Henning von Vogelsang

The end of the war in Liechtenstein

The Fate of the «First Russian National Army of the German Wehrmacht»

Abridged Reprint of the original First Edition by HERDER Paperback «Herderbücherei» Nr. 1193
Copyright by Verlag Herder Freiburg i. Breisgau 85
Herder Freiburg — Basel — Wien.

Englische Fassung, herausgegeben im Auftrag der

English version published by order of the Government
of the Principality of Liechtenstein 1985.

No part of this publication may be reproduced
without the prior permission of the publishers.
About the Author

Henning Karl T. Baron von Vogelsang, born 1943 married with four children, is Deputy Editor of the "Liechtensteiner Vaterland", Vaduz. He is scion of a family rich in tradition which, in recent generations has produced several writers and journalists. His great-grandfather was the Austrian social politician Karl Freiherr von Vogelsang, a leading personality of the Christian Social Movement who also contributed to the Social Encyclical "Rerum Novarum" by Pope Leo XIII. The author feels specially committed to the spiritual legacy of this ancestor who worked as an editor and journalist just like his own parents and other ancestors. For this reason, he is particularly interested in historical and social affairs, lesser events and problems, firmly established in Christian ethics. This is reflected in his daily work as well as in the present description of extraordinary events at the end of the Second World War in his home-country. The author's name is now well known in Liechtenstein and other countries from his cultural, historical and social contributions to newspapers and journals. He is, inter alia, a member of the P.E.N. Club in Liechtenstein.
A small country nowadays has to be a moral force if it desires the right of continuity.

Hilty, Political Almanac of the Swiss Confederation, 1909
I was extremely pleased and proud that in 1945, Liechtenstein granted asylum to the Russian Troops under the Command of General A. Holmston-Smyslowsky. It is an even greater joy that despite strong pressure, and in contrast to the bad example set by other countries, these unfortunate refugees were not handed over to the executioners.

Vaduz Castle
February 7th, 1980

These lines, remarkable in many respects, were written by Prince Francis Joseph II. of Liechtenstein in February 1980 to the Author of the booklet "To Liechtenstein - to Freedom!", published for the people of Liechtenstein by the Community of Schellenberg and distributed at the time when a commemorative stone was set up there.
CONTENTS

Introduction ......................................................................................
"Invasion" without bloodshed ..........................................................
An undesired memorial? .................................................................
For some, a distressingly unpleasant memory .........................
Curious name for a Russian .............................................................
"The betrayal of Yalta" .....................................................................
How it started: From tsarist guards Officer .................................
to an officer of the German Wehrmacht ........................................
Things began to move .....................................................................
How Hitler inadvertently helped Stalin ........................................
Retreat ..............................................................................................
An "Allied Armed Force" .................................................................
Salvage what may yet be salvaged: Life ........................................
A first look at Liechtenstein: The situation ..............................
The town was not defended ...........................................................
The most dramatic moment .........................................................
The population did not remain indifferent to .........................
the Russians' fate ............................................................................
"Five-hundred sang Evening Prayers" ........................................
The population was very sympathetic towards ....................
the Russians ..................................................................................
The roar of guns ceased
Farewell to the faithful Swiss Border Guards
A Soviet Russian "Repatriation Commission"
in Vaduz
The weapons scrapped, thrown in the lake
The General's prominent visitors
The only language they understand
There is also family life in the camp
A fateful time draws to a close
List of references
The story related in this book really happened. It took place at a border which nobody ever talked about in those days. Not a border in the military sense, although in 1945 that was the principle consideration. And despite much scepticism, it happened in the way it is told here, and no other.

The story ended on a dark night, during a severe snow storm, at a tiny border-crossing post between Liechtenstein and Austria, at that time part of the German Reich. Our interest focuses on what happened because of the spectacular culmination to the preceding events. However, it all started very much earlier.

On the frontier with Austria neutral Liechtenstein had taken up a position of all-round defence: Barbed-wire entanglements, cheveaux-de-frise, Liechtenstein auxiliary police and Swiss border guards patrolling along the border. There were also enormous wooden boards, mounted on posts and facing towards the sky, to mark Liechtenstein territory clearly for any allied bombers which might have gone astray. All this was evidently an advance indication of the perilous situation.
The Swiss border guards were a great help to this unarmed country and a way acceptable to International Law had been found to justify their presence. Moreover, the Government had taken "Measures for the protection of the population in the event of the Country being drawn into warlike activities". Food was rationed, many things were scarce. Near Schaanwald, refugees streamed towards Liechtenstein's border everyday where, however, there was no entry, something to eat at the most. Essential communications were of course still in operation, so that before the crucial moment the Swiss also had news of an approaching German military unit, but it was expected to arrive at the border at a point situated between Tisis in Vorarlberg and Schaanwald in Liechtenstein. This information had, in fact, been put about by the commander of that unit. As the leader of a signals corps, a hardened old tactician, he employed the stratagem, after an overnight rest, of "accidentally" forgetting a map which had been marked with an arrow pointing towards Schaanwald, ostensibly indicating his intention to cross into Liechtenstein territory at that point. The feint succeeded. He had every reason for resorting to tricks, for not only had the French been on his and his men's heels for some time, but also the SS, inexorable avengers, in search of those who, in face of hopeless odds, wished to abandon further resistance. Moreover, the Russian Allies, even though not present in this region, could have gained ready access to these somewhat unique people, Russians in German uniforms.
"Invasion" without Bloodshed

Despite their exhaustion the columns of men moved rapidly over the soft ground towards the border and although they made every effort to keep quiet, it was impossible for them on the last lap of the march to conceal their arrival from those on the Liechtenstein side. They had arrived, vehicles and men. It became immediately evident that these troops intended to overrun the border, there was no time for further deliberations, just sufficient to make tentative contact in accordance with existing orders. But this contact proved to be inadequate and shots were fired. Then a voice accustomed to giving commands called, "don't shoot, here is a Russian general". This was without doubt the last thing the two Swiss border guards had expected.
However, while they were still trying to find out what was really going on, the mysterious troops moved across the border, not stopping until they had moved a considerable distance into Liechtenstein, making absolutely certain that all troops and baggage were on neutral territory.

Before going further into these events it is necessary to explain their background from the present day point of view.

