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What price Switzerland?

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Erika Mann;

WHAT PRICE SWITZERLAND ?
-.....

"It's mortifying!" , as Jimmy Durante used to say, and it starts promptly at the boundary. As you drive past saluting "poilus", through French occupied Austria, along Lake Constance and towards the Swiss frontier , you'd better realize that things will never be the same. From now on you are no conqueror any more and no liberator either. The U.S. Army stickers, proudly glued to your windshield; the letter in your pocket, stating that "you are to depart on or about the 13th on an important press mission"; your brown A.G.O. card, issued by the War Department, your dearest possession , your magic pass partout; they all have come to mean nothing. What you want here, is a civilian visa in a valid passport. For years past you've been traveling exclusively on army orders, waving the type-written sheets at trusting soldiers, who'd hardly give them a glance. Thus the professional scrutiny, employed by the Swiss custom officials strikes you as almost offensive. Keep smiling, though. You're in no position to act hurt.

Before leaving Germany, you've tried your utmost to invest part of your fortune in Swiss Francs. To no avail. Up to their necks in allied invasion money and foreign banknotes of every description from Dutch Guildas⁶⁷⁵ to Palestinian Pounds, your finance officer ~~shrugged~~ ^s shrugged regretfully. "Sorry", they said. "If it were anything else you wanted... But ^{Swiss} Francs? ~~Nothing doing~~ Impossible!"

Luckily, your Swiss publisher owes you a bit of the scanty stuff. But that bit is in Zurich and you are 80 Miles away in a place

called St. Margaret / and in quite a spot.

"Any Francs at all?"

The custom official sounds as if he expected all Americans to be beggars.

"Well, ~~it~~," you say non-committally, producing 9 Dollar notes and seven Pounds Sterling, a small treasure you've been saving for just such an emergency. ^{IT HASN'T OCCURRED TO YOU} For ~~that~~ real cash - the same cash which you could have sold for four times its ^{OFFICIAL} value on any black market in Europe, would ever turn worthless, ~~was not expected to you.~~

"Keep it", the man says kindly; "It's no good."

The amount you owe him by now - for the stamp in your passport the ^{LAISSEZ-} ~~laissez~~-passer for your car and a long-distance call to the U.S. Legation in Berne - is modest, but worrying. Besides, what with the time spent on the thorough control of your untidy luggage, it is getting dark and the 80 Miles between here and Zuerich are covered with ice.

"If you want to stay over night", says the man, "I shall escort you to the ~~Hotel~~ hotel."

After an excellent dinner with wine and "^Schnaps", a hot bath, a night passed in a very cold room and a meager breakfast, you depart without as much as mentioning the bill. You've seen your custom's man whisper with your host and rightly assume that he is in the know. Whether these people rely on the honesty of your face, the chivalry of your Legation, or the inescapability of their own special Foreigners' Police, you can only guess.

The city of Zurich - picturesque ^{QUE}, but clean; ancient, but comfortable; intimate, but sizeable; cosmopolitan, but unmistakably Swiss, - is as handsome ~~as~~ as ever. The unfamiliar sight of a town all in one piece becomes all the more startling, where a colourful abundance of goods in every shop window seems to deny the occurrences of the past six and a half years. To deepen the feeling of dreamy confusion

that is taking hold of you, your own situation proves to be the exact opposite of what it used to be in Africa and France; in Belgium and Holland, ^{IN} Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia. Ever ^{SINCE} ~~and~~ the original D. Day you've been sauntering about in places where there was - legally at least - little or nothing to buy. Money kept piling up in your pockets which to you seemed hardly worth the paper it was printed on. Now you are faced by a string of exquisite shops with lengths of pure silk, silk stockings, dainty girdels ~~and~~ of lace and lastex, fur-lined vests, boots and gloves, evening gowns made of almost forgotten materials, venerable spirits from the finest Bourbon to Napoleon's own Brandy, watches which wind themselves and which tell you not merely the hour, but also the day of the week and the month and the year. These watches - dream objects of every G.I. on furlough - do not mind being bathed in either hot or cold, sweet or salty water. They are expensive, though, and their purchase may not even be pondered. The silk stockings, on the other hand, might be bought, if only your publisher's debt to you had been less insignificant. Also, you've had to drop the idea of somehow disposing of your Dollars and Pounds. The exchange rate offered "inofficially" (2 Francs to the Dollar and 7 to the Pound), proved all too pitiful. Both, the American and British governments refuse to accept their own respective currencies in payment for goods shipped to Switzerland; and the Swiss, their banks heavy with Pound and Dollar accounts, do not fancy the continued acquisition of banknotes ^{of} which two of their main business partners will have no part. Nor do they wish to see their fortunes shrink in their stockings, should we decide ^{To} ~~no~~ devaluating ^e our currencies. Hence their disinclination to sell us anything for anything but Francs.

