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NOUVELLE SOCIÉTÉ HELVÉTIQUE AND ANGLO-SWISS SOCIETY.

Lecture given by the Swiss Minister, Monsieur
A. Daeniker.

The Open Meeting of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique in conjunction with the Anglo-Swiss Society, which was held on Tuesday, October 18th, at Londonderry House, Park Lane, W.1., was crowded out about 130 persons being present, which easily beats all previous records.

On this occasion our Minister, Monsieur A. Daeniker, spoke on "Swiss Experience in active Neutrality". He was eminently competent to speak on this subject, having acted as Chief of the Swiss Delegation to the Neutral Nation Commission for the repatriation of Prisoners of War in Korea.

Dr. H. W. Egli, President of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, in introducing the speaker, also mentioned the presence of Sir Clifford Norton, a former British Minister in Berne.

We are much indebted to the Minister for having given the permission to re-produce his most interesting address in this paper, making it thus available to a wider circle of our compatriots.

Two films, one produced by the Indian Government, and one by the Supervision Commission, were shown at the conclusion of Monsieur Daeniker's exposé, the first one dealing principally with the troublesome happenings in the Prisoners of War camps, whilst the second portrayed, in the main, the work of the Neutral Nations Commission, also showing a number of views of the capital and other towns of South Korea.

When the lights were switched on again, Colonel St. Townend, President of the Anglo-Swiss Society, very warmly thanked the Swiss Minister, on behalf of the audience, for his excellent and most interesting address.

* * *

THE SWISS MINISTER'S ADDRESS.

Mr. Chairman, ladies and gentlemen,

I appreciate highly the privilege to speak before such a distinguished audience as the members of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique and the Anglo-Swiss Society about neutrality in its various forms, to lead you along some new paths of Swiss foreign policy and to show you the virtues and the risks of active neutrality.

I. If we speak of neutrality in a strictly legal sense, we mean a set of rules of international law governing the attitude and the behaviour of States in case of war. Any sovereign state is free to decide whether, in respect of a warlike action, it will take sides or stay apart; for some countries such freedom of action is however subject to certain specific obligations deriving from their membership with the UNO. The rules governing neutrality in war on land or at sea are laid down in the Hague conventions of 1907; any government which, on the outbreak of a war or in the case of an aggression against another state, has declared its will to remain neutral, will have to comply with those rules. Whereas the decision to be neutral is an act which a sovereign state is free to make, the rules of behaviour are cogent and absolute. In other words, a government cannot choose how or

how far it will be neutral; for whichever reason it has chosen to remain neutral it has to abide by those rules and abstain strictly from giving military, economic or financial support to either of the belligerents. Any deviation from such rules may be conclusive evidence of a lessening of the will to keep neutral; neutrality would thus be set aside and superseded by mere non-belligerence.

I propose however to examine to-night particularly the aspects of neutrality in peace time and especially in the years which we call the period of the cold war. We all know that in these circumstances the Nations have chosen differing ways. We are faced to-day with two blocks of States, linked amongst themselves by defensive alliances, because a majority of countries follows the old time honoured maxim of: *si vis pacem para bellum*. Such regional military alliances are supplemented by economic, financial and also cultural agreements intended to forge the bonds of common interests into a closer unity. The experiences of the last war have abundantly proved to the adherents of such a policy that only under a common strategical plan, by joining forces with powerful allies and opening their territory in advance to combined military operation, will they be able to withstand the onslaught of future aggressive action and obtain a reasonable safeguard for the defence of their territory. Solidarity on a common defensive basis has been proclaimed the only means for the preservation of these individual states as well as for the survival of our common patrimony.

In contrast to such theories, we find a number of states who are convinced that their integrity will be better guaranteed if they endeavour to keep an impartial attitude towards regional blocks. They maintain that reliance upon their own means of protection will not only be best for their own preservation, but will also best serve and further world peace. Whereas until lately neutrality had been decried as a policy of opportunism, of cowardice and even as a breach of common bonds of solidarity, we encountered recently a revaluation of the concept of neutrality in peace time. The Eastern block has thus in this divided world proclaimed the virtues and advantages of neutrality as a guiding principle; it has declared its willingness to favour such tendencies and to give its guarantee to any state willing to follow a neutral course. Coming from such an interested quarter, the suggestion has raised some suspicion. It has hardly helped to enhance the value of true neutrality, it is

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rather regarded as a tactical move intended to put a wedge into the opposing front.