The two sentences which preface this book, written by the Prince of Liechtenstein, the Sovereign to whom the hundreds of persecuted men involved here owe their lives, express completely the depth of the message this book attempts to convey: that fearless action, particularly on the part of the weak, can be extremely effective, more effective, in fact, by virtue of the example set, than a lot of sabre rattling by the strong. However, although the events related here derived their true historical dimension from precisely this fearless act, enacted by Prince, politicians and people, united, it is not proposed merely to sing the song of songs in praise of Liechtenstein's humanitarian spirit. Furthermore, it is not intended to set aimless youth thinking or to appraise that which preceded these happenings. Rather, it is desired to describe events which, in the relationship mentioned, speak for themselves. The book's main appeal lies in the fact that this which is related is true.
In 1980, thirty-five years to the day after the events described here took place, a simple monument was unveiled in the small Commune of Schellenberg. This monument does not serve the interests of retaliation and revenge. Rather, it gives expression to the memories of difficult times and courageous action, which saved the lives of many people. It is a reminder nevertheless of the something like two and a half million less fortunate Russians and Cossacks who were handed over for obliteration. But had this monument been a symbol of triumph rather than one of humanitarian thought and action, particularly at a time when it was most difficult, the Hereditary Prince, Hans Adam of Liechtenstein, Head Designate of the State of Liechtenstein, would probably have been reluctant to unveil it.

In the preface to a memorial booklet published on this occasion the Head of Government, Hans Brunhart, wrote: "When, at the end of the war, in 1945, thousands of refugees sought protection in our Country and help was urgently needed, the people of Liechtenstein recognized the needs of the moment and helped the exiled, the persecuted and the impoverished as far as the possibilities permitted, led by Her Serene Highness Princess Gina of Liechtenstein. The Liechtenstein Red Cross, founded at precisely that time, bears witness today to the Liechtenstein people's spontaneous willingness to help during those weeks of greatest need. The granting of asylum to the troops
of the "First Russian National Army of the German Wehrmacht", who entered our Country near Hinterschellenberg, was the acid test for the Prince and his Government. In their endeavours to bring about extradition the Soviet Union brought heavy pressure to bear against our small country. It was desired to enforce the standpoint of a constitutional state, of human rights and Christian humanity against the claims of great powers. The successful defence of the decision to grant asylum to the Russian troops must be attributed to the unswerving resolution of the Prince and the authorities. Many who had feared for their future breathed a sigh of relief.

These words serve to emphasize the significance the events of that time had for the Country or, it might be more pertinent to refer to the significance they have acquired, because then, there was no time to think, only to act.

A small diary is not a suitable vehicle for recording every detail, much has to remain unmentioned, while other things have to be assumed to be known.
For Some, a Distressingly Unpleasant Memory

The inhabitants of the victor states of that time are, in general, aware of that sad history of more than two and a half million anti-communist Russians and Cossaks who, in accordance with the agreement signed at Yalta, were handed over to the Soviet Union. The sorrow thus caused also stems from the recognition of failure. And perhaps, under Liechtenstein's miniaturized, less complex circumstances it was somewhat easier to align the internal and external opposition to extradition, although the pressure remained unchanged. It prevailed not only by virtue of Liechtenstein's own material needs and lack of space, but also because of the awareness of the possibility of becoming entwined in an extremely dangerous matter involving a powerful and victorious country, for whom the resistance might prove too stubborn and tiresome. In fact, Moscow would have had many opportunities to make matters very awkward for little Liechtenstein. Why these opportunities were not taken is inexplicable. Perhaps with all the troubles and upheavals at that time Russia had other problems.
Curious Name for a Russian

The leading character in these events was Major General Arturo Holmston-Smyslowsky. This is not quite his original name. The name "Holmston" was chosen during the war in order to keep the opposing forces in ignorance as long as possible concerning this man's true identity. His correct name is Boris Count Smyslowsky. Since, when internment in Liechtenstein ended the General, together with many of his men, found refuge in Argentina, he obtained an Argentinian passport, which he still held at the time this book was finished. This explains the Spanish way of writing the Christian name. A post-war element retained for the sake of simplicity.
"The Betrayal of Yalta"

The background to the events mentioned at the beginning, which relate to the handing over by the Allies of more than two and a half million anti-communist Russians and Cossacks to the Soviet Union in accordance with the agreement concluded with Stalin at Yalta, is examined in the book "The Last Secret", written by the British author Lord Bethell and published in 1974. Later in his book "The Betrayal of Yalta", Nicolai Tolstoy also describes the happenings surrounding General Holmston's troop when he portrays the handing over which took place during the period between 1944 and 1947.

The fact that by no means all of these men had been Soviet Russian Soldiers, many were not even Russian Citizens, is not without significance for our story, for the men of the First Russian National Army would have had very real reasons for fearing for their lives had they fallen into the hands of the Allies. It goes without saying that General Holmston was fully aware of the dangers that existed and because of them, led his men to safety. He knew the war was lost and, with it, every hope of delivering Russia from Stalin's terror. The widely held belief among historians that all these unfortunate people were either executed or left to perish in forced-labour camps is now enlightened by the refutation enacted in Liechtenstein. The end of the war in Liechtenstein: As is known, the Country did not experience the direct effects of the war, but suffered indirectly nevertheless; the threat was ever present and, ultimately, a few stray bombs dropped on Liechtenstein, whose area is only 160 sq.km, could have virtually wiped out the population.
To relieve the refugees' burden, the Government asked, among other things, for gifts of money, foodstuffs, ration cards and, in particular, bread coupons. Instructions specially promulgated for the contingency of war, that is, for the possibility of foreign troops entering the Country for any reason, would undoubtedly have come into force in the case of General Holmston's unit had the border not been crossed with such surprising speed.

The already mentioned memorial at Schellenberg reminds passers-by in a few words of the unusual event which took place here at the beginning of May, 1945: "Here, at Hinterschellenberg on the night of the 2nd to the 3rd May, 1945, the remnants of the First Russian National Army of the German Wehrmacht, under the command of Major General A. Holmston-Smyslowsky, comprising approximately 500 fully equipped men, crossed the Greater German frontier into Liechtenstein in search of asylum. Preliminary negotiations took place at the inn "Zum Löwen". These led to the granting of asylum by the Principality of Liechtenstein. Liechtenstein was thus the only European State which resisted Soviet Russia's demands for extradition. Two and a half years later the Russians were able to leave for a country of their choice".

In May 1984, the writer Rolf Hochhuth wrote in the Swiss magazine "Weltwoche": "... It may have been the Prince of Liechtenstein's catholicism, which directed him - and him alone of all the Statesmen of Europe in 1945, - to regard as sacred the ancient law of hospitality and to refuse absolutely to enter into any discussion concerning the handing over of refugees. Francis Joseph II. deserves the respect of posterity for, pressed from all sides to hand over the 500 Russians, the courageous Prince, with his Government and the citizens of Liechtenstein found themselves isolated".
How it Started:
From Tsarist Guards Officer
To an Officer of the German Wehrmacht

When, in the Spring of 1941, the military confrontation between the German Reich and the Sovjet Union began to appear unavoidable, the chairman of "ROWS" (the exiled General Russian Military Association), General von Lampe, approached the commander in chief of the German army, General Field Marshal von Brauchitsch, with the intention of discussing the possibility of co-operation. However, no agreement was reached, because Hitler rejected the suggestion. He had always been distrustful of foreign soldiers in the Wehrmacht and remained so as long as he lived. His attitude had not changed when later he gave his consent to incorporate foreign armies into the fighting. Subsequently, this also had a negative effect on political and military developments. Forty years after the end of the war, General Holmston saw this mistrust as one of the most important reasons for Hitler's defeat in Russia, because liberation without subjugation of the peoples of Russia from Stalins Regime, which was actually hated would have been bound to have a decisive influence in Germany's favour on the course of the war.

