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Vorarlberg, ^{a/} province of the former Austrian Empire, measures 2600 square kilometers. It is bordered [eastwards by Tyrol, [on the southern and western sides by Switzerland] and on the northern side by Bavaria. The small principality of Liechtenstein lies in the south western corner, between Vorarlberg and Switzerland.

The whole province forms a complex of vallies separated on their northern, eastern and southern side from the rest of the world by chains of mountains; all the rivers flow westwards, into the Rhine, in the direction of Switzerland. The north western corner is formed by the lake of Constance, from which the mountains rise, their height increasing as they near the eastern corner. The geographical position of Vorarlberg obliges the country to look westwards for an outlet towards Switzerland, unless it tries to reach, across the Lake of Constance, the plains of South-Germany.

Vorarlberg counts 140 000 inhabitants, almost all of them roman catholics: they are all of a very catholic and very democratic turn of mind; their majority belong to the Christian-socialist party. There are no important cities in Vorarlberg: the largest town is Dornbirn, which counts about 13000 inhabitants. Dornbirn is the center of the weaving and spinning industries. The town of Feldkirch is well known because of an important Jesuit college, where many roman catholics of Austria and Switzerland have been educated.

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The great importance of Vorarlberg lies in its railways (147 km.). It is not necessary to mention the secondary lines. The principal ones are :

St. Margrethen-Bregenz - Lindau : 24 km.

Bregenz-Dombirn-Feldkirch : 38 km.

Buchs-Feldkirch-Bludenz-Arlberg : 85 km.

The line St. Margrethen-Bregenz-Lindau units the Swiss railways to the Bavarian net (from Zurich to Munich) around the lake of Constance).

The line Bregenz-Dombirn-Feldkirch is only of local importance as long as the Swiss railways remain what they are.

But the line Buchs-Feldkirch-Arlberg is of the utmost importance, as it is a part of the great line which units east and west of Europe.

The Arlberg route is the most direct line between Paris and Constantinople; it borrows the Swiss territory from Basle to Buchs and continues across Vorarlberg, Tyrol and Carinthia until it reaches the Yugo-Slav territories and Belgrade. It is the natural way of communication between the western and eastern civilisation and will increase in importance now that the Yugo-Slav and Turkish countries will be always more exploited. One of the chief desires of Switzerland and, it may be presumed, of all Europe, is that this vital part of the great traffic route between East and West should remain in the hands of ~~them~~ a small and if possible neutral power.

As a rule, the province of Vorarlberg is agricultural and not rich. The industries are and have always been connected very intimately with the embroidery industry of the Swiss Canton of St.Gall. St.Gall is generally considered as the center of both sides of the upper valley of the Rhine. The relations have always been very intimate between the Swiss Canton of St.Gall and the Austrian province of Vorarlberg, which explains the great interest of St.Gall in the future of Vorarlberg. The Rhine is of course not a barrier between both countries and the inhabitants of Vorarlberg having long been cut out from any regular intercourse with Austrian or German provinces by the natural barrier of the mountains have sought and found their industrial and intellectual center across the Rhine, in Swiss St.Gall. There will always exist, politically and morally, actions and reactions between the Vorarlberg, otherwise an isolated group of valleys and the St.Gall regions, because the Rhine valley is a natural formation in the middle of which the river does not create a barrier.

It is therefore very natural that the authorities of Vorarlberg, as soon as the war was over, asked Switzerland to help them to get some food. With the kind cooperation of the Entente Governments, it was possible to provide the necessary supplies.

At the same time, the ties which held the different provinces of the Austrian Empire together were severed and the Vorarlberg populations ~~and~~ began to examine the problem of their future. A private committee was organised which put unofficially the question to the people. The Swiss Government took absolutely no part whatever in that affair, of which they were informed only by the papers, and no influence was brought to bear by anybody on the Swiss side. Through the press, Switzerland learnt in March that 70 percent of the population of the Vorarlberg had voted in favour of the aggregation of the land to the Swiss Confederation.

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Dr. Ender, the head of the Vorarlberg Government, then asked the Federal Council of Switzerland to grant him and four of his colleagues an interview: that was the first and only occasion on which the Swiss Government was approached: the answer from Berne was that it was not possible, at present, to grant the desired interview.

From the information received, the situation in Vorarlberg may be resumed as follows: the very great majority of the inhabitants desire their union with Switzerland: against the union, there exists two small groups of interests: on the one side the quite small group of pangermanists, headed by Dr. Ritter, who desire the annexion not only of Vorarlberg but, as it seems, also of the german speaking parts of Switzerland, to Germany, and on the other hand some of the manufacturers, who fear the competition of St. Gall for their industry.

An antipathy exists in Vorarlberg against the Tyrolese. In the protocoll of the sittings of the National Assembly, Dr. Ender, head of the provisional Government, expresses very strongly this feeling and explains it by the democratic turn of the mind of the Vorarlbergese, who object to the monarchical and retrograde spirit of the Tyrolese. There appears to be no doubt that the will of the Vorarlberg population is to sever all ties which unite them to the Tyrolese and the Austrians. They do not appear to feel any attraction towards Bavaria. If they cannot become Swiss, they will in all probability turn to Sth-Germany. A "Swabian Chapter" has already been formed to influence the population in that direction. This Chapter, which has secured the services of Dr. Ritter, acts together with the Pangermanists. Seeing that the Swiss Federal Council had not given any encouragement to the Vorarlberg Government, they have exerted all their efforts to increase the propaganda in favour of Wurtemberg.

In Switzerland, neither the Government, nor Parliament

nor the press have discussed Vorarlberg matters until the result of the unofficial votation of the population was known. Since then, the question has been the object of many articles in the press. It has not been brought before Parliament. The situation in Switzerland may be described as follows :

With the exception of St.Gall, where there is a very strong feeling in favour of the union, the question is generally examined in the most objective way. The opinion of the majority is that it is not desirable that this province should be annexed by Germany. The reasons for such an opinion is to be found on the one hand in the fact that both sides of the valley of the Rhine must perforce act and react upon oneanother, so that an influence of Germany, coming from Vorarlberg, would be inevitable, and on the other hand in the necessity that the railway traffic between east and west should remain in the hands of a small and if possible neutral power. Furthermore, it would be for the Swiss people a source of the greatest unrest to see their eastern frontier in the hands of the same power which controls their northern border. Since the early ^{six}fifteenth century, Switzerland has had four neighbours. The acquisition of Vorarlberg by Germany would reduce the number of its neighbours to three and the Swiss people cannot be expected to contemplate without the greatest doubt such a grave and dangerous change in its international situation. A stripe of German territory between Switzerland and the eastern countries can be the source of the most trying controversies.

The Swiss public opinion has always been very partial to the principle of the right of the people to dispose freely of themselves; the majority of the Swiss people would therefore very unwillingly deny to the Vorarlberg population the right to express their opinion and get their own way.

Apart from these considerations, the Swiss people

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have no desire to annex Vorarlberg. They would have preferred the question not to be put: only the extreme importance of securing a free traffic towards the east and of avoiding an increase of influence of one of their neighbours could cause them to accept the proposal of Vorarlberg. Many people in Switzerland are opposed to any increase of territory, under any pretence whatever. Moreover, the annexion of Vorarlberg would give Switzerland a longer and more difficult frontier to guard. And the Swiss people already impoverished by the war, have no desire to increase their financial difficulties through the acquisition of indebted provinces.

Useless to add that there is not one single individual in Switzerland who would think of admitting the possibility of contemplating the cession or exchange of any Swiss village.