

# Switzerland fights against a new "Anschluss"

Autor(en): **Friedmann, R.A.**

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**SWITZERLAND FIGHTS AGAINST A NEW "ANSCHLUSS."**

The situation created by the *Anschluss* of Austria has brought with it a number of new and rather dangerous problems, not only for Czechoslovakia but also for Switzerland. How serious they are is seen from a recent declaration of Herr Baumann, President of the Confederation, in which he announced that the Swiss nation will defend its freedom and independence as long as the Swiss people have breath. There are many good reasons for anxiety in Switzerland. The problem that has suddenly arisen is not only a problem for Switzerland but also for Europe and especially for France. We shall see later why.

The new period in the history of Europe began for Switzerland in a peculiar way. On March 14th, when the Reichswehr had entered Austrian territory, the diplomatic representative of Germany in Berne called on the Swiss Minister of Foreign Affairs in order to assure the Swiss Government, in the name of Herr Hitler, that the Fuehrer had no evil intentions in regard to Switzerland and that he would respect the integrity of the country. This was an astonishing declaration for the Swiss nation, which had taken for granted that its independence was a permanent element in Europe's structure and needed no special acknowledgement. Herr Hitler's assurance, however, proved that he was well aware of the fear that he might also try to annex the nearly three million German-speaking Swiss. If this apprehension has become possible, it dates not only from the entry of German troops into Austria but from the very beginning of the Nazi régime in Germany. On the same day on which the German envoy made his declaration in Berne all the important bookshops in Vienna exposed maps which showed not only the actual frontiers of Germany, but also the territories outside Germany which, according to the National-Socialist theories, belong to the Fatherland. Among them was also the territory of Switzerland inhabited by a German-speaking population. But this was no surprise. It was characteristic that these maps were suddenly seen in Vienna just at the moment when Austria was occupied. Years ago the German press had already claimed that these nearly three million Swiss were actually without "Fatherland" and would only get one when they were incorporated into the Greater Germany. Optimists might have been induced to think that all this campaign had been checked by Herr Hitler's *démarche* in Berne. But only a few days after the occupation of Austria, several important German newspapers began to reopen the same campaign in spite of Herr Hitler's declaration. The *Frankfurter Zeitung* published an article which said: "No branch of the German race has the right or the possibility of withdrawing from the common destiny of all the Germans." It is remarkable that this declaration was printed in the country where no newspaper and particularly not so important a one as the *Frankfurter Zeitung* would publish anything that was not approved by Dr. Goebbels. But this was not a special case. Another powerful paper, the *Deutsche Bergwerkszeitung*, wrote after Herr Hitler's assurance: "Austria has had the experience of what can be called *Verschweizern* (Swissing), meaning the tragedy of a people which has been made to believe that they were a nation while in reality they were only part of a community of the same language." At the same time, a special edition of the *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* inundated Switzerland. It contained many illustrations of the so-called enthusiasm with which the German troops had been welcomed in Austria, and this review was sold at a price far below the real rate of exchange and even below the price of Swiss reviews. A few weeks later the German press reproached the Swiss press for not having truly informed their readers about the meeting of Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini. They were accused of not having published enough details of the receptions given in Rome. Finally, the Swiss Government was forced to lodge a protest in Berlin against the use of a school book containing a map which marked the German-speaking regions of Switzerland as German territory. All these things show that in spite of the spontaneous declaration of the German envoy in Berne nothing has really changed. There is no reason for the Swiss people to feel assured of the goodwill of Germany. The new steps taken by the Federal Government show already that it is fully aware of the new danger.

First of all the change in the situation is of military character. So long as Austria existed, the eastern frontier of Switzerland could be neglected. Only one division of the Swiss army had its quarters on this side. There had been no reason for keeping a greater force in this region, for her relations with Austria had been always very friendly. And what could be feared from little Austria which only wished to be left in peace? The situation is now quite different, especially on the northern, southern and eastern frontiers. Since the beginning of Germany's rearmament, three divisions had been placed in the

north on the border of the Rhine, while only two divisions were in the proximity of the French frontier. Quite recently a special frontier corps was created and was exclusively placed in the new system of defence established near the German border. A sort of Maginot line in miniature has been constructed in this region to stop a possible German invasion and to permit the mobilisation of the other units. Sixteen months ago the Federal Government issued a loan of 240 million Swiss francs in order to reorganise the army and fully modernise its equipment. For the first time the Swiss general staff decided to order great quantities of tanks and aeroplanes. All these measures had been taken while Austria still existed; Germany's enormous rearmament compelled the Swiss to make a serious sacrifice.

