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HOME AFFAIRS.

By PIERRE BÉGUIN.

You have probably not forgotten the misadventure of that Zurich professor who had been given the task of making the traditional 1st of August allocution, and who complained afterwards that his text was submitted to a kind of censure, so that he was unable to expose all his ideas. The orator had, as a matter of fact, the intention of expressing opinions which were not quite conformable on the subject of Swiss neutrality and the authorities had decided that this initiative would be inopportune, not to say dangerous.

It has been said and repeated on all sides that neutrality should not be discussed on any pretext, for — if it is desired to inspire confidence abroad — it is imperative that no doubt whatsoever should be experienced as regards our firm will to maintain the most important maxim of our national independence. And, in any case, it is quite understandable that the 1st of August is not a well chosen occasion for the examination of this problem, as, on that particular day, it is the orator's duty to underline that which unites us and not that which might be a cause for division. Nevertheless, it has now been proved that a discussion on neutrality is far from being dangerous and that it can even be very useful.

The Zurich professor has now made known those passages in his address, which he was not allowed to use. He has even made a detailed exposé of his ideas in a declaration sent to a newspaper. And, what has been the effect of this publication? Quite simply, that its author has not received any co-operation or support and that, on the contrary his ideas have been vigorously and unanimously contested. In fact, far from spreading any doubts in regard to our attachment to neutrality, this initiative on the part of the Zurich professor, which had been considered untimely, has made it possible to stress once more the fact that the whole of the great majority of our people is determined that our traditional external policy continue to be practiced with greater fidelity and perseverance than ever. There probably does not exist any other domain in which our people are so staunchly conservative or in which they are more afraid of any innovation taking place.

In effect, this Professor — as it is now known — had given way to a species of reasoning which has often been maintained, but the logic of which is much more apparent than real. He wanted to show why Federalist

Switzerland had excellent reasons for becoming part of a European Federation and playing an active rôle therein. In view of the fact that the federative idea was in some sort of way born in our country, where it has proved its worth, why should we not contribute towards extending its benefits to Europe? The Zurich professor thought furthermore that in this way we would be working, at one and the same time, for the instauration of a neutral Europe which would play the part of a buffer between the two great Soviet and American blocks and that we would thus bring a real contribution towards peace.

There is no saying but that perhaps one day, Switzerland may join a confederation of States, just as she used to be a member of the League of Nations. But, in order that this should happen it would be necessary for certain very precise conditions to be realised. For one thing, this Confederation would have to be universal. Or else, if it happened to be regional, then it would be necessary for it to be largely European and not to be a merging of Western European states alone. Furthermore, it would be necessary for this confederation to be recognised by the Great Powers who did not belong to it, as being an element of peace in a world-wide concert. It would, therefore, have to be absolutely autonomous, and not bound by any alliances with other groups.

For the present, only theoretic conditions can be put forward on this subject. In practice, there is no such problem to be faced. No European Federation exists. Not even, embryonically. And, especially, there is no neutral Europe. Our Continent is divided into two halves, each one being strongly bound to an external Great Power. That shows that, at the present moment, there is no problem facing Switzerland in regard to her external policy. We remain faithful to the maxim which has guaranteed our national independence until the present day. We will not abandon it in favour of this or that illusion. The Zurich professor has given us the opportunity to repeat this elementary truth. In so doing he has rendered a great service. He has brought about a clarification of the subject.

“GRUEMPELSCHIESSEN”

A report concerning the successful “Grümpelschiessen” of the Swiss Rifle Association, which took place on Sunday, October 26th, 1952, at Bisley, will appear in our next issue.

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