

**Zeitschrift:** The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK  
**Herausgeber:** Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom  
**Band:** - (1940)  
**Heft:** 982  
  
**Artikel:** The fate of Switzerland as seen by an Englishman  
**Autor:** [s.n.]  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-694814>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. [Siehe Rechtliche Hinweise.](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. [Voir Informations légales.](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. [See Legal notice.](#)

**Download PDF:** 16.05.2025

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

## THE FATE OF SWITZERLAND AS SEEN BY AN ENGLISHMAN.

(The following article from the "British Weekly," September 26th, somehow amplifies what M. Pierre Béguin states in a previous column; it has evidently been written before the publication on September 25th of the supposed lines on which a new order is to be instituted in Europe after the war by Germany. The conclusion and inference arrived at by the author of this article need not be taken too seriously — they merely show the way the wind is blowing).

Switzerland, the oldest democracy, is in imminent danger of being swallowed by Hitler's Reich. Propaganda and subversive activities, supplemented by typical Nazi commercial blackmail, is making it increasingly difficult for the Swiss to remain free and independent of Germany.

In common with many others, I have been without direct news from Switzerland since the collapse of France, which brought with it the suspension of normal international postal and telephone communication. Now the ingenuity of my former correspondents in various parts of Switzerland has surmounted the difficulties caused by German and Italian encirclement, and within the last few days I have received several despatches via Portugal and trans-Atlantic airmail.

The news from Switzerland is startling! Economically and politically, the situation is critical, and while the age-long spirit of freedom burns just as brightly in the hearts of the Swiss, they realise that force of circumstances may compel them to adopt a course distasteful to them and one which will strike at the very root of their conscience. Nothing short of complete demobilisation of their armed forces and political and economic reliance on Germany will save the Swiss from being forcibly "protected," after the fashion of the Nazi occupation of Denmark.

What a terrible fate for such a country as Switzerland — the land of the *Eidgenossen* — comrades of the oath! Comrades in Oath — how fearless and beautiful this rings.

For six hundred years or more the Swiss have kept the oath to remain free in thought and action, an oath first taken by the Leagues at the first union of the Forest Cantons in 1307, which, legend says, was organised by the Helvetian patriot Tell, as a protest against the arbitrariness and tyranny of Austria's *Statthalter*, or *Vogt*, Gessler.

So Switzerland evolved, not out of revolt, but from neglect, and from being the first democracy, governed without a nobility as men then knew it — over-lordship, the right to bear arms and the display of quarterings — this little country has continued, down to the present day, unafraid, with its territorial integrity guaranteed by every State in Europe.

Now this security has gone. The land of the *Eidgenossen* is menaced north, south and east. Germany is about to launch another "Back to the Reich" campaign in the German-speaking *Gaus* of Switzerland, and Italy glowers at what may prove to be an extension of contiguity of her axis partner and prepares to counter such a move — for the Duce knows that the ochlocracy of the Nazis is more dynamic than his own Fascism.

For years Nazi race theorists have spread the fiction that the Swiss must "come back to the Reich," in their ignorance confusing the Reich of Hitler with the Reich of the Germans of Charlemagne's time. The notorious Banse in his "Volk und Raum im Weltkrieg," with a contempt for the true facts of history unequalled even by Hitler or Goebbels, writes "they (the Swiss Cantons) have been established wholly or mainly at the cost of German people," and cynically he concludes his chapter, "... Swiss neutrality is, in fact, only useful to the French, and not to us..."

There is the writing on the wall, for Banse is the prophet of Hitler's Reich; the French having collapsed, Germany will, as soon as is convenient to her rulers, swarm over Switzerland as she has done to the other weaker nations. The need for Swiss neutrality has passed. In a recent speech in the Berlin Sportpalast, Goebbels promised the Germans that "the turn of the Swiss cow will come next, when the Fuehrer wills it."

The Germans are now following up their propaganda campaign against Switzerland (they have not forgotten that the Swiss gave sanctuary to many who fled from the terror of the concentration camp) by taking advantage of its unique position within the blockade.

The return to civil life of the demobilised army is already adding to the unemployment problem, a problem made more acute by the sudden cessation of the Swiss export trade and the disappearance of the lucrative tourist traffic, which came largely from England and America, and this sudden hardship and misery is fertile ground for the seeds of internal disaffection. Already "the supineness and apparent inability of the Berne Government to deal with the economic situation" is being talked about in the bars and cafés, the whisperings started by Nazi Fifth Columnists.

Coal is the crux of the whole situation. For this commodity Switzerland is entirely dependent upon outside sources. Italy has none of her own, the collieries of France now lie under German control, and England can hardly be expected to sell coal to a country which has to pass through one or other of the belligerent or occupied countries. America is the only country from which coal can be bought openly, and even the colliers carrying these supplies are subject to British contraband control at Gibraltar.

While the outward and inward traffic has the good will of Britain, it is obvious that the most stringent guarantee will be necessary before these vessels can be cleared for Italian or other ports. In the absence of such guarantees, the Swiss will become more and more economic prisoners of Germany, which again, has Switzerland at a further disadvantage, since the German-Swiss Clearing Agreement expired in June last and it has not been renewed. Since that time Germany has virtually dictated to Switzerland; Switzerland required coal, in return for which she is surrendering to the Reich huge quantities of petrol, rice, wheat, fats, cheese and animal feeding stuffs. All these goods are being drawn from the reserves she had accumulated against such a contingency as that now facing her — closed frontiers.

