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SWITZERLAND'S TESTING WAR YEARS

This is a résumé of a talk given by the Cultural Attaché of the Swiss Embassy, Dr. Paul Stauffer, at the Nouvelle Société Helvétique in London.

The fact that Switzerland has escaped two wars and remained an island of peace in war-stricken Europe has been widely accepted as amazing. In speaking of the country's " testing " war years, the idea is not to surround Switzerland's attitude with some kind of heroic splendour. To paint an idyllic picture of the besieged fortress which Switzerland became after the fall of France, and Italy's entry into the war, would, however, likewise be wrong. Even though perhaps not highly dramatic, compared with what was going on in the belligerent countries, the events which took place in Switzerland during the war may command a certain amount of interest. The subject also deserves attention because 25 years after they happened, certain wartime events suddenly became an issue which occupied public opinion to such an extent that not only the Press, radio and TV, but also the Government got involved.

The discussion was opened in 1961 by a Swiss compatriot living in London, Jon Kimche who published his book " Spying for Peace ". It was translated into German and French and serialised by the " Weltwoche " under the title " General Guisan's Zweifrontenkrieg ". The book expounded the idea that General Guisan, the Swiss Commander-in-Chief, was *the* outstanding figure in wartime Switzerland, and that he had to face not only the outward threat of Nazi Germany, but also a strong group of people sympathetic to Germany *inside* the Swiss boundaries. Whereas this view could be shared by Swiss readers who had gone through that period, critics held that the author had somewhat oversimplified the facts and had likened Guisan to Winston Churchill as to the importance of the two men for their countries, whilst denying the Federal Council practically all merit in the conduct of the country's affairs. The original title of the book indicated that Kimche claimed General Guisan's conscious encouragement of passing information about Germany to the allied secret services, in order to hasten the downfall of the Third Reich. The General was already dead when the book was published, but close assistants, such as Col. Bernard Barbey, Chief of the General's personal staff, firmly denied that he could ever have influenced the outcome of the war in such an adventurous manner.

The Federal Council, anxious to get an authentic and comprehensive account of Switzerland's policy before and during the war, charged Prof. Bonjour, eminent historian of Basle University, to carry out the necessary investigations. Prof. Bonjour was granted access to all relevant documents, regardless of legal restrictions normally preventing historians from consulting state documents during a period of 50 years. The report it to be submitted to the Federal Government who will decide whether it is to be published. The strongest argument in favour of publishing it is that it would probably put a stop to publications by unqualified authors.

In support of this claim, a further book may be quoted, the work of two French journalists, Pierre Accoce and Pierre Quet, entitled " La guerre a été gagnée en Suisse " (" The War was won in Switzerland "), recently published in this country under the title " The Lucy Ring ". This book deals mainly with the activity of a German émigré in Lucerne, Rudolf Roessler (code-named " Lucy "), who managed to keep in close contact with one or more reliable informants he had among officers of the German High Command. According to Accoce and Quet, no fewer than twelve senior German officers, including several generals, belonged to the " Lucy Ring ", but it seems somewhat unlikely that such a large conspiracy should have remained undiscovered for years while operating from the very centre of the " Oberkommando der Wehrmacht ". Be that as it may, Roessler succeeded in daily receiving first-hand secret information from Germany by radio, a service which apparently worked supremely well. " Lucy " is supposed to have delivered all information useful to Switzerland to a branch of the Swiss intelligence service, called " Büro Ha ", named after its chief, Captain, later Major Hausammann. Roessler also managed to pass on the material to the intelligence services of the Western Allies, most prominently represented in Switzerland, during the second part of the war, by Allan Dulles, later director of the American Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.). There was, moreover, a direct link between Roessler and a group of Soviet intelligence agents operating from Geneva and Lausanne until the autumn of 1943, when the Swiss Federal Police discovered their transmitters and put an end to their activities. The value of Roessler's information is beyond doubt, but not always was good use made of it by the responsible allied services. To claim, however, as the French authors did, that owing to Roessler and his friends the war " was won in Switzerland " is an enormous exaggeration, even though their activities were rather unique in the history of espionage.

Roessler's intelligence work was of considerable value to Switzerland, although the Swiss Secret Service, headed by Brigadier Masson, could draw on various other sources of information as well. What is known about the " Lucy Ring " is mainly based on information given to authors like Kimche and the two French writers by the abovementioned Major Hausammann. He made his knowledge available not only to these journalists, but also to the author of the most remarkable and most serious among the books so far published on Switzerland's wartime history.

It is Dr. Alice Meyer's "Anpassung oder Widerstand" ("Adaptation or Resistance"), published in 1965, a best-seller in German-speaking Switzerland. Miss Elizabeth Wiskemann, well-known author and historian and member of the British Embassy's intelligence section in Berne during the war, reviewed the book most favourably in " The Times Literary Supplement ", calling it " essentially a reply to a hit-or-miss detective story type of book about Switzerland in the Second World War written some years ago by Jon Kimche ". She also says that it is an extremely conscientious work on which Dr. Meyer is to be congratulated warmly.