It would therefore be very helpful to analyse the position and the motives underlying the policy of some of the states belonging to this last group of neutrals and compare them with the principles guiding Swiss neutrality.

Foremost among the governments who profess to-day an independent neutral course, and thus may be considered eligible for active neutrality, is that of the Union of India. Under the dynamic leadership of Pandit Nehru, India has insisted on keeping aloof from any of the ideological blocks, being anxious to devote its energy and strength solely to its own reconstruction. She is willing to accept help and support from whatever quarter it may be offered, provided it is without political strings or obligations. But to describe this conduct as properly neutral would in the eyes of the Indian Prime Minister be a misconception of his policy. He feels this would imply a limitation of the sovereignty of India and her freedom of action. Nehru pretends that he is prepared to throw India's weight in support of any policy which serves the higher interests of the community of Nations, but that he will base his decision entirely on the merits of the particular situation. In following such a policy, he believes he is best serving the cause of peace; indeed the services which India has so far rendered as an intermediary in questions of world wide importance, such as accepting heavy responsibilities in Korea and Indo-China and in suggesting solutions to acute disputes, cannot be overlooked and have rightly been appreciated in many quarters.

Another example of a state with a fixed neutral policy in peace time, though less ambitious, and based on more realistic reasons, is Sweden. There are no treaties or guarantees which determine Sweden's foreign policy. But, ever since Prince Bernadotte, the then Crown Prince Elect of Sweden, in 1813 led his forces onto the battlefield of Leipzig and brought defeat on his former overlord, Sweden has not been engaged in warlike operations. Its approach towards neutrality however is empirical, the maintenance of neutrality has been favoured by circumstances and commended itself for reasons of opportunism; the wisdom of their decision has often been regarded as questionable; for instance when Prussia waged war on Denmark in 1864. Considering the poor condition of Sweden's armament and military

preparedness until the first world war, her position, wedged between such powers as Germany and Russia, gave her hardly a chance but to stick meticulously to her neutrality. Since Sweden has now become the foremost military power in the North she has no reason to abandon neutrality. But the country aspired also to the leadership of a neutral block of Nordic Nations, a plan which did not however get a favourable response from its neighbours. It has often been assumed that Sweden would throw its neutrality overboard in the case of an unprovoked aggression against Norway or Denmark on the one side and Finland on the other. History so far has disproved this assumption; during the first Finno-Russian war Sweden was anything but neutral, then it went to the extremes of non-belligerence.

India and Sweden are both full members of the United Nations Organisation; they even consider their membership essential in order to collaborate in the cause of peace and solidarity in the world. Similarly, the Austrian Republic which so recently recovered her sovereignty through the Treaty with the Allied powers, would consider membership of UNO to be compatible with a declaration of permanent neutrality. The matter is controversial. We Swiss consider the United Nations in the last resort as an alliance which ultimately obliges its members to lend not only economic but also military aid in case of aggression. There are indeed under the Charter various possibilities for member nations to qualify their contribution in a joint action.

In all other respects Austria seems to be anxious to follow the example of Swiss neutrality. Though it would be too early to give a definite judgment on the character of the future Austrian status, it is in my opinion wrong to place it on the same level as the so-called neutralised states; by this I mean states upon whom neutrality has been imposed without consulting them or even against their will, as has been the case for Belgium and Luxembourg before the first World War and also for the now defunct city state of Trieste.

II. I have made these remarks on some of the neutral states in our time solely in order to illustrate the different ways in which they themselves understand their neutrality. Whereas neutrality in wartime is subject to strict regulations, neutrality in peace time is rather a relative conception. A state may be neutral towards some states whilst a different course

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of action has been laid down towards some other nation for quite definite and specific reasons. "The principle of neutrality is one and the same", President Petitpierre said in his latest speech, "but in practice the neutral states follow various policies, each according to its own historical and political evolution; it can be said that there are as many neutralities as there exist neutral states". In comparison with such a concept of peace-time neutrality, the status of perpetual neutrality of the Swiss Confederation is of a more absolute nature. Indeed, its main characteristics derive from the fact that a) it is the product of an historical evolution and has thereby become a "maxime d'état"; b) it is of a permanent and durable nature, not merely accidental as in the case of Sweden, and c) it has been recognised as a factor in the true interest to Europe.