A specious argument is being used by the Reich; Switzerland acquired these huge reserves as an insurance against war conditions — Germany now having "freed" Europe from "the thralldom of British

plutocracy," Switzerland's future supplies are assured by the Reich and its armed power. Therefore, out of gratitude for the protection of the Reich, Switzerland is expected to deliver more and more, until, within a few weeks, her stocks will be exhausted. Then Germany will have another starving population on her frontier, if not, by that time, in her midst.

In the meantime, however, the Swiss are being blackmailed into "leasing" rolling stock for the much denuded German railways, sadly depleted by R.A.F. attacks and by the need to maintain Poland's industries, for in the last partition of Poland, Russia seized the bulk of Polish rolling stock, as well as the great locomotive works at Bialystock.

Already suffering from the tension of the Soviet-Nazi Treaty, Germany must watch her axis-partner south of the Tyrol, for even now Italian propaganda is countering Goebbels's pleas to German-speaking Swiss to come "back into the Reich."

Italy cannot afford a break-up of the Swiss State, even if she benefited territorially, because as things are, a buffer state against its Aryan friend may one day give a little breathing space before the march south takes place in a possible Hitlerian attempt to seize Italian lands, by virtue of the accident that once made them a part of the Holy Roman Empire, whose sceptre has, in Hitler's mind, fallen into his hands.

So far Italy has shown a helpful attitude towards Swiss problems, because of this fear from the north. If Britain could rely upon goods sent through the blockade not being snapped up by Germany, British contraband control over Swiss chartered ships en route for Italian ports, might be relaxed, but can the Italians be trusted any farther than the Germans? No!

Therefore, because of the political dishonesty inherent in our enemies, we must continue to apply the blockade to Switzerland, even at the risk of being considered uncharitable. Better to suffer this stigma, than by our decent acts to encourage the Swiss to become another larder and workshop for our enemies.

If, as I said in a recent article, we cannot lift the blockade for any part of France, on the grounds that the conquered Frenchmen are now tools of Hitler for our destruction, as shown by recent announcements that French heavy industrialists are making arms for Germany, then we cannot relax our blockade, wherein lies our strength, in favour of Switzerland.

Now as in Napoleon's day, all Europe lies under the yoke of the aggressor. Against this aggressor there remains only Britain. We must not, and will not, heedlessly throw away a weapon which nature, by granting us control of the seas, has given to our hand.

#### FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Saturday, October 12th, at 2.30 p.m. — Swiss Mercantile Society Ltd. — Monthly Meeting — at Swiss House, 34/35 Fitzroy Square, W.1.

*Drink delicious "Ovaltine"  
at every meal—for Health!*

#### G. E. CORNIOLEY †.

We much regret to announce the death of Mr. G. E. Cornioley, of "Oakhurst," St. Stephens Road, Ealing.

Mr. Cornioley was born at Chez-le-Bart (Neuchâtel) in 1854, and was therefore in his 87th year. He came to this country in 1877 for the purpose of founding a branch Office in London of the well-known firm of Henri Picard & Frère, La Chaux-de-Fonds, wholesale dealers in watch materials and tools for watchmakers, which firm he joined as an apprentice at the early age of 14. His great capacity for hard work, his strong personality and business acumen were such that under his energetic and wise direction the London Office developed rapidly and in a comparatively short time it outgrew in importance the parent firm. Today the London firm is in a leading position in the Watch Material Trade and well known throughout the world.

Mr. Cornioley was a self-made man in the true sense of the word; he maintained the active direction and leadership of the firm to within a few days of his death.

In the social circles of the Swiss Colony he was not widely known, as he concentrated all his best energies on his business, which was his life's work, but he always took a keen and sympathetic interest in our Colony, as the treasurers of the various Swiss Charities well know. He always kept a warm corner in his heart for his native land and as the goods he was dealing in are mostly of Swiss origin, the Swiss industry loses in him a very valuable outpost and a faithful supporter. A long and fruitful life has come to a close and we therefore should not mourn.

F.

#### Divine Services.

Dimanche 6 octobre 1940 : à l'Eglise Suisse, 79, Endell Street W.C.2.  
11h. Culte M. M. Pradervand.

Mardi 8 octobre, à 2h.30, au Foyer Suisse, 15, Bedford Way, W.C.1,  
Réunion de Couture.

Pour tout ce qui concerne le ministère pastoral, prière de s'adresser  
à Monsieur le pasteur Marcel Pradervand, 65, Mount View  
Road, N.4. (Téléphone Mountview 5003). Heure de réception  
à l'église le mercredi de 11-12h.30.

Sonntag, den 6. Oktober 1940 : in der Schweizerkirche, 9, Gresham  
Street E.C.2.

11 Uhr. Gottesdienst. Mr. B. Segal.

Für alle Amtshandlungen wende man sich z.Z. an Pfr. M.  
Pradervand, 65, Mount View Road, N.4. (MOU 5003)

Printed and Published by THE FREDERICK PRINTING CO., LTD., at  
23, Leonard Street, London, E.C.2.