

How Switzerland stands to-day

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HOW SWITZERLAND STANDS TO-DAY.

(The following article is reproduced from "The Sphere," April 4th; it does not contain anything that is not already known to our readers but as a previous contribution to this contemporary has raised a storm of protest, we hope that this reprint will restore the equilibrium. The author is Charles Graves, a great admirer of our country, who has been an honoured guest of some of our annual banquets).

The arrival of the Swiss Trade Mission headed by Dr. Hans Sulzer, formerly Swiss Minister to Washington, Professor Rappard, the Economic Expert of Geneva, and Professor Keller, has aroused a number of unfriendly comments about Switzerland. The members of the Trade Mission are presumably here to negotiate for a larger goods exchange and extra food supplies. Unkind critics point out that the Swiss are selling a lot of their goods to Germany, and claim that Hitler has deliberately abstained from invading Switzerland in order to keep a vast factory for himself.

The truth of the matter is that Switzerland is in a very unfortunate predicament. The tone of its newspapers, particularly after the loss of Singapore, makes it quite clear that they are Anglophile — or, at least, realise that they have nothing to fear from England and a great deal to fear from Germany.

But look at their position. They are surrounded completely by the Axis countries except for thirty miles of Vichy France. Their population is four millions, and the greatest enemy of Hitler would not be so foolish as to want Switzerland to go to war with Germany unless actually attacked.

Of the working population of two million Swiss, 181,000 are in metal trades, 107,000 in the textile industry, 89,000 in the food trade, and 400,000 are agricultural workers, farmers, and the like. There are also 60,000 employed in the clock and watch industry, and 20,000 in chemicals. In addition, there are 20,000 adults who are unemployed.

Many people imagine that 80 per cent. of Switzerland's peacetime prosperity was due to the tourist traffic. In point of fact, only 10 per cent. of its revenue came in this way. Its most profitable business was the export of clocks and watches, which amounted in the year before the war to a value of 250,000,000 Swiss francs. To-day, by force of circumstances, the export of watches and clocks goes almost entirely to the Axis. And, indeed, Switzerland is dependent on Germany for coal, steel, newsprint, and feeding stuff for the cattle, among other things.

Switzerland, believe it or not, has its own navy. So the old joke about the Swiss admiral is out of date. This small fleet imports wheat by way of Lisbon, Marseilles and Genoa from overseas. Coffee and tea have also to be imported in this way. Navicerts are given. But at the moment almost the only edibles that are not rationed over there are bread and vegetables. Thus, meat is rationed; even cheese is rationed. Macaroni and rice are rationed, although they are still unrationed here, or at least only on the Points system. Coffee and tea in Switzerland were rationed from the start of the war.

Exports to Germany include electric power and re-exported finished goods for which the Swiss receive the raw materials. This last year the import of coal from Germany was only one-third of the requirements,

and as the drought prevented the working of many of the biggest electric-power plants, the Swiss had the coldest winter in history. Incidentally, the imports of copper and nickel have been stopped.

Switzerland has always been a professional neutral. In the church of St. Martin at Vevey you will find the remains of Ludlow and Broughton, who read the death sentence to King Charles I. in 1649. It was only fifty years ago that the memorial tablet was erected to their memory — on the fiftieth anniversary of Queen Victoria's succession!

But, however neutral Switzerland may wish to be, it has been impossible not to divert to Germany those exports which the collapse of France made it impossible for us to acquire. They claim that the war material they produce is negligible, except for their own purposes in still further fortifying their positions and arming their troops. Officially the Swiss Army, which was mobilised in September 1939, has not yet been demobilised. Actually, slightly over half the officers, N.C.O.s and men have been allowed to take a series of extended business leaves. But there are always 200,000 troops under arms, and the rest are available for immediate recall.

At the moment there are in Switzerland 14,000 Polish troops, who are still allowed to keep their arms. They made their way into Switzerland, and those of them who are of the student class are studying at technical colleges and the Swiss universities. At the collapse of France there were 30,000 French troops who crossed the border to prevent capture. But these have since returned home. There is a handful of British prisoners of war, and about 5,000 Jewish emigrés who entered by way of Unoccupied France.

Switzerland is the protecting power in Germany and Italy for Great Britain and the United States. She is also the protecting power for the United States in Japan, where the Argentine acts for us in this capacity. She is the protecting power for Germany and Italy and Japan in the United States, and for Germany and Italy and Siam in Great Britain. She used to be the protecting power for Germany in the Dutch East Indies, and for Japan in Hong Kong and Singapore.

In Geneva alone there is a staff of 6,000 dealing with prisoners of war and the other routine duties of the International Red Cross Society. Russia has no connection with the International Red Cross Society, although the subject has been approached. (I have heard grim stories of the systematic starvation of two and a-half million Russian prisoners in Germany. Russia has a minimum of 700,000 German prisoners of war.)

