

In defense of Switzerland

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IN DEFENSE OF SWITZERLAND.

"Pour La Victoire", the distinguished Journal Francais d'Amerique, published in its issue of January 13, under the title, "In My Opinion", an editorial: "In Defense of Switzerland", by its editor Michel Pobers (a Frenchman). Among other cities M. Pobers has lived for many years in Geneva, Berne. He is well qualified to defend Switzerland.

A tiny country in the heart of Europe is setting the world an amazing example of dignity, humanity, and the most enlightened liberalism.

Need we remind people of the position and role of Switzerland since 1939? Need we remind them that despite an encircling "cordon totalitaire" Switzerland has yielded none of her proud traditions, has kept intact her democratic institutions and her free press, and has strained every effort to alleviate the hardships caused by the war?

The Swiss, worthy heirs of the Henri Dunants and the Gustave Adors, once more are demonstrating that the soul of Switzerland cannot be gauged by the width of her territory but rather by the majestic greatness of her mountains.

Surely we might have believed that since Switzerland, from 1940 to 1944, had been as an oasis in the fascist desert, she would have been spared the misery of having to defend herself against ingratitude and slander.

Unfortunately, amidst the moral confusion of this sixth year of war, such strange happenings are not impossible.

Some newspapers are shooting poisoned arrows at the only democratic country which has dared stand up to the passions of its neighbors.

This started over the selection of the future home of the new League of Nations. "Not Switzerland! Not Geneva!" people said. "Too many unhappy memories are attached to these names..."

Certainly the name of Geneva evokes thoughts of a generous ideal betrayed by some of the members of The League of Nations. But it also evokes the merciful symbol of the Red Cross, the magnificent work of welfare organizations and so many other fine achievements in which the Swiss people have never faltered.

It has been suggested that the new League of Nations sit at Vienna, I am not oblivious to Viennese charm, but does the former capital of the Austro-Hungarian Empire evoke such pleasant memories? And, above all, what advantage would there be in establishing the League of the United Nations in a German language city?

An American review discussing the future of the free world, published an attack on Switzerland which, to put it mildly, was unexpected. The Swiss press was said to be pro-fascist! The poor ignoramus who wrote this monstrosity could not have been acquainted with the Swiss press except perhaps for one or two inconsequential sheets minus influence of circulation. He could not have heard of William Martin, the master of international journalism of the "Gazette of Zurich" - one of the three or four outstanding newspapers in the world. Nor could he have heard of the "Gazette de Lausanne!"

No matter where we may look, if the seat of the new League of Nations is to be in Europe, Switzerland is the only country truly suitable for such a purpose. Everything about her makes it so, - her history, her tri-lingual culture, her geographical position in the very heart of the continent, at the cross-roads of the St. Gothard, - her democratic tradition.

But the extravagant press campaign did not confine itself to the choice of a new international capital. Switzerland is accused of lacking in firmness with her German neighbor. She is reproached for not breaking off commercial relations with Germany. "Reporters," who have never looked at a map of Europe, speak gravely of the "tremendous economic aid" which Switzerland is giving to Germany.

At a time when Switzerland did not have enough to provide for her own children she sent food to French and Belgian children, and to bomb victims in London. She invited the children of war prisoners to come to her mountain resorts as honor guests.

The food which the Quakers and the Red Cross were able to ship to France and other occupied countries, could be obtained only with Switzerland's help.

Today, due to stringent restrictions in Allied shipping, and since she can ask nothing of liberated France or Italy (both starved and ruined), Switzerland gallantly struggles with the most serious difficulties.

Without access to the sea, unable to depend on coal or raw materials from overseas, Switzerland fights hunger, cold and destitution as grimly as she fought totalitarian contagion.

Doubtless there will be no sequel to the press polemics. There will be no "sanctions" against Switzerland. Tomorrow these news writers in quest of sensations will discover other subjects.

As for me, whenever I hear people talk of post war Europe, my thoughts go back to the past, to those years which I was privileged to spend in Switzerland, and I ask myself: "Will they not try to find in Europe a constitution on the pattern of the Helvetic Confederation? And will the day ever come when the world shall be blessed with this spirit of tolerance, this respect for what is right, this happy synthesis which embodies at once national sentiment and a keen understanding of the multiplicity of languages and cultures, and has made of tiny Switzerland a country of which all Europeans may justly be proud!"

ECHO REGARDING THE CONCLUSION OF ALLIED TRADE NEGOTIATIONS WITH SWITZERLAND.

1. Statement by Lauchlin Currie, Chief of the American Mission.

Mr. Lauchlin Currie who led the American delegation during the recent economic negotiations in Berne said on March 19th in the course of a press conference that in his opinion a perfect agreement was reached on all points. The agreement was in all respects in harmony with Switzerland's policy of neutrality.

2. Through the Eyes of the Swiss Press (Swiss Radio Broadcast to New Zealand).

The Swiss press gave considerable space to the economic agreements recently drawn up between Switzerland and the Allies. We read about this in the "Nouveau Zurcher Zeitung": "True, the comprehension of our partners was deepened by the several weeks stay in our country of the special delegations. However, it is also embedded in the determined will made necessary by the unprecedented totalization of war. Switzerland's resolve to maintain economic life in the teeth of all the