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SWITZERLAND'S NEW SITUATION

As was just explained in our Spotlight, Switzerland finds herself today in one of the most peculiar situations of her long history. From a certain viewpoint, she is surrounded by one power only. From another viewpoint, she is surrounded, among others, by three defeated powers: Austria, France and Italy. Under these circumstances Switzerland has remained true to her traditional rôle of guardian of the Alpine passes. Recently, she has sent, in fact, a considerable number of troops to defend them. Switzerland knows well that the present state of things cannot last for ever. She foresaw the breakdown of the Axis, and as a democracy she feels that without the consent of the peoples, occupation can be only temporary, even if this "temporary" may drag out to some length, as has been the case in France.

Of course, Switzerland had great hopes that with the surrender of Italy a way would be opened rapidly to the seas and the ~~modern~~^{western} powers. The fact that railroad transit traffic ceased immediately was not perplexing, for a great crop, especially a fruit crop, will have to be distributed in Switzerland and our entire railway capacity can be put to good use for this. And when it comes to sea transport we are not without hope either, even though fighting will be going on in Italy for several months to come. The nations have got used to planning only little ahead. Were Switzerland to look only to her neighbors, she could, at this present moment, nearly despair, for, in the lands where there is not an anti-democratic régime, there is anarchy, as in Italy. A country which entertains such extensive cultural relations with the rest of Europe as does Switzerland, could not remain untouched for any length of time by this state of affairs. But the collapse of the French Republic has taught the Swiss to count on their own ~~power~~ strength. In fact, we have been forced to adapt ourselves to a certain autarchy in the spiritual domain.

In spite of this temporary encirclement, Switzerland is in no way pessimistic. She has noticed - or believes she has - that in the course of the past four years of war the whole warring world has found increased understanding for her more than correct neutrality. Whenever the attitude of Switzerland has been criticized or attacked, as was the case in the widely considered letter of Lord Davies, which appeared in the London Times, distinguished defenders of the Swiss viewpoint were found right away. And ^{always} all the peoples at war have asked that their interests be

represented by our little country. The International Red Cross, which these days is again appealing to the generosity of the Swiss people and is showing, by means of large posters, picturing the wounded, the prisoners and the starving masses, the nobility of its mission, stands far above the hostile sentiments of the day; and its influence is incontestable.

Our neutrality is armed neutrality; and it can be said now that after four years of war the Swiss army, with its modern equipment and its good training, is ready, ~~in its great ~~own~~ majority at least~~, for the most difficult of mountain wars. This all-out training has caused quite a few casualties lately. In reply to a parliamentary request, the Federal Council has found that these accidents must be traced back to hard training and more complicated weapons. The use of flame-throwers, for instance, and the crossing of rivers and high mountain exercises, all must be held responsible. These manoeuvres have to be adapted as much as possible to reality.

The fact that the battlefronts are approaching the Swiss borders will probably have some influence on parliamentary elections. Party disputes have become less important and less violent. But this will be welcomed by the majority of the people. Political differences here never are relative to questions of principle, but merely to technical, social and political matters. All the parties are for neutrality, democracy, liberty and independence.

Hermann Böschenstein.