

As others see us

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AS OTHERS SEE US. The Crisis of Switzerland.

Switzerland's problem is threefold. She is a purely inland State lying in the heart of Europe. Her population is made up of three nationalities — of four, if we include the Romansch element. And that population is much denser than befits a country predominantly mountainous and to a great extent even Alpine. The third problem is one of economics. Switzerland stands on the same plane as Belgium and Holland, since she, too, is a highly capitalised small State. Unlike Belgium and Holland, however, which possess raw materials, she has to import her raw materials from abroad. She is also exceptionally lacking in power, for she has neither coal nor oil. Her sole resource is abundant water power, with which she has electrified her railways. But she also has to import grain for about nine months, and this dependence on abroad increases continually owing to the rapid rise in population. Even between 1880 and 1890 the home-grown grain sufficed for only 157 days in the year.

To pay for her imports Switzerland became a land of export and of tourist industry. Owing to her central position, her proximity to great markets and the high standard of her working class, she forms a favourable source of supply for industrial products, whilst the beauty of her scenery entices visitors. Unhappily, however, such an economic structure demands a flourishing world capitalism and active world markets. Swiss industry specialises in goods of high-class quality, even luxury articles, and many of her hotels, unlike those in the Tyrol, cater for luxury requirements. Such a specialised type of industry, like such an hotel standard, calls for open frontiers. Terrible harm has been done to her economic life by the efforts of modern autarchy, the strangling of tourist traffic by currency regulations, the depreciation of many currencies, and general impoverishment. The Federal railways are also hard hit. Since 1930 tourist traffic has steadily decreased, and so has goods traffic. As tariffs are very high already, recovery by raising them is out of the question.

As a creditor country, an exporting country — even her agriculture depending on cheese for export — and as a country of tourist travel, Switzerland was for decades a land of extremely active paying power. Her passive trade balance did not matter. Accumulated capital could be distributed in considerable investments at home and abroad. This benefited the building trade. In addition to hotels and sanatoria, vast numbers of public buildings were erected, especially schools. The mortgage system developed side by side with the building trade, and, as the former is in the hands of the banks — that is, of the cantonal and savings banks — the banking and savings bank combine developed as well. At the same time capital from all parts of the world poured into the country with its gold standard; and, however much Switzerland paid out abroad, a considerable amount remained and fertilised the banks. Side by side with the old cantonal banks, big banking concerns arose, which, considering the smallness of the country, assumed unusual dimensions. The extent of industrialisation may be realised from the fact that the proportion of those engaged in industry is only exceeded by England and Belgium. This has increased the population enormously, and the growing population created an ever larger industry, as provision now had to be made for expanding home markets.

But when export trade declined and distress descended upon the hotels, unemployment began and purchasing power dropped. To-day Switzerland has, according to the season, 80,000 to 100,000 unemployed, a figure which, compared with that of other countries, does not seem very serious, but to which must be added the large number of part-time workers. The embroidery business of eastern Switzerland, which was carried on chiefly for export purposes, is nearly ruined. Basle's silk ribbon industry has also declined greatly. On the other hand, of course, new and lucrative branches of production have been created: for example, the chemical industry centred in Basle, whose fine aniline dyes and medicinal products find increasingly favourable markets abroad, and the aluminium industry, which is dependent on water power and therefore particularly suited to Switzerland. Certain old-established trades have also improved somewhat. The export of watches for 1935 amounted to 124.5 million francs against 109 million for 1934 and 96 million for 1933. Distressed trades have been assisted by Federal grants, and so has agriculture, the latter by high payments exceeding world prices. Foreign wheat, delivered at the frontier, costs 10 to 12 francs per 100 kilos, but the Federation pays the peasants 35 francs per 100 kilos. Thus, at a time when wages are falling, food prices are rising. The subvention system cannot continue as it is; for it runs counter to Swiss ideology, which still continues to hold fast, in politics as in economics, to the freedom of the individual.

