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HOW THE SWISS KEPT GERMANY AT BAY.

(This has been contributed by a Special Correspondent to "The Sunday Times"; 24th June, 1945):

Now that the great military secrets of the war are being disclosed, the story can be told of a remarkable undertaking, the Battle of Switzerland. It was a silent battle, a contest of wits, bluff and ingenuity, and the Swiss victory was complete.

Switzerland in past wars always found itself between the Powers engaged. In such circumstances the obvious thing to do was to man the frontiers against both parties, and the modest Swiss forces were consequently assembled on the French and German frontiers when this war began.

The French collapse of 1940 confronted Switzerland with an entirely new problem because from that moment Switzerland was completely surrounded by the Axis Powers. It was impossible to defend the whole frontier (the length of which approximately equals the distance from London to Tunis), and, moreover, the French campaign had shown that motorised divisions could break in at any point they chose, and take the remaining Swiss forces in the rear.

Swiss military policy had to be rapidly and completely changed, while maintaining its paramount aim, which is first to deter a great Power from attacking Switzerland at all, by offering the prospect of losses in one form or another which would render conquest barren, and secondly to ensure that if there is a fight it should take place in the best conditions for the Swiss army.

It was clear that the main strategic object of any Axis attack would be to gain possession of the two railways, the Gotthard and the Simplon, connecting Germany and Italy; the Brenner route, through Austria, was already seriously overstrained and vulnerable to air attack, and the alternative route through France was long and devious. Thus the Swiss Commander-in-Chief, Gen. Guisan, hit on the idea of a Swiss Redoubt (which German propaganda afterwards borrowed for South Germany).

The decision was taken to leave only light forces, ordered to fight to the last, in the flatter frontier regions, and to withdraw the bulk of the Swiss army to a small, inner mountainous zone enclosing the two vital tunnels, which were to be blown up if Switzerland was attacked. This meant abandoning the Swiss industries (which were also prepared for destruction), the five chief towns, and the Swiss population, which was told that in case of invasion it would have to stay, and that any mass attempt to enter the Redoubt area would be forcibly prevented.

Thus a formidable deterrent (the certain loss of the chief prize) was offered to the invader; the front to be defended was greatly shortened; and the Swiss chose for the battle the most favourable terrain, namely, the mountains which geographical Providence has given them.

As the Swiss factories were outside the Redoubt, stores of munitions and food had to be brought into it and placed in huge caverns blasted in the living rock. Field hospitals were erected in the mountains, roads built for bringing up heavy artillery, cable railways prepared to supply the outposts at 10,000 ft. and higher, flying strips made for fighters, and so on. Swiss military training was revolutionised overnight.

The silent battle was won, Switzerland was never attacked and the Swiss authorities are eagerly waiting to see whether, among the German military documents captured by the Allies, there are any which explain why.

At the end of 1944, when the Allies were deep inside Europe and the new danger arose that the Germans might invade Switzerland, not for conquest but to block any Allied short-cut, Switzerland partly reverted to the traditional policy and the low-lying frontiers were again manned.

The Redoubt will remain a permanent feature of Swiss defensive policy in the future.

NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE, London Group.

We have pleasure in advising you that it has now been possible to make arrangements with the ACADEMY CINEMA, 165, Oxford Street, W.1, for the showing of the film "MARIE LOUISE" about the middle of September. (Consult daily Press).

The film will form the main feature of the normal programme and will appear three times per day.

Normal prices for seats will apply to Swiss visitors as to others, but it will be possible to reserve seats for any performance by ringing up GER 2981 one day in advance.

The ACADEMY CINEMA is situated halfway between Oxford Circus and Tottenham Court Road Underground Stations, and Bus routes 7, 8, 17, 23, 25, 73, and 163 pass the door.

We would also advise the Colony that another famous Swiss war film will be shown in London shortly. Further particulars will be given in the next issue.

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