

# Switzerland and Soviet Russia

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The Zurich Socialist paper "Volksrecht", only to mention one among the many Liberal and Social Democratic voices, writes that during more than five years of mobilization, General Guisan has brilliantly carried out his tasks maintaining the people's will for resistance and leading not only the army but the whole armed nation.

On the occasion of General Guisan's resignation, the Swedish paper, Stockholm's "Tidningen" in an editorial paid high tribute to the Commander-in-Chief of the Swiss Army. The paper declares that through his activity General Guisan has made himself a name which reaches far beyond Switzerland's frontiers. General Guisan is a brilliant representative of the Swiss people's will to defend their country to the last and this will has had to stand many a hard test during this war, much more than this has been the case for Sweden. Especially when Switzerland had been completely surrounded by the forces of the Axis powers, General Guisan in his well known order of the day, had inspired the Swiss people with confidence and courage and had gained for himself great popularity.

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#### SWITZERLAND AND SOVIET RUSSIA.

As you may remember, Switzerland undertook last Fall official steps for the re-establishment of normal diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia after an interruption of some 25 years. This proposition found an absolutely negative echo. Since that time the Soviet Press and Radio has not ceased to shout off accusations of an extremely serious character against our country. A great many of these reproaches are completely lacking all foundations and all we can do when we hear them is to shrug our shoulders. We do not consider them worthy of being answered. If some people are accusing us of having been pro-fascist in our official policy, we do not even try to defend ourselves, for experience tells that whatever you do, you are always considered pro-enemy in the eyes of somebody or other. We know that we are good and true democrats and that is all we need to keep our conscience quiet in this respect. We are convinced that justice will be done to us sooner or later.

The Russians have also accused us of ill-treating Russian internees and refugees who have come to our country during this war. It is true, certain regrettable incidents have taken place. In the course of uproars two Russian internees have unfortunately been killed. But it is also true that these men had assaulted our soldiers who guarded them. In this matter a most thorough investigation has been made, the results of which will be made known before the end of this month. The question will then be taken up again. We are firmly determined to reveal the facts about these incidents with complete objectivity to exculpate ourselves of the acts we have been accused of, but also to admit eventual errors we may have made or misunderstandings which may have occurred.

Recently, the Soviet government decided to expel from the Russian occupied territories all Swiss citizens regardless of their being private persons or diplomatic or consular representatives. Several of them have already returned to Switzerland and others are on their way home after having passed via Odessa and Turkey. Their reports reveal that our compatriots have been the victims of certain excesses. These excesses are of the same kind as other acts which seem to belong to modern warfare. At any rate these compatriots of ours have not been worse off than the citizens of other countries, at least as far as the cases in Germany and in Vienna are concerned. In Budapest more serious and still unexplained incidents have happened. And our two diplomatic representatives there are still prisoners in Russian hands. Those who had been accredited in Berlin and Vienna have been able to return home; they have suffered only material losses. They had been treated correctly but had not been granted any of the facilities which are customary in diplomatic relations.

The fact that Swiss citizens could be repatriated after all might have been even a favorable sign although the Russians did not allow our consular services to take care of the interests of our compatriots in the regions under Russian control. Now suddenly Radio Moscow announces that the Soviet government has decided to suspend all repatriations of Swiss citizens until it has received precise news about the conditions in which the Russian internees and refugees are kept in Switzerland, and also about the steps taken by the Swiss authorities for the repatriation of these Russians.

At the moment there are about 11,000 Russian internees in our country. They are mostly former prisoners of war who escaped from German camps at the time of the Reich's collapse. They have all been well treated and have been taken good care of. They are enjoying the same privileges which according to international conventions we have granted all foreign soldiers who have come to seek refuge in our country. On June 16 I saw about a hundred of these Russians accompanied by 8 unarmed Swiss soldiers taking a walk in the streets of Berne and singing their national songs. They were all properly dressed in new uniforms and looked extremely healthy. Why are they still in Switzerland? Why have they not yet gone back to their own country from which they have been separated for such a long time? Our authorities have declared themselves willing to let them go. There is no obstacle in their way if they want to do so. We have never tried to retain them and only in the interests of the countries which they will have to pass we have submitted them to a sanitary quarantine, an elementary hygienic measure whose value cannot be discussed. If they are still in Switzerland, it is because they don't know by which route they would be able to travel home. Another reason is that our neighboring countries and the military authorities who are in charge of them have not put at our disposal the means of transportation which are indispensable for these repatriations. The difficulties have certainly not their source with the Swiss authorities. They are caused by circumstances which are beyond our control. Nevertheless, all these Russian internees are welcome in our country and our people have received them with friendliness. We have done everything in our power to take good care of them and to cure the effects of the moral and physical hardships they have had to endure in German prison camps. We understand their wish to return home and also the wish of the Soviet government to see these men back again on Russian territory. We never, in the least, opposed ourselves against these very natural feelings for we are respecting international law as well as we decide for individual freedom. The steps taken by our authorities have led to no positive results so far but they will not fail to do so if the Russian diplomacy will lend a hand to it. This voice would undoubtedly be heard. Wouldn't it be much simpler to straighten out this problem in direct contact without intermediaries instead of communicating government decisions through officious radio stations? Switzerland would be willing, as the Russian refusal last November has changed nothing in our plans and intentions. She would be glad to meet a similar attitude in her far way interlocutors. The Russian authorities would then find that in this matter no reproaches can be made to Switzerland.

#### HAS SWITZERLAND ENOUGH TO EAT?

Food rations in our country have grown very small, and our people are eagerly expecting new imports. The Federal statistical office in Berne has published several most interesting figures, comparing the food situation in our country during the first and the second world war. They reveal above all that in the first war no major restrictions were necessary during the first year and that also in this war 1940 was still a relatively good year. In January 1917 sugar had still been free. In December of the same year, the ration had been 750 grams. In January 1940, however, the monthly quantity of sugar allowed per head was 2000 grams and in December 1000 grams. Today, the figure has even dropped to 500 grams. Spaghetties, macaronies and noodles had still been unrationed until late in the summer 1917, and in 1918, the monthly ration had varied from 350 to 400 grams. Today we only get 250 grams. The present bread ration is about as high as in the last years of the first war. Cheese rations are even a bit higher. But meat had not been rationed at all in the first war while today it has become a very scarce article. Edible fats and oils had only been rationed in the last month of the first war and during a short period afterwards. Today the foodstuffs which have grown rarest in our country are just fat and oil. If Switzerland could import more fats, a most important food problem would be solved for there are sufficient quantities of potatoes in the country.

Switzerland would like to extend her relief and aid actions. After the departure of the internees and refugees in our country, she would like to welcome new categories of them, especially a great number of undernourished Dutch children. Reports from Holland continue to say: save our children who are weak and underfed and need great care. But our country's charitable actions create the great problems of food supply. Nevertheless, we are determined to accept further tens of thousands of needy people.