

The Swiss in London

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Government for Swiss hotels, the security for which would be a blocked sterling account in London. An Englishman will pay in pounds, and these pounds would ultimately be used by the Swiss to buy goods in England. Our first task, of course, is to supply the Home Market and those of our Allies with such goods as they urgently need. Under this scheme the Swiss Government would have to accept the risk that pounds would depreciate in purchasing value before they could be used for the purchase of goods.

In conclusion, I should like to insist that the British have been missed for better reasons than the purely economic. No foreign guests are more welcome than us. There is a natural affinity between the British and the Swiss, and there were no competitive skiers with whom our relations were friendlier than the Swiss — particularly the Swiss University Ski Club.

"Something has gone out of the life of Switzerland since the English left," a Swiss said to me.

"There is a lack of colour and vitality about our popular resorts."

I remember on my return to Grindelwald, visiting a retired railway guard, who was living on his pension, and had no financial interest in the return of the English; but no Swiss could have had a greater affection for our country. The first sight of a returning Englishman proved too much for him. He took my hand in his, squeezed it affectionately, and could not speak for emotion. The tears ran down his cheek.

General Guisan, who commanded the Swiss army during the war, is the national hero in Switzerland. In 1940 there were defeatists even in the Swiss army who urged that it would be futile to resist in the event of a German invasion, for after the collapse of France, Switzerland was entirely surrounded by the Axis. The General summoned his staff officers to meet him at Rütli, the historic home of Swiss liberties, and pointed out that there was no reason why the Swiss should lose not only their freedom but also their self-respect.

"The war is not won by Germany until England falls, and even if England falls, we must fight, that our children and our children's children may still be proud to be Swiss."

The Swiss have three heroes to-day: General Guisan, Mr. Churchill and Field-Marshal Montgomery. The Field-Marshal used to ski at Lenk in the Bernese Oberland and his skiing boots with his name on the label are one of the show pieces of the hotel where he stayed.

A small boy in Lenk was asked by a Swiss:

"Do you know the name of our General?" and was expected to reply "General Guisan." Instead he replied:

"Of course I do. His name is General Montgomery."

I received, when I was in Switzerland, a very moving letter from a Swiss in which he paid a noble tribute to the British who fought not only for their own freedom, but also for ours. England's traditional policy of "balance of power" was a protection for us, for Swiss freedom is endangered the moment that one power on the Continent assumes a dominating position. The much-abused "balance of power" policy merely means that it is not in England's interests that any big bully should make things unpleasant for the little nations; and for this reason "the balance of

power" is a doctrine which commends itself to none more than to the little countries like Switzerland.

All Switzerland waited in suspense for Mr. Bevin's first speech as Foreign Minister, and all Switzerland rejoiced when they heard in that speech the authentic voice, not of party, but of England.

"It is easy," a great ambassador once remarked to me, "to pick holes in our foreign policy, and even easier to talk nonsense about 'Power Politics'; but, however much Continental nations may enjoy criticising us, there is one question they always ask when they are in a jam. 'Is England on our side?'"

The prestige of our own country was never higher in Switzerland than it is to-day. Unfortunately we are doing very little to take advantage of the prestige. The Americans are sweeping aside all war-time controls which are likely to hinder their export trade, and are making a great and successful bid to capture the Swiss market. As our hopes of skiing next winter in Switzerland depend very largely on our getting our share of that market, our failure to do so is bad news for British skiers.

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THE SWISS IN LONDON

Ambitious, filled with youthful hope,
He heard the call for wider scope
Across the narrow ocean
And, purposeful, with willing hands,
Set out to seek in distant lands
His fortune and promotion.

And so among us he appears,
In banking, shipping, trading spheres,
Dependable, efficient.
In Science, Industry and Art
Of ev'ry kind he plays his part,
In all of them proficient.

He serves in yet another guise:—
In all those caravanserais
For cheer and comfort noted,
He is conspicuous, at his post
As an attendant or as host,
To our welfare devoted.

He's shrewd, endowed with common sense,
Abhors all shams and false pretence,
Preferring facts to fiction,
And holds that man's equality
With discipline and loyalty
Stands not in contradiction.

He has his faults, is not a saint,
In speech and manner somewhat quaint,
By no means an ascetic.
He may be slow, but is no fool,
Can be as stubborn as a mule
And in his views emphatic.

But faithful service is his goal
And he performs a useful role
In this great far-flung city.
However humble he may be,
To him, with love and sympathy,
I dedicate this ditty.

J.J.F.S.