Journée des Suisses de l'étranger 1939

Autor(en): **[s.n.]**

Objekttyp: **Article**

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

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

Heft 912

PDF erstellt am: **19.03.2024**

Persistenter Link: https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-692030

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WHAT OTHER PEOPLE THINK OF US.

SWISS DEFENCES.

The Power of the Individual Soldier.

Switzerland's recent declaration that she intends to defend her frontiers is in keeping with the spirit of independence which has marked the Swiss character for many centuries. Two years ago Herr Hitler guaranteed Swiss neutrality, but at the same time Switzerland began to look to her defences; even casual observers going there for winter sports were able to see the laying out of artillery positions commanding the railway approaches.

The Swiss, who have for many years been looked upon as a nation of hoteliers, have behind them a proud fighting record. Their nationals have figured prominently in most European wars as mercenaries, and as free-lances proved themselves amongst the best who fought for pay alone. To-day one may say, "Blessed is the nation which is taking no part in the making of history," and those who know and love Switzerland will be the last to suggest that she should embroil herself unnecessarily or take up the burden of arms "when no man attacketh."

Alpine Strength.

Without going into the likelihood or otherwise of Switzerland's being drawn into any conflict, one can be certain that if she were she would make a very good showing when put to the test; more-over, Switzerland is a country almost uniquely placed in relation to modern warfare. She is provided by nature with great defences, and she offers a terrain not at all favourable to modern engines of war. Her mountains are her bastions against the use of tanks and heavy artillery; the peaks of the Alps can defy the blast of death from the air.

Such chinks as exist in the armour of her sierras have been attended to by cunning engineers, and it is significant that in 1933, when the subject of disarmament was front-page news throughout the world, Switzerland quietly began a programme for strengthening her frontiers both facing Germany and Italy. Travellers through the St. Gothard tunnel could not fail to notice the Alpine forts facing the latter country.

Every Man Trained.

Human courage is not lacking to-day so long as man is opposed to man; but man is terrorised by the machine, and Switzerland is a country which can place greater reliance on man-power than almost any other country in Europe. He who attacks her must attack with the bodies of men, not with giant weapons of metal. If fighting were to take place upon Switzerland's borders or within her territories the individual soldier, not the tank or aeroplane, would be the unit of battle.

Every man between the ages of 20 and 49 is bound to undergo military training and attend drill. The rifle is the arm of Switzerland, and the training the men undergo makes them the finest marksmen in the world.

Marksmen of Skill.

There is an interesting story of a smart reply given by a Swiss soldier to the Kaiser when he visited Switzerland before the Great War. For the All-Highest's benefit a shooting contest at running targets had been arranged and one sergeant fired 50 rounds without a miss. Immensely impressed, the Kaiser asked this man: "How many men can your country put into the field?" "Two hundred and fifty thousand," was the reply. "And what would you do if I sent an army of 500,000 against you?" asked the Kaiser. "In that case," came the reply, "we should each require two cartridges." This story is probably untrue, but it correctly states the pride taken in the skill of the private soldier and the spirit with which he would fight if called upon to do so.

The Swiss "Navy."

History recounts a number of occasions on which the Swiss when serving abroad have suffered from nostalgia, so much so that in certain armies the Swiss contingents were forbidden to sing their native songs lest it should cause home-sickness and lessen their morale; but that love of country so strongly displayed in that way makes the Swiss soldier a stern and uncompromising patriot and defender of his native hearth.

Water forms part of Switzerland's frontiers, and the "Swiss Navy" has often been the subject of jokes in Britain. Nevertheless, the Swiss would fight on the water as bravely as on land. Their "Navy" to-day consists of a number of armed motor boats used for the suppression of smuggling, but early days may be recalled when the Swiss had a formidable navy, well armed and bravely manned. From the 13th century up to 1890 the Canton of Vaud maintained fighting ships on Lake Geneva. They were intended to defy the Italian Dukes of Savoy, and at one time this navy consisted of seven ships of the line and twenty-four smaller vessels.

