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HOME AFFAIRS.

by PIERRE BÉGUIN.

"Switzerland and the International Agency for Atomic Energy."

Switzerland recently concluded an Agreement with the United States of America, an Agreement, the coming into force of which will make it possible for our country to obtain, very shortly, fissionable material, more particularly enriched uranium, scientific information and technical installations, thanks to which Switzerland will be able to take an important step forward along the road towards the peaceful and industrial utilisation of nuclear energy.

This Convention has already been ratified by the American parliamentary authority. It has been submitted for the ratification of the Federal Chambers, but this final procedure is meeting, for the present, with some obstacles. Indeed, a far from negligible portion of our public opinion has given an unfavourable reception — and in some cases quite a negative one — to the Convention which provides for the right of American inspectors to supervise the use that we will make of these materials, information and equipment furnished by our big partner.

It is true, of course, that this control and its modalities will not constitute anything that is scandalous or prejudicial to our sovereignty. It is an understood thing that the American inspectors will have to be approved, personally and individually, by our Government. It is also understood that they will not be able to proceed with any inspection unless they are accompanied by Swiss experts.

Nevertheless, in all questions of this kind, Swiss public opinion is apt to be extremely proud in its attitude. Up to the present, we have always asked foreign powers to trust us, we have always insisted on carrying out the necessary control, by ourselves. This was still the case during the last World War, at the time of the blockade and the counter-blockade, when conditions were extremely difficult and when it could hardly be said that confidence prevailed in the world. No other solution appeared to us to be compatible with national independence.

Thus, this is practically the very first time that we are being asked to make such an important concession in regard to foreign control exercised on our territory. But, viewed objectively, we must admit that had we not made this concession we would not have been able to procure that which we require in order to preserve our capacity for industrial competition and to participate in technical progress. American legislation would not allow of any other solution. And, it must be stated that the exigencies of our sovereignty have been taken into account to a very large degree.

However, provisions have been made for the unilateral control of our supplier to be replaced automatically by an international control, should it prove possible to establish an international, or even European, atomic authority. International control would have a quite different signification, in that its encroachments on national sovereignty would also be multilateral and, thus, much more readily admissible.

From the foregoing it will be seen why it is that our public is following with the keenest interest the Conference which has just opened in New York, with the object of establishing an International Agency for Nuclear Energy, or, as it is generally called, an Atomic Agency. It is earnestly hoped that a practical result will be achieved in this respect, as this would solve, in a very satisfactory manner, the difficulties with which the ratification of the Agreement between Switzerland and the U.S.A. by the Swiss Parliament is now meeting. However, one must not allow oneself to have too many illusions on this subject. A long time will pass before we have an international atomic agency, and it is as soon as possible that our industry should be able to use nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

Thus, in New York, at this Conference in which eighty-one countries are represented, Switzerland will adopt a very positive and constructive attitude. At the same time, she will act in a very determined manner, in order to obtain that the control should be reduced to what is strictly indispensable. Of course, all the necessary measures must be taken in order that nuclear energy be used exclusively for peaceful purposes, technical and industrial. This must be controlled. But, it is not at all necessary that, in so doing, any of the industrial processes be divulged and made available to everyone. Were this to happen, then the competitive capacity of a small country — which possesses no other riches except its inventive talents — would be seriously compromised. On the other hand, from the Swiss point of view, international inspectors ought always to be accompanied by national inspectors when proceeding with their investigations. Finally, control should be directed mainly to the atomic sites and projects, and not to the installations and the activities of the realised projects.

Such an attitude is wise. It consists in advocating an efficient, but not annoying, control, and, also, in upholding an international, multilateral, solution, which would demand the same sacrifices in regard to sovereignty on the part of all the countries taking part, and would, in this way, be compatible with the conception which we possess of national independence.

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HOME AFFAIRS.

by MAX NEF.

Switzerland is also taking part in the general development of Civil Aviation, throughout the world. The present weekly schedule of flights on the Zurich airport comprises 62 air lines operated by foreign air navigation companies, and 42 air lines operated by Swissair, whilst Geneva-Cointrin has 57 lines operated by foreign companies and 21 lines operated by Swissair. About 450 flights per week start from, or end at, one of these two airports.