Export industry would fail to profit by the devaluation on behalf of which so much propa-

ganda has been expended, for Switzerland would no longer be able, with her high rate of exchange, to purchase raw materials and foodstuffs cheaply. Unlike England, neither prices nor wages could be kept steady. How could it be otherwise in such a small country, poor in raw materials and lacking colonies? This dislocation of the price level would only foster the unrest with which the country is seething. Farmers welcome the idea of devaluation, not merely because they hope it will benefit the cheese export and raise prices at home, and because they want to decrease their heavy financial obligations, but also because of their opposition to the towns. Above all, however, the farmers — and here they agree with the entire working class — fear the reverse of devaluation, namely, deflation, the adjustment of wages and prices to the world market. It is contended that cuts made in salaries and wages have already reduced purchasing power only too sadly. As a matter of fact, such a small country ought not to insist either on devaluation or on deflation, but must seek a middle way, that of careful adaptation, continually revised in view of the very different conditions prevailing in the various economic classes and labour groups. The expression, "differential adaptation," used recently in a document issued by the Federal Council, comes closest to the heart of the matter. A small country, in which good supervision by a central organisation is possible, can thus advance step by step with comparative ease. Of course, there must be a general plan — not economic planning, but a constructive programme.

There is one presupposition in such an economic reconstruction: resolute leaders for the State and the economic system combined with non-party authority. This does not mean the downfall of democracy; it does, however, involve more centralisation. Democracy, in the sense of the most far-reaching participation by the nation in the business of government, is deeply rooted in the Swiss, and this again is closely connected with their co-operation in local municipal and cantonal administration. The service of the State is built up from the bottom. If the cantons were abolished, the deepest Swiss sentiments would be hurt. The Federation is respected because it watches over the canton, but the canton is beloved. In cultural matters in particular the cantons will not surrender their autonomy, and this is justifiable, for their differences are enormous. To those of language and race must be added those of religion. There are purely Protestant and purely Catholic cantons, whilst in others that are "mixed" the denomination changes from valley to valley or even from village to village. Geographical differences must also be borne in mind: Alpine regions, the so-called central districts and the Jura, the outlying districts, Basle, the golden gate of Switzerland, and the canton of Schaffhausen, on the right bank of the Rhine. Never was there greater colour and variety in so small a space.

This, however, is precisely the reason why unified leadership in politics and economics is necessary. In an age of bitter competitive struggle, federation and democracy can only be preserved by making concessions to centralisation and strong State leadership — concessions tending, not to dictatorship but to wise, and, in case of need, drastic levelling of differences. Switzerland, moreover, is very well prepared for such a levelling process. If she has succeeded in the difficult task of reconciling German and French Switzerland, she has revealed thereby an inner strength which awakens hope for the future. She has also shown her mastery in restraint. When a movement towards Switzerland arose in Vorarlberg after the collapse of Austria, she did not allow herself to be tempted by the possibility of enlargement, for in that way the German portion would have grown at the cost of the French, and Catholicism at the expense of Protestantism. The balance of power erected with so much effort was not to be endangered.

The Swiss nation has grown in a strange manner from one particular space which cannot be made larger or smaller at will. This is the country lying round the central Alpine passes, that is, round the most central, the St. Gotthard: a land of intercourse, of passage from north to south, but also from east to west. The great pass does not separate, but links closely the lands on either side. Thus northern, southern, western and eastern Switzerland are intimately connected; and as regards culture, however far the German-Swiss is German, the French-Swiss French and the Italian-Swiss Italian, just so far, again, do they all approach each other by the operation of space. For this reason the culture of the German-Swiss — and the same holds good for both other sections — is German only up to a certain point. It might even be said that at the point of transition from culture into sentiment it is no longer German, but specifically Swiss. Side by side with this, a specific Swiss national sense exists, its cantonal coherence showing still more plainly that it is deeply rooted in the soil.

This regional sense remains far removed from all national limitations and extravagances. The Swiss cheerfully stands by his nation, but does

not bear her name continually on his lips. For this reason Switzerland has been able to assume many international characteristics, and to become the typical country of international congresses and organisations. But this complicated national-international character prevents her at the same time from inclining to excess towards any other nation, especially towards any of the States surrounding her. That is the source of Swiss neutrality, which has been so much discussed and, in reality, so little understood. This neutrality is in the interests of Europe, since it checks the Powers' eagerness to control the traffic routes of Central Europe; but it issues above all from the character of Switzerland herself. She can be nothing but neutral, because she is European, or, putting it more cautiously, because she, more than all the other States of Europe, is on the way to Europeanism. For this reason a very strong Europe Movement has arisen recently — a specifically Swiss Movement that has nothing to do with Count Coudenhove-Calergi's Pan-Europa.