For the first time in his overseas carrier, the American soldier - and officer for that matter - is poor, a fellow who can hardly afford to take a girl out even once, without turning his budget into a shambles. While his Swiss furlough lasts seven days, his pocket money, the ~~X~~225 francs which ~~he~~ he is entitled to buy at the boundary, would not survive one reasonably high evening. True, the exchange rate established for him, is favorable (4.29 to the dollar). And he eats, sleeps and travels for nothing. Or, rather for the five Dollars pro day with which the army, having ~~deducted~~ deducted 35 dollars from the G.I.'s pay, compensates the Swiss government. His food, though furnished by the ~~NATIVES~~ ~~locals~~, does not come out of this amount, as the ~~latter~~ ^{SWISS} receive ~~the~~ THE equivalent in army rations. Drinks, tips, theater tickets, taxis and any little extra he might feel like - such as renting skis or taking a guide - are his own financial responsibility. And after a few hours, spent on Swiss soil, he'll think twice before needlessly sacrificing any one coin in his pocket. All the more so, since nobody here seems interested in what he might be willing to sell. Neither his cigarettes, nor his candy rations, nor even the extra pair of pants which he managed to get through the army control at Mulhouse, appear to be wanted here.

How black is your market? When in Switzerland, it is barely pale gray. Along with Luxembourg and, until recently, ^{BRITAIN} ~~Britain~~, this country is one of a precious few, whose people stick stubbornly to the rules. These rules, though applied to food and fuel only, are stringent enough. The country is rich in electricity, generated from water power and therefor not quite as cold as if it had to rely on non-existing coal and too little wood. But one egg pro month and person is an humble amount of eggs. Whoever thinks it too humble, is permitted to keep one and a half chickens. Poulterers who exceed that quota have to surrender the extra eggs to the dairy authorities.

Meat (2 pounds ^A~~two~~ month ^{PRO}~~and~~ person), sugar (^{ONE}~~two~~ pounds, including honey and jam), butter and fats (almost 2 pounds) and bread, ^{AND}~~flour, and~~ ~~rice, meat and vegetables~~ (15 pounds) are not plentiful either. Yet, the Swiss eat precisely what they are entitled to. By means of a tidily democratic ration system well-to-do citizens are prevented from dropping in to a restaurant after having dined ^D at home. Restaurant diners get exactly enough coupons for three meals a day. People who eat partly at home, and partly in Cafes have to go to the food office and change shop coupons for restaurant coupons. Smiles or tips won't get you one extra lump of sugar or a minute ^{shaving}~~shaver~~ of butter. Nor is the man at the gas station interested in francs for black rations. (Doctors are allowed 5 gallons a month; when that is gone, they walk, unless they prefer to have an evil smelling charcoal burner built into their vehicle.) While in France, Belgium, Italy, or Germany the official rations are somewhat lower than here, they do not give anything like a true picture of the food situation. Last fall in Brussels, you could eat two fried eggs, a dozen oysters, a large lobster, a thick steak, equally thick chops, half a deer and a whole goose, all at once, if you could do it. In Rome, almost anything ~~as~~ you want is expensively yours for the asking and few people even know what the current rations are. "Starving Germany", too, ~~has~~ is peopled by black marketeers.

