Correspondence

Objekttyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): **- (1939)**

Heft 932

PDF erstellt am: **19.03.2024**

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Wheat, flour, macaroni, and similar products, fats and oils, methylated spirit and alcohol cannot be sold in the shops; coffee, sugar, coal, petrol, and oil can be had only in small quantities pending the issue of ration cards. Motorists are so far allowed 13 gallons of petrol a month and motor traffic is now prohibited on Sundays except for military use, public transport, and medical services.

This does not mean that a dearth of these products is threatened. Stocks in the country are sufficient for at least 18 months, but the Government wisely decided to prevent hoarding, such as flourished in 1914 and resulted in an increase of prices and in destruction of products badly stored by individuals. These measures are also intended to accustom the population to reduce to the lowest possible level the consumption of food and fuel, and thus avoid the error made at the beginning of the last War, when the people continued to live as usual until, after 1915, there was a real dearth consequent on the stoppage of imports.

Each family has been instructed to store certain foodstuffs so as to be able to live for three months without making new purchases, and that order has been generally followed. This will enable the Government to organize a general rationing scheme within the next two months and to issue the ration cards.

"The Times" 21/9/39.

CORRESPONDENCE.

(In encouraging and publishing correspondence on any matter of interest to our readers we wish to stress that we do not necessarily subscribe to the opinions expressed therein. ED. S.O.)

55, Firsby Avenue,
Shirley — Croydon,
25th September, 1939.

The Editor,
THE SWISS OBSERVER,
23, Leonard Street,
E.C.2.

SWISS NEUTRALITY.

Sir,

In reply to Mr. Tosio's letter I will readily admit that on purely theoretical grounds the attitude of Switzerland deserves full marks.

As I pointed out before, I am fully aware that Switzerland's neutrality is a matter of international agreement which should not lightly be violated, least of all by Switzerland herself. Her neutrality, however, dates back to the time when agreements carried some weight, whereas in these days of international gangsterdom such agreements are apt to go by the board, and to judge by the huge expenditure of money that the Swiss Government felt justified in incurring for military purposes, it appears that our Government does not place too much confidence in this guaranteed neutrality being respected by all parties.

I will say that what I hold of Switzerland also applies to other neutral countries, and chiefly to those in the immediate path of German ambition, but Switzerland's attitude is particularly disappointing to me because the Swiss never tire of praising their freedom and independence in song and speech, and I, for one, would have expected them to be eager to assist in the maintenance of these blessings, instead of which I find that their immediate immunity from war is much dearer to them.

Mr. Tosio says that Switzerland did not ask the Western Powers to fight German aggression, but when Czechoslovakia was sacrificed on the altar of peace, there was in Switzerland, as elsewhere, an outcry of disappointment that the Western Democracies should have abandoned Czechoslovakia to her fate. I gather from this that the neutral nations are all in favour of, and indeed expect, Great Britain and France to do the dirty work, while they themselves look on.

Mr. Tosio "believes" that Great Britain and France are fighting for a principle, and I admire his caution. He lets himself go to the extent of stating that Swiss public opinion may approve of that principle. Now, if it is good enough for those two countries to fight for a principle, it should be equally good enough for all nations that value this principle. If, after all, the two Western Democracies were animated by the same considerations of selfish expediency, as is the case with the neutral countries, they could hold out against Germany long after these neutral countries had disappeared as separate entities.

If logic is to be the guiding star, and if logic demands that Switzerland should wait for an attack, then it is grossly illogical of Great Britian and France to fight until their turn comes in the German scheme of world domination.

As to Mr. Tosio's contention that my forebodings for Switzerland's future in the event of a German victory are hypothetical, and a presumption, I would point out to him that "circumstantial evidence," although not looked upon with favour, is nevertheless occasionally admitted in a Court of Law, and the circumstantial evidence accumulated over the last few years should have convinced the most stubborn sceptic.

Yours faithfully,

J. FREI.

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

The Monthly Meeting of the Society was held at Swiss House on Saturday, September 23rd. Mr. J. J. Boos, President, was in the Chair and about thirty members were present. The Chairman in opening the proceedings referred to the exceptional circumstances under which the Society was meeting and expressed his gratitude that so many members made it convenient to attend. He explained that the Meeting had been convened for a Saturday afternoon as meetings during evenings were to be deprecated owing to black-out restrictions and difficulties of travelling. Little was it thought, the Chairman pointed out, when last the Society met in June, that the war clouds which had already then gathered over Europe, would break loose into a storm, the end of which no one could foresee. The Chairman expressed the fervent hope that our country may be spared the ravages wrought by the unleashed elements and that the day may not be too distant when we could all return to our normal lives and occupations.

The Chairman then made a survey of recent events. He said that towards the end of August, when the tension was increasing daily, lady students were strongly urged on the advice of the Swiss Legation to return to Switzerland immediately and party arrangements were subsequently made for about 50 students who left London on Sunday, August 27th and had a safe journey