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HOME AFFAIRS.

PIERRE BÉGUIN.

Some remarks on the military appointments.

The Federal Council has just made some important changes in the composition of our military High Command. Several of the senior ranking officers had attained the age limit and steps had to be taken in order to provide for their replacement. In French-speaking Switzerland — with which we generally deal in these talks — it was learnt with great satisfaction that Colonel Corps Commander Marius Corbat had been appointed to the post of Chief Instructor. Thus, as the Chief of the General Staff is the Colonel Corps Commander de Montmollin, the two highest posts of military hierarchy are now occupied by sons of French-speaking Switzerland. Moreover, one of the four Army Corps is commanded by Colonel Corps Commander Gonard, so that out of the six members of the Committee for National Defense — which is composed exclusively of Corps Commanders — there are three whose mother-tongue is French. This gives great satisfaction to our pride. And, this is not, as a matter of fact, a question of nationalism. But, at a time, when one hears, far too often, complaints being expressed in regard to citizens who belong to the linguistic minorities finding the road barred to the highest jobs in our Republic, it is with real pleasure that one discovers that our fellow-countrymen possessing another language, are delighting in giving the lie to this legend. Thus, merit will always find its justification. It will always be recognised and questions of race, language and religion will always be relegated to the second place. And that is an excellent thing.

But, these appointments, important as they are, will no doubt give rise to less talk than some other military appointments which have caused a great deal of ink to flow.

Here is what happened. The Chief of the Swiss Military Mission in Korea has, on his own authority and without referring the matter to his superior officers in Berne, raised to the rank of Colonel, two officers possessing lower ranks. When this was learnt it caused a considerable commotion, as such action appeared arbitrary, to say the least of it. It nearly caused a scandal in this country where great attention is paid to the strict observance of regulations.

As a matter of fact, this affair is not very serious. It is not, really, at all serious. In order to be able to deal with the officers belonging to the Missions of other countries, it was necessary that certain members of the Swiss Military Mission possessed the same rank as their foreign opposite numbers. Thus, two of these officers have become temporary Colonels, during their

stay in Korea. After which they will be demoted to the subordinate rank which they occupied in the Swiss Army, before they went to Asia. In other countries this affair would not have been considered worthy of any notice being taken of it, because abroad one is used to men being given temporary rank, when their function require it. Such is not the case, however, in Switzerland.

All the indignation which manifested itself here in regard to this occurrence is due to our passionate love for equality and for legality. We certainly don't like the idea of any favouritism or privileges. Everything has got to take place in a normal manner and in accordance with rules. The slightest exception to the rules of the game surprises, astounds and even scandalises our people. It might be wise, however, not to allow this tendency to develop into a narrow and ridiculous sentiment.

We are always thinking and saying that, because of our neutrality, our fellow-countrymen are particularly well-placed to assume international missions of control and of conciliation. No doubt this is true. But, if this is really the case and if we accept to engage in missions of this kind, then we must see to it that these special envoys of ours possess all the means required in order to be able to carry out really effective work. This consideration should prevail above all other principles. If we wish to render services, we must do this fully and completely. A little more broad-mindedness should teach us this lesson.

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