

Swiss watch on the Rhine

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SWISS WATCH ON THE RHINE.

Strengthening of Defences.

The failure of the Disarmament Conference, the unsettled political outlook, and the publication last spring of certain German plans providing for an attack against France through Switzerland have induced the Swiss Government to take the measures necessary to strengthen the country's defences.

Last winter the Swiss Parliament authorized the Government to spend about 80,000,000 francs (55,333,000) on the improvement of the Army's weapons. That sum is being spent in increasing the number of heavy artillery batteries, in developing the strength of the Air Force, and in supplying infantry regiments with more quick-firing guns and light artillery. Parliament has also prolonged the periods of instruction of nearly all Army units, and especially of technical units. These measures were at first opposed by the Socialists, who abstained finally from voting.

The Swiss Army consists of six divisions, three cavalry brigades, four mountain brigades, the Air Force, and the garrisons of the St. Gothard and St. Maurice forts. It can put nearly 400,000 men in the field including the *Landwehr* and *Landsturm* units, composed of men over 32 years of age, and it will now possess a very modern and powerful armament. But that is not enough. There is no standing Army in Switzerland, and though the Army can be mobilized in two days, the country is open to any daring and unscrupulous invader who, without declaring war, could easily seize a number of strategical points in Swiss territory and thereby render possible an invasion by a powerful army.

It would not be difficult for the Germans to take possession of the undefended Rhine bridges and — before any declaration of war — to throw into Switzerland a number of motorized units which would seize important points before the Swiss Army was ready to defend them. At the same time the Swiss mobilization might be hindered by air attacks upon arsenals, railway junctions, main roads, and electric power plants, and a German army might thereby be enabled to break through and separate the Swiss defenders, throwing one part of them back into the Lake of Lucerne region and the other towards the Lake of Geneva. If these forces were not completely shattered it would be necessary to immobilize several divisions in order to pin the remnants of the Swiss forces in their mountains.

Meanwhile the invader would push his troops along the Jura range and across the *Plateau suisse*, which extends between the Alps and the Jura, and would fall on the French forces, or take them in the rear either south of Belfort or farther west in the Pontarlier and Besançon area. Should the Swiss Army be unable to resist or fail to immobilize several enemy divisions, or should France be slow in coming to the assistance of Switzerland, which she would do once Swiss neutrality had been violated, the whole of the invading forces might push on rapidly along the Geneva route and fall upon the Lyons region, thus completely turning the French system of defences.

Possible line of invasion.

It is curious to note that the possible line of invasion from the Rhine frontier to Geneva — which forms a sort of natural corridor between the Alps and the Jura range — is regularly followed by the airship *Graf Zeppelin* in the course of her pleasure cruises from the Lake of Constance to Geneva. For the past two years these trips have taken place regularly during the summer season, a fact which causes much concern to those who know the military value of air photography.

The possibility of an attack through Switzerland has not escaped the attention of the French military authorities, and the recent manoeuvres in the Belfort region were based on the supposition that an enemy force had broken through Basle and the Porrentruy district. The alternative route from the Rhine to Geneva seems less dangerous, as the invading army would be compelled to maintain and defend lines of communication 185 to 200 miles in length. The importance of this route has not, however, been overlooked by the French. A number of military roads have been built in the mountains south of the Lake of Geneva, the erection of fortifications is contemplated in the mountains separating the Giffre valley from that of the Arve, south of Geneva, and workmen are now engaged in finishing before the coming winter a strategic road on the top of the Salève mountain, which dominates Geneva and the lake. The French are also repairing and rearming the Fort de l'Écluse, which defends the road and the railway line from Geneva to Paris and Lyons through Bellegarde.

