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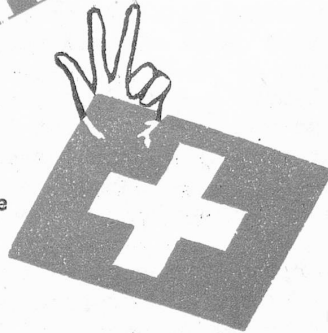
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HELVETIA



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WAS SWITZERLAND IN DANGER??

Our members will be interested to read the following declarations made by Federal Councillor Kobelt in the National Council regarding the dangers which threatened Switzerland during the war, and these declarations will destroy any doubts which may have existed as to the very real dangers which existed for the independence of our country. Federal Councillor Kobelt made the following declarations:

"During the first phase of the war, Hitler's political aims were a constant danger for our country. First of all, his idea of creating a great German Reich, and second his plan to establish a New Order in Europe under German control.

At that time Switzerland always had to reckon with the possibility that Germany would try to incorporate her by force into the new Reich. We were actually in possession of a railroad map of Switzerland worked out in November 1944 by the General Staff of the German Luftwaffe, which shows all our vital objectives such as railroad stations, viaducts, electrical power plants, etc.

Furthermore, it is generally known that in the German headquarters decisions were often made under the effects of momentous considerations or of violent emotional outbursts of the Führer even against the advice of the military experts. Hitler often decided over the heads of his generals and his fits of rage are known to have often turned out to be to the advantage of the Allies. For us, however, his uncontrolled temper formed a constant source of danger.

Prior to the offensive in the Spring of 1940, the German preparations in this direction had been signaled by our intelligence service already in winter and information about Norway, Holland and Belgium came true, but fortunately the danger for our country was averted.

Another critical moment was May 15, 1940, when the German offensive against Sedan somewhat slackened down. The German forces in the southern part of the front remained inactive during the whole operation in northern France and the possibility of a manoeuvre across our country was not to be denied. After France's collapse, Switzerland found herself completely surrounded by the Axis powers. The great success achieved had made Germany feel invincible and Switzerland was constantly afraid of being incorporated into the new German order in Europe.

Until the beginning of July 1940, two German armoured corps under Guderian and Schmidt with four armoured divisions and motorized divisions were stationed in the section of Delle-Besancon. This very dense occupation of the northern frontier sector only decreased slowly. At the end of July there were still two German armies on the left, and near our frontier, and for a longer period several German divisions still remained in the southern German sector.

The danger of an action of reprisal against Switzerland increased when our anti-aircraft forces shot down German airplanes and when every night the British air forces flew across our air space in their operations against the enemy. In the Summer of 1940, the German Luftwaffe had projected an action of sabotage against our airfields, but this plan was frustrated at the beginning. There were no military operations against our country as the Germans thought that Switzerland, that "porcupine" as they called her would be subdued by mere political pressure and taken by the German forces on their way home without any bloodshed.

When Germany found out, however, that Switzerland was unwilling to bend her knee under any pressure, definite military preparations for an invasion of our country were made. The best proof of the existence of this plan was the intensification of German espionage activity in Switzerland. Germany's espionage was particularly active in 1941 and 1942, but continued in 1943 and 1944. The main center was in Stuttgart with a chain of branches along the Swiss border and also in our country itself. Hundreds of agents, foreigners and Swiss were active in this organization, and their equipment included secret radio stations, miniature cameras, invisible ink and all the other tools of modern spies. It is known that several Swiss attended special courses for espionage and sabotage in Germany. This carefully planned activity was undoubtedly the prelude of an attack. Besides, the information supplied by our intelligence service clearly confirmed the facts that a military action against Switzerland was projected and much discussed among the leading circles in Germany.

Towards the end of 1942, and at the beginning of 1943, Himmler and Dietrich tried to persuade Hitler to attack Switzerland. The German generals, however, expressed themselves definitely against this plan. In the second half of March, an assault against Switzerland was worked out in Hitler's headquarters under the direction of Colonel General Dietel. Our intelligence service which reached right into the German Führer's headquarters and which functioned with absolute reliability, however, knew about the German preparations. Our agents had even been able to inform our authorities about the exact date of the German attack against Scandinavia and in the West and also knew about the German operations in the Balkans and against Russia one or two weeks before they started.