When, ten years ago, the financial participation of the Swiss Confederation in the construction of civil airports in this country was decided upon, only Zurich was taken into consideration as an airport for so-called inter-Continental, i.e. Overseas, air traffic. Since then, Geneva-Cointrin has also developed into an airport for flights to other Continents besides the European one, whereas Basle now brings its contribution towards traffic on the European air lines.

Whilst Zurich-Kloten stands at the head of the list in regard to air traffic with North America, Geneva-Cointrin comes very close to it in so far as flights to Africa and Asia are concerned. This has only proved possible owing to the necessary extension of the airfield and its equipment. In view of the fact that Cointrin has now also become an inter-Continental airport, the Federal Council has proposed to the Federal Chambers that higher rates be fixed for the subsidies granted in respect of the additional costs entailed by this extension, as was done formerly in the case of Kloten. This proposal is also applicable to future construction work on both airports, which may prove necessary, if Switzerland is to keep pace with what is being done abroad in the field of civil aviation. The proposal put forward by the Federal Council for the fixing of the amount of the appropriation to be dealt with by Parliament, contains, however, a restrictive provision, whereby the applicant for the subsidy is required to produce proof of the fact that a necessity exists for the extension of the airport, that it is justifiable and essential. Thus there is no intention of developing the medium and small Swiss airfields, also, for air line traffic to Overseas countries. No doubt, such traffic will be limited to Zurich and Geneva, this also because of the relatively short distances which exist within the Swiss national frontiers.

THE FLORAL HOUSE**23, MUSEUM STREET, W.C.I.**

Further to my announcement on October 12th of the closing down of my business at 23, Museum Street, W.C.I., I beg to draw your kind attention to the fact that from now on Miss Elsie Finger, Florist, of No. 237 Junction Road, N.19, will be trading under the known name "The Floral House", and that I shall give her all assistance needed in future. I take this opportunity in recommending Miss Finger to your patronage.

J. SCHEUERMEIER.

The airport facilities in Zurich just suffice for coping with the present amount of traffic. Should there occur — and this is certainly to be expected — a further development in civil aviation, then extension work on the airport will be indispensable. Quite apart from the increase in traffic, such extension will be imperative because of the fact that already in a few years' time, larger and therefore heavier aircraft, jet-propelled aircraft will be in use, which will require longer runways than those needed by the aircraft operating at present. In view of the fact that these new types of aircraft are already being constructed, no time should be lost. The work of planning has already been taken in hand, in regard to both Geneva and Zurich. In spite of the enormous financial means that such investments require, there exists a general recognition of the necessity for these measures and the willingness to grant the requisite credits. If all goes well, the work on the airfields will be started already in the spring of 1957.

It is not easy to make any prognostications in regard to the future development of air traffic, which are anything more than mere estimates. A scientific opinion drawn up in regard to conditions in Zurich, draws attention to the fact that not only must the increase in the population be taken into account, in absolute figures, but also — and this still more — the changes in the social and economic structure, as well as the migratory movement from the land to the town. The highly industrialised central regions must be placed on the same level as the towns, in so far as air traffic requirements are concerned. All these factors point to an increasing demand for air traffic in the future.

When estimating the feeder area, the constant improvement which is taking place in the conditions of the so-called feeder service, i.e. the increase in the rapidity of travel either by rail or road, must also be taken into account. This points to the fact that Switzerland, in the future, will restrict Overseas air traffic to the two airports at Zurich and Geneva. As further facilities are introduced in regard to the crossing of the frontiers, the feeder area in respect of the two airports will extend beyond the Swiss borders. Here is an interesting detail: already today, starting from Zurich, the airport at Istanbul can be reached quicker than the Lower Engadine or Zermatt in the Upper Valais, when travelling by air.

From all this it will be seen that the statement made in the Report of the Federal Council to the Swiss Parliament that traffic conditions had undergone a revolutionary change, which is still only in its initial stage, is in no way an exaggeration. In this matter, Switzerland is determined not to remain outside the general trend.

OUR NEXT ISSUE.

Our next issue will be published on Friday, November 30th, 1956.

We take this opportunity of thanking the following subscribers for their kind and helpful donations over and above their subscription: C. O. Brullhard, A. R. Tissot, G. E. Suter, Mrs. A. Bachofen, Mrs. O. A. Stanton, J. B. Brutsch, W. Allenspach, M. E. Dubois, A. Bleiker, Walter Weber, Th. Erb, Paul Schnetz, Charles Fer, F. G. Sommer.