

Switzerland's role in Europe

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Bidgenossenschaft

Wie ist denn einst der Diamant entstanden

Zu unzerstörlich alldurchdringender Einheit,

Zu ungetrübter, strahlenheller Reinheit,

Gefestiget von unsichtbaren Banden ?

Wenn aus der Völker Schwellen und Versanden

Ein neues sich zu einem Ganzen einreihet,

Wenn Freiheitslieb' zum Volke dann es einweihet,

Wo Gleichgesinnte eine Heimat fanden:

Wer will da wohl noch rütteln dran und feilen ?

Zu spät, ihr Herrn! Schon ist's ein Diamant,

Der nicht mehr ist zu trüben und zu teilen!

Und wenn, wie man im Edelstein erkennt,

Darin noch kleine dunkle Körper weilen,

Soll sind sie fest umschlossen und gekannt.

Gottfried Keller.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX X SWITZERLAND'S ROLE IN EUROPE. X XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Ever since the three forest cantons of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden declared their independence in 1291, Switzerland has played a big role in Europe far out of proportion with her size or population. Today, as a troubled continent gropes for peace and stability, that fact is more true than ever before. That the Swiss are an efficient people is evident when you consider that the only natural resources in the country are water power and eye-catching scenery. Switzerland makes the most of both.

Rushing glacier streams have been harnessed to provide light and power for homes, industry and the railroads. Large reservoirs glitter under the Alpine sun, and in valleys, the great turbines hum day and night. Enough hydro-electric power is generated so a surplus is available for "export" to foreign areas near the frontiers. The extent to which Switzerland uses electricity is especially evident in her railroads, which are 96% electrically operated. Result is that trains are both fast and remarkably clean. The Swiss, incidentally, are almost fanatically neat - not only the trains but every railroad station and chalet seems to have been scrubbed with soap and water.

Scenically, Switzerland is a spectacular showcase of snow peaks, quiet lakes, green hills. Graustarkian villages and resorts. There are enormous differences in altitude ranging from the low point of 633 feet above sea level along Lake Maggiore in the Italian speaking Ticino, to the soaring 15,203 foot spire of the Monte Rosa, in the Canton of the Valais. Wherever you go, there are busy mountain railroads, funiculars and chair lifts. The people have the same kind of pride in showing you the prize scenic spots as a stamp collector has when he shows you his album. You have an amazing selection of high altitude or lakeside resorts, all of them with a wide range of hotel accommodations where the staff speaks English, French, German or assorted Swiss dialects. You can go skiing on the Jungfrauoch in mid-July, or relax in Winter along the Riviera-like retreats along Lakes Lugano and Maggiore. Even the cities are fascinating places to visit. In Zurich Geneva, Berne and Basle, the picturesque old sections of town rub elbows with broad avenues lined with shops, theatres and modern office buildings.

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property in Switzerland could, and should, be liquidated before the question of an adequate compensation has been settled. Since it does not seem possible that an agreement will be reached on this very important question, the case will probably have to be submitted to an international Court of Arbitration, which possibility is provided for in the Washington Agreement.

The liquidation of the German holdings in Switzerland has been the object of a complaint in the British Parliament by a speaker of the Foreign Office; also the middle and lower press and some radio commentators of a similar category in the United States, accused Switzerland of not carrying out her obligations under the Agreement of Washington. Experts in Bern pointed out that all these accusations are unjustified.