Rocky Fastnesses.

It is only to be expected that a nation living amidst great mountains should be well acquainted with military engineering, and the forts Switzerland has built may very well prove impregnable in the hands of garrisons of determined men. Bombing and artillery fire could be defied in the fastness of the tunnels carved out of the Alpine rock. Swiss gunnery is excellent, and their machine-gun corps carry out regular exercises on ski, manœuvres taking place in areas over which no tank or armoured car could travel, and the danger to bombers in the narrow confines of Alpine valleys is obvious.

R. L. Hadfield.

(Edinburgh Evening News.)

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JOURNEE DES SUISSES DE L'ETRANGER 1939.

Le Secrétariat des Suisses à l'Etranger et l'Exposition Nationale invitent cordialement tous les Suisses à l'étranger et leurs amis à la

18e Journée des Suisses de l'Etranger,

qui aura lieu à l'Exposition Nationale de Zürich, les 12 et 13 août 1939.

Pour ne pas nuire aux fêtes du 1er août des colonies suisses et pour tenir compte du désir de certaines sociétés suisses d'Italie et de France de venir en voyages collectifs à Zurich à l'occasion des congés du 15 août (Assomption), nous avons renoncé à placer la Journée des Suisses de l'Etranger à la fin de juillet.

Cette manifestation aura lieu les *samedi et dimanche 12 et 13 août*. Des réunions moins importantes auront lieu le 14 août et, sur désir spécial, le 15 août.

La Suisse, Zurich, l'Exposition nationale, le Secrétariat des Suisses à l'Etranger, tous vous attendent avec la plus grande joie. Faites en sorte que votre colonie soit représentée le mieux possible à la manifestation solennelle organisée en l'honneur des Suisses à l'étranger.

PROGRAMME GENERAL

(des précisions suivront plus tard)

Samedi, 12 août

à la fin de l'après-midi:

au Bâtiment des Congrès:

Ouverture de la Journée des Suisses de l'Etranger.

Rapports du Secrétariat des Suisses à l'Etranger.

Discussion de questions actuelles.

Soir: au Bâtiment des Congrès: Souper en commun; soirée familière.

Dimanche, 13 août

Matin: Services religieux dans les diverses églises de Zurich avec prédication d'ecclésiastiques suisses de l'étranger.

Manifestation officielle dans la Grande salle du Bâtiment des Congrès.

Réception par l'Exposition nationale. Visite de la "Haute Avenue" de l'Exposition nationale.

Midi: *Banquet officiel* dans la salle des fêtes du Palais des attractions.

Soir: Représentation de la "Heimatschutzbühne" de Berne, au théâtre de l'exposition.

Lundi, 14 août

Matin: *Réception au Pavillon des Suisses à l'étranger.* — Visite de l'Exposition.

Soir: Souper en commun au "Landgasthof" suivi d'une soirée récréative.

Mardi, 15 août Sur demande spéciale, excursion en commun sur le lac ou dans les environs.

Le Secrétariat des Suisses à l'Etranger.

COMMUNICATION FROM THE SWISS LEGATION.

The Swiss Minister has sent out invitations to witness a private performance of the film *"Notre Armée,"* showing the different units of the Swiss Army in training at manœuvres and parading before Federal Councillor R. Minger.

The performance is to be given at the Monseigneur Theatre in Piccadilly, at 10 o'clock a.m., on May 10th and invitations have been sent out to Members of Parliament, Army officers, Military and Air Attaché's, etc.

As the object of the performance is to show our soldiers at work to certain circles of the British public it has unfortunately not been possible to invite also members of the Swiss Colony, the seating accommodation being very limited, but as very probably arrangements will be made for the film to be shown later on in one or other public cinemas, our compatriots will have an opportunity to see it in due course.

May 2nd, 1939.

TO OUR READERS.

The Editor of the Swiss Observer would be greatly obliged if readers would supply him with addresses of likely subscribers, so that specimen copies could be posted to them.

If such addresses supplied should be already included on our mailing list, no extra copies would be sent.

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