The roots of neutrality reach far back in our history. Paradoxically enough it was the outcome of experiences gathered during the period of expansion, which the young Confederation followed and was driven to practise in order to secure a "Lebensraum" for its growing population. But very soon contrasting interests between the towns and rural cantons became only too evident. "So half-baked a political organisation as the Confederation of that time, did not possess the necessary strength either for a uniform policy or for clearcut military aims", says Professor Bonjour in his fundamental treatise on the subject. Our ancestors had to choose between tightening and centralising their government or preserving their individual liberties and their regional and communal autonomies. Thus there exists a close affinity between neutrality and federation which forms the foundation of our constitutional life, and also between neutrality and democracy. It was for reasons connected with this internal growth that the Swiss cantons made neutrality the mainstay of the Confederation's foreign policy. Later when religious conflicts threatened to undermine the national cohesion and to disrupt the Confederation, when powerful national states grew up on her frontiers, the heritage of their fathers proved to be a blessing to the coming generations. Neutrality has been and remains the protective shield against the desintegration of the Confederation, composed of members of such different political standing, religious belief, language and culture.

Moreover, the neutral status of the Confederation with its key position in the alpine massif corresponded well with the balance of power, which during many centuries determined the international situation on the European Continent. Nevertheless, it was a diplomatic achievement of the first order when the representative of the Swiss cantons, Pictet de Rochement, obtained in the Act of Paris of 1815 a declaration to the effect that the perpetual neutrality and integrity of Switzerland and its independence of any foreign influence are in the true interest of the whole of Europe. This act as well as its reaffirmation in the Treaty of Versailles stipulates a formal and authentic recognition of the perpetual neutrality and gives a guarantee of the integrity and inviolability of its territory but *not* of its neutrality. The difference is important. Our government never allowed the signatory powers to infer a right to enquire how we intend to maintain and exercise our neutrality;

neither did we concede to them a right to take measures for the protection of our territory without our consent or against our will.

III. Having shown that Swiss neutrality is not an attitude of weakness but is motivated by historical, geographical and political reasons and has therefore nothing to do with neutralism, let us now see what the implications of permanent neutrality are and what peculiar responsibilities derive from it. We have always maintained that if we want our neutrality to be respected, we must be willing and able to defend our independence and our territory with our own armed forces. It precludes moreover, in peace as in war, our participation in any military alliance, treaty of assistance or the concession of military bases. The entanglements we encountered under a status of differential neutrality, which qualified our adherence to the League of Nations, made us abstain from any arrangements which might have enabled us to apply successfully for membership in the United Nations Organisation; for analogous reasons we did not participate in the Council of Europe. But our neutrality does not mean a regimentation of public opinion. The Federal Council repeatedly declared that only the state is neutral, the citizen is always free in his choice of sympathies and dispassionate discussion of world affairs is never banned. Permanent neutrality does not prevent us from taking part in economic activities on a multilateral basis as long as they do not profit some states to the detriment of others. Thus we are participating in most of the agencies of the U.N.O. and collaborate in the reconstruction of Europe within the framework of the O.E.E.C.; provided always that our membership does not restrict our freedom to deal with states who may not be members of these organisations. Besides our many humanitarian activities during both wars and after, it has been our special privilege to support and protect on our soil the International Committee of the Red Cross and to offer a home to the League of Red Cross Societies as well as other organisations of a world wide character. Indeed, the fundamental principles of the Red Cross organisation are its universality, its impartiality, its independence from any political confessional and economic influences and the maintenance of a status of equality between the member societies. Only a permanently neutral state can offer the healthy climate needed for the flourishing of such principles; how could the Red Cross Committee have ever attained its aims in wartime if its headquarters had been located with one of the belligerents?

It is therefore not a programmatic declaration



but a factual statement when Federal Councillor Petitpierre declared that neutrality has to be supplemented by solidarity and that these are the twin principles guiding Swiss foreign policy in the post war period.