The German-Swiss frontier has now increased by several hundreds of miles. It begins at Basle, runs along the border of the Rhine and continues for more than 200 miles in the east on the former Austrian frontier. The whole north and more than half the east of Switzerland is now surrounded by Germany. It is a situation akin to that of Czechoslovakia, perhaps worse. In the north the Rhine border is not easy to defend, for the Rhine is very narrow and the country behind it is flat and without strategical possibilities. To the east the valley of the Rhine reappears, together with the valley of the Inn. Both lead into the interior of Switzerland. The valley of the Rhine arrives at the Alps of Glarus and the city of Chur, the capital of the canton, and the valley of the Inn opens the way to the Alps of the Engadine. These two valleys are now of great strategical importance since the enlarged Germany with her enormous army has replaced little Austria from whom Switzerland had nothing to fear. At the same time Germany has become the direct neighbour of the important canton of St. Gall and its capital of the same name with 500,000 inhabitants. On the other side of the Rhine is situated the little principality of Liechtenstein, united with Switzerland by monetary and customs' agreements. German newspapers pretend already that there is a "minority" demanding the *Anschluss*, although the little Liechtenstein people immediately declared that it did not want to loosen its union with Switzerland. All this requires a reorganisation of the Swiss army. The one division that is there now is obviously insufficient for the defence of this border. It is out of the question to reduce the number of the divisions placed on the northern frontier where already the greater part of the army is stationed. In the south, on the Italian border, the same precaution is necessary because the Italian propaganda in the Ticino district has recently increased and requires alertness and readiness for all emergencies. This is especially so since the establishment of the Berlin-Rome axis. Only on the French side has Switzerland nothing to fear. France alone of the three neighbours of Switzerland demands nothing and keeps aloof from Swiss internal affairs. No Frenchman would dream of demanding the incorporation of Geneva and the Swiss districts where French is spoken into France! It is therefore possible, and even probable, that the necessary reinforcements will be taken from the western frontier. The Government has already decided to prolong the period of military service and now demands new credit for an increase in armaments.

So much for the military aspect of the problem. There is also the economic factor to consider. The maintenance of good relations with Austria and of her independence has always been of great importance for Switzerland because an independent Austria was a guarantee of free access to Central and Eastern Europe. After the Franco-German War of 1870, Swiss and French

capital collaborated in constructing the Arlberg railway line which was built to link the Austrian provinces of Arlberg and Tyrol; and this permitted communication with Eastern Europe without having to cross German territory. At the end of the Great War, Switzerland's interest in the independence of Austria increased still further. Switzerland participated in the international loans granted to Austria, and Swiss capital was invested in Austrian industries. After 1933, when Herr Hitler came into power, the maintenance of this gateway to the east of Europe became of vital importance to Switzerland. This communication has now been cut off. It is now impossible to reach Prague, Budapest, Warsaw and Belgrade from Zürich without crossing Germany. At the same time, the junction of Germany and Italy at the Brenner pass has brought with it a new problem. Hitherto a great part of the traffic between Germany and Italy has been effected via Switzerland and the St. Gothard pass, although the route via the Brenner is a little shorter. The very modern equipment of the Swiss line compensated for the difference of length. The Swiss fear that Germany will now, after the establishment of a direct frontier with Italy, choose the Brenner way, partly for reasons of prestige and partly to save the expense in Swiss francs, seeing that Germany is very short of foreign exchange. This would cause considerable financial loss to Switzerland. The country is already in fear of what will become of the international loans granted to Austria and the Swiss loans which had been granted to Austrian cities. Swiss citizens established in Austria are now forced to deliver their holdings of foreign exchange to the German authorities, and it will become impossible for many of them to leave Austria and find a new means of existence in Switzerland because they are unable to dispose of their capital. It is also probable that Austria now incorporated into Germany will cease to buy the same quantities of Swiss merchandise as before; they will be replaced by German goods.