Switzerland considered her entry into the League of Nations to be consistent with her neutrality. Since the League seemed to guarantee order for the world, and for Europe in particular, the Swiss nation voted, in a plebiscite, for entry. The less the hopes placed on the League have been fulfilled hitherto, the more does Switzerland recognise the necessity of developing her defensive system. New defence credits, to the large amount of 235 million francs, are about to be granted, a sum destined chiefly for technical equipment. The smallness of the country and the possibility of its swift penetration demand especially strong technical preparations.

This, of course, only makes the financial troubles more difficult and the burden of debt heavier — the means of raising the defensive credits are to be created by a Defence Loan. Here — in the country's economic and financial life — lies the sore spot: but the economic problems are also pressing for political renewal. The feeling is general that party life is torpid. If resolute men are to rebuild the economic system, they must be assisted by new parties. But party reform, again, can only issue from democratic tradition. The so-called Front Movement, which coquets partly with National Socialism and partly with Fascism, has, after some early success, virtually collapsed, because Switzerland realised that her further existence can only be assured by her abstention from every form of Fascism. This explains the sharp note in the more influential Press when dealing with the Third Reich. It implies no enmity towards Germany, least of all in German-Switzerland, the very place where efforts are being made to nourish the eternal values of the German soul. It is purely defensive: the desire to protect at all costs that which has been bequeathed to the present generation by their fathers.

The smaller the possibility of renewal through the Front parties, the greater is the responsibility of the old parties. In addition to the historic groups of the political and religious Conservatives on the one hand and of the Democrats and bourgeois Radicals on the other, there have been for decades the Social Democrats. Despite the acrimonious debates between them and the bourgeois parties, they have been silently admitted into the old order of society. Their Left wing is fairly influential, but it is by that very means that Communism is being kept down; moreover, by far the larger part of Social Democracy has recently accepted the idea of defence. Thus the class struggle is not very sharply defined in Switzerland: the cleavage runs rather through the individual parties. The young are rebelling against the old, and thus groups have arisen of Young Conservatives, Young Liberals, Young Democrats, who will be joined sooner or later by Young Socialists. One section of the peasantry calls itself the Young Peasants. These peasants, who are settled in the mountainous districts of Canton Bern, are engaged exclusively in cattle rearing, and represent, as a party, an interesting transition from a civic group to Social Democracy. Thus all party life is in flux. Everywhere there are new programmes, many meetings, violent discussions, but, so far, no fixed purposes. Last year the so-called Crisis Proposals were rejected by the nation — a plan of the Social Democrats for the reconstruction of the economic system. The plan was rightly rejected, for it was fundamentally obscure; but something new ought to have been put in its place.

This point also illustrates Switzerland's position in the heart of Europe. That which affects Europe as a whole — uncertainty as to the future — affects Switzerland also. The Swiss, however, will always be able to renew his inspiration by lifting up his eyes to the hills — to those towering mountains, which for him take the place of the sea. An Alpine State such as this is no narrow inland State, for the streams that rise in those mountains unite the country with the sea, the source of greatness for all nations. During a recent visit to Basle the present Federal President claimed for the ancient city on the Rhine the spirit of the seafaring nations, because it stands

on a traffic route of major importance and has furthermore fulfilled its mission by the enormous development of its port. It is to be hoped that Switzerland will thus again extricate herself from the storms of the future; in harmony with the world and with the heart of Europe, but also stubbornly preserving her own unique characteristics.

