

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: - (1960)

Heft: 1365

Artikel: The Repression of espionage in Switzerland

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-689956>

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THE REPRESSION OF ESPIONAGE IN SWITZERLAND

By PIERRE BÉGUIN.

Two Soviet spies were arrested in Switzerland, very shortly after an American aircraft — on a reconnaissance flight — was shot down over Russia. Here and there, attempts have been made to build up a connection between these two incidents. It might be useful, therefore, to examine the situation more closely and to define what the attitude of the Swiss Confederation to espionage has always been.

The activities of spies, whatever they may be, are illegal activities. They are condemned by the laws of every country, and by laws which provide for very heavy sanctions. The fact remains, nevertheless, that all the countries of the world have intelligence services. In other words, they claim that they can do what they are determined to prevent others from doing in their own interests. This is one of those cases where reasons of State justify activities which elsewhere are considered illegal.

So long as there are nations attached to their independence possessing an instrument of national defence, these nations — if only in order to be up to date with their indispensable measures of precaution and security — will strive to obtain information on the armies of other countries, their strength, their material means, their technical modernity and the danger which they might represent, to-day or to-morrow. In order to know how best to defend oneself, one must know how one might be attacked. All this adds up finally to legitimate defence.

In the old days, espionage services were at work mainly during wars and during those periods when peace was in imminent danger; to-day these services are permanent. This is no doubt because to-day there are regimes where secrecy has been exalted into being the supreme principle of government, where free observation and free movement are impossible, and where information, even of the simplest character, cannot be obtained except by surprise and by devious means. If totalitarianism, in all its forms, does not, of itself, explain the existence of espionage, it nevertheless calls it forth, in the sense that totalitarianism cannot do without espionage.

These elementary truths should be borne in mind when attempting to define Switzerland's attitude to this question. Indeed, Switzerland is rigorously intolerant of all attempts at espionage, whether directed against her own national defence, or against the national defence of another country. In point of fact, Switzerland, which has no offensive military policy, which refuses to form any alliance, which does not threaten anyone, but is ready to defend herself autonomously, believes that there is no justification for any mistrust of her.

Another thing is that Switzerland does not want her territory to become a place where foreign agents can engage in espionage against other States. She wishes to remain free of all suspicion in this respect, because of the fact that she is independent and neutral.

Such considerations dictate her uncompromising attitude towards espionage. It is such considerations, also, which prompt the authorities to unmask the

spies, whatever the international circumstances, without troubling about any false interpretations which might be given to these measures. This attitude may sometimes prove inconvenient at the time, but in the long run it is always found to have been right.

C O M M U N I Q U E FROM THE SWISS EMBASSY

Serbian and Yugoslav External Loans issued prior to World War II.

In the "Swiss Observer" of April 24, 1959, a Communiqué appeared advising Swiss or Liechtenstein nationals in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, owning bonds forming part of these Loans, to approach Swiss banks or Swiss authorities. This Communiqué was also intended for Societies and Companies where Swiss or Liechtenstein participation is predominant.

At that time Switzerland was conducting negotiations with Yugoslavia regarding these securities. An Agreement has now been concluded. According to this Agreement which came into force on April 23, 1960, the Yugoslav Government undertook to redeem the securities in question, subject to certain conditions and exceptions. The holders of these securities who wish to benefit under this Agreement should apply for further information to the Swiss Bank Corporation, 99 Gresham Street, London, E.C.2, or to the Swiss Embassy, 18 Montagu Place, London, W.1, before October 29, 1960, even if they have already declared their holdings in a previous notification.

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