Unlike the books so far quoted, Alice Meyer's survey does not concentrate on the activities of intelligence agents in wartime Switzerland, but is concerned mainly with developments in the country's political life. She most vividly recalls the crucial days of the French surrender and the very different reactions that event provoked among the Swiss. She reproduces the appeal made to the Swiss people on 25th June 1940 by the Swiss Government, which welcomed " with relief " the fact that Switzerland's three neighbours had chosen the way of peace and that Switzerland could now start to demobilise. The time for an

" inner renewal " had come. No reference was made to the one power still at war with Germany and Italy, and that the final outcome of the war was by no means certain.

The presidential declaration by Federal President Pilet-Golaz thus presented the war as won by the Axis Powers, a result accepted almost cheerfully. This attitude, however, contrasted strongly with the feelings of the majority of the population. Instead of " following confidently " the Government, as Pilet-Golaz and his colleagues had asked the people to do, many, both civilians and soldiers, became doubtful and suspected the Federal Council to be weak, if not treacherous, an unspoken allegation which was definitely unjustified, for the Government had the welfare of the country at heart, and that needed a certain amount of *Anpassung* to the new pattern of Europe, set up, as they believed, for years to come by the Axis Powers.

The opposing forces, consciously or unconsciously aware of the fact that any sign of weakness towards the Third Reich would encourage the Germans to increase their pressure on Switzerland, advocated a firm stand and the highest possible military readiness rather than demobilisation. A few days after Pilet-Golaz's address to the nation, a number of younger Army officers got together and pledged themselves to unconditional armed resistance, even should any capitulation orders be issued by the Swiss Government or General Staff. One of the 37 participants in the " Officers' Conspiracy " was the already-mentioned Captain Hausammann. In his and his fellow-officers' creed laid down on 2nd July 1940, he stated their conviction that resistance and a firm, uncompromising stand against Germany was not only possible but vital, and that fiercest armed resistance would be given the Germans, as well as destruction of all installatons, especially the transit railway lines from Germany to Italy.

With that point, Hausammann certainly touched on the most important element in Switzerland's wartime situation: the value of the Alpine tunnels for supplying coal and steel from North to South in exchange for Italian foodstuffs bound for Germany — and those lifelines were only available as long as the Axis Powers respected Switzerland's neutrality and integrity.

The Swiss Army Command, incidentally, would not have needed the " conspiring " officers' advice — they were fully aware of the importance of this point and prepared in case of emergency to destroy immediately all important bridges and tunnels.

In addition, General Guisan did not share the opinion that the war was over. Without openly approving of the conspiracy, he nevertheless adopted an important proposal put forward by some of the officers, agreeing that it would strengthen Army morale and public opinion if, contrary to the impression given by Pilet-Golaz's message, the Army still had a vital mission to fulfil and was determined to stand firm against any aggressor. General Guisan, exactly a month after the surrender of France, ordered all the commanding officers down to the level of battalion commander to the most suitable spot — the Rütli meadow, cradle of the Confederation. Part of the message, not revealed to the Press at the moment, was devoted to a new concept of the Army's role. The plan was to concentrate the troops mainly in the Alpine area, in the so-called *Réduit National,* where they would be prepared to sustain a siege of, if necessary, two or more years and prevent the enemy from seizing control of vital North-South transit lines. The *Réduit* Plan's main author was Colonel, later Corps Commander, Gonard.

The problems Switzerland had to tackle during the war were of course far from settled with the " Rütli Rapport ", but the country had recovered part of its self-confidence and was morally better equiped to face further difficulties.

* * *

Other books to be mentioned in connection with Switzerland's war years are " Winged Diplomat " by Pat Reid. " The Diplomatic Smuggler " by John Lomax. " The Ruling Few ", Memoirs by Sir David Kelly. " Q.N. Wusste Bescheid " by Kurt Emmenegger.

AMERICA COMMISSIONS A SWISS INSTITUTE TO CARRY OUT RESEARCH

Through its attaché in Berne, the American Department of Agriculture recently commissioned the Federal Testing Establishment for Arboriculture, Viticulture and Horticulture, at Wädenswil, to carry out research on the aromatic substances of three kinds of apples. The main purpose of this research is to determine the conditions governing the development and identification of the main ingredients of these aromas. The project is due to last a period of five years and a sum of over Fr.260.000.— has been set aside for it.

[O.S.E.C.]

BAD RAGAZ — LOYAL GUESTS

Nearly 25 years ago, the Tourist Office of Bad Ragaz created a badge which is presented once a year to its most loyal guests. This year, nine guests who had spent their 20th holiday at Bad Ragaz received the golden " Ragazer Tübli ". The silver badge was handed to fifty-two guests who had spent ten holidays at Bad Ragaz.

[S.N.T.O.]

1967 SKI SCHOOL DIRECTORS' COURSE

After a discussion of organisational questions, the two resorts of Gstaad and Villars made joint application to the Swiss Ski School Association for the holding of the annual Ski School Directors' Course in December 1967. At a recent meeting of the Board of Directors, the application was approved. Thus in 1967 the world's largest ski-course will be divided between two winter resorts for the first time. It will mark the first time that Gstaad has participated in this important ski-ing event. Both at Villars and Gstaad, all necessary facilities are already available to ensure perfect functioning of the complex elements which go to make up the course.

[S.N.T.O.]

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