

Switzerland ready for new sacrifices in order safeguard its independence

Autor(en): **M.G.**

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SWITZERLAND READY FOR NEW SACRIFICES IN ORDER TO SAFEGUARD ITS INDEPENDENCE.

There can be no doubt that the events of this year with demonstrations of the unilateral application of the policy of appeasement at the expense of some small state or other has rudely shaken Switzerland out of its inherent complacency. Luckily the swing of the pendulum had already begun to sway the policy from disarmament to rearmament. The organisation of the army had been thoroughly revised and brought into line with up-to-date requirements. The covering of the frontiers received special attention. Fortifications were built, special frontier detachments formed on a voluntary basis, with the task to take the first shock of an attack on our borders. At the same time the border regions were specially organised into frontier-defence brigades with predetermined tasks allotted, so that our borders could be covered and our forts manned within a matter of hours. Thereby the bulk of the army was to be given breathing space to complete its mobilisation, a process which takes less time in Switzerland than anywhere else, because every man knows where he has to go and to what unit he belongs and he is at all times fully equipped with uniform, boots and arms. In our case, speed is for the great need. Nobody is likely to attack us for the sake of collaring our riches. Our money has a happy knack to flow abroad quite of its own free will and accord. And sometimes it is devilish hard to get it back again. Apart from that there are no tempting mineral deposits, oil or such like natural wealth lying ready for some invader. But the danger is, and a very real one at that, of one of our neighbours, finding his way into his enemy's lands hopelessly barred by impregnable fortifications, deciding to try and outflank them, push through Switzerland and get behind the unpassable lines. Obviously this manoeuvre can only succeed when the invading army can traverse Switzerland without undue delay. Such an attack would immediately bring the opposing party to the aid of Switzerland. If the break through should not succeed at the first attempt, there would be much more lost than gained. First, the Swiss army would become an additional adversary and second, the invaders' own line of fortifications might now lie open.

These few remarks have perhaps convinced the most peacefully inclined individual that there is some sense in our keeping a well-trained and equipped army and the defeatist, who sees poor old Switzerland wiped out and eaten up in any case, may, after reflection, recognise the fallacy of his argument.

Now comes the news of proposed *sweeping changes* in our military and civil organisation, destined to prepare the way for an efficient continuation of the life of the country during war-time. The proposal is an extension of the liability to military and/or auxiliary service. The two classes of service must be kept separate and distinct. Those passed as fit for military service will, as heretofore join the colours, serve from 20 to 32 in the Elite (Auszug), from 32 to 36 in the Landwehr and thence till 48 in the Landsturm.

In the auxiliary service, on the other hand, the duties of every Swiss citizen begin at 18 and continue to the age of 60. Here is to be found the revolutionary element of the proposals. What it means is this:

In the years 18 and 19 the young men can be made to prepare themselves physically for the coming military service, in the various gymnastic or sportive societies. Sport has done much to raise the physical standard; but it still leaves a great deal to be desired. At 19 the young man presents himself to the recruiting commission for medical examination, whereupon he is either passed fit for military service (and thus duly classified until he reaches the age of 48), or he is fit for the auxiliary services (which will hold him in feters until he reaches 60) or he is unfit for either which will necessitate some serious disability in future, not merely short-sightedness, as so often in the past, when the number of men wanted was reduced to a minimum. Switzerland needs every man available for the defence of its independence. By the greater numbers in the auxiliary service many gaps can be filled. The new army organisation already provides for some of the Landwehr-battalions to be incorporated in Elite-regiments, while certain Landsturm formations take over Landwehr duties. At the age of 48 the soldiers would normally leave the army and join, until 60, the auxiliary services. They may, however, be appointed to some Landsturm-units short of personnel; if so they keep their arms and uniform.

The new organisation will give special consideration to the organisation of trade and industry in war time. Anyone of special importance in factory or office may be told that his job in case of war is at his present or some other predetermined place, all with a view to ensure

smooth working of the economic machinery of the country in times of stress.

Those soldiers who have been disbanded (at the age of 48 for N.C.O.s and men, 52 years for officers) will not be affected by the new proposals, unless they voluntarily offer their services. Neither are those affected who were declared unfit and are between 32 and 48 years old. On the other hand, those rejected and aged between 20 and 32 will be called up for medical re-examination.

Volunteers may be enrolled, i.e., those who have not been found fit for any service, yet would like to do their bit, or those who are over 60. And what about the *women*? Hundreds of applications have already poured in for all sorts of services. This matter will be separately dealt with. A vast field lies open to women, such as nursing, Red Cross work, driving motor-cars and so on. But this is a somewhat difficult subject. Anyway, my wife would not hear of it, that she would have to wash dishes for the hard-working soldiers until she was 60. I was promptly threatened with a divorce!

M.G.

SWISS LETTER.

The international crisis of last September had only a passing effect on Switzerland's economic life and after the shock, business continued normally and on a scale similar to that of last year.

Industrial employment during the third term of 1938 proved, as a whole, to be more favourable than during the preceding three months. Foreign trade for the first nine months of 1938, compared with 1937, shows a decline in imports and a very slight increase in export values. Foreign trade was characterised in October 1938 by an increase in exports which attained 134 millions Swiss francs the highest level reached during the last ten years.

At the beginning of the autumn unemployment figures were stable and if the situation remains unchanged no marked alteration for the worse is to be expected during the winter months.