There is yet another side to the problem. The *Anschluss* has deprived the Swiss newspapers of a large public in Austria. Most of the papers are now forbidden by the German authorities. The Swiss publishers of books are in the same situation. In normal times and before the Nazi régime in Germany the literary relations between Switzerland and Germany had been very close. Swiss books had been published by German publishers and books published in German by Swiss firms had been sold not only in Switzerland but also in Germany. Now in Germany only those books and those authors are tolerated who are approved by Dr. Goebbels. That means that Swiss writers and publishers in the German language are confined to selling in the small Swiss market, and naturally 2.5 million German-speaking Swiss offer very reduced possibilities as compared with the 76 millions of Greater Germany. The link between Swiss and German civilisation is broken and it is not without danger for the former. For nearly all the German-speaking Swiss talk a great variety of dialects that differ from literary German and cannot easily be understood by the majority of Germans. Only books and newspapers are printed in literary German, while the debates in the municipal assemblies and even in the courts are very often held in dialect.

All this is a matter of grave concern not only to Switzerland but also to France. This new military threat to Switzerland is also alarming France. The new Swiss demand for acknowledgement of complete neutrality has been granted by France, in accordance with Great Britain and the Council of the League of Nations, but there is some anxiety in France as to whether Switzerland will really defend her integrity and fight against a German invasion. It is known

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that Germany during the war had considered the possibility of attacking France by invading Switzerland. The French Maginot line ends five kilometres before Basle and the Swiss frontier, according to the old treaty of 1816 that forbade France to establish fortresses in this region. France respected this treaty when she constructed her new system of defence, but there is a rather dangerous hole near the Swiss frontier at Basle which may tempt the German invader to violate Swiss territory and to push as far as Lyons or Creusot, the seat of the Schneider armament works. France is also highly interested in the maintenance of the Swiss economic system. Switzerland is the best buyer of French goods on the Continent, and no less than 10 per cent. of the total of French exports are sent to little Switzerland. The new situation might affect the economic position of Switzerland, which is already forced to buy large quantities of German goods in order to get possession of the millions of frozen marks, the only means by which they can be repaid on their large credits granted to Germany before the Nazi régime. A weakening of Swiss economy and an increase in German exportations to Switzerland would equally affect French economy and exports.

At present, however, the German-speaking population of Switzerland is rather favourable to France. The present Swiss envoy in Paris, Herr Stucki, who is of German-Swiss origin, delivered a remarkable address on the occasion of presenting his credentials to Monsieur Lebrun, President of the French Republic. Herr Stucki said: "It seems to me, and I attach particular importance to this fact, that in these days when democratic institutions are daily attacked, the noblest and highest task is to give to the French Republic a picture of Swiss democracy. I will use all my force and my profound conviction in order to solidify more than ever the relations of friendship which exist between our democracies and to develop their mutual appreciation." It is significant that a Swiss diplomat whose mother tongue is German expressed himself in such vigorous words. Hitherto the German propaganda in Switzerland has had no success. If it is true that the French "Popular Front" and the social experiments of Monsieur Léon Blum have been watched in Switzerland with distrust, it is also a fact that no sympathy has been given to the propaganda of the German press which tried to frighten the Swiss people with the ghost of bolchevism invading Switzerland from France. Also all efforts of Germany to create in Switzerland a feeling of anti-Semitism have been in vain. Swiss tribunals have severely condemned the authors of such propaganda, all the more as they accused respectable Swiss personalities of "being paid by Jews," of "having placed Switzerland in the position of a vassal of France and of being under the rule of international Jewry." Germany, which does not refrain from insulting Switzerland and the Swiss people, finds it compatible with this attitude to pretend that an ever so slight critical remark in the Swiss press is intolerable to German dignity. There are signs that Herr Hitler might try to force upon Switzerland one of his pet ideas, a so-called press truce, which in reality would be nothing less than the end of the liberty of the Swiss press. Austria also had concluded a press truce with Germany!

R. A. FRIEDMAN.

(The Contemporary Review.)

#### SWISS FOOTBALL TEAM versus ARSENAL.

As previously mentioned in the columns of this paper, the Match arranged between a Swiss combined team (Grasshoppers-Servette) and the F. C. Arsenal will take place on Wednesday next, September 21st, at 5.30 p.m., at the Highbury stadium. We have secured a block of reserved seats so that the London Swiss may give their compatriots the necessary vociferous support. Applications should be made without delay. (Tel. CLERkenwell 2321/2).

The City Swiss Club has invited the Swiss Team to an official Luncheon at the Zoological Gardens, Regent's Park on Thursday, September 22nd, at 1 o'clock, and they extend a hearty invitation to all members of the Swiss Colony to attend this function, to which Ladies are also invited. Tickets at 5/-, which includes admittance to the Zoological Gardens, can be obtained from the offices of the Swiss Observer, 23, Leonard Street, E.C.2 (Tel.: CLERkenwell 2321/2) by sending cheque or P.O. value 5/-. please enclose stamped return envelope.