The unequivocal situation prompted General von Lampe to allow his officers to act according to their own discretion. It was at that time that, "Our General" made his first appearance. He was still the Russian Guards Captain Boris Count Smyslowsky when he took over the negotiations with the German Supreme Command.
The Count was born on December 3rd, 1897, in Terriyoki, then still Finnish, scion of a family rich in tradition, whose military men were decorated for conspicuous bravery. He began his military career already as a boy. In 1908 he was accepted into the Cadet Corps "Empress Catharine II" and graduated at the Mihailowska School of Artillery, St. Petersburg, became second lieutenant in 1915, in the Third Artillery Guards Regiment and at the age of eighteen was drafted to the front. Grave years followed, for his country, his family and himself. He witnessed the revolution, which had broken out in the meantime, and the end of the war in St. Petersburg, where he had been assigned to the General Staff Academy. The old order had collapsed. There were bloody conflicts and he began to fear for his life. His father, a true patriot, had returned home from a German prisoner-of-war camp, but he was arrested and later died in a bolshevik concentration camp, after his son had fled. Other relatives also died. The only way of avoiding the same fate was to flee. Boris Count Smyslowsky escaped with a transport of Austrian prisoners-of-war, disguised as one of them. He was bravely helped by the Austrian Red Cross delegate, Nora Countess Kinsky, who later married Count Wilczek and bore a daughter who became Gina, Princess of Liechtenstein, wife of Francis Joseph II., the Prince destined to save the life of the later General Holmston by granting him asylum in 1945, at the time when Princess Gina founded the Liechtenstein Red Cross.

Following his fortunate escape he joined the White Army in 1918, in whose service he fought for two years against the Red Army. In March 1920, his unit was interned in Poland, from where he escaped, as the civilian Holmston.
During a visit to Berlin, a one-time comrade-in-arms Baron Kaulbars, a former officer in a Russian Cavalry Regiment of the Guards, recognized him on the street. Baron Kaulbars was then attached to the "Abwehr" (the camouflage name for the military secret service) of the "Reichswehr", the 100,000 strong army Germany was permitted to keep under arms under the terms of the Versailles Treaty. Holmston now enlisted in the "Abwehr". At the end of the twenties, this secret service was taken over by Captain, later Admiral Canaris. At the same time Holmston received General Staff training (General Army Offices/Military Academy). He kept to his path single mindedly and was of one mind with his compatriots, patriotically motivated Russians, that Russia should be freed from Stalinism. They all shared the view that a change could only be brought about from outside Russia. The all pervading secret service, the NKWD, would certainly prevent the oppressed people from achieving such a change from within the country. However, it was not until later that it became evident to these men that they could not cast out the Devil by Beelzebub. As is known, they were not the first to be misled by the brilliant propaganda which succeeded in disguising the invasion of allied Russia as a "crusade against bolshevism".

It is natural that the experienced General Staff Officer Holmston did not cherish illusions of a German victory for very long. Nevertheless, he remained true to his conviction, shared already in the Autumn of 1942 with 1,080,000 Russians fighting on Germany's side, that it was not necessary to embrace National Socialism in order to free one's country. They saw the only chance of rescuing the people in serving in this army.
Most people know how this effort ended. (The handing over, above all by the Allies, of more than two and a half million anti-communist Russians and Cossaks to the Soviet Union before and subsequent to the end of the war, in accordance with the Yalta Agreement, concluded on the 11. February, 1945, remains to the present day not only controversial, but is also considered generally to be contrary to International Law, the more so since already before the agreement was signed the U.S. State Department expressed serious misgivings regarding the International Law aspect. And so for the free nations of the West this became a serious incrimination.

Holmston, incidentally, who was acutely conscious of the vast superiority of Hitler's opponents and regarded his dream of victory as an illusion, was always of the opinion that the Russian people were so strong numerically and biologically that they need never fear assimilation by the Germans. This war, against the Anglo-Saxons, the French and the Poles was no concern of the Russian volunteers. They considered that to be a purely German affair. This was Holmston's political credo until the end of the war.
The war against the Soviet Union had begun. Special Commander (Captain) Holmston was transferred to the general staff of the German Army with the rank of major. On the Eastern Front he had two duties, one was that of an intelligence officer while the other was to raise an anti Soviet Russian unit, which it was intended to form into a division in 1943. Holmston, as colonel, was in command. This body, composed mainly of deserters and prisoners-of-war who, because of the experiences they have had and the information they have gathered, preferred to help wipe out Stalin's regime, which was by no means popular in the Red Army. They all participated voluntarily.

In July, 1941, Major Holmston raised a "Training Batallion", on the northern sector of the Eastern Front, its duty being "to resist the enemy and provide an intelligence service". Twelve further batallions were developed from that one. In this way Major Holmston became the first Russian officer capable of raising Russian units on the Eastern Front. At that time Vlassow was still fighting against Germany, in command of the Second Russian Assault Army.

Holmston was promoted to the rank of lieutenant colonel at the beginning of 1942 and a year later received permission to raise under his command a national Russian division which bore the title "special Division R" (Russia).
Having been promoted to the rank of colonel, matters should have progressed rapidly. However, it was at this point that the political strategists began to interfere. The NSDAP, the influential party politicians, the Security Service (the SD) of the SS distrusted Holmston and gave Vlassow their support. With some justification they considered that Holmston was not exactly a friend of the Party, and therefore feared that in a high position and, undoubtedly, moreover, as the leader of a body of men whose ranks were swelling, he could become dangerous. Without warning, in December 1943, the Colonel was arrested and his division disbanded.

