

The Swiss and the European recovery plan

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THE SWISS AND THE EUROPEAN RECOVERY PLAN.

By Pierre Cordey. (Service suisse des ondes courtes).

At the second Paris conference of the 16 nations participating in the European Recovery Plan, 13 will be represented through their foreign ministers. Switzerland is going to delegate a diplomat again, Mr. Burckhardt, Swiss Minister to France, who has been present at the first Paris conference also.

Switzerland could very well have delegated its foreign minister also, in spite of the political tradition which wants it, that no federal councillor leave the country during his term of public service. That the exception to the rule has not been made is most significant inasmuch as it proves once more up to what point the Swiss Government is decided to respect its fundamental political principles and tradition here, with regard to the European Recovery plan. The country wishes to cooperate actively in the reconstruction of the continent but in a non-political way only.

The recent development of the international situation has made many an observer wonder whether or not Switzerland would finally be forced to give up its neutrality. Especially so because it may be said that the Swiss neutrality - which is the fundamental principle of the country - is no longer unanimously recognised in international relations. Various nations, the United Nations also, for instance, refuse to subscribe to the Swiss conception, which in Switzerland itself has never been publicly questioned. In the U.S. on the other hand, as well as in Great Britain and surely elsewhere also, the acceptability of the Swiss status of neutrality has been the object of repeated discussions.

Federal Councillor Petitpierre, head of the Federal Political Department, that is, "the Swiss Foreign Minister" has recently made a declaration meant for the originators of the foreign movements demanding the suppression of the Swiss neutrality. M. Petitpierre, in a speech pronounced on the 1st of March spoke once more of the firm decision of the Swiss Government to fully adhere to its principle of neutrality. The declaration made left no room for any doubt. Mr. Petitpierre used the following words:

"We shall continue to participate actively in the reconstruction of Europe, but this active cooperation does not affect our status of neutrality in any way. Since neutrality is not only a privilege, but an obligation also, we shall not fail to be true to that obligation which is, first of all, to make others respect our neutrality, if necessary through warfare, if that be the price-to-pay for independence. We are convinced that our neutrality is a living principle, and a just one. To give it up at this time could mean nothing else but that Switzerland were resigned to believe war to be inevitable. Hoping to see the present conflicts settled peacefully, we shall at all time continue to conciliate the Swiss national interest with the general interest of all Europe."

The speech just quoted in part clearly shows that the Government of Switzerland apparently sees no reason for giving up its neutrality, because of recent events in Europe, or for not co-operating in the European Recovery Plan.

An article published shortly after the declarations made by Federal Councillor Petitpierre in the British "Economist" proves that some observers are able to understand the Swiss point of view, and to appreciate the reasons which are underlying it. The writer of the article speaks of the situation of Switzerland in a very knowing and intelligent way. Here are some of his conclusions:

"The interests, the tradition and the aims of Switzerland as a nation

make it so that Switzerland will do all it can to further the forces of an economic reconstruction of Europe. For the same reasons that Switzerland is an ardent promoter of continental reconstruction, it is also obliged to stay away from political co-operation, with whatever political constellation. Co-operation might be proposed, unless such political co-operation be not merely in the form of a regional union, but of a world wide one. The principle of Armed neutrality, and of determined hostility against all possible violators of that principle are, from the Swiss point of view, the best guarantee for survival. In addition to this, history proved and proves that the principle of neutrality has not only been applied by the Swiss in their own interest, but that application has served the best interests of other nations as well."

This article could not have been written in a different way had it been written by a Swiss writer instead of a British one.

That the Swiss people are agreeing to the attitude adopted by their Government with regard to the status of neutrality, can be seen from this following fact: The Federal Parliament was recently in session, but neither in the National Council, nor in the State Council is there any bill or motion deposited that does as much as touch upon a questioning regarding Swiss foreign relations.

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