Despite the modesty of the Swiss cuisine and his own reduced financial position, the average G.I. is favourably impressed with this quaint little country. He admires its beauty, likes its cleanliness and appreciates its integrity. After so many months, spent among ruins and in places where nothing functioned, he is doubly grateful for the casual efficiency with which the Swiss ~~can~~ run their national life. Even his poverty fills him with awe. A nation who doesn't care for the dollar, is a very special nation indeed. Does it not seem, as if they

failed to care even for their own sacred franc? But here the puzzled G.I. lacks in psychological insight. For the Swiss are great believers in money, the best bankers on earth. Knowing precisely just how many "franklies" the G.I. has in his pockets and how far they are supposed to go, they watch his financial moves with vivid interest and profound understanding. Sales clerks urgently advise him against buying their goods, which they consider too expensive. Waiters warn him against ordering the specialty of the house; there are - they point out - cheaper dishes on the menu. I myself have been cautioned with regard to a cup of coffee. "It's more here in the bar", I was told, "than next door in the restaurant. 10 centimes (^{Two} ~~one~~ cents) more!" I said that I didn't mind.

"Very well", said the waitress, eying me with an air of mild disapproval; "I just meant to spare you a shock."

Too poor to indulge in noisy revelries and too impressed by the sedate dignity ~~of~~ of his hosts, as to make himself conspicuous, the G.I. in Zuerich, Bale, or Arosa seems a far cry from his own expansive self. A quiet tourist, friendly and unobtrusive, he displays neither his most fetching, nor his less engaging characteristics. The result is likable enough. Were it not for the fact that, ~~when~~ when parting with people whom he expects to see again in an hour or so, he frequently forgets to shake hands, he'd be thought perfectly charming. And even this omission is considered a fruit of his "shyness" rather than of outlandish manners.

What he's picked up in the way of German, French and Italian (Switzerland's three official languages), rarely suffices for him to peruse the local press. Thus a number of developments and events which recently upset the nation's inner balance, are likely to escape him.

Here as elsewhere this is the time for all sorts of now-it-can-now-it must-be-told stories. And the Swiss have been shocked recently by an account published by their government and revealing for the first time the staggering extent of Nazi and Fifth ~~Hhh~~ Column ^{ACTIVITIES} ~~activities~~ in this country. On 143 printed pages "Report Number 4919" pictures the machinations that threatened the freedom and the very existence of the small alpine republic. Especially in 1940, Hitler's New Europe^u attracted an ever increasing number of enth^used or faint-hearted natives. Two hundred of them - a fairly prominent and influential group - went as far as to demand in a signed application to the government what amounted to the abolition of the country's free press and the "coordination" of Swiss justice to the legal practices of the Third Reich. Newspapers, that had ventured to criticize the all-powerful neighbour even between the lines, were to be forbidden. Judges, who had dared to condemn a quisling, were to be dismissed and the traitors were to be freed, as well as apologized to. While the government proudly asserts that ~~hh~~ they never as much as answered the treasonable application, ^{- at least not in writing -} the press maintains that a written rebuttal would have been desirable; more so than the silent, if modified acceptance of ^{NAZI INSPIRED} certain demands, ~~made by the applicants.~~ Though cautiously anti-nazi newspapers were never forbidden, they were muted by a censorship with which the "infamous 200" must have been highly pleased. Nor, according to the press, was "Report Number 4919" sufficiently ~~hhhhhhhhh~~ conclusive. By withholding the incriminated names, it failed to initiate the "inner housecleaning so sorely needed at this moment." After a furious ~~campain~~^e conducted in rare unity by the entire Swiss press, the nam^es were finally surrendered.

Allegedly their ^{BEARERS} ~~persons~~, among ^{THEM} ~~them~~ many a high army- and government official, ~~but not the~~ acted in the interest of their country's continued neutrality and independence. Others - the members of various "rightist movements" - candidly affirmed that their goal was ^{TO LEAD} ~~the restoration~~ of their nation into the arms of the ^{GREATER} fatherland.

Even before the war, the Germans, when mentioning Switzerland used to say: "That one we'll take with a vacuum cleaner."