A severe blow, but Holmston did not admit defeat. The cleft which existed between party members and professional soldiers again played a prominent part or, in this case an even more prominent part because, despite SS opposition, the German Supreme Command conducted an inquiry which, in April 1944, resulted in Holmston's rehabilitation. He then raised the "First National Russian Division". It is a fact that the designations for his units were always chosen with care. They were intended clearly to indentify their relationship to the Wehrmacht, the German Army, as such. They were also meant to declare the firm intention as to the purpose for which this body of men had been raised and trained also to make known whose responsibility this raising and training had been. The designations were also intended to emphasize the domestic detachment from another Russian army, the "Russian Liberation Army", led by General Vlassow. Co-operation with the former Soviet officer Vlassow had always struck Holmston as being impossible owing to the former's completely different background.
How Hitler inadvertently helped Stalin

The "First National Russian Division" was now given the task of organizing a partisan movement behind the Russian Front and, together with an anti-Soviet armed forces to kindle national rebellion in Russia. In fact, it was already too late for such plans. Hitler's suspicions and delusions had destroyed all chances of success, although there is evidence that the Russian population would have liked to get rid of Stalin's regime. To start with, the people had received their fellow countrymen with open arms, German troops had, even been blessed when they entered the country. But then it became evident that the Germans had not come as liberators, but as conquerors. To Stalin's delight joy turned to disappointment and hatred. He now had the people on his side, not as Party Chief, but as fellow countryman. For the Russian volunteers this development was deeply tragic. That which Stalin's terror had smashed within the country, that which the Germans could have harvested and which the National Russians had planned to utilize, in the first instance as the administrators of a re-born Russia, had now been patched up, with the psychological inability of misled party fanatics. Now, all those Russians who had joined forces in order to fight the Red Army saw their hopes shattered and realized - without considering their own fate - that Stalin and his party would emerge stronger and more powerful than ever from a victory achieved by Soviet Russia. They came to realize how gravely they had been deceived and ill-treated, even betrayed. They found too little understanding, not to mention support for their patriotic objectives.
Meanwhile, two groups had begun to develop in Germany, opposed to each other with regard to policy in the East and, associated with this, regarding the conduct of the war. One of these groups was represented by Hitler and the higher functionaries of his party, its aim being to subjugate and colonize Russia ("Lebensraum" in the East). The other group was composed of the higher ranking officers of the German High Command, a large proportion of the generals on the Eastern Front and a number of politicians who knew Russia well. The latter had realized that a war against the Soviet Union waged with military means alone could end only in defeat. Regarded from this standpoint, the number wanting to help Holmston and his compatriots was not inconsiderable. However, these people did not have the means at their disposal. They saw the accelerated raising and backing of the strongest possible Russian Army of Liberation as the only way to win the war in the East. As a result of this argument there developed in one group of officers of the Supreme Command a component essential for the attempt on the 20th July, 1944, on the life of Adolf Hitler. Its failure must also have been a hard set-back for the Russian liberation movement, including Holmston's men.

Retreat

While these events were taking place Colonel Holmston's Division was stationed in Silesia, before Breslau. With the Russian forces advancing, the Division, still in the course of being raised, withdrew westward, according to plan. First in the direction of Saxony, then farther southward, towards Eschenback in Bavaria, about 80 km northeast of Nuremberg. On the 2nd February, Holmston received orders to raise, out of the Division, a Russian army having the cover name
"The Green Army". The soldiers were recruited mainly from the various prisoner of war and training camps. Ultimately, the units Holmston put into action, widely spaced along the Eastern Front, had a total strength of approximately 6,000 men.

An "Allied Armed Force"

Holmston continued to negotiate with the Supreme Command of the German Army and on the 4th April, 1945 achieved the official renaming of his unit. It was renamed the "First Russian National Army". He was promoted to the rank of major general and to Commander-in-Chief of the new army. This formation, with the rights of an "allied armed force" continued to be subordinate the Wehrmacht, but was not part of General Vlassow's ROA, which was regarded as an entirely independent Russian unit. The planned integration of the Russia Defence Corps on the Balkan Front, under the command of General Steifon and the Third Vlassow Division, being raised, was no longer capable of achievement. In addition, the cadres of the ROWS, under the command of General von Lampe placed themselves under the command of Holmston who ordered General von Lampe to march westward separately with his detachment of Russian troops.

The situation became increasingly critical. At the beginning of April, 1945, some of the westward marching columns of the army still being raised suffered heavy losses from air attacks and were no longer able to reach the assembly area in Bavaria. Holmston lost something like 3,000 of his men. Any large scale attack against the front had become impossible.

* under the command of General Schapowalow
The military collapse now proceeded with unexpected speed. The American advance through Southern Germany in the direction of Tyrol and Salzburg gained increasingly more ground and the French began their advance towards Lake Constance and Vorarlberg.

Nuremberg was captured by US troops on the 20th April; the Russians had launched their major offensive against Berlin already on the 16th. Concerning that time, General Holmston said later: "It was essential to try and salvage whatever could still be salvaged. The situation was critical". In fact, what counted then was to try and reach safety, a neutral country that was out of the developing military and political chaos. Holmston had already made provisions to that end. Bearing in mind the possible future need to negotiate with representatives of the Western Allies he had taken three officers onto his staff, two Polish and one British, in disguise. The latter had fought previously on the side of the national Polish partisans. The General was accompanied by his wife Irene, who came from an aristocratic Polish family. Her official rank was that of secretary and interpreter. He supplemented his staff with a Swiss journalist, who acted as an interpreter. It was the journalist who advised him to go to Liechtenstein, considering it safer than Switzerland. As was to be seen later, this opinion was not entirely without justification, for, unlike Liechtenstein, Switzerland did not declare unequivocally that refugees would not be forcibly extradited. This situation deprived many refugees who had not already been obliged to leave the country of any sense of security, so that they found it preferable to give themselves up, to flee, or to commit suicide. In those difficult days, rumour contributed to the already present fear and insecurity. The Russians and Cossacks were well aware of the tragedies which followed the Yalta Agreement, already before the end of the war.
On April 18th, 1945, General Holmston held a council of war with his officers and he explained to the assembled body: "Germany's defeat is inevitable. We cannot stand by and wait for it, we must make use of the time. I therefore order the troop to march in the direction of neutral Switzerland. The next march objective is Memmingen, where we shall assemble".

Although, it is true the Army Supreme Command (OKH) had given this plan its approval, because it also recognized the need to rescue these exposed men, it was in fact General Gehlen, then head of the (OKH) department responsible for foreign armies on the Eastern Front, who created this possibility. There were some fanatical elements that wanted to fight to the last man and this determination became evident at the last moment when the flight was almost frustrated by the SS. The unit concerned thought it could ignore Holmston's secret command, which was actually irrefutable, and forbid further movement. However, the highest ranking SS officer who was called allowed them to pass. This man had been the officer on duty when Holmston had been decorated with the German Order of the Eagle at Hitler's "Wolfsschanze" headquarters.

But now back to the situation involving the retreating unit. The departure from Eschenbach was carried out with all speed. The armoured spearheads of the advancing Americans were only 10 km away. Detonations from the nearby front were clearly audible. It may well have been possible to convince the Americans and the French that they were not facing National Socialist forces at this point, but it was considered wiser to evade them, particularly since the Russians had tangible reasons for believing that the Allies would hand them over to the Red Army. It was happening all the time.
Because of this the unit had to try and reach its objective ahead of the advancing Seventh United States Army and before the First French Army could block the way to the Swiss frontier.