In the afternoon of March 18, 1943, it was reported that Germany would attack Switzerland on April 6. On the next day, March 19, it was said that the danger was very serious, but that the final decisions had not yet been made. Lively discussions were reported to be in progress about the pros and cons of this plan in Hitler's headquarters and we were warned to beware of so-called "negotiations" which might only serve as a blinding manoeuvre for a surprise attack as had happened before with other countries. Simultaneously, our reconnaissance reported that the Germans were concentrating troops in Bavaria. Our intelligence service, however, denied the news of the "London Daily Telegraph" about a concentration of 30 German divisions near our frontier.

On March 27, finally, the news arrived that the Germans had decided not to attack Switzerland for the time being. The reason for this decision was generally considered to be the losses suffered by the German army and also the state of readiness achieved by our own forces. It was said that the economic experts of the German army had energetically voted against the plan to attack Switzerland and that also the effects of the Allied world war against Germany and the impending Allied invasion of the Continent had had their influence in this decision.

The Swiss army, however, had already been called to particular vigilance several days before. On March 20, General Guisan had issued orders increasing the state of readiness of the Swiss army staffs. A number of manoeuvres were called off, furloughs were restricted and preparations were made for the mobilization of additional troops. This last step, however, became unnecessary after the report had arrived that Switzerland would not be attacked. The most critical moment had passed, but the danger of an invasion still continued until the beginning of the Russian summer offensive.

On April 29, 1944, a German airplane landed on the airport of Dübendorf. Its crew refused to deliver their machine which was said to be equipped with the most modern instruments. At that time, it seems that the High Command of the German Luftwaffe had worked out a plan to liberate or destroy this machine in a surprise assault on Dübendorf. The German Air Attache in Berne, however, is said to have warned the Germans of the consequences of such an enterprise and so negotiations were opened in which we finally consented to destroy the machine.

In May 1944, between 20 and 30 German divisions were stationed along an area of some 300 kms. on our northern border. These forces were kept ready in case of an invasion of Europe by the Allies, but their presence in that sector always formed a source of danger. The danger of a German invasion of Switzerland gradually began to disappear with the progress the Allies were making in their operations on the continent. There was still the possibility that some German forces might be pushed into Switzerland. The critical moment in this respect was when the Germans stiffened their resistance around the Belfort gap for they had received the order to fight their way back to Germany across Switzerland if they were cut off.

The electrical power plants between Basle and Lake Constance also caused us many worries. The German headquarters had ordered the destruction of those plants, as well as of the bridges across the Rhine if the Germans should be forced to retreat. It can now be revealed that thanks to a confidential understanding which was reached with the Germans working in those power stations and also thanks to the courageous intervention of our frontier guards, the destruction of those works was prevented in time. In the same way, the Germans had been prevented from blowing up the southern end of the Simplon Tunnel. We know today that the Germans had hoped to resist in the Black Forest for six months, but the war was moving too fast for them.

At the beginning of the war, in September 1939, 400,000 men had been called to arms in Switzerland. In the second general mobilization in May 1940, this number was increased to 500,000 men, and after the creation of new staffs and units, after the mobilization of auxiliary forces and local guards, our army finally counted over 850,000 men. A third general mobilization would have almost completely paralyzed our economic life. Therefore, the Federal Council, as well as General Guisan always tried to limit the number of mobilized soldiers to the absolute minimum."

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SWISS - RUSSIAN PROTOCOL REGARDING THE TREATMENT OF RUSSIAN INTERNEES IN SWITZERLAND.

In the July issue of the "Helvetia" we reported on the controversy which arose between Russia and Switzerland in connection with the alleged ill-treatment of Russian internees in Swiss camps, and as this controversy was again given space in the New Zealand Press recently, we wish to quote an article on the negotiations in Switzerland between a Russian Mission and the Swiss Authorities which clarified the position.

The report on the negotiations, which have taken place throughout long weeks between Swiss authorities and a Russian delegation was published in Berne. These negotiations dealt with the treatment of Soviet internees in Switzerland, and their repatriation to the USSR. This matter is deserving of comment.

First of all, it can be pointed out with satisfaction that the two parties, assisted by the Allied delegations, and in particular by the French delegation, the latter having played a first rate role in the talks, were able to agree on a common text. This text shows in itself that an understanding was reached. Had this not been the case, each side would have found it necessary to issue its own statement in support of its own report. It must be stated, however, that the Swiss authorities gave proof of much good will. They did not act on considerations inspired by a false conception of prestige. They had only one desire and one aim: that of getting down to objective facts.