~~Some say, some say~~ ^{DID TAKE} ~~They took~~ the trouble, however, of carefully grooming a number of high pressure Fifth Columnists to do the cleaning. In Ernst Leonhardt ~~Switzerland~~ Switzerland found her quisling number one, the equivalent of Austria's Seyss-Inquart and Holland's Mussert. ~~He~~ ^{but} The local "Fuehrer" moved to Germany early in the war, ~~he~~ kept directing his "movement" from his ~~headquarters~~ ^{IN THE REICH} ~~headquarters~~. If Leonhardt has been apprehended, he has not thus far been identified by any of the occupying powers. His deputy, the traitor Franz Burri, has recently been arrested in Austria.

He is held for questioning by the Americans; wanted by the Austrian State Police; and claimed for trial by his own government.

The German head on Swiss soil of the Nazi conspiracy against the country was Herr Doctor Koecher, Hitler's last Minister to Berne. Captured in the American Zone, the shady "diplomat" hanged himself, following an interrogation by C.I.C. (Counter Intelligence Corps). His suicide was non-political. While the Americans were about to release their prisoner, the German police were ready to re-arrest him for the alleged embezzlement of 200 000 Marks.

Many of the facts revealed in "4219" have their ~~repercussions~~ ^{repercussions} even now, when the purge of undesirable elements has surpassed its peak. For example: Though mail is permitted to circulate freely between here and Austria, picture postcards remain "verboten". This queer restriction has to do with the ingenious way in which Nazi agents on Swiss territory kept in touch with their ^{MASTERS} ~~masters~~ at home. Their communications were addressed to a religious publishing house in Stuttgart, whose affiliations

in Switzerland were generally known. Letters exchanged between the firm and its Swiss correspondents were rarely, if ever, opened by the Swiss censors. Nor was the arrangements of stamps on many of these envelopes thought significant. All Nazi envelopes bore five three-centimes stamps, on^e of which^e the center piece^e was applied upside down. While on the Swiss side these letters passed with the others, they were ^esegregated in Germany and properly re-~~handed~~ addressed by initiated postal officials. Since picture postcards might lend themselves to similar schemes (picture^s of certain flowers, mailed in a certain sequence, might serve to hide a certain meaning, etc.), this most innocuous type of correspondence has been barred.

The Swiss, in whose daily lives corruption is all but an unknown factor, seem stunned, not so much by the enemy's frustrated attempts, ^{AS} ~~than~~ by the lack of integrity, evidenced by some ~~OF THEIR OWN COUNTRYMEN~~ ^{from whom they trusted}. It must be stated, though, that the majority of the people - and quite especially the greater part of the press - understood and detested the giant in whose murderous embrace they lived. They could not, to be sure, refuse all economic collaboration. And even if they'd been ^epermitted to do so, their industrialists would hardly have wanted to sacrifice considerable profits. At present the latter are appalled by an allied ruling according to which Swiss factories on German soil must put aside 25 % of their machinery for reparations. Waving their Swiss passports and muttering the magic word "neutral" will avail them little. Like Germans they've lived and worked in ^eGermany for Hitler's war effort, and like Germans they'll have to pay a small fine.

Revolted by their performance, their countrymen rightly insist that these industrialists were anything but typical and that, by and large, Switzerland ~~has~~ never sold her soul to the devil. Even the horrified sensation caused by ~~WapbthhNubbbh~~ "4219" is proof of this.

If that report and its consequences are too intricate and embarrassing an affair, as to be discussed with the touring G.I., he will hardly escape another topic of conversation. No matter to whom he talks or listens, "our neutrality" will lurk in the background, ^{certain} to ^{creep} up at the ^{earliest} opportunity.

For all their pride in their freedom-loving community, their ancient democratic traditions and their well-run country, the Swiss are strongly inclined towards self-analysis, self-criticism, and even self-reproach. And while they deem their ~~hubbhghbbh~~ traditional neutrality a time-honoured right, they concede that the very concept of neutrality loses its meaning when the neutral's liberty and existence depend on the victory of one ~~bhbb~~ belligerent side. Hence the "neutrality complex" which has grown in their hearts and which battles its way to the surface in even the most unpolitical conversation.

"We haven't suffered at all..... ~~curvishghbbh~~
~~we don't regret we could~~, We've never paid the price of liberation; for, we, too, had to be liberated, whether we like it, or not ~~hubbh~~
There's been a lot of ^{too} treachery ^e and people, who talk pro-allied today, talked quite differently in 1940...."