There followed strenuous marches in a south-westerly direction until at last the assembly area Memmingen was reached. There the men remained until the 26th April, vainly awaiting the arrival of the Russian Defence Corps from the Balkan Front. However, owing to the collapse the corps had been unable to complete the march. The approaching Third Vlassow Division under General Shapovalow refused to obey the command to join General Holmston's unit and followed General Vlassow's instruction to march towards the Czechoslovakian frontier, thereby unknowingly sealing their fate. But now, the cadres of the First Russian National Army have lost valuable time and therefore strive to reach the Alps as quickly as possible.

Marching on, they were attacked from the air and a number were killed and wounded. Nevertheless, they reached Oberstaufen on the 28th April. The General had gone ahead with his staff and was waiting for his men nearby. He held another council of war and informed his officers of his true objective: Liechtenstein.
A first look at Liechtenstein:

The Situation

A Liechtenstein report concerning those eventful days and the end of the war stated, among other things: "At the end of April the fires the war had set ablaze in Lauterach and along the shore of Lake Constance were watched with horror. The fury of war moved towards Feldkirch, with the howl of air-raid warnings and the thunder of guns. Everywhere preparations were being made for evacuation to Oberplanken, the presence of the dreadful SS was feared. However, the rapid break-through of the French army via Amerluegen brought relief and the ringing of church bells on the 8th May, announced the laying down of arms. Auxiliary police and Swiss frontier guards quickly mopped up the few SS soldiers hiding in the mountains".

The safeguarding of Liechtenstein's border with Vorarlberg which, belonging to Federal Austria had, since the "Anschluss", been part of the German Reich, was taken over by a detachment from the Border Guard Recruit School at Liestal in Switzerland. This arrangement was necessary because bona fide Swiss troops could not be engaged in sovereign, neutral Liechtenstein. Approximately one hundred men were stationed in Liechtenstein.

There had been a number of erroneous bombing attacks on Swiss territory and it was desired to avoid similar occurrences in Liechtenstein. The Government had therefore ordered that the border be identified by large boards, erected so as to be recognizable from the air and painted with the Country's colours.
With the exception of Schaanwald, the border had been closed in the manner described previously already on the 22nd April, 1945. On the Swiss side, it continued to remain open because of the Customs Treaty with Switzerland. However, towards the end of the war the Swiss Federal Council ordered the border to be closed from Luziensteig, to the south of Liechtenstein as far as Altenrhein. Although subject to control, the bridges over the Rhine between Balzers in Liechtenstein and Truebbach in Switzerland and between Schaan and Buchs remained open for traffic.

In Liechtenstein the Auxiliary Police Force, now reinforced to a strength of fifty-two men, took part in the manning of the border; at that time the Regular Police Force consisted of only eleven men.

By this time Holmston's troop had arrived at Oberstaufen. To reach neutral Liechtenstein in time it was necessary to proceed with all haste. The sixth US corps, close behind them, had penetrated as far as Kempten, reaching there on the 27th April, and parts of the First French Army appeared in Bregenz on the 29th, ready to cross the Vorarlberg border 20 km to the west of Oberstaufen. Every participant in this serious game knew there was only one road in the Rhine valley leading to Liechtenstein which was suitable for a motorized column (that is not the case today). There began a race with the French, who having heard of their whereabouts had set off in pursuit. It really was touch and go. The unit was encamped on the outskirts of Oberstaufen, just outside the town, when a soldier on sentry duty in the town reported the appearance of Moroccan soldiers. The French had arrived and were searching for the Russians. Departure took place in pouring rain, with all possible haste and as quietly as possible. There followed a forced march through the night, ending 60 km further on, immediately outside Feldkirch. It was the 30th April.
The Town was not Defended

Feldkirch was still occupied by German troops and the appearance of General Holmston's unit may well have prevented a bloodbath. Resistance groups were already determined to put an end to the German occupation and also, naturally, to deprive the party leadership of power. The reason behind this plan was the rumour that the town was to be defended. Then when these heavily armed soldiers arrived in the town, it was believed that they were reinforcements. Such military "superiority" banished all thoughts of resistance.

On the 1st May, the First Russian National Army advanced as far as the village of Nofels, near Feldkirch, close to the Liechtenstein border.

It may be appropriate at this point to list the nationalities, peoples and races represented here. There were Great Russians, Germans, White Ruthenians, Ukrainians, Cossacks, Tartars, Armenians, Tchuwashe, Tchetchene, Comi-Sirijanes, Tadjikians, Lesgians, Tsunguses, Usbekians, Calmucks, Turks, Mordwinians, Bashirks, Marijans, Englishmen, Swiss and Poles. Some were represented by only one individual; nevertheless, for the sake of simplicity the plural has been used throughout.

The ranks of the First Russian National Army had been sadly depleted by the ravages of War. However, when the objective became known a number of people attached themselves, hoping that they, too, might be allowed to witness the end of the war under the protection of a neutral state. In so far as this was justifiable and possible, they were permitted to stay with the unit, albeit without any assurances. In fact, they were not granted asylum in Liechtenstein; they were no more able to establish that they were endangered and therefore entitled to special status than the other people queueing at
the border. The little country could not be turned into an assembly point for thousands of displaced persons, there was too little shelter and not enough food. Moreover, opening Liechtenstein's border before the war had ended would have embroiled the country in war. In spite of this, the refugees waiting at the border were cared for daily by the newly founded Liechtenstein Red Cross, led by Princess Gina personally, also by the Government and many volunteers, above all the scout movement.

From the commencement of the Third Reich Liechtenstein had had in any case to be politically extremely careful not to provide Germany with a reason to interfere. Other examples had provided clear warnings. The fact that it never came to this was due not only to Liechtenstein's minuteness and strategic insignificance, but also to the close association with Switzerland, whom Hitler had consciously not taken into his plans (future plans had been left undecided). There was one other reason. The Prince paid an official visit to Berlin for talks with the German Chancellor, Adolf Hitler and displayed diplomacy and great skill during this difficult conversation. While the Third Reich, gripped in a death struggle which all could see, staked everything, it is not difficult to imagine how great the fear must have been that the war could have been brought in Liechtenstein. Thus the decision to grant asylum to the Russians could not have been an easy one for the Prince and his Government, particularly bearing in mind that the war had not actually ended.
The Most Dramatic Moment...

On the 1st May, the German radio station Hamburg announced that the Führer, Chancellor of the German Reich, Adolf Hitler, had fallen, fighting Bolshevism to the end. In fact, he died the day before, not in heroic battle, but by committing suicide, together with his wife Eva, whose maiden name was Braun. On the 29th April, the day before Hitler's death, the German troops in Italy had capitulated.

