

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK
Band: - (1981)
Heft: 1777

Rubrik: Letter from Switzerland

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A pessimistic view from the National Council

THE military commission of the Swiss National Council has requested the Federal Military Department to examine whether repetition courses should not, in future, also be held during the Christmas and New Year's recess.

In view of the climate of confrontation between East and West and of the continuously increasing preponderance of the Eastern bloc in the military field Switzerland should, in the eyes of the commission, be better than hitherto secured against a surprise attack. Moreover, measures should now be studied how the mobilisation of the army could be carried through more rapidly than now.

The question naturally arises what induced the members of the said commission to adopt such a pessimistic, not to say alarmist, view of the international situation. As far as can be established, a number of factors may have contributed to a sombre picture emerging.

First and foremost it was no doubt the brutal Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 which showed clearly what the constant Soviet professions of peaceful intentions and co-existence are worth.

In addition it is no secret that the Soviets have built up a military machine of conventional and nuclear potential, including one of the largest fleets of warships and giant submarines, missiles, rockets, warplanes, tanks and other weaponry which has long since passed the level of what can conceivably be considered as necessary for defence.

If one were to look for gloomy prophets amongst the interna-

tional prominence, one could point to recent utterances of Henry Kissinger, or the Federal German Foreign Minister Genscher, as well as the new American Deputy Minister of Defence, Carlucci - not to speak of the Chinese politicians who take an outbreak of an East-West conflict within the next few years for granted. And now Berne seems to view the situation in a similar light.

However, if one examines the problem whether the Soviets have built up such a huge military machine in order to attack - or rather in order to be able to politically blackmail the West into surrendering important positions - the latter possibility seems to be the more probable.

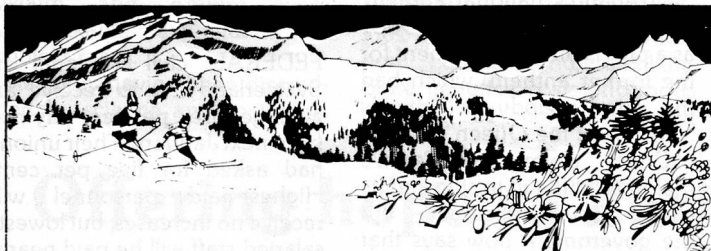
For one thing, as long as Soviet relations with China are

what they are now, it is most unlikely that the Soviets would risk an aggression against Western Europe for fear of a possible second front in their back.

Moreover it seems most likely that in case of a war the Soviet's East-European Empire would rise like one man against their suppressors: Poland, the Baltic States, Hungary, Romania are not, by nature, communist states.

If one looks for reasons why a direct Soviet attack against the West is unlikely, they are very easy to find. Besides, to be ready to defend the country is right and necessary - but to contribute to the creation of an atmosphere of pessimism and gloom seems unwise, to say the least.

Gottfried Keller



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