

Swiss reflection on the San Francisco Conference

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SWISS REFLECTION ON THE SAN FRANCISCO CONFERENCE.

If you study the history of international collaboration in the past century, you will find that Switzerland has always played a leading role. She was present when the Geneva Convention of the treatment of war prisoners was signed and offered hospitality to the international bureaux like that of the World Postal Union, the World Telegraphic Union, the Central Office for International Railway Traffic, the International Patent Office and the International Broadcasting Union. She has always supported all social, cultural, hygienic and political congresses which render a service to peace and finally the League of Nations which was established in Geneva.

Switzerland has not been represented at the San Francisco Conference. She has not even sent an official observer, and does not know whether she will ever join the new world organization, but these facts have not let the Swiss people be indifferent at all. Since the beginning of the San Francisco Conference and particularly since its successful conclusion, the Swiss people are following the discussions and results of the new world organization with the greatest interest. We are beginning to ask ourselves now whether we shall ever have a chance of showing our readiness to co-operate or whether we shall become outsiders. A small country herself, Switzerland is looking forward to the recognition of the significance of the small powers and of their right to live independently. This does not mean that she is in opposition to the great powers which have a leading part to play. On the contrary, Switzerland always considered it most unfortunate that the United States and Russia and later also Germany stayed away from the League of Nations. The Swiss people who have had to live for centuries between great powers like France and Austria and later in between two belligerent great powers like Germany and France know well enough the important part a big nation has to play and today are wishing nothing better than that these nations will really fulfill their tasks in the security of peace.

The small countries have neither the power nor the means to fight the trouble makers effectively. Switzerland fully understands that the great powers reserve the leading roles for themselves.

The second question, one of the most essential for our country, is that of the maintenance of our centuries old neutrality. What will happen when the signers of the world peace, demand that all members of the organization co-operate in military or other sanctions again? For the time being, Switzerland is waiting for the signatory powers to assume their final attitude in this question. The time may come where she will have to choose between her traditional neutrality and the new security. Our choice will then be made calmly and objectively, balancing out the pros and cons because our neutrality has been a way to the independence and liberty of our nation.

For the moment there are only few partisans of the idea of abandoning our neutrality. They are represented among the leftists, i.e. among the Communists and also in certain intellectual circles. Everywhere else something like a deep attachment for our neutrality can be felt. This was still evident the other day during the convention of the Swiss Socialists. This party does not envisage the maintenance of the principle of neutrality unless we receive in return equal guarantees of security.

A commission of experts is going to study the entire problem. The government, the parliament and no doubt the people too will take part in the matter. As soon as a decision has been taken, it is not excluded that a sort of intermediary position will be found, permitting the maintenance of our neutrality perhaps in a revised form without our being obliged to remain outside the international organization and condemned to refrain from all contact with it.

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