

An editor speaks

Objektyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): **- (1957)**

Heft 1305

PDF erstellt am: **30.04.2024**

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AN EDITOR SPEAKS.

By PIERRE BÉGUIN.

Some time ago the Madrid newspaper "Informaciones" published some very strange news concerning Switzerland. This paper announced that Switzerland was on the eve of abandoning her traditional policy of neutrality, that our Authorities were going to announce this innovation very shortly, either through a proclamation or else through diplomatic means, and that the evolution of military technique would be forcing Switzerland to adhere to the bloc of free countries against Communist Russia. Moreover, the Spanish newspaper affirms that the Helvetic strategy of a retreat into the Alpine redoubt is no longer possible in an era of atomic weapons and that our High Authorities, who are always very well informed, are so anxious about the evolution of the world situation that they have found themselves obliged to order, from one day to another, the constitution of food stocks in all the Swiss households.

Here are some explanations which should clear up these affirmations. In so far as the constitution of stocks of food is concerned, this measure dates from several years ago. It was recalled to mind very recently, because the citizens and more especially the housewives are apt to forget their duty in regard to taking precautionary measures of this kind. Furthermore, our authorities thought that by convincing everyone of the necessity of building up reserves, this would mean that the money thus employed would not go towards increasing current consumption and that, in this way, a certain contribution would be made towards the struggle against inflation. The tendency towards saving is on the decline, and attempts are being made to revive it. It must now take on a new aspect; instead of putting money aside, stocks of food will be laid in. And this is how a perfectly natural measure, dictated primarily by economic considerations, is transformed by the pen of a foreign journalist into the precursory sign of our intention to give up neutrality!

This journalist is just as badly informed when he speaks of our strategy. The formula of the "Alpine redoubt" into which our armed forces would have retired in order to hold out as long as possible, was a formula belonging to the last war, at a time when we were quite alone in the very centre of Europe and under the constant menace of a National-Socialist aggression. Since then the "Alpine redoubt" is no longer a unique formula, but merely one of our various plans of defence, for we are firmly decided, in case of war, to make an attempt to defend the whole of our territory, our entire population and, oddly enough, all our industrial riches which — as everyone knows — are not concentrated in the Alps. Our national defence is a total one and is based on the very obvious consideration that every inch of our territory is precious and deserving of being saved.

The appearance of atomic weapons has done nothing to change this situation. It may even be said that it has given fresh actuality to the formula of the "Alpine redoubt", which would be a most effective shelter from atomic attacks. This shows only too

clearly that the reasoning of the "Informaciones" is wrong from the start.

Finally, Switzerland has taken care to preserve all the effectiveness and all the significance of her traditional neutrality. It is so much alive that our Authorities have not allowed themselves to adhere to any international organisations of a political or military character, or even to such organisations which, had we become members of them, could have led us indirectly to conclude engagements of a political or military character. Every precaution has been taken in this respect, and some of our public opinion has even considered that our Government showed too much prudence in this domaine.

It is true, on the other hand, that our neutrality has become richer in character. It is no longer a mere negative notion. It has become positive, in the sense that we have now become conscious of our duties of solidarity and that, in consequence, our country co-operates in all humanitarian, economic, technical, intellectual and scientific action, organised on an international basis. Nevertheless, we recall each time our policy of neutrality, and we make all the necessary reservations in regard to decisions which might infringe on this principle which we preserve so jealously and which we defend in all circumstances.

All this is quite clear and definite, and we hope that we have now succeeded in demonstrating that the statements made by the newspaper "Informaciones" were unfounded.

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