

Comment

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contrast with the kind of national *self-image* which has led to a decade of fighting for an elusive "peace with honour" in Indo-China.

P.M.B.

SWISS EVENTS

The Desramault Case passes almost unnoticed

The Linda Desramault saga aroused surprisingly little interest in Switzerland. The Press reported it very briefly. However, much of it was played in Lausanne, where Mrs. Desramault was reunited with her daughter Caroline on Friday, 23rd March. Following the decision by a county court at Gosport, the care of Caroline was awarded to Mr. Rene Desramault, Linda's estranged husband. He brought the child back to France. A later ruling by the Versailles divorce tribunal, upheld by the Paris Court of Appeal, allowed Mrs. Desramault custody of her child. But Rene Desramault fled from his home in Northern France before the bailiffs had arrived to serve the order, and disappeared for several weeks before being discovered in Lausanne last September.

The Lausanne Cantonal Court took the case in hand. Rene Desramault took a teaching job in a school at Vevey so as to be near to his daughter, who had been placed in a children's home in Lausanne while the case was under examination.

The Court was faced with a new situation as it was not covered by any legal convention between Britain and Switzerland. After examination of the "dossier" and several hearings, it decided to give the child back to its mother. Mrs. Desramault rushed to l'"Abris", the home where Caroline had been kept pending the decision. She hugged her daughter before the flashes of the cameras and touched bystanders, who included a Cantonal child-care official and the woman director of l'"Abris". Mother and child sped away from Lausanne by car, shaking off journalists who had expected them to take the next flight from Geneva. In the event, Mrs. Desramault went to Dijon, where she boarded a special plane chartered by the *Daily Mail* and landed at Stanstead Airport.

It was said that Caroline had never asked for her "mummy" while being in the custody of the child-care services of Canton Vaud. This was hardly surprising as Caroline had been taken from her mother at the age of one, and does not speak a word of English. After all that has happened to her, Caroline, who celebrated her third birthday only days after her return to Newcastle, will find it confusing to adapt to her new life.

Mr. Desramault is by all appearance excessively fond of his child (or jealous of his ex-wife?). He may appeal against the Cantonal Court's decision. He has already brought the case to the French "Cour de

COMMENT

THE DOGMA OF NEUTRALITY

The talks presently taking place in Helsinki with a view to an international conference on European security attracts little attention in Britain. As the Swiss have no Common Market, no Commonwealth and no Uganda, no Atlantic Alliance and no hostile Arab countries to cope with, this conference obviously receives more coverage there. There is another important reason: it is the first time that the neutral Swiss are represented at an international — and non academic-platform.

The Swiss delegate has presented a scheme, copied from medieval agreements between the old cantons, for settling differences between European states. He is still hopeful that the idea will gain acceptance.

Mr. Pierre Graber, Switzerland's foreign ministre, recently put his views on the Conference to the Swiss News Agency.

In a two-column interview, he

uttered the two synonymous words "caution" and "reserve" respectively three and two times. Indeed, there is no doubt that these words characterise Switzerland's foreign policy. Only by exercising "caution" is it possible to respect the non-involvement which neutrality requires.

Speaking of the mutual and balanced forces reduction in Europe, which western and Communist delegates are laboriously discussing in Vienna, Mr. Graber said that Switzerland had not yet decided to join in the talks. She may decide to do so in order to know what is going on, and eventually to defend her interests. In any event, it will be impossible to table any proposal or support resolutions from either side as this would necessarily conflict with neutrality.

Thus Mr. Graber implicitly admitted that Switzerland could not join in any political initiative abroad. Our foreign policy rests on the "principle of neutrality coupled with solidarity and universality," he said. The latter term appears to compensate for the passivity inherent in the former.

Although "solidarity and universality" are ideals claimed by every country, it is true that Switzerland is in a better position to defend them, thanks to her neutrality.

Mr. Graber recalled that India and Pakistan, the United States and Cuba had all asked for Berne's good offices. This is a proof that neutrality has played and built a "capital of confidence in Switzerland" among the countries of the world.

But this capital should not be destroyed by inconsiderate statements, he warned. Hence the indispensable caution.

The policy of permanent neutrality is thus geared to defend the trust of others in Switzerland, or, in other words, our political image in the world. One could argue that striving to defend a country's image through considered caution does not represent an active principle of diplomacy. Yet it has helped to bring warring parties closer together (unfortunately after harm had been done).

Swiss foreign policy consists essentially in promoting and defending a national image in the eyes of the world. This can't do any harm to peace, in

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