Those of you who used to visit Switzerland for the winter sports may be interested to know that the Palace Hotel at St. Moritz is still open; in fact, most of the big hotels at the leading resorts have been able to continue, somewhat emptily. But the Swiss have always had a mania for travel, and now that the outside world is closed to them, they are enjoying the beauties of their own country. Winter sports, however, have been run on almost entirely military lines. There have been endurance tests for age groups. In the Army championship at Davos, one thousand patrols took part in the thirty-kilometres race. There were military ski-ing events in Engelberg, with a twenty-five-kilometres race, and the native Swiss ski-

championship was won at Grindelwald by Otto Von Allmen. Miniature Olympic Games took place at Gstaad. It was a very good winter for snow, but, I repeat, the coldest on record, partly because of ground temperatures and partly because of the lack of coal and electric power.

Frankly, the more real information one has about Switzerland, the more sorry one cannot help feeling for her. Out of every thousand Swiss, 720 speak German, 210 speak French, 60 speak Italian, and 10 speak Romansch. German, French, and Italian are all official languages in Switzerland. Fortunately, there has never been a war of languages in Switzerland, and this diversity of tongues has always been respected and even regarded with favour. The reason for this is that Nationalism, as we know it to-day, did not rear its head until the nineteenth century, some five hundred years after the formation of the original Swiss Republic. It never occurred to the original Swiss when they were thrown together for mutual protection against the Hapsburg Empire that there was any language problem, or that it could create any difficulty. This is still the attitude to-day.

Postscript. — The diplomatic bag from the Swiss Legation to Berne takes a week, by way of Lisbon. The Swiss golf courses are still optimistically kept up, but golf balls are more or less unobtainable. The re-insurance business at Zurich still continues for insurance companies of all the belligerents. And if that is not neutral, what is? The Customs revenue has dropped sixty-five million Swiss francs annually since the collapse of France.

SWISS STOCK EXCHANGE PRICES.

Through the courtesy of the London Office of the Swiss Bank Corporation we are enabled to publish the quotations of some of the leading stocks.

	18th March.	15th April.
Bankverein	453 ex div.	459
Kreditanstalt	520	528
Rückversicherung	3200	3200
Ciba	6125	5765
Nestlé	813	775
Aluminium Neuhausen	3260	3145
Columbus	327	323
Sulzer	1275	1200
Brown Boveri	685	698
Wehranleihe 3% 1936	102.40	102.90
SBB Jura-Simplon	102.75	103.15
Banque Fédérale		368.—
	2nd March.	30th March.
Hispano A. B. C.	1090	965.

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OASIS OF DEMOCRACY.

(This interesting and lucid survey written by Percival R. Knauth, appeared in the "New York Times Magazine," January 25th, from which it is reprinted with due acknowledgment.)

In Switzerland the Winter winds are now crinkling the lakes to slaty grey, and snow blows down the mountain valleys. The high peaks of the Alps are white and remote above the little land hemmed in by war; the cities at their base are huddled close together in the cold. On week-ends, skiers raise long feathered trails of powder snow on mountain trails, and day by day the sentries on the borders stand their watch.

In Geneva the great white halls of the League of Nations buildings look somberly across the lake at France. The corridors and chambers, equipped and furnished with the wealth of every country, brood in silence, and when a watchman passes through, his footsteps echo in the hollow gloom. The brown and golden frescoes in the Council Chamber, symbols of men's rising civilisation, stare down on rows of empty seats, and from the "Halle des Pas-Perdus," where delegates once paced in endless conference, the blacked-out windows gaze blankly at snow-blanketed potato fields where gardens used to grow.

Along the borders silence reigns. At Moillesulaz, the frontier town of France, the Geneva tramcar rattles emptily past heavy blocks of concrete and entanglements of sharp-tipped wire, with its tiny group of passengers who daily pass the border on Red Cross and other missions. On the shores of Lake Constance, the border soldier on patrol picks his way past empty pillboxes whose gun-slots stare across at Germany. At Chiasso, in the Tessin, Italian-speaking Swiss watch the long lines of trains forever passing through to Italy and wonder at the changing fates of war.

At Basle, as the lights wink on, the Swiss can watch the darkness settling down on Germany across the Rhine. Behind them as they watch lies France, now occupied. Thus, as the night descends, they see the darkness falling over Europe, the blackout that holds a continent enthralled. But in their towns and villages the lights glow on.

Yet by 11 o'clock the hand of total war snuffs out these lights, too. No longer can the British bomber pilots, feeling their lonely way across the enemy continent from England use these friendly lamps as beacons on their flights to Italy or Germany. A year ago they did, until the Axis powers, realizing the importance of these lights as points of orientation for the enemy, forced Switzerland to introduce the blackout law.

These and other concessions have been the price of peace for Switzerland — the price of peace, but never of appeasement. Dependent though they are upon their Axis neighbours for everything, the Swiss, democrats and independents to the core, have never acquiesced in Germany's "New Order." For the Swiss, — and they do not hesitate to say so — would rather die than live in slavery.

For twenty-nine months this tiny nation of 4,000,000 people has been spending an average of 50,000,000 francs, or about \$1,200,000, every month on national defence. For more than two years the Swiss have been mobilized, at times completely, at other times maintaining a defensive army by calling up the men in shifts while those at home stood ever ready