Since this was written, Switzerland entered upon a devaluation of about 30 per cent., though not in slavish imitation of France. The technical condition of the Swiss franc remained as excellent as ever; as a matter of fact, a great deal of fresh gold had actually flowed into the National Bank a short time previously. It may be formulated thus: the Federal Council used the French devaluation and the formation of a Franco-British-American gold standard bloc as a favourable opportunity of re-entering the field of international competition by means of devaluation. It was also anxious about the fate of the Defence Loan. State bonds were pretty low, even if they had recovered from the lowest standard, directly after Belgian devaluation; and it was to be feared that, despite all patriotism, the uncertain conditions of exchange would not be exactly favourable to a loan issued at par and yielding 3 per cent. Now, after devaluation and with the great improvement in the rate of former issues, not only the entire amount of 235 millions for the Defence Loan has been subscribed, but nearly 100 millions in addition.

The exchange in Switzerland has been put in order for some time to come. As far as one can foresee, there can be no question of new devaluation. Fears that Switzerland has lost the world's confidence as an international savings bank are thus groundless; the position of the banks is actually better, because they have decreased their debts and current business has revived. But whether the other hopes cherished by the friends of devaluation will be realised is doubtful. If a return to economic Liberalism is expected from devaluation because, in order to keep prices steady, the Customs are reduced, there is on the other hand a sharp control of prices, which restores the influence of the State on trade. To this must be added the fact that Switzerland is so financially dependent on tariffs that only a partial lowering is practicable. In a country so dependent on the import of raw materials, even the strictest control of prices will never be able to prevent a rise in prices and tariffs. This increase will always be held in check by the devaluation quota, which is reckoned somewhat high in Switzerland, and in so far a certain permanent assimilation to the standard of living abroad will be brought about. On the other hand it will be so high that a struggle for wages will be inevitable. The workmen usually only becomes restless when he realises that devaluation, owing to rising prices, means a bleak decrease of wages; till then he sees only the decrease of unemployment.

The Defence Loan was greeted all over Switzerland, in town and in country, by the display of flags. This financial success was looked upon as a triumph of the national spirit of sacrifice; and even if devaluation has helped this forward, at all events another proof has been given that Switzerland is determined to preserve her independence under all circumstances.

Adolf Grabowsky.
(The Contemporary Review.)

CITY SWISS CLUB. January 5th, 1937.

The first meeting of the year took place on January 5th. The attendance was poor, less than two dozen, and if the decrease continues the Committee will soon be able to have the monthly meeting by itself without any members to criticize or make awkward suggestions, as it was, the President sat almost alone in his glory at the top-table. True it is, that he was supported by his faithful Secretary and later by his equally faithful Treasurer and also managed to induce one old but not ancient member to occupy a chair but the eminent were conspicuous by their absence.

There was practically nothing on the agenda to be discussed. No admissions. One resignation.

The President read a letter inviting donations to stock the Zoo in Bern. Someone suggested that the animals should be called after the donors.

I only hope that the famous bears of Bern will not be jealous.

There being no other business, the President closed the meeting at 9 o'clock.

I was sitting next to one of our most eminent members who told me the following story which I am minded to relate as I have nothing more to tell you about the meeting.

Two hikers were wandering about the country-side and towards evening they got lost. At last they came across a small inn and decided to stay for the night.

They asked the landlady for supper and a room. During the night one of the hikers was unable to sleep and in despair he walked up and

down the room. Fearing to waken his companion he then proceeded to walk up and down the corridor. After a time, a door opened, the landlady appeared and asked him what he thought he was doing. He explained his trouble. The landlady then said to him, "You may not run the risk of awakening your companion, but you will most probably wake up the other inmates. Let me see if I can help you."

The next morning, when they were about to depart, the landlady asked him for his name and address. As he was by way of being a humorous fellow he gave the name and address of his companion.

Nearly a year later, the two met again when the companion said to him, "You remember the night we got lost and stayed at the inn. Well, I have just received a most unexpected letter which I am quite unable to understand." "Oh, indeed," replied his friend "and what was in the letter." "Why?" said the other hiker, "it says that the landlady has just died and left me £2,000. *Morals.* (1) If you go hiking, take a map and be sure you can read it.

(2) If you must be witty, be careful that your humour does not turn to your own disadvantage.

