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of its shareholders as the latter cannot be expected to be penalised for what in the first instance was a *faux pas* inadvertently committed by the British Government.

The Savoy Free Zones.

In deference to the desire of a correspondent for some details of the arguments in the French Senate which preceded the ratification of the Franco-Swiss compromise, we reproduce the report relating thereto from the *Times* (March 14th); the measure was passed the following day (March 14th), thanks to the strong recommendation of the French Foreign Minister.

"In the debate M. Fernand David, Senator for the Department of Haute Savoie, gave a vivid historical survey of the whole dispute, and referred to a number of actions on the part of the Swiss authorities which helped perhaps, in some degree, to explain the local French opposition to the proposed settlement.

"Two projects were before the Senate:—(1) The Bill adopted by the Chamber, proposing that the President of the Republic be authorised to ratify the convention embodying the arbitral compromise between France and Switzerland with regard to the Free Zones of Haute Savoie and the district of Gex, signed at Paris on October 30th, 1924; and (2) a resolution introduced by M. David, supported by two other Senators of Haute Savoie, MM. Gallet and Curral, demanding the postponement of any discussion of the above until the Swiss Confederation should have ratified unconditionally that part of Article 435 of the Treaty of Versailles containing the abrogation of the provisions laid down by the Congress of Vienna and the Treaty of Paris in 1815 on the subject of the neutralised Savoy Zone.

Mr. Fernand David declared that, since the French Government had moved up the Customs frontier to coincide with the political frontier, the whole situation with regard to the zones had greatly improved, and there was now no dispute between the Government and the representatives of the Savoy. Their opposition to the ratification of the arbitral compromise was intended to be a protest against the attitude of the Swiss Government, which threatened that, if the Senate refused to ratify the compromise, it would itself refuse assent to the provisions in the Treaty of Versailles relating to the neutrality of the northern Savoy Zone. These provisions were political in that they envisaged the military neutrality of the Savoy region, between the Jura and the Lake of Geneva, and they were economic in that they affected the Free Zones bordering upon Geneva itself. In obtaining the inclusion of Article 435 in the Treaty France thus intended to get rid of a double obligation, and informed Switzerland to this effect. Switzerland, however, was chiefly concerned to preserve her peculiar state of permanent neutrality, without that neutrality being considered an obstacle to her membership of the League of Nations. Switzerland, in fact, wanted all the advantages without giving anything in return, and to this extent her ratification was conditional.

M. David went on to give some illustrations of the relations between the two countries on the frontier. He recalled the opposition of Switzerland, at the beginning of the War, to the establishment of a hospital for French wounded in the Northern zone. This opposition was persisted in even when France offered not to send back the wounded to the front, and to allow Swiss medical officers to exercise control. He also recalled the Swiss protest when a French regiment coming out of the trenches had been sent for a period of rest to Saint Julien. He reminded the Senate that the part of Article 435 relating to the Swiss Zones, which envisaged an economic *entente*, had been ratified by the Swiss Federal Chambers, but had been rejected by a referendum of the Swiss people under the influence of German propaganda and Genevese Nationalists, as a protest against French Imperialism and the occupation of the Ruhr. M. Poincaré had then offered to enter into fresh negotiations, but the Swiss had refused, and it was after he had seen that no advance was to be made on these lines that the Customs posts were moved up to the political frontier. As to the so-called 1860 zone, he ascribed the opposition of Switzerland to possible disappointment in that this zone was destined to be assigned to her if Germany had won the war. The Swiss claimed rights over it on historical grounds that were quite untenable, and the population had the right to demand that the Senate should watch over the interests of a region that was French, and was determined to remain French.

M. David was followed by M. Victor Bérard, the *rapporteur* on the Bill, who resisted M. David's proposal for an adjournment. M. Bérard traced the history of the free zone controversy, and came to the conclusion that Switzerland, when she obtained recognition of her right of neutrality, and her entry into the League of Nations, abandoned in favour of France the claim to neutrality of Northern Savoy and the administration of the free zones. The first paragraph of Article 435 of the Treaty of Versailles definitely

abolished the neutrality of Savoy, according to M. Bérard. The second paragraph did away with the zone system, but only on the understanding that a convention on this subject would be drawn up between France and Switzerland. Switzerland obtained the two advantages which she sought, and should be willing to concede, in return, the abandonment of Savoyan neutrality.

After M. Bérard's speech the Senate adjourned."

The speeches of the Senators David and Bérard also contained some statements (disregarded in the above report) which suggested reflections on the President of the Confederation in office at the time when the Versailles Treaty was drawn up. M. Gustave Ador has issued a declaration in the following terms (*Times*, March 21st):—

"He explained that when he arrived in Paris in 1919 and was told that the Treaty of Versailles contained an article—No. 435—concerning Switzerland, he at once objected that a clause regarding Switzerland, who was no party to the Treaty, could not be inserted without her previous assent. In the ensuing conversations there was practically no discussion on the question of the confirmation of Swiss neutrality and the eventual renunciation by Switzerland of her right to occupy northern Savoy in case of war. But M. Ador obtained an assurance that the question of the Free Zones in Savoy and the Pays de Gex should be left aside. He further never admitted that the second paragraph of Article 435 suppressed or would have the effect of bringing about the suppression of the Free Zone. Not only had the words "by mutual consent," inserted in that article at the request of M. Ador, excluded any unilateral modification of the status of the Free Zones, but he never admitted either that the Free Zones were suppressed by that second paragraph or that they would be suppressed by the Franco-Swiss Agreement for which that article of the Treaty did provide.