Thus they sigh, searching your face for possible reactions. If you reply by shrugging, or a non-committal "what could you have done?", you are doing fine. If, however, you wholeheartedly agree with your partner's ^{SELF-ACCUSATIONS} ~~self-accusations~~, or even add an illustrating

word of your own, you'll find yourself ^Rsurprisingly contradicted. Our neutrality - the Swiss seem to feel - is open to Swiss criticism only. Woe to the foreigner who undertakes to reprove the little nation for what it finds itself reported daily in its own press.

Under the ironical heading "A Harmless Sport", the passionately pro-allied NATIONAL ZEITUNG of Bale deals with a piece recently published by the American weekly THE PROTESTANT. Its author, it appears, "harmlessly" amused himself by accusing the Swiss people of wholesale collaboration and their government of having ^{WILFULLY} aided and abetted Hitlerite aggression. The Bale paper, not content with repudiating the unjust attack, stakes a violent counter-offensive.

"Switzerland", it shouts, "armed against the German menace, when the U.S. still indulged in ^{DEPLORABLE} ~~indulgent~~ isolationism and sold quantities of war-important materials to both Hitler and Japan. And when war came, there stood at our frontiers a Swiss army, larger than the anglo-saxon land-armies together. Had the great democracies been prepared according to their means as was this small democracy in the midst of the most endangered danger zone, the world would either have been spared the horrid blood bath, or Hitler and consorts would have been drowned ~~in~~ in it after a few months."

Outbursts like the above never appear without provocation. More often than not, they are framed by expressions of dismay at the very ambiguities in the Swiss makeup, ~~whhhhhhhhhhhhh~~ the existence of which they deny and which foreigners had better consider tabu.

Switzerland is full of foreigners. Apart from the ^{WHOM} touring G.I.s (175 000 of ~~them~~ have thus far passed through the SWISS LEAVE CENTER at Mulhouse) and the American soldier-students ^{paying guests - the}

(459 of them have just moved into the universities of Geneva, Freiburg, Neuenburg, Berne and Bale, where ~~they'll attend courses~~ ^{they'll attend} ^{740 MONTHS!} ~~courses~~ pertaining to all faculties) ^{GROWN UPS} -deserving ~~groups~~ and suffering children of many nationalities enjoy the hospitality of Switzerland, home of the Red Cross. At present, 6000 ailing members of Europe's various resistance movements are nursed back to health in the Swiss mountains. 4000 child victims of Nazi persecution have found a permanent refuge in Swiss families and children's homes. 14 000 little Poles have ~~been~~ been invited for a wholesome holiday. Like the tens of thousands of French, Dutch, Belgian, ^{and} Norwegian children, who preceded them, they will soon recover here from the horrors of war. To cover the expenses caused by these needy ones - expenses that run high into the millions - funds have been raised from countless private sources. Inborn humanitarianism, as well as the ^e disturbed desire to lessen the sufferings of a world, in whose liberating struggle ^{it} ~~they~~ failed to participate, ^{OPENED} this nation's hearts and pockets. Even Germany ~~benefits~~ benefits from Switzerland's all-embracing generosity. No less than 35 aid committees are out to comfort the guilty neighbour.

If the Swiss can ^f afford to be generous, this does not in any way mar the grace of their gesture. Things have been going well here throughout the war and the general European need for finished products, coupled with the industrial low prevalent in the ravaged countries, hold no mean promise for the ^{Swiss} near future. The average maker or seller of goods, his recent and current income up to 100 % higher than usual, asks himself and others, why he should go on paying correspondingly high taxes. His government's war expenditures, he argues, were comparatively slight and, what figures so prominently on other peoples' post war bills - the entry "reconstruction" - has no place on balance sheets made in Berne.

