

Fortifications in Switzerland

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important for a state with four different languages. The natural trend of adherents to four different civilizations had to be subordinated to one principle: the will for a common political existence in a Federal Democracy free and tolerant, the purpose of which is actually to guarantee the maintenance of these differences and to allow each citizen to live his own life in a manner compatible with his individuality.

Such is the strength of the Swiss democratic ideal, this writer continues, and of the spiritual ties that unite the Swiss, that the national frontiers are guarded - a fact that would appear paradoxical anywhere else - precisely by troops speaking the same language as spoken in the neighboring country.

Switzerland, with four different languages, yet perfectly harmonious and in normal times very prosperous, is a present-day miracle, and a ray of hope for the world at large.

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FORTIFICATIONS IN SWITZERLAND.

During the four years of the World War the Swiss army, watchful and ready, manned the extensive front in the south in face of the belligerents. Since then Switzerland has not neglected the training and equipment of her militia. In the last few years especially she has shown, by the allocation of considerable sums of money, that she is afraid of no sacrifice in order to carry out properly this task involving her neutrality and integrity.

Among the measures taken we must above all note the comprehensive defensive works created in recent years. More than 100 million Swiss francs have been spent on these works. The construction of these fortifications gives evidence of a thorough study by the military authorities of plans for national defence and for the best utilisation of natural topographical obstacles. The alpine chain which traverses the country from end to end, had earlier been strengthened by fortifications to serve as a central rampart. These works are already well known, namely the central massif of the St. Gotthard defences and the St. Maurice lines of resistance, which bar the western entrance to the Rhone valley. Both these systems of fortifications have been considerably extended, and in this connection it must be remembered, that this small country enjoys a great reputation throughout the whole world in the spheres of engineering and building, and especially in tunnelling. It can thus be understood how fortifications have arisen here, designed to make proper use of the native rock and which, with their modern armament, are impregnable. Finishing off the central alpine system of fortifications we have the last strategically important point, the gap called the Sarganser Gate, which forms an opening in the alpine wall to the East. Here, as a counterpart to St. Maurice, great defensive works have recently been constructed.

Besides this systematic construction of fortifications in the centre, frontier works have been built everywhere. Actually every possible point of ingress which is strategically important has been made sure and further work is constantly being done to complete this protective belt. Switzerland has provided these lines with an excellent modern armament and given the greatest attention to the reliability of the building technique and the materials used, which are generally on a foundation of native rock. Similar care has been bestowed on the training of the garrisons, who add to their skill in handling their weapons an unconquerable enthusiasm for the defence of their country and an ardent love of their native land.

A comparison with the terrain of Poland as we saw it in the recent war operations there provides a striking contrast; for the broken nature of the Swiss topography accentuates the evident advantages enjoyed by the defence in this mountainous country, whereas in Poland extensive plains offer no obstacle to an advance by motorised troops, except in the case of heavy rains; the Swiss roads and tracks pass through mountain ranges and

defiles, impassable except by relatively scanty means of communication; and further in the interior of the country numerous landslides have been provided for, which will definitely block roads, bridges and passes. A motorised invasion might conceivably find itself faced suddenly by a chasm, round the steep faces of which chamois and goats might clamber, but not soldiers carrying weapons, and still less armoured cars. Weather conditions would in such cases cause very great difficulties, for right out in the outlying hilly country there is normally a snowfall of such depth that, although we do not get the 10 to 20 meters of snow found on the ranges, falls of one to two meters are commonly measured.

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NEWS IN BRIEF.

On July 8th last, the Federal authorities prohibited all dealings in currencies deposited in Switzerland by individuals or companies from France, Belgium, Holland, Denmark, Norway and Luxemburg. Hundreds of millions of foreign moneys have been transferred to our country since the outbreak of the war. Switzerland is now freely called the "Banker of Europe" and is second to the U.S.A. as a safe place for "fugitive" capital.

Federal Minister H. Obrecht is resigning from his position, due to ill-health. He was head of the department of political economy since 1935.

A miniature motor, only half the weight, namely 0.06 grams, of the one shown at Zurich's exhibition last year, is now at the New York World's Fair. This tiny motor, constructed by F. Huguenin, a Swiss specialist, is valued at 5,000 dollars. The motor consists of 42 component parts and is mounted inside a pearl of 9.5 mm. diameter. This marvellous piece of work is viewed through a magnifying glass by the public, and of course the motor is constantly moving by its own power.

The last capital punishment in Zurich took place in May, 1865 - fully 75 years ago. The final judgment was ratified through the Grand Council, in drawing lots: 100 black balls, against 87 white.

An Army of 50,000 men, composed of French and Poles, crossed the Swiss frontiers on June 20th at Gaumois in the Bernese Jura. Many were wounded, all were dirty and tired. Some were bitter against their own leaders; others were joking and took everything with an easy conscience. The soldiers, including a full division of Poles, came partly from the battlefields of the Champagne and others from the southern Maginot Line. They were separated from the main forces through advancing Germans and their bombers. The fugitives were promptly interned and distributed in various quarters in the Bernese Oberland and Central Switzerland.

The total donations towards the Swiss War Relief Fund in the United States of America amounted to well over 50,000 dollars.

Mail to and from Switzerland is now transmitted through the U.S.A. and Portugal. Fast airmail services from New Zealand are despatched fortnightly by Pan American airships to New York, thence to Lisbon and by Italian planes to Rome, and finally by train to Switzerland.