MM. Bérard and David pretended that M. Ador was not in agreement with the Swiss Government on that question. M. Ador emphatically states that he was in complete agreement with the Swiss Federal Council, which shared all his views on the subject and consequently addressed on May 5th, 1919, a Note to the French Government, in which it indicated the conditions on which it could agree to the proposed wording of Article 435. M. Ador, moreover, did not give any pledge in any circumstances concerning the immediate or subsequent suppression of the Free Zones. It may be added that the points to which M. Ador referred in "his statement are among those which will be submitted to the examination of The Hague Court."

BARNUM ET CIE.

J'ai, soyez-en persuadés, autant de respect et d'admiration que vous pour la Société des Nations. Mais l'on ne peut s'empêcher—lorsqu'on n'est pas secoué par un parti-pris qui peut, suivant les circonstances, devenir une maladie grave et chronique au même degré que la danse de Saint-Guy ou la fièvre jaune—de suivre avec gaité les méandres marécageux dans lesquels s'est embourbé la Commission préparatoire de la Conférence du désarmement.

Il est évident que nos hauts diplomates européens, pour traverser cette jungle douteuse et fœufue, ont eu recours à des porteurs d'une curieuse espèce. Ces derniers venaient de Moscou ou étaient fort imprégnés des odeurs qui règnent en ces régions ultra-carpathiennes. Notre équipage a donc manqué de s'enliser totalement, malgré toute la clairvoyance des chefs et comme, finalement, chacun tirait de son côté, que les porteurs ne voulaient plus rien porter, que les guides ne voulaient plus rien montrer, que les bêtes ne voulaient plus marcher et que les chefs eux-mêmes en avaient assez, notre vaillante cohorte s'est souhaitée "bien le bonjour" et chacun est rentré chez lui par le plus court chemin. Or, chose remarquable, autant la brousse semblait infranchissable pour cette noble compagnie prise en entier, autant elle n'exista plus lorsque chacun fut livré à lui-même!

On a dit tout le bien qu'on pouvait attendre des débats publics instaurés par la Société des Nations, et jusqu'à présent nous avions cru qu'il y avait dans cette voie un élément de plus pour assurer au monde une paix que nous pouvions peut-être taxer, aujourd'hui, d'utopique! Mais pour ceux qui ont assisté aux deux dernières séances de cette Commission, il est hors de doute que la mécontente manifeste et les propos totalement opposés que se jetaient à la face les délégués ne sont pas faits pour plaider en faveur de ce nouveau système.

Epicure disait déjà qu'il fallait "prendre la vie comme elle vient, et savoir la voir toujours en rose!" Nous opinions pour ce système et ne doutons nullement que d'ici une...future séance nos diplomates n'arrivent à un accord parfait, dûment établi à l'avance.

En attendant, le spectacle était vraiment étonnant où, sans se soucier—et la chose est bien rare à Genève!—de l'avis de son voisin, le délégué affirmait purement et simplement son point de vue.

Il fallait ou, s'en émuovoir très fort ou le prendre "avec le sourire." C'est ce que nous avons fait et nous estimons avoir trouvé la bonne méthode.

Le Russe, donc, veut qu'on désarme immédiatement. Comme son projet soulève des montagnes de protestations...et de paperasserie, il recule ses batteries et propose un désarmement graduel, mais encore bien problématique. Une fois de plus, il laisse exulter la joie qu'il éprouve d'avoir mis le feu aux poudres...de l'opinion publique mondiale.

Michel, toujours sympathique, n'est qu'un tout petit garçon en l'affaire. On lui a enlevé son cuirassé à moteur, ses dirigeables à ficelle, ses canons en tire-bouchons et ses soldats de plomb... ou de chair! Se sentant désarmé, il réclame que les autres en fassent autant, avec une véhémence et une ténacité qui sont bien la caractéristique de sa race.

Mais le plus admirable est sans doute l'envoyé de son Altesse très romaine qui, en des déclarations fort ambiguës, déclare tout simplement n'avoir rien à faire avec ce problème compliqué, pour lequel il marque du reste le plus grand des délais. On sent dans ses déclarations le peu...d'intérêt, pour ne pas dire d'autre chose, que lui inspire l'institution de Genève.

Seuls Marianne et John Bull se tiennent tendrement par la main, parlant à tour de rôle, tandis que l'autre opine du bonnet ou du chapeau-claque. La jeune fille reprend en cœur et sur un air doucereux les vaillantes paroles de son camarade, alors que ce dernier ponctue de savants coups de poing les propos déagés de sa compagne.

Autour de ces grands ténors, c'est une foule de seconds rôles aussi acrobatiques, aussi pressés, aussi brailards, aussi bien habillés les uns que les autres. Tels les satellites autour des astres qui leur donnent vie et raison d'être, ils acquiescent lorsqu'on acquiesce, ils protestent lorsqu'on proteste, ils font écho lorsqu'on leur demande, ils se répandent en imprécations désordonnées lorsqu'ils ont l'impression de pouvoir en tirer quelque...bénéfice.

Admirable chose que cette session, qui restera la "pièce" la plus réussie de l'année, comme le Chateaubriant le plus soigneusement préparé, comme le sorbet le plus admirablement dosé. Reste seulement à savoir qui ingurgitera ce mets délicat, et surtout qui paiera l'addition du repas!...

L'Auguste poudré.

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