The budget of the Swiss Confederation for 1939 contains provision for a total expenditure of 581 millions Swiss francs, total receipts being estimated at 525 millions, thus leaving a deficit of 56 million francs. It should be noted, however, that the budget includes 86 million francs for amortization purposes, so that the financial position is in no way weakened by this budgetary deficit.

Reviewing Switzerland's economic evolution during the last few years, it may be stated that after having re-established contact with world markets in 1936, the country has enjoyed, in 1937 particularly, the benefits derived from the marked improvement of its economic position. This evolution was interrupted by the setting in of a new world economic depression and the political tension of recent months. Although the present outlook appears fairly uncertain, official circles are not pessimistic with regard to the future. It is generally believed that Swiss industry is fully capable of following up the development thus far achieved. Among the factors which will favour further expansion mention should be made of the Swiss National Exhibition which will be held at Zurich in 1939. A number of Swiss industries will not fail to make the most of this opportunity to complete various technical achievements of the greatest interest, including the world's most powerful locomotive.

It is also worth noting that Switzerland is about to complete its industrial equipment by the establishment in the centre of the country of an important aircraft factory.

UNIONE TICINESE.

36th Annual Concert and Dance,
at Pagni's, W.1 — November 29th, 1938.

The "Unione Ticinese" once more has given us a proof of their generosity, in arranging a concert and dance in aid of the "Fonds de Secours," the Swiss Benevolent Society.

For the last 35 years our compatriots from the sunny Ticino, have reserved one day in the year to help our countrymen, who, often through no fault of their own have fallen on evil days.

The "Unione Ticinese" has since its foundation, 64 years ago, given us many proofs of their generosity. I remember, when, some years ago I had the pleasure of publishing the photograph of a cheque amounting to £1,000 as a donation to the Swiss Benevolent Society, this was not only a red letter day in the history of the Society, but also in the history of the Swiss Colony.

I am almost certain that this record has never yet been beaten by any other Swiss Society, at least not in "one go," and it shows that our

Ticinese have not only a big heart, but an equally big purse. —

Barely two weeks ago, we learned that the Swiss Benevolent Society in London has, since its inception in 1870 distributed the staggering sum of over £70,000, surely a splendid testimonial of Swiss generosity.

The greater part of this magnificent sum has been subscribed by our countrymen in this country. True enough, during all these years, the burden has fallen almost constantly on the same people.

There are about 15,000 Swiss living in this hospitable country, but unfortunately only a small percentage show a really active interest in the work of the Swiss Colony.

There are thousands of Swiss living in Great Britain who are only Swiss on paper, they keep themselves aloof from any active collaboration, but when in 1914 Switzerland mobilised, and again during the critical times of last September, many of them were the first to require information and help from our Legation, then for some fleeting moments they exhibited their patriotism, to go into oblivion again as soon as the danger was passed.

We shall remember this, and we shall see that those who give their time and money for the benefit of the Swiss community, will, when the time comes, be served first.

In the meantime we are willing to shoulder the burden, and make even greater sacrifices, following the splendid example which the Unione Ticinese has shown us in the past in such a splendid manner.

We do not consider that only those Swiss who belong to a Swiss Society, or those who read the Swiss Observer are good Swiss, no, but there are many means and ways to show in a tangible way the attachment to a country which has given them the most precious inheritance, the inheritance of a free and unfettered liberty.

So much said, I am glad to report that the concert was a great success. All the artistes billed on the programme were of Swiss nationality.

Before the concert started, the President of the Unione Ticinese, the genial Mr. G. Eusebio, made an impassioned appeal on behalf of the "Fonds de Secours" pointing out that through a succession of adverse circumstances the finances of this deserving institution had undergone a severe strain.

Unfortunately M. A. Gandon, who is so well known in the Colony as an accordion player, was prevented from being present, and thus the audience missed one item which would have been greatly appreciated.

Mlle. Marietta Albertolly, started the programme by giving us some songs in Italian and English which were greatly appreciated.

M. Howard De Courcy, a Ticinese born and bred, intrigued the company with some very efficient conjuring, especially his "turn" with the canary which left the audience speechless.

Next came M. Théodore Weil, our celebrated violinist, who was accompanied on the piano by Mr. E. P. Dick, they played the following numbers: Berceuse by Lynski, Polish Dance, by Scharwenka, Sicillienne by Paradis and L'Abelle by Schubert.

The great applause which greeted their performance was proof enough how much everybody appreciated their really fine playing.

Mr. Maurice Charles, the clever cartoonist proved that he was not only a great artiste with his chalk, but also a fine humorist.

The last number on the programme mentioned was Mlle. Eva Cattaneo; enough words have appeared in the columns of this paper in praise of this really charming artiste, and yet we shall never get tired of praising her accomplished style of singing. Mlle. Cattaneo sang that lovely song "Your home and mine," and after a song in Italian, sang Deuza's "Fumiculi Fumicula," inviting all and sundry to join in the refrain, it was a befitting conclusion to a most enjoyable programme.

After an excellent supper dancing started and was kept up until the small hours of the morning.

ST.

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

We are informed that the Swiss Mercantile Society has arranged a social evening, to take place on Wednesday, December 14th, at Swiss House, 34/35, Fitzroy Square, W.1, immediately after the monthly meeting, to which all members and their friends are cordially invited.

We understand that amongst the entertainers will be George King, the well-known con-