IV. This survey of the present position of Neutrals would however not be complete if I did not mention recent developments which tend to impart to them some new political functions and so give a new significance to neutrality. Seen from this latest point of view it will not be enough that a neutral state engages in humanitarian activities in order to compensate somehow the advantages of being spared the horrors of war. More and more it is recognised that specific tasks exist which can only be carried out by a truly neutral Nation who enjoys the unrestricted confidence of both sides and acts with impartiality and objectivity. The mandates conferred on some neutrals by the armistice conventions in Korea and Indo-China would seem to be a beginning only for a new trend aiming somehow at the integration of neutrality in modern world politics.

I remember the times around fifty years ago when neutrals led a life apart from world politics; the times when statesmen rarely crossed the frontiers of their country, when foreign Ministers refused to spend most of their time in foreign travel and left the task of settling international disputes to their diplomatic representatives. Although neutral soil was preferred for international conferences, these were mostly of a technical or humanitarian and not of a political character. During this period of comparative peace neutral governments were not called upon

to collaborate in political missions and the Swiss people in particular would have felt shy to be involved in matters concerning disputes between world powers.

How the times have changed since the first world war. Our people are pleased that Geneva is considered an ideal place for gatherings of a political nature and I feel sure that our national prestige has grown through the support which our authorities have given by providing facilities and even organising such conferences on our soil.

To illustrate the attitude of our government towards international missions, let me draw your attention to the message of the Federal Council of April 26th, 1955, on the participation of Swiss delegates in Korea. The Federal Council point out that neutrality does not oblige us to follow a policy of abstention and indifference towards international events and does not prevent us from participating in the endeavours for the settlement of conflicts between states or the establishment of a system of enduring world peace. They remind us that before now Switzerland or its individual citizens had been asked to undertake missions of an international character. Our country considered such requests as a recognition of its neutrality and they were accepted in order to demonstrate our readiness to contribute however modestly towards the peaceful settlement of problems which, without concerning us directly, disturbed international relations or might possibly lead to an outbreak of hostilities. These services undoubtedly helped to enhance the position of Switzerland and facilitated the understanding of our permanent neutrality. The Federal Council recalls further the many occasions where members of our Executive or of our Supreme Court had to act as or to appoint arbiters in a settlement of disputes between foreign states; it recalls also more than 40 mandates accepted during the World War II for the protection of foreign interests.

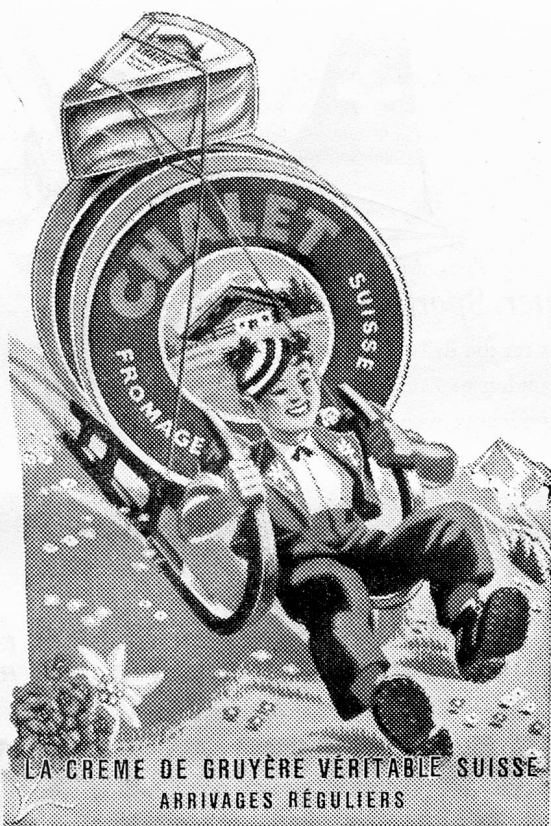
However, when the Federal Council was asked to participate in the execution of the Korean armistice treaty, it was confronted with a novel situation. Except in the Gran Chaco conflict, no neutral government had ever been summoned to a similar task, nor had Swiss military detachments ever been sent abroad in order to carry out such a mission. How was this mandate compatible with our traditional neutrality, what risks would it imply? Would it morally be in the interest of our country, would it be conducive to the establishment of real peace?

(Conclusion in next issue.)

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