On the 2nd May, while the commander in charge of the defences surrounding the German capital was making his way to the Russian supreme commander to surrender this last bastion of the Third Reich, General Holmston's men were making final preparations for crossing the border into Liechtenstein. As already mentioned owing to the understanding shown by high ranking officers of the German Supreme Command, Holmston had been granted permission to rescue the remnants of his army. Accordingly, the German border guards cleared the way to the Liechtenstein frontier. In a heavy snow storm the men marched up the narrow, steep road to Schellenberg in Liechtenstein. An armoured personnel carrier led the way, followed by the car with the Commander and then the remaining vehicles. On either side of these, in long columns, marched the cadres of both regiments. After passing through no man's land, between the two countries, they removed the obstacles on the Liechtenstein frontier, taking only a few minutes to move the cheveaux de frise and the barbed wire entanglements to one side. They then continued their march which, within earshot of the border, had not gone unnoticed on the Liechtenstein side. Suddenly shots rang out, intended rather as warning shots, because it was evident that the men did not intend to be stopped. The General's adjutant called in German from his car to two Swiss border guards standing with rifles levelled, "Stop, don't shoot, here is a Russian general!"
Meanwhile, one of the border guards had telephoned an account of the happenings. The civilian instructor of the Border Guard Recruit Detachment passed the information on to the Head of the Federal Frontier Guards, Lieutenant Colonel Dr. Wyss, who for days had had the troop's movements observed and had expected the border crossing to take place at another point, at Tisis, to be precise. Later, when he met the General, he congratulated him on the success of his plan, saying that he had accomplished a military masterpiece. This opinion, incidentally, was also shared by the high ranking allied officers who visited Liechtenstein a few weeks later.

Dr Wyss expressed his willingness to comply with the request, made to him as the first competent officer, to allow the troop to remain on Liechtenstein's neutral soil, subject, of course, to the political confirmation of the Liechtenstein Government. Following the visit to the scene of action by the representatives of the Government, the latter's decision was positive as far as the troop's provisional stay in the Country was concerned. First contacts were made in the old Schellenberg inn "zum Löwen" and preliminary talks were held, while the exhausted men and women were taken to temporary lodgings. On the following day the population gazed with amazement at the uniformed men and their vehicles and, above all, at the large quantity of weapons of all kinds, gathered in large piles. Among the people of Liechtenstein the opinion prevailed that they had been taken unawares. At the same time, however, they were happy that bloodshed at least had been avoided and now, without concern for the why's and wherefore's wanted to concentrate on the task before them.
More than forty years later two eye-witnesses who should know exactly, recalled many details from those days. They are the only people left to ask, the others are scattered to the winds or have died. At the time this book was being written, General Holmston was living with his wife in Vaduz, and First Lieutenant Michail Sochin has lived in Liechtenstein almost without interruption since that time. He recalls, "Our troop was comprised of four companies. There were still sixty-five men in my company, mostly young people between eighteen and twenty years of age. We lost one man from our ranks at Dornbirn, during an American air attack. That was our last loss. Late in the evening of the 2nd May, we set off on the steep road from Nofels toward Schellenberg. French soldiers encamped near Feldkirch had seen us and fired two shells from mortars ... We were extremely well armed. At about two-thirty in the morning my men and I crossed the border, we were the last of the long column. It was really not difficult to part us from our weapons, we felt secure and believed that we had at last left the difficult days behind.

Some officers remained in the inn "zum Löwen", at Hinterschellenberg. Most of the troop marched on to the school. I found space there in a room in the cellar. It had snowed heavily that night and we were all wet through. The next day all our papers or rather, those we had not already destroyed, were confiscated by the Swiss customs officials. Many people came to welcome us. On the 5th May, two Liechtenstein police officers accompanied us to Ruggell, where we were quartered, in a barrack, the school or the municipal hall."
At one fell swoop, the population of Liechtenstein had been increased overnight by something like 500 people. At that time, Liechtenstein had a population of 12,141 people, distributed over its 160 sq. km, far less than half the present population. It was found that this fact played an important part when the small population, of whom comparatively few - only the gainfully employed - had an income, helped to provide for these foreign troops. Eye witness reports make this evident.

With the Russians' successful crossing of the border into Liechtenstein, as Lieutenant Colonel Kashirin, member of the army staff, writes, "the negotiation of the political barrier, the "devil's bridge", as it were", was successfully achieved and "the cadres of the army were rescued". He goes on: "Throughout the war, we fought only against the Soviet Union ... We did not contribute either an officer or a soldier for battles on other fronts against other Europeans. We did not fire a single shot against Anglo-Saxons, French, Poles or Jews. And in the hour of collapse we did not stain our honour with gunfights against the German confederates".

The Population did not remain Indifferent to the Fate of the Russians

Although the situation existing between the "informed" - for want of a better word - on both sides had become a little less tense, the population, particularly of Schellenberg, was still largely uncertain about what was going on. In preparation for the (still provisional) internment of the troop, the young Swiss border guard recruits were ordered to effect its disarmament. The Head of the State of Liechtenstein, Prince Franz Josef II of Liechtenstein also visited the scene in order to gather first-hand knowledge of the situation. He and not the Government alone bore the ultimate responsibility for the acceptance of these refugees. His wife, Princess Gina,
also inquired on the spot concerning the well-being of the men. Meanwhile, these had been accommodated in makeshift quarters and experiences were already being related.

"Five-Hundred Sang Evening Prayers"

At that time, Alois Ritter from Schaanwald was the schoolmaster at Ruggell. In the commemorative book he recorded a number of memorable events. Among other things, he wrote: "Sympathetic people came from near and far, bringing food and cigarettes for the hungry ones. In gratitude for these kindness the Russians made all kinds of wood carvings, which are still kept in many houses. It was very moving when these men, evidently homesick, sang their melodious folk songs or when on gentle evenings in May their beautiful evening prayer rang out from five hundred throats.

Here at Ruggell two long barracks were erected on the school playground. The number of inmates was not always the same, because most of them found work on farms. They were all willing workers. These barracks would not have been adequate for winter conditions and so all those who were left were transferred to winter accommodation at Schaan.

The Russians who remained were also invited to join in the Christmas festivities, so that they, too, were able to enjoy the spirit of Christmas. Some schoolchildren rehearsed Christmas greetings in Russian. The parish priest and a Russian major spoke movingly. At the end of the Christmas party people gave the Russians gifts of apples, "birnbrot" - a kind of sweet bread filled with dried pears, dried fruit, etc.

It must be said of these people that they were honest and disciplined, so that none of the villagers complained in this regard. So much for Ruggell school chronicles which record happenings affecting the interned Russians during the years 1945 and 1946.
Mr. Adulf Peter Goop, at that time a leading personality in the Liechtenstein Scout Movement, reported from Schellenberg how, already on the 3rd May, the morning the Russians arrived, the scouts prepared the first warm meal for them. It was absolutely amazing how, within a few days, it was possible to organize so much, not only in the way of food, but also with regard to accommodation and other necessities.

Mr. Goop also reported: "Feeding this large body of men presented us, in the long run, with many problems. We had no money and nobody provided us with ration cards. The Russians had brought several ponies and a number of carts with them and with these we drove all round low land drumming up food. The population was very sympathetic towards the Russians and we were able to collect the necessary provisions. Large wash-tubs were filled two and sometimes three times a day with potatoes, eggs, vegetables and occasionally with some meat."

