

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK
Band: - (1953)
Heft: 1204

Rubrik: Home affairs

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HOME AFFAIRS.

by MAX NEF.

During the last few days, comprehensive discussions took place in the National Council in regard to questions of external policy. At the same time, the Head of the Political Department, Federal Councillor Petitpierre, made a statement regarding the attitude taken up by Switzerland in the world, split up as it is at present into two factions. This had nothing to do with the setting up of any new principles or guiding directions in regard to our country's relations with the community of nations. A permanent, fundamental and armed neutrality is and will remain Switzerland's rule of conduct as expressed in the familiar phrase "Neutrality and solidarity".

It is necessary, however, that, occasionally, the newest developments and to-day's actuality be carefully examined in the light of this rule, in order to be able to establish whether or not our foreign policy is in harmony with these events. During the parliamentary debates, all the speakers belonging to the authoritative Parties in Switzerland approved without reserve the foreign policy pursued by the Government of the country, and assured the Federal Council of their continued support in all its endeavours.

"We wish to proceed along the road which we have chosen for ourselves", said Federal Councillor Petitpierre, in conclusion of his speech, "and which has been prescribed for us by our history. We are firmly convinced that our neutrality, no more constitutes a sin against Europe, than does co-operation, as we understand it and practice it in relation to all those nations with which it is possible, constitute a sin against neutrality".

It must always be recalled to the mind that Swiss neutrality is not an end in itself. It is merely one of the means for the maintenance of our independence and freedom, because it creates a basis for entertaining correct relations with all the countries. For none of these States does it form an obstacle in the way of their attempts to achieve a future union.

European efforts to arrive at a unification may have various effects upon our country, according to whether, when striving for this union, the economic, political or military viewpoints come first into consideration. Switzerland's Statute of Neutrality prohibits her from taking part in any unions of a political or military nature concluded by countries. On the other hand, as soon as it is a case of efforts being made in the economic, financial, cultural or, more particularly, charitable and social spheres of action, our country is an active member of the community of nations. It is not afraid to make sacrifices, in order to help, in this way in the reconstruction of a peaceful world. This does not, however, presuppose the necessity for union, but can be achieved by means of collaboration.

For the Leader of Swiss foreign policy, however, the problem of European integration presents itself not so much in an abstract form, as in the form of practical individual questions which may arise and have to be settled during the course of their development. To these belong such occurrences as the setting up of the Montan Union, the Payments Union, the

Organisation for European Economic Organisation and similar institutions.

The divided world of to-day, with Europe split up into two halves, is the reflected image of the ideological conflict. Switzerland, however, does not lie between these two Europes, one belonging to the East and the other to the West. From the geographical, historical and cultural aspect she forms a part of Western Europe. This, however, does not — and must not — prevent her from entertaining — as she has always done — good relations with all the other countries. As a result, there do not exist any serious difficulties in regard to Switzerland's foreign relations with any country.

Federal Councillor Petitpierre stated that according to Swiss views, every country should be free to choose whatever régime suited it best. There does not exist any political and economic régime of a general character which would be acceptable to all the countries, collectively. In Switzerland, the predominating political idea is that of tolerance. Because Communism upholds an opposite attitude to this and advocates it, in part, by means of weighty measures, we are against it. On the national plane, we consider that Communism is a doctrine which can be discussed and against which defensive measures can be taken to protect ourselves within the limits of the laws and of the Constitution. This is what the Swiss Minister for Foreign Affairs declared textually, before the National Council. He then went on to say that "even if we, in Switzerland, prefer our democratic and freedom-loving ideas to the doctrines of Communism, and are therefore opposed to it in all its radiations, this does not, and must not prevent us from entertaining, in the future, also, the same honest and loyal relations with the Communist Governments as with all the others."



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