

Political Intelligence Department,
Foreign Office, S.W.I.
23rd April, 1919.

Dear Headlam,

1. *Switzerland & Germany* : 2. *Vorarlberg*.

8752
30 APR '19 PM

There have been several telegrams from official Berne about the attitude of the Swiss Government towards the question of recognising the German Government. (1) First of all, on March 25th Sir Horace Rumbold stated that the Swiss President had not replied in "cordial terms" to a letter from Ebert announcing his assumption of office: and that Switzerland had not "formally recognised" the German Imperial Government. These things had been asserted by Wolff's Bureau. The President merely sent Ebert a formal acknowledgment of his letter.

2. On January 17th Lord Acton telegraphed from Berne that the Director of the Political Department ^{now} informed him that the Press correctly asserted that the Federal Council had now officially recognised the German Government. Lord Acton added "No reservation has apparently been made in respect of territorial boundaries, but I will report further on this point". De facto relations with the German Representative at Berne had existed for some time past.

3. Later on the same day Lord Acton telegraphed "Minister for Foreign Affairs informed me this evening that in formally recognising German Government Swiss Government had explicitly stated that ^{they} disinterested (sic) themselves from territorial questions and that they will immediately break off relations with Germany should Weimar Government be over-thrown by communists".

On these telegrams Randall and I have written the following minutes:-



A. A special meaning of the statement by the Swiss Minister for Foreign Affairs that Switzerland had "disinterested itself from territorial questions" would be that they ^{to Swiss} took no interest in the movement which had been encouraged in Vorarlberg by the German-Swiss Press for the union of that former Austrian Crown Territory with Switzerland. According to an article on the subject in the Frankfurter Zeitung (April 13, 1st Morning Edition, No 278 p.2, col.3 & 4) the movement was lavishly subsidised by Swiss industrialists of St. Gall, who held out hopes of plenty of employment for the leading Vorarlberg industry (embroidery) and also of the liberation of Vorarlberg from the financial burdens of Austria by means of a loan in francs, for which the Austrian exchange is enormously favourable. The population (some 144,000) is described as indifferent on the subject of ~~nationality~~ ^{but earnestly desirous of ordered Government} and a secure economic future. The Vorarlberg Diet at Braganza resolved on March 15th to send deputations to Vienna, Berne and Munich in order to ascertain what advantages Austria, Switzerland and Bavaria could respectively offer, if Vorarlberg agreed to incorporation in one of these States. There appears to be a general horror of the internal condition of Bavaria; it is asserted by local experts that the industries of ^{Vorarlberg} ~~the region~~ would be ruined by incorporation in Switzerland; and the attraction of an Austria involved in endless territorial and other troubles is not great. Vorarlberg, it is asserted, would only remain Austrian if the Paris Conference insisted upon it. There is another movement engineered from Ulm for incorporating Vorarlberg with Württemberg in the projected "Great Swabia". The population is Swabian in race, and the movement is said to command considerable sympathy. The Frankfurter Zeitung believes that the deputation will therefore go to Stuttgart, too. In reply to enquiries addressed

to the Swiss Government an intimation was recently given that the Federal Council greatly regretted that, for the present, it was not possible to fix a date for receiving a deputation from Vorarlberg. (Frankfurter Ztg. loc.cit.)

(signed) G.S. 23.4.19.

B. The question of the attachment of the province of Vorarlberg to Switzerland was raised more than once, I believe, before the war, and again as soon as the war ended and conditions in Austria became very bad. A Committee was formed at Braganza to popularise the idea of union with Switzerland, the principal argument being the comparatively contented and well-fed condition of the Confederation. A plebiscite was taken among the voters of Vorarlberg and on its completion recently revealed the fact that nearly 70% of the voters were in favour of joining Switzerland.

From the beginning Swiss circles were opposed to the suggestion, the French-speaking cantons because they did not wish Switzerland to be made overwhelmingly German, Protestant circles generally because most of the Vorarlbergers are Catholics, and official circles because of problems such as the Vorarlbergers' share in the Austrian National debt, etc.

During the past month the ^{opposition} ~~oppression~~ in Switzerland has died down, in consequence, presumably, of the fear of the attachment of the whole of German Austria, including Vorarlberg, to Germany. According to a telegram of Lord Acton's of April 14, the Swiss Government was prepared to approach the Peace Conference on the matter: a previous telegram of April 11 No. 626 informed us that the Swiss Government had withdrawn their opposition.

As regards the suggestion of the Frankfurter Zeitung that

propaganda in favour of the union had been subsidized by St. Gall industrialists I do not think this very likely. The industry of Vorarlberg is in competition with that of the canton of St. Gall and the admission of Vorarlberg into the Confederation would intensify it. Probably there has been some Swiss Catholic influence in the propaganda, for the German-Swiss Catholic papers from the beginning, for obvious reasons, were in favour of the proposal, though even they, I think, would much prefer an independent German-Austrian State, or at least an independent Confederation consisting of Vorarlberg, Tyrol and Liechtenstein.

(signed) A.W.G.R.

23.4.19.

If you have time, you will perhaps read the article on Vorarlberg in the Frankfurter Zeitung to which I have given the reference in my minute. The article further states that an American officer has been touring the country and is supposed to have been collecting information for his Government.

Yours sincerely,

George Saunders

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30th April 1919

Writer.
Mr. Saunders
(P.I.D.)
to Mr. Headlam
Morley.

April 23rd 1919

Pol. Aus-Hungary.

Swiss attitude towards suggested admission of Vorarlberg into the Confederation. (Doctet)

Transmits minutes by himself and Mr. Randall summarising recent information regarding Swiss attitude towards the German Govt. and suggesting that a special meaning for the statement that Swiss Govt. in recognising German Govt. "disinterested themselves from territorial questions" would be that they took no interest in movement in Vorarlberg towards union with Switzerland. Minutes summarise recent information on the subject and refer to an article in the Frankfurter Zeitung of April 13th on the attraction of the Vorarlberg for either Switzerland or Wurtemberg.

(Print.)

(Minutes.)

See memorandum in 8583.

taken notes.

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