

**Zeitschrift:** The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK

**Herausgeber:** Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

**Band:** - (1957)

**Heft:** 1289

  

**Artikel:** Extract of a speech made in the Swiss parliament

**Autor:** Petitpierre, Max

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-686776>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. [Siehe Rechtliche Hinweise.](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. [Voir Informations légales.](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. [See Legal notice.](#)

**Download PDF:** 30.03.2025

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

**EXTRACT OF A SPEECH  
MADE IN THE SWISS PARLIAMENT BY  
MONSIEUR MAX PETITPIERRE,  
SWISS FOREIGN MINISTER.**

In the latter part of his speech to the Federal Parliament the Swiss Foreign Minister, Mr. Petitpierre, went into Switzerland's intentions on the diplomatic level in the present state of world affairs. He said that suggestions had come from certain quarters relating, among other things, to Switzerland's membership of United Nations and breaking off diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia. The Swiss Foreign Minister said the Cabinet and Foreign Affairs Committees all agreed that breaking off diplomatic relations with Russia would be inopportune because the universality of Switzerland's foreign relations meant that this country, as a neutral, could carry out humanitarian work in case of conflict or strained or dangerous situations. It also meant that international conferences were held on our territory, and international organisations had been able to set up their headquarters here. The Minister reminded the House that the staff of the International Committee of the Red Cross was Swiss, and paralysing their activity would mean that the application of conventions as useful as those of Geneva would be made more difficult or even impossible.

Mr. Petitpierre, referring to suggestions that Switzerland should join United Nations, said in effect that this country was really more useful outside that organisation than within it, for Switzerland could scarcely expect to influence its decisions much, and in addition could no longer be available for carrying out tasks given by the United Nations to countries not directly involved in any of the questions that body is trying to solve. Switzerland was ready to accept missions or tasks which were in the general interest. Regarding the Council of Europe, the Swiss Foreign Minister said that in order to have its rightful place in the world, the countries of this continent should try to unite; but political unity could only stem from an agreement between the various countries on the principles of foreign policy with the main aim of peace within Europe and with other continents. "But," added Mr. Petitpierre, "as long as the problems facing certain countries of Europe because of their overseas territories remain unsolved, and thus constitute a sort of mortgage on the relations between the Western world and other continents — as long as this is the case, I am convinced that it is not in Europe's interest for the countries not having these responsibilities to become associated directly or indirectly." The Minister added: "It is preferable for them to remain available, impartial, disinterested, ready for the time when relations based on confidence, now destroyed, can be set up again."

Referring to neutrality, the Foreign Minister stated that, although things had changed since Switzerland's neutral status was set up, that neutrality had not lost its significance. Recent events and the modest activities Switzerland had carried out had shown that there was room in the world of to-day for neutrality like Switzerland's. This neutrality was not a purely moral neutrality, indifferent. It had no connection with neutralism, is not a matter of running away from responsibilities, implies no abdication

in judgments made on events, and does not hesitate to take action when it can be useful to peace.

Those modest activities the Swiss Foreign Minister referred to concerned amongst others the taking over of the representation by Switzerland of French and British interests in the Middle East, dealt with in another part of the speech. Mr. Petitpierre also spoke of other government activities during the Middle East and Hungarian crises. Mentioning the Cabinet's appeal of 6th November for a Five-Power Conference on Swiss soil, he said that the appeal, even if its chances of success seemed modest, had to be made, and although it had had no immediate consequences, it *had* opened up possibilities which later on, if the opportunity arose, could be returned to. The Minister went on to point out that the Cabinet decision to make the appeal was unanimous, and it was in no way inspired from outside this country.

In a résumé of recent international events with which he opened his speech to Parliament, the Foreign Minister said that there was no common measure between what had happened in the Middle East and what had taken place in Hungary. However, there was no doubt, added the Minister, that the French and British ultimatum of 30th October, followed by military intervention, reminded all countries which had once been colonies of methods which belonged to time past, and these states therefore took the side of Egypt against what they considered a return to colonialism.

The events taking place in Hungary since the 23rd October presented a frightful and staggering picture, the Foreign Minister said. The only crime committed by the Hungarians had been wanting to get back their independence, give themselves the government they had chosen, organise their national life as they wished, and set their own aims.

Some of the conclusions the Swiss Foreign Minister drew were these: That no problem has been settled in the Middle East, but that a plan for aiding underdeveloped countries on a basis of absolute political equality might make it possible to find a way towards needed fruitful co-operation. The events in Hungary ended the *détente*, and proved that Communism was a regime which could only survive thanks to the presence or intervention of foreign forces. A system of government which pretended to be at the service of the proletariat is obliged to machine-gun or deport workers — it makes its own condemnation.

In the situation in Eastern Europe, said the Minister, lay a heavy threat for the future.