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#### SWISS FOOTBALLERS VISIT LONDON.

In a few days now, we may see the "white cross in the red field" blowing over the Arsenal Stadium! Our Swiss Footballers are coming to London. — Last summer, the strongest English Football team played on the Continent, beating the German and French National Teams. But in Zurich they were beaten by our Swiss team. Before the match, the English Manager intimated to the Swiss Players, that they might possibly arrange a fixture in England if they played well; a few hours later, the English team was defeated. The English critics stated at this time, that the Swiss team was the best on the Continent. The same Swiss team a few weeks later defeated the Germans in Paris. However, our Footballers were not always so lucky; 1924 was the last glorious year, when our team collected the victories at the Olympiade in Paris. Then followed many years of fluctuating success and our football friends almost lost their belief of the rehabilitation of our Swiss footballers, but they did not lose hope and have worked on with energy and patience, in order to reach again the high standard of football. It is mostly the same Players who now visit London and the following are a few of the particulars:

Huber Willy, goal-keeper, 23 years, student, played 16 times international, very quick and sure catching.

Minelli Severino, 29 years, merchant, played in sixty-four international matches and is one of the best defenders on the Continent.

Lehmann August, 29 years, merchant, twenty-one times international, quick and excellent head player

Springer Hermann, right half, 29 years, book-keeper, twenty-two international matches, former centre-forward, to-day in the best form of his football career.

Vernati Sirio, 29 years, book-keeper, twenty-five times international, centre-half, technic excellent, was selected for the continental team in Amsterdam.

Loertscher Ernst, 27 years, merchant, twenty-four international matches, not a show player, but conscientious in his work as defensive half.

Bickel Alfred, twenty years, skilled engineer, twenty-two times international, first class centre-forward.

Abegglen Trello, 28 years, merchant and Trainer of the F. C. Servette, Geneva, forty-one international matches, played for some years with Sochaux, the French champion, and the best tactical player in the Swiss football team.

Walacek Eugen, 21 years, student, twelve international matches, born in Russia, naturalised Swiss, technique excellent inside-left, good kicker.

Aeby Georges, 27 years, skilled engineer, twenty-two times international, outside-left, very quick and tricky.

Well, I hope our players are not going to play a game "one heart" or "two spades." I expect a contra on every bid from Arsenal! What about a small slam!! ... Slowly — slowly ... But we people, we shall help too, shouting in four different languages, still an united mind — Hopp, Hopp, Switzerland!!!

J.O.A.

#### FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Wednesday, September 21st, at 5.30 p.m. — F.C. Arsenal versus Swiss Wanderers — at Highbury Stadium.

Thursday, September 22nd, at 1 o'clock — Luncheon offered to Swiss Football Team — at the Zoological Gardens. Tickets 5/- including entrance. (See announcement.)

Friday, September 23rd — Nouvelle Société Helvétique — Monthly Meeting at "Foyer Suisse," 15, Bedford Way, W.C.1 — Supper at 6.30 to be followed by a causerie by *Hanns Vischer, Esq.*, Colonial Office on: "The Swiss and the Empire."

Thursday, September 29th, at 8.30 p.m., Unione Ticinese — "Danza Familiare," at 74, Charlotte Street, W.1.

Tuesday, November 29th — Unione Ticinese — Concert and Ball in aid of the Fonds des Secours, at Pagani's Restaurant, Great Portland Street, W.1.

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Le pasteur Pradervand sera absent du 19 septembre au 5 octobre. Pendant ce temps-là, prière de s'adresser à M. le pasteur Hahn (Chiswick 4156).

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Sonntag, den 18. September 1938.

*Eidgenössischer Dank- Buss- und Betttag.*

11 Uhr morgens, Gottesdienst und Heiliges Abendmahl.

7 Uhr abends, Gottesdienst und Heiliges Abendmahl.

Anfragen wegen Religions-bezw. Confirmandenstunden und Amtshandlungen sind erbeten an den Pfarrer der Gemeinde : C. Th. Hahn, 43, Priory Road, Bedford Park, W.4. (Telephon : Chiswick 4156). Sprechstunden : Dienstag 12-2 Uhr in der Kirche.