The Swiss are resolved to do their duty in defence of their neutrality. This year the divisional manoeuvres of the Swiss Army were all based on the supposition of an enemy force having broken through the northern and north-eastern frontiers. The Swiss Parliament recently

passed a resolution urging the Government to fortify the Rhine frontier, and a sum of from 6,000,000f. to 7,000,000f. (£400,000 to 470,000) is to be drawn from the Fund for Unemployment Works and will be used to pay the unemployed who will be occupied in erecting fortifications. The General Staff has not yet completed its plans, but it is understood that they will provide for the reinforcement of natural defences wherever possible, and for the construction of fortified bridge-heads and blockhouses to prevent a surprise attack and to cover the mobilization of the Army. These fortifications would be permanently manned and supplied with quick-firing guns and light artillery. It is thought that it will thus be possible to defend the Rhine frontier and Switzerland against surprise.

Times.

LES TRAVAUX DE CHOMAGE.

Le Conseil fédéral vient d'adopter un projet d'"arrêté fédéral" comportant un programme de grands travaux de chômage qui semble conçu d'une façon très judicieuse, mais qui présente de sérieuses difficultés d'ordre financier. Ce programme, il faut le dire, a été préparé par le département fédéral de l'économie publique, même en partie par M. Edmond Schulthess lui-même.

Diverses mesures seront prises pour mieux utiliser toutes les possibilités de travail qu'offre l'économie privée. C'est ainsi qu'on envisage le développement du service de placement, un transfert plus aisé des chômeurs, la formation professionnelle la plus complète, la répartition selon les besoins des possibilités de travail existantes. D'autres part, on introduirait des industries nouvelles et l'on subventionnerait des coopératives de cautionnement artisanales.

Le gouvernement fédéral propose en outre de créer des possibilités supplémentaires avec le concours de l'Etat, ceci bien que les cantons et les communes fournissent déjà, sous ce rapport, un effort trop méconnu. Il établit donc un programme de travaux qui, pour le moment, est limité à deux années, mais dont les effets s'échelonnent sur une plus longue durée. Ce programme comprend des travaux de construction, puis des commandes aux industries; il comporte, outre les travaux exécutés par les cantons, les communes et les corporations, la mise en chantier de travaux publics. Le Conseil fédéral demande enfin l'autorisation de créer des possibilités de travail pour les intellectuels, notamment pour les artistes.

On subventionnerait dans une plus forte mesure les entreprises de service volontaire de travail et l'on développerait la capacité professionnelle de jeunes chômeurs en leur procurant une occupation régulière.

Le coût de ce projet serait, pour la confédération, d'environ 40 millions. Comme on ne veut pas voir se reproduire l'aventure des "chantiers nationaux" de Louis Blanc, qui compromit l'existence de la deuxième République française, on prévoit que le plan n'entrera en vigueur que lorsque la couverture financière en aura été établie. C'est la première fois, sans erreur, que le Conseil fédéral applique ce principe dont M. Musy s'est fait à plusieurs reprises le champion. Il convient de l'en féliciter.

Cependant l'on est en droit d'espérer que le gouvernement fédéral saura trouver, au cours de ces prochaines années, davantage d'audace encore, pour assurer la couverture financière dans les projets mêmes des dépenses qu'il préconise. Il s'épargnerait de la sorte d'injustes interprétations. C'est ainsi que les esprits plus ou moins bienveillants affirment ou du moins insinuent que si la couverture des dépenses de ce programme de travail de chômage a été séparée de ce projet, ce serait afin d'attendre l'expiration du délai de referendum du projet de loi rail-route. Les ressources nécessaires au projet de travaux ne pouvant guère être trouvées que dans l'édiction de droits d'entrée supplémentaires sur la benzine et le sucre, on trouverait, grâce à cette manœuvre, le moyen d'éviter une fâcheuse levée de boucliers des automobilistes.

Nous ne pensons pas qu'une pensée aussi machiavélique ait traversé le cerveau de nos dirigeants. Il est permis d'attribuer ce malentendu aux cloisons étanches qui séparent malheureusement nos départements fédéraux: c'est pour eux, de toute évidence, que l'Évangile affirme: "Ta gauche doit ignorer ce que fait ta droite."

Ne pourrait-on pas, objectera-t-on, substituer des emprunts à des impôts nouveaux? Peut-être, le jour où les députés auraient renoncé au droit d'initiative financière, qui conduit nécessairement à un certain gaspillage des deniers publics. Jusque-là, les emprunts envisagés risqueraient fort d'échouer, ce qui pourrait conduire à un relèvement du loyer de l'argent, et, par suite, à un renchérissement de l'existence.

