France is loved,
England bewundert,	England is admired,
Deutschland gehasst."	Germany is hated."

If a picture is worth a thousand words, the witticisms, jokes, and insults discussed above express the full breath of emotions of the spirit of resistance in a manner that could never be verbalized in the cold language of official reports. The popular culture of *Widerstand* is an important chapter in the hidden history of Switzerland's success story in retaining its freedom, independence, and democracy in a sea of despotism during World

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[49] Bruno Grimm, *Gau Schweiz? Dokumente über die nationalsozialistischen Umtriebe in der Schweiz* (Druck der Unionsdruckerei Bern, 1939), 9-13.

War II. In order that future generations will appreciate the realities of the period, it is important that the experiences of the wartime generation be recorded. Members of the wartime generation are invited to submit written accounts of their experiences to the author.[50]

APPENDIX

The following lines are from the "*Rattenfänger*" (Rat Catcher), a 1939 production of the Cabaret Cornichon in Zürich.[51]

Rattenfänger	**Rat Catcher**
Ich bin Hypnotiseur und geh'	I am the hypnotizer and go
bezwingend durch die Masse.	through the masses defeating them.
Ich nehm' dem Menschen seinen Sinn	I am taking the people's sense
und geb' ihm dafür Rasse.	but I give it race.
"Gefährlich leben!" – dieses Wort	"Live dangerously!" is the word
verbreite ich mit Listen.	I spread with lists.
Ich selber geh' nur aus dem Haus	But I don't leave the house
mit tausend Polizisten.	unless surrounded by thousands of policemen.
Wenn ich befehle, tut der Mensch	When I give orders, man loses
sich gar nicht mehr genieren.	all inhibitions.
Er fängt sogar zu kriechen an	He even starts to crawl
und geht auf allen Vieren.	on hands and knees.
Die Schweizer, die sehr störrisch sind,	I am trying to treat the Swiss
versuch' ich zu behandeln.	who are very stubborn.
Doch ist es trotz Hypnose schwer,	Despite my hypnosis it is hard
in Nazi sie zu wandeln.	to turn them into Nazi.
(auf die Kinder zeigend)	(he points to the children)
Den Kindern suggerier' ich jetzt,	I am now going to suggest to the children
der Anschluss sei vollzogen.	that the Anschluss has taken place.
Wenn sie mal in Hypnose sind,	Once they are hypnotized,
merkt keins, dass ich gelogen!	they will not notice that I lied!

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[50] Stephen P. Halbrook, 10560 Main St., Suite 404, Fairfax, VA 22030, Fax: 703 359 0938, email: protell@aol.com.

[51] Elsie Attenhofer, *Cornichon: Erinnerungen an ein Cabaret* (Benteli Verlag Bern, 1975), 158-59.

(umtanzt die Kinder)

Der Pfeifer is kommen,
ich hab' euch genommen!
Ich blas' euch ins Ohr.
Mein Flöterl, das trillert,
mei Liaderl, dös schillert –
ich mach' euch was vor.

In Braunau bin i 'boren,
mit Stiefel und Sporen,
drum hab' i braun gern!
Aus Österreich bin i kommen,
hab Deutschland genommen,
an-ti-ko-min-tern!

Der Pfeifer is kommen,
die Schweiz is genommen
mit der hintersten Kueh!
Dass ihr zur HJ [Hitlerjugend] ghört
und aufs Hakenkreuz schwört –
ja, was sagt ihr dazue?

Chor der Kinder

Am erst-n-Augschte hämmer welle singe,
di ganzi Klass: "heil dir, Helvetia!"
En Bueb hät welle
d'Schwyzerfahne schwinge,
die Dütsche-n-aber händs verbotte gha!

Ein Mädchen:

Vätterli, mis Vätterli,
sitzt jetzt hinderm Gätterli . . .

Früehner hät min Vatter gseit,
D'Jude tüeged ihm nöd leid,
Au d'Freimurer siged Find,
dänn me wüss nöd, was sie sind!
S'Dritti Rych tüeg Ornig mache
mit de ganze fuule Sache,
mit der Warehüser-Judebruet –
und em Mittelstand göngs guet.

Vätterli, mis Vätterli,
sitzt jetzt hinderm Gätterli!
Und so rettet s'Naziland
eusure Schwyzer Mittelstand!

(dances around the children)

The flutist has come,
I have taken you!
I am blowing into your ear.
My flute is warbling,
my song is glowing,
I am telling you stories.

I was born in Braunau,
with boots and spurs.
That is why I like the color brown.
I came from Austria
and took Germany,
anti-Comintern!

The flutist has come,
Switzerland has been taken,
to the last cow!
You belong to the HJ [Hitler Youth]
and have sworn by the swastika.
What do you say to that?

Children's choir:

On the first of August we wanted to sing,
the whole class wanted to sing "Hail to Helvetia!"
A boy wanted to wave
the Swiss flag,
but the Germans forbid him to do so.

A girl:

Father, my father,
he now sits behind bars . . .

Earlier my father said
that he was not sorry for the Jews
and that the Free Masons were enemies
because we did not know what they were.
He said the Third Reich would clean up
with the mess
with the dirty warehouse Jews.
He said the middle class was doing well.

Father, my father,
he now sits behind bars.
And so Nazi land save
our middle stand!

Der Bub Giacomo Matto:

Min Padre het en Wahlspruch gha:
"Per tutto muesch parad sy!"
Der erste war mein Herr Papa,
wo's gschlingget het dur d'Nazi!

Und er hät doch eso glächlet
und gfächlet
und gwagglet
und gfacklet
berichtiget
und beschwichtiget
us hoffender Bruscht –
uemesuscht!

Ein Mädchen:

Mi Muetter isch so vornehm gsy
und elegant.
De Dialäkt hät si nöd gschätzt
im Schwyzerland.
Si hät bim Wörtili "Kommunist"
en Schrei abglah!
Und si hät gseit: De Hitler ist
l'homme qu'il nous faut!

Mi Muetter hät Vermöge gha,
e Million!
Jetzt isch si ziemli bschisse dra,
das isch de Lohn.
Sie hät halt glaubt, dass d'Hitlerei
une barricade
gäg alli Bolschewiki sei –
une bonne parade.
O lala!

Wer hät ere de Bolle gstucht
et toutes les broches?
Wer hät namal Devise brucht?
C'étaient les boches!
Jetzt äntli merkts mis Mami gwüss:
Les Nazi sont
encore plus rouge que les Russes!
Elle a raison . . .
O lala!

The boy Giacomo Matto:

My father had an election slogan:
We have to be ready for everything!
My Papa was the first one
who slipped out because of the Nazi!

Even though he smiled
and waved
and wavered
and hesitated
and justified
and toned down
in hope
for nothing

A girl:

My mother was so distinguished
and elegant.
She did not appreciate the dialect
in Switzerland.
She screamed when she heard
"Communist."
And she said: Hitler is
the man we need!

My mother owned a fortune,
one million!
Now we are in big doodo,
that is our payback!
She believed that Hitler
was a barricade
against the Bolsheviks,
a good parade.
O lala!

Who took all her money
and all her brooches?
Who needed currency?
The Germans [*les boches*]!
Now my mother finally understands:
The Nazis are
even more red than the Russians!
She is right . . .
O lala