

# The index cards ("fiches") in the Office of the Federal Attorney : an unpleasant affair - no state crisis

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Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad**

Band (Jahr): **17 (1990)**

Heft 2

PDF erstellt am: **29.05.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-906846>

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schools. The associations of our teachers and educational authorities could furnish suggestions for the exchange of information about possibilities and problems arising in connection with the teaching of foreign languages to children at an early age.

These are just a few examples, taken more or less at random, and the list could easily be greatly increased. But in every case, the core of the matter is the same: democracy, as well as a free market economy, can only succeed if they are firmly anchored in well devised institutions. And to achieve this end, much painstaking detailed work will have to be undertaken, day after day. Switzerland is not a country devoid of problems, but she has in the course of a long historical process created effective institutions, and successfully tried out procedures that make it possible to know how to settle conflicts in a more or less peaceful manner. The experience thereby gained could prove beneficial to the new democracies now developing.

#### Strengthening the neutrals

Needless to say, one may wonder what interest Switzerland can have in participating in such relief activities. I am convinced that much more can be involved than merely the application of the so often invoked foreign policy maxim of solidarity. Only through an all-European relief and support campaign will it be possible to bring stability to Central and Eastern Europe – so often in the past a veritable “powder keg” – within the framework of a peaceful and democratic European society.

Thus the political and economical stabilisation of this zone is of importance to the fundamental interest of Switzerland in securing her own security. Moreover, most of the political parties in Hungary would like to see the issue of neutrality become a vital part of their programmes in respect of foreign affairs. And other countries would undoubtedly like to adhere to this same objective. In the light of future European integration, a numerically strengthened group of neutral states would be able to exert greater influence in the shaping of “things to come”. Likewise, the same considerations apply in connection with the European Economic Space (EES) which will be developing: the adhesion of new free market economies to EFTA could perhaps become an encouraging feature of the outlook. The initial aid “package” for Poland and Hungary, decided upon by the Federal Assembly in March of this year, is a step in the right direction, and one which for me brings deep personal contentment.

*Judit Garamvölgyi*

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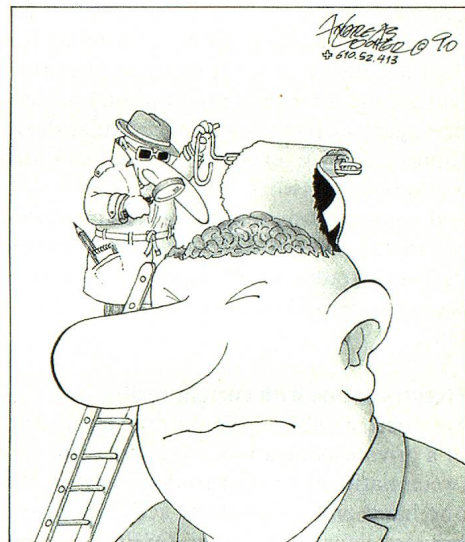
## An unpleasant Affair – no State Crisis

*Early in 1989 a Parliamentary Committee of Inquiry (often referred to by the initials of its name in German, “PUK”) was appointed for investigating the events in the Federal Department of Justice and Police which led to the resignation of Elisabeth Kopp, the first woman to become a member of the Federal Council. In November 1989, the PUK issued its final report, which brought to light the fact that the Federal Police had for several decades maintained a card-index comprising “fiches” (personal index cards) and files in connection with hundreds of thousands of citizens.*

It is indisputable that measures for the protection of the State and for an effective military intelligence service were of vital importance to Switzerland during the years of the “Cold War”. Even today, there can be no question of simply abolishing our preventive police forces, quite the reverse. There would in fact be less justification than ever for dispensing with a Federal Police Force operating within sensible limits, or an intelligence service, for counteracting terrorism, organised crime, violent extremism and espionage. After all, security for the State means protection of our country and of its individual inhabitants. But it should never be allowed to degenerate into spying on those individuals, or into ideological “snooping” as appears to have often been happening in this case until very recently.

Participation in an authorised demonstration or making a journey to behind the “Iron Curtain” were enough to result in an entry being added to one’s “fiche” – something that could mean severe prejudice to the interests of the person concerned (for instance when he or she is applying for a job or trying to rent an apartment, without such person having any knowledge whatsoever about the existence of a “fiche”).

When the PUK report disclosed these practices the security services and the political police came in for massive criticism, and an ever-increasing demand



(See also the “official Announcements” section of this issue.)

for every individual, irrespective of domicile and nationality to be entitled to see the contents of his or her “fiche”. Consequently, at the beginning of February 1990, the first applicants were allowed to inspect the index cards relating to them (if any). The widespread irritation caused by this rather amateurish craze for card-indexing affected the cantonal and in some cases, the municipal authorities too, who had set up their own documentation – from which many entries of a banal or incorrect nature had been drawn. In view of the insistent demand for a thorough cleaning-up of the files the Federal Council designated at the end of March a special Commissioner who will until the end of 1990 be responsible for examining and dealing with the 150000 requests already received, and those yet to come, for insight into personal “fiches”.

Such insight will be granted by the despatch of a photocopy of the relevant index cards to the applicants.

The Federal Military Departement (the EMD or DMF) will *itself* in due course inform all those persons in respect of whom such registration has taken place.

(Information available at *time* of going to press)

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