Finally may I remind members that the one and only Cinderella this year will be held at the Mayfair Hotel, on Saturday March 13th. Please make a note of the date and come in your hundreds so that the efforts of the Committee to entertain you, may be crowned by success.

ck.

PRIMITIVE MAN IN THE ALPS.

Until recently it was generally believed that the Swiss Alps had not been inhabited by man before the third glacial period. Recent finds, and the remarkable studies made by Dr. Baechler, of St. Gallen, show that man settled in the Alps during the Mousterian period — that is, between the two last glacial periods.

During the Old Stone Age, when men lived in Germany, in the Pyrenees, and in Italy south of the Po, the Swiss Alps were buried under a sheet of ice which at some places reached a depth of over 3,000ft. The existence of an already civilized population of the Late Stone Age was not revealed until 1853, when the first lake dwellings were discovered in the Lake of Zurich. In 1873 traces of still older men were discovered in the Kesslerloch Cave, at a height of 2,000ft., near Thayngen, in Canton Schaffhausen. Some other finds made a short distance away, at Schweizersbild, confirmed the existence of that Stone Age civilization. At the beginning of the century came a new surprise to archaeologists. The finds made in the Wildkirchli Cave, in the Drachenloch, in the Wildenmannisloch, in a cave on the Righi, in the Cotencher Cave, and quite recently on the Calanda, prove that men dwelt in the Alps during the last inter-glacial period: these are so far the oldest traces of human beings in the Alpine regions.

The Wildkirchli Cave lies on the Saentis, at a height of 4,845ft. It is about 250ft. in length, and in it were collected skulls and bones of cave panthers and lions, of mountain stags and chamois. The Drachenloch (or Dragon Cave), above Vättis, in the Tamina Valley, near Ragaz, at an altitude of 7,875ft., is the highest point in the Alps where prehistoric remains have been discovered. In the Churfirsten, on the flank of the Selun Peak, at a height of about 5,000ft., lies the Wildenmannisloch, a cave which yielded numerous bones of marmots, chamois, foxes, wolves, deer, and — quite unexpected at such an altitude — remains of cave lions. Bone and flint implements were also collected, but the most remarkable find consisted in a piece of roughly-carved bone representing the head of a woman. Similar remains were also yielded by a cave on the Righi, at a height of nearly 4,500ft., and by the Cotencher Cave, in the Jura, in the Gorges de l'Areuse, at an altitude of 2,000ft. More recently traces of the Mousterian Alpine man were discovered at a height of about 4,600ft. on the slopes of the Calanda, north of Chur.

These discoveries have established that about 50,000 years ago men lived in the Swiss Alps, high up on the mountain sides. After the second glacial period the climate was warm and damp, and the first Alpine men were able to hunt cave bears, lions, panthers, as well as other animals, such as chamois, marmots, and snow rabbits, which still exist in the Swiss mountains.

T.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Wednesday, January 13th, at 8 o'clock — Swiss Mercantile Society — Monthly Meeting — followed by a Lecture entitled: "Will A New Adam Smith Appear?" by Mr. V. H. Buraston, B.Com., F.C.I.S., F.C.R.A., at "Swiss House," 34/35, Fitzroy Square, W.1.

Friday, January 15th, at 8 o'clock — Nouvelle Société Helvétique — Annual General Meeting at the "Foyer Suisse," 15, Upper Bedford Place, W.C.1 (Supper at 3/- to be served at 6.30 p.m.).

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SCHWEIZERKIRCHE

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Sonntag, den 10. Januar 1937.

11 Uhr morgens, Gottesdienst und Sonntagsschule.

7 Uhr abends, Gottesdienst.

8 Uhr, Chorprobe.

BESTATTUNG.

Am 4. Januar wurde beerdigt: Ernst Josef Baumann von Zürich (Stadt); geb. am 14. X. 1889 — gest. am 23.12.1936.

Anfragen wegen Religions- bzw. Confirmandenstunden und Amtshandlungen sind erbeten an den Pfarrer der Gemeinde: C. Th. Hahn, 43, Priory Road, Bedford Park, W.4 (Telephon: Chiswick 4156). Sprechstunden: Dienstag 12-2 Uhr in der Kirche.