

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

Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

Band: - (1957)

Heft: 1288

Rubrik: Home affairs

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HOME AFFAIRS.

by PIERRE BÉGUIN.

At the suggestion of Mr. Hammerskjöld, the Secretary General of the United Nations, the General Assembly of the UNO has designated our compatriot, Mr. Auguste Lindt, to the post of High Commissioner for the Refugees.

Mr. Lindt is particularly well-fitted for the execution of these important functions. First as a journalist, then as the delegate of welfare organisations and, finally, as a diplomat, he has travelled over the whole world. When he was still quite young he was eager for adventure and he followed the Mandchukuo campaign. Thus, he has come into close contact with the Asian peoples. Neither obstacles nor perilous situations have the power of holding him back.

After many another journey, the Second World War brought Mr. Lindt back to Switzerland. The special knowledge that he possesses marked him as being very suitable for tasks connected with charitable organisations, first of all at the International Red Cross, of which he was one of the most active delegates, and then at the "Don Suisse", a Swiss relief scheme which our country had set up for the reconstruction of regions that had been devastated by the war. Thus he was able to see, at close quarters, the fate that awaited a refugee, a transplantee, a displaced person. He knows by heart all the measures that can be taken in order to lighten the fate of distressed persons and to reintegrate them into a normal life.

This suffices to show that the choice made by the UNO is a fortunate one. Alas, who would ever have thought it possible that, eleven years after the end of the war, the international organisations would not yet have finished with the problem of the refugees! To tell the truth, this problem is continually coming up afresh, because new events are constantly creating new categories of refugees.

There may be some people, who have only a scant knowledge of our country and of its general policy, who may perhaps ask themselves why such an important post has been entrusted to a personality whose country is not a member of the UNO. To this we would reply that a neutral is particularly well-

placed to treat with the authorities occupying themselves with the refugees, because of the qualities of impartiality and of objectivity which he possesses. Does not this constitute, in the humanitarian domain, a justification for the existence of neutral countries?

There has never been any question of Switzerland adhering to the United Nations. She has not been invited to do so, nor has she applied for membership. She had belonged to the League of Nations, because the latter had recognised formally her status of neutrality and had taken into account our firm resolution not to adhere to any alliance of a military or political character. The Charter of the United Nations, however, is much more absolute, and does not provide for any such exceptions; in fact, it excludes them.

Nevertheless, whenever our country has been able to collaborate with one of the humanitarian or technical agencies of the UNO, it has done so with the greatest willingness. It plays a part in the UNESCO, in the International Labour Organisation, in the World Health Organisation, and even in certain of the UNO's economic commissions. Moreover, Switzerland is represented at the seat of the United Nations by a permanent observer, who, recently, was no other than Mr. Auguste Lindt himself.

In these happenings we find a verification of our maxim in respect of foreign politics: Neutrality, but also Solidarity. This we put into practice, and it is now recognised by acts. Mr. Lindt's nomination is a proof of this.

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HOME AFFAIRS.

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Viewed from certain aspects the situation in which we now find ourselves recalls that of 1930 and the following years. One had just passed through a period of peace lasting for ten or twelve years. Military efforts had been somewhat neglected, because the feeling was shared generally that the last of all wars had taken place.

But, in 1930 already, a Swiss statesman — whose memory remains very much alive in this country — Mr. Rudolph Minger, a Federal Councillor and the Head of the Military Department, made his voice heard. He asked for credits in order to purchase aircraft, and strove to awaken the interest of the country, as a whole, in the Army and its requirements. He did not share the illusions of so many other people in regard to Hitlerism; in his eyes it constituted a grave danger. And that is why he proceeded, during the course of several years, to get a whole series of measures voted by Parliament: the purchase of material, the prolongation of periods of military instruction, the construction of fortified works, more especially on the Northern frontier, etc. etc. It was owing to these measures that we were militarily prepared in September, 1939, and that the efficacy of our Army of militiamen, an efficacy which was well known to foreign observers, saved us from being drawn into the Second World War.

Today the situation is different, in the sense that our military effort had only been relaxed for a few years, and that it had been taken up again immediately after the coup in Prague and the war in Korea. Our Army was reorganised, equipped with new material, and instructed in accordance with the most recent improvements in military technique and the lessons learnt from the last war.

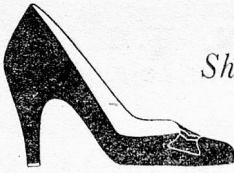
The present situation, however, is similar to that in 1930 and the years that followed, in that our Authorities, once more in complete agreement with public opinion, consider that it is necessary to complete our military measures without any loss of time. This is the lesson that we must draw from the events in Hungary, in particular, and from the deterioration in the international situation, in general.

Certain of these measures are of a technical order. Thus, the Federal Council asked the Federal Chambers to vote on the text of a Law which will give it the power to mobilise a sufficient number of troops in case of any imminent danger. The Federal Council will be able to do this on its own, without first having to consult with the national representation. It is practically certain that efforts will also be made to accelerate the carrying out of the armament pro-

gramme which is now being realised and that supplementary credits will be asked for. It is not necessary to be acquainted with State secrets to know that the effort will be directed mainly towards the Air Force, the mechanisation of the Army and armoured vehicles. Prior to taking these measures, however, an end will have to be put to a discussion which has already lasted too long and which, during the last few years, has set against each other the partisans of a stand made on fortified positions and the partisans of a mobile counter attack. A solution will be found without any great difficulty, as there is no question of sacrificing everything to a narrow doctrine, but rather of drawing the best out of several methods, among which a harmonious and efficacious synthesis must operate.

Obviously, divergent opinions are to be found in public opinion. Thus, for example, in a declaration made by the Swiss Officers' Society the accent is placed on the reinforcement of armament. Others endeavour to turn the lesson learnt from Hungary into account by advocating the thesis of partisan warfare and surprise attacks. Others, still, are pre-occupied with measures which would prove conducive to a better recruitment of cadres, which, at present, is not sufficient. Finally, there are others who plead in favour of a change in the atmosphere which prevails in the relations between superiors and subordinates.

Such discussions are very satisfactory, as they bear witness to a renewal of interest in military problems. One may rest assured that they will lead to good results, in view of the fact that — as has always happened in our history — our people are studying them with all the gravity demanded by the international situation. As always happens in similar circumstances — that is to say whenever danger reappears — our national reflexes react and our passion for independence manifests itself in all its plenitude.



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