

The Swiss Government answers accusations regarding the German concentration camps

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THE SWISS GOVERNMENT ANSWERS ACCUSATIONS REGARDING THE GERMAN CONCENTRATION CAMPS.

The Swiss Government gave its attention to certain accusations made against Switzerland in her role of Protecting Power, by certain allied newspapers. These accusations bear on the terrible conditions found in certain German prison camps about which it is alleged that Switzerland never issued any reports. The Swiss Federal Council firmly refuses to accept any criticisms of that kind.

"The territory of Germany had to be conquered before the indescribable horrors of the concentration camps were revealed to the world. The situation which has just come to light has caused universal indignation. It was never dreamed that a people would have the audacity to set themselves up as defenders of Western culture and to sink so low as to indulge in such atrocities. The emotion felt in Switzerland was just as great, as that which swept across the other nations. Therefore, our surprise and consternation were all the greater when we read in some allied newspapers the reproaches made against Switzerland and the International Red Cross.

Throughout the war, Switzerland and the International Red Cross, which she has supported to the limits of her strength have left nothing undone that might contribute to the alleviation of the state of military prisoners. We saw to it that international conventions were observed and respected. This cannot be contested and the Allied governments, which are better informed than the press, know well that both the International Red Cross and Switzerland have been persistent in their actions.

As for the concentration camps, it never has been possible to do anything about them. Attempts have been made to intervene, but the results have always been a flat refusal to allow them to be visited.

The status of the International Red Cross only permitted her to deal with military prisoners. There is no international law allowing a Protecting Power the right to concern itself with political internees.

Switzerland would have liked to have intervened. She would like to have had the means to do so and to put an end to these ignominious acts, but she did not have the necessary means of action. She therefore is not open to criticism. She acted in every case where it was materially possible to do so. She cannot therefore be reproached with failure to do her duty. She is not guilty of those accusations and she means to proclaim her innocence in no uncertain terms."

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SUNDRY NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

The British Minister in Berne, Mr. Norton, has handed the Federal President a letter from Prime Minister Churchill. In this message Mr. Churchill expresses his satisfaction about the outcome of the commercial negotiations in Berne between the Allied and Swiss delegates. At the same time he thanks the Swiss government and people for the great humanitarian services which Switzerland in collaboration with the International Committee of the Red Cross has contributed, especially with regard to British prisoners of war and to the protection of foreign interests. The Prime Minister assures Switzerland that the feelings are shared by the whole British people. The President, in the name of the Federal Council and of the Swiss people has thanked Mr. Churchill for this manifestation of confidence towards Switzerland.

On May 1st, a British aircraft with 12 Swiss nurses and 6 Swiss doctors landed near the German concentration camp of Belsen. The purpose of this mission is to bring rapid help to the internees of this camp. The plane had come from England and landed in Switzerland to receive the Swiss medical mission and proceeded to Germany. An agreement had been concluded with the Germans that this plane which was specially marked should not be attacked. The Swiss physicians and nurses have already started their work. It has been the first time in several years that a British civil plane has landed in Switzerland.