Meanwhile he sticks to a ruling which he himself has set up, but by which he feels bound as by an Eleventh Commandment. "Never", this law decrees, "Never spend more than the interests of your income!" Figuring, however, that to spend less than the interests of one's income might seem a trifle miserly, he now indulges in luxuries which were formerly reserved to the rich, the irresponsible and the alien. He and his - for he is a family man - may be seen dining in ~~costly~~^{COSTLY} restaurants; buying in expensive shops; and occupying the best seats ~~and~~^{IN} concert halls and theaters. Whatever he gets for his money, is first-rate. The Zurich theater in particular has come to be something strangely unique; the only theater in German language that escaped the devastating influence of Nazism. While on the stages of Vienna or Berlin the actors engage even now in imitating Der Fuehrer; while, regardless of the character of their parts, they keep screaming and bellowing, as if to ~~intimidate~~^{bully} the audience; the ~~most~~ assembled at the ZUERCHER SCHAUSPIELHAUS (Zurich play-house), lives up to the finest traditions of the German stage. And here again, the Swiss profited by Hitler and the war. Actors, directors and designers; Germans, Austrians and Czechs, who either could or would not, work in the Third Reich, flocked into Switzerland. Sheltered from the ill winds which swept their homelands and which had blown them together, they thrived, as in a hothouse, dependent on each other, learning from each other and, along with their Swiss colleagues, gradually turning into a team of rare homogeneity. A film, produced by one of them - THE LAST CHANCE - made Switzerland a winner at the international Film Contest in the U.S.. And their performances - they play everything from Shakespeare to Thornton Wilder - can compete with ~~any other theatrical production~~

stand: he is to be part of this all, of this enchanted and bewitching scenery, which he shall conquer - on skies.

I've seen him do it, after varying fashions.

Has he reasonably settled for a teacher, he may be observed in groups of 15 or 20, learning how to walk without falling over his disturbingly prolonged feet; how to follow his speeding legs down the slope (the upper part of his body tends to stay behind); and, most important of all, how to come to a stop. After a few ~~hours~~ ^{hours} ~~hours~~, devoted to the study of these indispensable stunts, he is ready for the ski-lift. Theoretically, at least. Practically, he defies all warnings not to sit on the ~~anchor~~ ^{ANCHOR} shaped something which is meant to push, rather than to carry him to the top; reclining in the midst of the landscape, he causes his "seat" to yield and himself to collapse. At best, he stays, where he lies, a formidable obstacle to those who follow. At worst, he rolls into their path, a kicking bundle, whose foreordained, inevitable approach is fearsome to behold. Here, as on his way down, his inexperience equals his courage. The wisdom of his instructor, however, protects him from serious trouble. Out of 1243 uniformed pupils, piloted up to date by one Arosa teacher, only one - a doctor - chanced to break an ~~ankel~~ ^{ankel}.

Non-believers in "basic training", on the other hand, are less secure. Moreover, as a self-made man, the G.I. skier is almost as dangerous, as he is endangered. In watching his ~~staggering~~ ^{AMAZING} antics on icy slopes and tree-covered slants, many a seasoned skier has taken to praying. If he knows, where he's been, he cannot possibly fathom, where - or even how far - he is going. Incapable of either steering, or stopping, ^{DOE} ~~the skis~~ advances like a force of nature, drifting towards his victim with terrifying speed. His expression is oddly composed of

Pride - at what he's achieved thus far - and apprehension - regarding the immediate future. The latter turns out to be dark. A gentle "sorry" on his lips, the bird of ill omen swoops down on his prey. As they fall, night falls before their eyes. Whose arm is this, whose leg that? Whose ski has dastardly escaped, continuing the journey on its own? And all those pretty, multi-colored stars, to whom do they belong?

Never mind. A twisted ankle or a gnarled knee are not worth writing home about.

Switzerland, that much remains certain, has been fun. To us ~~her~~ her charme has gained a new poignancy. ~~We, who knew here before, when it was as interesting as ever.~~
In the midsts of neighbours whose faces are disfigured by suffering, she seems movingly lonesome in all her loveliness.

To those who only just met her, the soldiers from across the sea whom she welcomes with such eager warmth, she is more than a casual acquaintance. In discovering Switzerland, the war-weary G.I. who knows the continent to be a battlefield, blood-drenched, ugly and saddening, has caught a glimpse of a finer, happier Europe. In the words of my friend Pete McCuller, Tech. ~~S~~ ^S ~~Rehr~~ Sergeant from West Virginia:

" Now that I've seen Switzerland, I understand at long last why people keep making so much fuss about Europe. At least I guess, I do....."

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