

General Guisan lays down his command

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The results of the age-old tradition of liberty and social justice in Switzerland are obvious. Foreign observers of Switzerland have always been impressed by a certain dignity in the bearing of the common man, be he farmer, labourer or employee. I recall the exclamation of the well-known French Socialist, Jean Jaures, when he addressed a political gathering of Swiss working men at the beginning of this century. Perplexed by the prosperous look of the audience, when entering the crowded hall, he asked "But where are the working men?". It is therefore not surprising to find that the farmer and working man in Switzerland are loyal patriots and that, in general, an enviable social peace exists in the land.

Having successfully come through the severe test of this war, the Swiss nation now faces the new international political era with solidarity and confidence. Naturally enough, this new international political era is being moulded by the world-wide bloc of the victorious United Nations. Thus through abstaining from war, neutral countries find themselves at the present time somewhat isolated from the dynamic stream of international politics. Amongst them is Switzerland who, as a permanent neutral could not enter the war at the last minute for the expediency of being counted as an Allied Nation. And so, in company with another prominent neutral - Sweden - Switzerland was absent from San Francisco, which fact she accepts as a natural consequence of her policy during the war years. That does not mean, however, that Switzerland was not intensely interested in the outcome of the San Francisco Conference. Nor does it mean that Switzerland will remain in isolation. She is firmly bound to the whole world by her diverse linguistic and racial ties, by her political and fecund cultural history, by her wide international ramifications in trade, commerce and science. Also, it cannot be denied that in the past years of war Switzerland has added new prestige to her history through the great humanitarian activities of the International Red Cross in Geneva, and by the difficult mission undertaken by the Swiss Government in representing the interests of more than half of the belligerents. Switzerland is, therefore, not afraid that she will remain isolated.

In order to overcome the diplomatic isolation which has existed for 28 years in respect of one of the great countries among the victors - Russia - Switzerland is pursuing, with all the necessary dignity, a course which is compatible with the new political constellation in the world, especially on the European continent. There certainly exist no unsympathetic feelings between the Swiss and the Russian people. We well remember the many Russians who, prior to the first world war, were popular guests of our Universities. The heroic defence put up by the Russian people in this war is generally admired in Switzerland. It would, therefore, only be intolerance regarding the existing forms of government on both sides, which could in my opinion, form an obstacle to the development of friendly relations which, in former periods in the history of the two countries, were taken for granted.

Dr. Walter Schmid
Swiss Consul.

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GENERAL GUISAN LAYS DOWN HIS COMMAND.

A few days ago General Guisan announced his intention to resign on August 20 from his post as Commander-in-Chief of the Swiss Army. The Federal Assembly will accept his resignation and in the name of the Swiss people will thank the General for the great services he has rendered our country.

The Swiss press of all shades and languages unanimously expresses hearty and unrestricted thanks as an expression of the feelings of the whole Swiss people. General Guisan has left an everlasting memory in the hearts not only of all Swiss soldiers but also of all those who have participated in some way or other in Switzerland's war efforts. The newspapers point out that for 50 years General Guisan has worked indefatigably and with greatest knowledge of the science of war for the training of our Army, that he has brought the latest achievements and innovations of modern warfare to the knowledge of our people, that in this most dreadful of all wars he has shown great wisdom in the protection of our country and that with his unrelenting courage and his outstanding power of judgment he has greatly helped to preserve Switzerland from harm. All Swiss papers agree that the Swiss people admire General Guisan as a man of character who has been strong enough to be natural, frank and hearty but also modest enough to ask for deep respect.

The Zurich Socialist paper "Volksrecht", only to mention one among the many Liberal and Social Democratic voices, writes that during more than five years of mobilization, General Guisan has brilliantly carried out his tasks maintaining the people's will for resistance and leading not only the army but the whole armed nation.

On the occasion of General Guisan's resignation, the Swedish paper, Stockholm's "Tidningen" in an editorial paid high tribute to the Commander-in-Chief of the Swiss Army. The paper declares that through his activity General Guisan has made himself a name which reaches far beyond Switzerland's frontiers. General Guisan is a brilliant representative of the Swiss people's will to defend their country to the last and this will has had to stand many a hard test during this war, much more than this has been the case for Sweden. Especially when Switzerland had been completely surrounded by the forces of the Axis powers, General Guisan in his well known order of the day, had inspired the Swiss people with confidence and courage and had gained for himself great popularity.

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SWITZERLAND AND SOVIET RUSSIA.

As you may remember, Switzerland undertook last Fall official steps for the re-establishment of normal diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia after an interruption of some 25 years. This proposition found an absolutely negative echo. Since that time the Soviet Press and Radio has not ceased to shout off accusations of an extremely serious character against our country. A great many of these reproaches are completely lacking all foundations and all we can do when we hear them is to shrug our shoulders. We do not consider them worthy of being answered. If some people are accusing us of having been pro-fascist in our official policy, we do not even try to defend ourselves, for experience tells that whatever you do, you are always considered pro-enemy in the eyes of somebody or other. We know that we are good and true democrats and that is all we need to keep our conscience quiet in this respect. We are convinced that justice will be done to us sooner or later.

The Russians have also accused us of ill-treating Russian internees and refugees who have come to our country during this war. It is true, certain regrettable incidents have taken place. In the course of uproars two Russian internees have unfortunately been killed. But it is also true that these men had assaulted our soldiers who guarded them. In this matter a most thorough investigation has been made, the results of which will be made known before the end of this month. The question will then be taken up again. We are firmly determined to reveal the facts about these incidents with complete objectivity to exculpate ourselves of the acts we have been accused of, but also to admit eventual errors we may have made or misunderstandings which may have occurred.

Recently, the Soviet government decided to expel from the Russian occupied territories all Swiss citizens regardless of their being private persons or diplomatic or consular representatives. Several of them have already returned to Switzerland and others are on their way home after having passed via Odessa and Turkey. Their reports reveal that our compatriots have been the victims of certain excesses. These excesses are of the same kind as other acts which seem to belong to modern warfare. At any rate these compatriots of ours have not been worse off than the citizens of other countries, at least as far as the cases in Germany and in Vienna are concerned. In Budapest more serious and still unexplained incidents have happened. And our two diplomatic representatives there are still prisoners in Russian hands. Those who had been accredited in Berlin and Vienna have been able to return home; they have suffered only material losses. They had been treated correctly but had not been granted any of the facilities which are customary in diplomatic relations.

The fact that Swiss citizens could be repatriated after all might have been even a favorable sign although the Russians did not allow our consular services to take care of the interests of our compatriots in the regions under Russian control. Now suddenly Radio Moscow announces that the Soviet government has decided to suspend all repatriations of Swiss citizens until it has received precise news about the conditions in which the Russian internees and refugees are kept in Switzerland, and also about the steps taken by the Swiss authorities for the repatriation of these Russians.