For the Russian Easter celebrations (according to the Gregorian calendar) the scouts of Schellenberg gave the Russians an unforgettable surprise. During holy week they had begged or borrowed between five and six-hundred eggs and painted them. Now, on Easter Sunday, we presented the easter eggs to the Russians, for whom Easter is the highest feast, on a metal plate measuring nearly one and a half metres in diameter, which had been used at the Prince's wedding. With the presentation we recited, in Russian, the Russian Easter greeting we had rehearsed. As I was handing an egg to one man, he wept and embraced me. This Russian custom of men embracing and kissing was strange to me and I proffered the next egg from a safe distance.
Of an evening, in the twilight, the men used to sing the evening prayer, in Russian and many people came to listen, for it was a most impressive experience. On the 10th May, all the Russians came to Ruggell where they begged wire, straw and other materials from which they wove baskets to sell to the population for pocket money. My mother still has one such small basket, in which she keeps her jewellery.

Let us focus our thoughts on the past once again and play the part of observers of that situation:

After the effect of surprise had worn off a little, it was realized, that the country was confronted by a difficult task which was without precedent for us and for which no preparations could have been made. For a small State which had only history book knowledge of similar events, albeit of a negative nature, these five-hundred men presented organizational, social and psychological problems.

As this narrative relates, the situation was very different in 1945. The military factor was no longer of consequence, the political one had, for the time being, receded into the background and was not going to become explosive until later. The task in hand involved providing for an army staff, the cadres of two regiments, a train and, in addition, thought had to be devoted to these people's future.

Because to begin with it was thought that the internees would be staying in Liechtenstein for only a brief period, in transit, as it were, they were accommodated, according to various eye witnesses, in private homes, schools and inns, at Ruggell, Gamprin, Mauren and Schellenberg. The population accepted this with surprising calmness. However, those informed by press and radio certainly suspected that a precise plan combined with the wisdom and goodwill of military leaders
in the German High Command, together with great good fortune had brought about the deliverance of these Russians from a ghastly fate, literally in the last days and hours of the second world war. Nevertheless, it would have been a sad day for Europe's tradition of humaneness and Christianity had General Holmston not decided to take his people to precisely Liechtenstein.

**The Roar of Guns Ceased**

The day after the Liechtenstein border had been crossed, on the night of the 2nd to the 3rd May, all the German troops in Northwest Germany, Denmark and the Netherlands surrendered to the British Field Marshal Montgomery, on the 4th May. A day later, the army group north of the Alps, under the command of General Field Marshal Kesselring capitulated. On the morning of the 8th May, at 2.41 hours, Germany surrendered unconditionally to the American General Eisenhower, in the French town of Reims.

On the night of the 8th to the 9th May, weapons were silent throughout Europe.

The newspaper "Liechtensteiner Vaterland" informed its readers as follows of the Government's proclamation of the 8th May: "Now that the war has at last ended, our Government orders that bells shall be rung in all communes in the Country on Tuesday evening, from 7.00 until 7.15. Next Sunday, Thanksgiving Services will be held in all parish churches throughout the Country. We have good reason to attend these services. Miraculously, we have survived this terrible war, safely and unharmed!"
On the 10th May, 1945, the Swiss border guards who had helped Liechtenstein so decisively, were discharged. Already before the singing of both anthems, the Liechtenstein and the Swiss, had ended, a French General accompanied by a number of gentlemen arrived at the Lindenplatz in Schaan, where the ceremony was being held and was greeted by the population with great enthusiasm. The Deputy Head of Government, Dr. Hoop, received the General of the French Army and his escort with the words: "I have the honour to announce to those taking part in this celebration that a General of the splendid French First Army, General Lattre de Tassignys, has just arrived. A triumphal march has brought his Army to our Country's border. His name is General Hesdin, he is accompanied by Commander de Villiers, Captain Leseur and Lieutenant Le Liberder. I present His Excellency with my compliments and express thanks for the correct manner in which the men of his Army have respected our Country's border. I wish to express the opinion that the relationship between the French army of occupation and ourselves, already so happily initiated, will proceed agreeably and with good neighbourliness.

General Holmston's troop continued to exist as a military body until the middle of May, beyond the end of hostilities, that is. But this was important only for the purpose of organizing the men's daily life in an orderly fashion; outwardly, they kept together and discipline was maintained.
A Soviet Russian "Repatriation Commission" in Vaduz

Sochin gives an account of the arrival from Moscow of a Soviet Russian "Repatriation Commission" whose task was to persuade all Russians, regardless of origin, to return to Russia. This notwithstanding the fact that many of these Russians had never been citizens of Soviet Russia, some of them had survived the revolution in another country or had never lived in Russia. Sochin relates, "On Sunday the 28th August, we were all assembled in Vaduz, our fate was to be decided. The Russian Commission, which had been in the Country for some time, pressed for our extradition with all vigour. This demand was not allowed. For reasons of security, our troop was dispersed. Six officers, I among them, were taken into protective custody, in Vaduz prison, where we spent the next three months. On the 28th November, the Russian Ambassador to France, Mr Bogomolow came and demanded our written renunciation of Russian citizenship.

The commission, composed of Soviet Union officers, who concerned themselves minutely with the internees and went sightseeing in their "free time", were not all military people. Some of the internees recognized one of the officers dressed in army uniform as a member of the infamous NKWD, the Russian secret service. Adelbert Konrad, who was an auxiliary policeman at that time, reported that members of the Russian repatriation commission frequently contacted the internees, trying to persuade them to "return home". "Many" he recalled, "were terribly homesick. There was one very young Estonian who always imploring me, "Konrad", he used to say, "I don't care what happens, if only I can see Mama and Papa once again!" Many who decided to go promised they would send a postcard. Not one of them even let us know that he was still alive."
The Weapons Scrapped, thrown in the Lake ...