Cependant, il est bon que l'on s'explique une bonne fois sur ce point, dont on mesure déjà toute l'importance..

R. Bovet-Grisel.

NEWS FROM THE COLONY.

LONDON SWISS RIFLE TEAM.

A novel but all the more interesting shooting match was fought out last Sunday, at Bisley, with members of the Surrey Rifle Club. Weather conditions were excellent.

The competitors had to fire 14 shots each, first with their own rifles and then another 14 shots with opponents' rifles on two different targets: one a 300 yards decimal (max. 140 points) and the other a 400 yards "tin-hat" target (Max. 70 points). English and Swiss went down in pairs and prizes were awarded for the two pairs securing the highest score; two additional prizes were offered for the best shot with the Swiss and the English rifle. The contest was divided into four series two sighters being allowed in each but was not preceded by any practice or trial shots.

The following tables show the score of the Swiss competitors:

300 yards Decimal.			
(h.p.s. 140)			
	Swiss Rifle	English Rifle	Total
A. Deubelbeiss	58	46	104
P. Hilfiker	48	35	83
F. Notter	66	43	109
J. C. Wetter	70	53	123
J. Haesler	60	48	108
Alf. Schmid	63	37	100
W. Fischer	66	64	130
H. Senn	63	51	114
J. A. Hess	66	62	128
C. A. Fuchs	39	46	85
	599	485	1084

400 yards tin-hat.			
(h.p.s. 70)			
	Swiss Rifle	English Rifle	Total
A. Deubelbeiss	31	29	60
P. Hilfiker	30	21	51
F. Notter	29	27	56
J. C. Wetter	31	27	58
J. Haesler	25	23	48
Alf. Schmid	30	25	55
W. Fischer	27	30	57
H. Senn	30	24	54
J. A. Hess	29	26	55
C. A. Fuchs	25	24	49
	287	259	546

The match started with nine pairs and the Swiss secured a lead of 12 points in the first round when both teams shot with their own rifles on the decimal target. After the result had been announced another pair was allowed to shoot, i.e., C. A. Fuchs and Major Talbot-Smith, the two making a very one-sided partnership as the Major right away disposed of a h.p.s. of 70 against Fuchs' 39. This turned the tables and the Swiss team finished with 19 points down.

In the second round with rifles changed over, our men were evidently not at home with the English rifle and scored a total of only 485 against 604; Fischer and Hess topping the list with 64 and 62 respectively.

The first round on the 400 yards tin-hat target left us with only 13 points behind — both the distance and the target not being familiar to our team. Deubelbeiss, Wetter and Hilfiker surpassed the performance of their respective partners. With the rifles changed over in the last round we lost 35 points the opponents score being 294.

The total final score was
London Swiss Rifle Team 1630 points.
Surrey Rifle Club 1816 points.

so that we are just 10% below our English rivals.

The first prize went to W. Fischer and his partner with a total score of 382, and the second prize to H. Senn and his partner who scored 168 and 193 respectively with a total of 361.

J. C. Wetter secured the prize for the highest score with the Swiss rifle; he obtained 101 points out of a possible 105. The two next best were Hess and Notter with 95 points each.

Two possibles were scored on the decimal target by J. C. Wetter and Major Talbot-Smith. Out of a possible of 140 on the decimal target Fischer scored 130, Hess 128 and Wetter 123. The best Swiss scores on the English target were by Deubelbeiss 60, Wetter 58 and Fischer 57.

The whole of the arrangements were admirably carried out and the contest was greatly enjoyed by both sides. The Swiss gave an exceptionally good account of themselves considering that they were matched against one of the premier rifle clubs of England, the Surrey Club having won the county championship on several occasions. We were considerably handicapped by not being familiar with the tin-hat target and not using such comforts as elbow pads, and above all our team was not selected and had hardly sufficient practice.

We wish to extend here our hearty thanks to the Surrey Rifle Club for entertaining our members to lunch and tea in the comfortable club house.