On the occasion of the ratification of the Washington Agreement, voices were raised in the Swiss Federal Parliament against said Agreement, because it was in contradiction to the Swiss Federal Constitution and to Swiss law, inasmuch as force was applied against the property of third parties. On the 8th of October, 1947, the Federal Council, in a note to the Allied Governments, explained its legal point of view; in Switzerland people can only be expropriated of their property if a complete compensation is made thereof. In order to be able to assess such compensation a certain relation must be established between the Swiss and the German currencies; Switzerland has requested the Allies to fix such a rate of exchange corresponding exactly to the parity between the dollar and the reichsmark in Germany. The Allies made a proposition according to which a German from whom 100 frs. would be taken away would receive in compensation only 56 reichsmarks. It is to be noted that, without a doubt, the value of the Swiss franc exceeds by far that of the reichsmark. Switzerland could not therefore, accept the proposition because it is in contradiction to the principle to give to expropriated owners a compensation representing the true counter-value of the goods or holdings involved. The acceptance of said proposal would constitute too heavy a burden for our country. To its note of the 8th of October, 1947, the Federal Council received the answer of the Allies only on the 8th of May, 1948. The Political Department saw itself compelled to request further explanations in connection with an important point in that note. An answer by the Allies to this request is still outstanding. The Federal Council regrets that a delay has occurred in the execution of the Washington Agreement - it points out however, that it cannot be made responsible for this delay.

The Swiss refuse to believe in the principle that "might makes right." They have resisted the Nazis whenever they tried to impose conditions in utter disregard of the law and the Swiss are determined to resist such impositions, no matter from what quarter they might come. Switzerland is, and will always remain, a State built strictly upon law and justice and under no circumstances will she deviate from her line of conduct.

SWITZERLAND'S ROLE IN EUROPE. (continued)

But obviously, Switzerland's success story is due to more than tourists and electric power. Even her agriculture, the well-known cows and yodelling alpherds - are far less important than her highly developed industries and the products of skilled labour. Today, industry absorbs 45% of the nation's workers, agriculture only 22%. Best known of Switzerland's many exports are, of course, her watches. Twenty million are exported annually, mostly to the United States, Great Britain and South American nations. Swiss textiles find ready markets, and so do the delicate embroideries and lace-work of the so-called "home-industries." The Swiss chemical and pharmaceutical concerns boast a long record of achievement, including the famous DDT formula. Swiss marine turbines, heavy machinery and precision instruments are in enormous demand. Her graphic arts are superlative. Atomic research is in full swing. And, although landlocked, Switzerland has built up an amazing mechanism of banking and international trade which functions as precisely as a chronometer. The Swiss franc is the only currency comparable to the dollar in stability.

There is solidarity too, in Switzerland's policy of international co-operation within the limits of her own neutrality. Industrial fairs take place regularly in Basle, Lausanne, Lugano and St. Fall. In Geneva, former home of the League of Nations, you may find today, a United Nations' session in full swing, or an international trade or labor forum. There is a steady program of music, art and cultural events throughout the country, all with an international flavour.

The democratic Swiss, no less nationalistic than any people, feel that peace can be built only on a firm foundation of mutual understanding, commerce and an exchange and distillation of viewpoints. Their efforts along these lines may well be an historic mission.

NOTICE

REMINDER TO MEMBERS WHO HAVE NOT YET PAID THEIR SUBSCRIPTIONS.

Members are reminded that the Acting-Secretary, Mr. A. Moosberger, 129 Crummer Road, Grey Lynn, Auckland, W.2., is only too willing to accept Subscriptions which, by the way, are now overdue by six months.

ELECTION OF COMMITTEE.

Members of our Society are invited to send in names of fellow-members whom they wish to be elected as:-

- (a) President
- (b) Vice-President
- (c) Secretary
- (d) Treasurer
- (e) Scrutineers
- (f) Executives for the different districts for our Annual General Meeting to be held at the end of our financial year, September 1948, in Auckland.

You can nominate an entirely new Committee if you so desire.

NOTICE TO MEMBERS.

The following Calendars for 1948 in colour, can be ordered through the Consulate of Switzerland:

"Berge und Taler der Heimat"	9/-
"Die malerische Schweiz"	7/-
"Alpenblumen Kalender"	6/-

When sending in your order please forward at the same time the Subscription Fee.

Our Secretary has left Auckland for a trip to Switzerland and the Committee appointed Mr. A. Moosberger, as Acting-Secretary until the end of our financial year. Please forward your Subscriptions or Correspondence to:

Mr. A. Moosberger,
129 Crummer Road,
AUCKLAND, W.2.