It was recorded earlier that the Russians were heavily armed when they entered Liechtenstein. The question therefore arises: what happened to those weapons? The official story is that they were rendered unserviceable and sold for scrap at four centimes per Kilogramme. Some were exhibited in the National Museum, while the remainder was thrown in Lake Constance, certainly the ammunition. This is indeed correct, the more so since the author had the opportunity of seeing some of these weapons in the state archives. They ranged from carbines to Kalashnikov or German Army submachine guns. Nevertheless, it is known in Liechtenstein that a number of weapons were "missing" already at the time that scheme was initiated. The quantities of vehicles and weapons that turned up in peaceful Liechtenstein were really quite impressive:

Ten motor vehicles, one motor-cycle, seventeen bicycles, six horses, several carts and handcarts, 235 rifles, fourteen carbines, nine submachine guns, forty-two machine guns, seventy-five pistols and revolvers, twenty-three hand grenades, one Cossack sabre, ammunition of all calibres also gas masks, six steel helmets and the Army's silk white, blue and red flag.
The General's prominent Visitors

After the General had settled down, as far as the temporary circumstances permitted, he endeavoured to establish contact with the Allies. At first, this was a rather slow process. The British even displayed chilly disapproval, unofficially conveying their lack of interest. It appeared as though the Allies' working alliance with the Russians still outweighed everything that had had to do with the Germans. But times changed and with them the views and political and historical considerations. Thus, from that first post-war year until 1947, prominent people travelled to Liechtenstein to have talks with the General. It had leaked out that an interesting personality was to be found in little Liechtenstein. Interesting, not only for personal reasons, but also because of his knowledge of the German Army and of the way the Germans conducted the war. The General received the military correspondent of the US Headquarters, Kennedy, his colleague from the Supreme Command of the Belgian Army, also the Chief of US General Mark Clark's Staff, the Commander in Chief of the Allied Fifteenth Army Group in Italy, the US Consul General, Sam E. Woods, the American Senator Kenneth S. Wherry, Alan Dulles, Head of the American News Service in Europe and the Englishman Liddell Hart, one of this century's leading military experts.

And, in addition, there were of course those other visitors, already mentioned, the members of the "Repatriation Commission", even though the state they represented was by no means home for all the eastern Europeans handed over to it. Many were born in Tsarist Russia or outside Soviet Russia, in any case they did not regard present-day Russia as their home.
Also belonging to this group were those people from countries, once free, which are now occupied by Soviet Russia. They have no desire to return so long as Russian rule prevails, even if they can never return. Particularly if they have to fear punishment for contravening laws which were issued only after their departure.

In accordance with a mutual agreement, Switzerland could also have accepted the Russians. However, it was Switzerland's opinion that in this case Liechtenstein was entirely capable of acting alone and sovereign Liechtenstein shared that view.

The Commission arrived about the middle of August and, as is known, demanded the compulsory handing over of all those who had lived in Russia before the 20th February, 1941. Here, they were evidently making use of experience with an eye to the chances of success for further demands. The situation was very tense, as earlier eye-witness accounts confirmed. It must have been most inconvenient for the commission when one of their members was exposed as an NKWD man. Nevertheless, the fact was undeniable. This member of the secret police had been known to the "Exposer" in Moscow. The latter, who had worked as an interpreter in government service, was a Liechtenstein citizen, linked by relatives with Tsarist Russia. He also worked as an interpreter for General Holmston who refused to speak with officers of the Red Army. As an indication that he did not understand their language, he said what had to be said only through this interpreter.
The Repatriation Commission quickly felt obliged to change its tactics, switching from promises to threats, continuing to switch as it thought fit. After all, they, too, were under pressure to produce results. But here, they made the wrong assumption in believing that it was the desire of the Swiss Government and possibly even of the Liechtenstein Government also to solve the problem in the best way, namely by means of the voluntary departure of the Russians to the Soviet Union and, if the internees did not volunteer, then by means of compulsory departure. These members of the Commission simply failed to understand why a government cannot, quite naturally, enforce that which it may consider to be correct without, of course, any regard for those concerned or the people. The members of the Commission must also have felt rather confused because, although their desire to have a few "refractory" internees jailed had been fulfilled, nothing further had happened. The internees themselves quickly realized that in face of the Soviet threats, they were in the best place. The psychical pressure on them was naturally great because at this stage the Government had not made it clear that compulsory extradition was not open for discussion. For all that, they were quickly relieved of this pressure when they saw and realized how firmly the people stood behind them and how in this Country the Government actually represented the people and in the truest sense, took heed of what the people had to say, for if it did not, it would simply not be re-elected at the next elections. Free elections!

Apart from this, the Soviet officers were very annoyed that the evident antipathy against them was tolerated. They were furious not to have any power and not to be able to use the Government as an instrument for the achievement of their objectives. Nevertheless, they were more successful when it came to dealing with those people who were suffering homesickness, built up hopes, encouraged by the promises of the Commission
officers that punishment would be very light, purely formal or
that there would not be any punishment at all. Unlike those
who departed for a free country and concerning whom eye
witness reports, documents and letters are available, the
unfortunate internees who returned to Russia were never
heard of again. To be precise, the Government behaved in
a strictly sober manner when complying with those requests
from the Commission which related to its officially admissible
work, i.e. the isolation from the other internees of and
the withdrawal of work from the Russians in question,
compulsory handing over, however, was not occasioned. This
was bound to appear illogical to the Soviet Russians although, of
course, it was not. The decision, although already certain,
to rescue the internees was rendered easier by the circumstance
that the fate of those who had permitted themselves to be
"repatriated" had meanwhile become common knowledge. The
ultimate, categorical demand made by the members of the
Commission was the extradition of General Holmston, whom
they regarded as a war criminal. In addition, they required
fifty-nine of his staff officers. They evaded the request
for documentary evidence of the allegations. They could not
produce anything. At this stage, the Commission went so far
as to threaten the Government openly with reprisals against
Liechtenstein in the Soviet Union's foreign policy. In spite
of this, the Government in Vaduz held firmly to its refusal.

The Church also supported the demand for the granting of
asylum to and protection for the Russians. The clergy's
standpoint, founded on the gospel, was also backed by the
authorities of the church. An order from the Episcopal
Curia in Chur, to whose bishopric Liechtenstein belongs,
directed to the Priest Johannes Tschuor, Schaan, has been
handed down. This order instructs the priest to protest in
Vaduz against the extradition of the Russians, should such a
step be contemplated. He shall make it clear that God's
Word shall be obeyed before that of man's.
It was realized afterwards that the Russian Commission was well acquainted with what went on in Liechtenstein. Elections were hardly over when the Commission, which had left the Country, appeared on the scene again. Meanwhile, however, a delegation from the International Red Cross in Geneva had arrived and was in action on behalf of the refugees. In spite of this, the Russians adopted a stubborn attitude at first. At one time the Commission even tried to bring about the prevention of contact between farmers and clergy on the one hand and the internees on the other. The Princely Government also rejected that demand.

When the officers of the Commission realized that in principle they were not making any progress towards their objective of approaching the internees, they announced that two of their number would remain in Liechtenstein until the matter had been settled in their favour. The same officers, who had indignantly invoked the International Law whose violation had made war criminals of these Russians, now demanded that the Swiss send a battalion of the Swiss Army to Liechtenstein for the purpose of forcibly handing the internees over to the Soviet Union. A step which would have caused Switzerland, entering Liechtenstein as an occupying power, to violate International Law. Their demands became completely absurd when they demanded that the internees' already meagre rations be reduced, since the only reason why they did not wish to return home was that they were being treated too well! The population knew better. Another demand involved the termination of gift parcels, because these contained not only food, but also anti-Russian newspapers. This, too, was rejected. An officer interned in Vaduz jail wrote, "Not one of us who enters the Russian occupied zone will come out alive!"
The Government also had frequent consultations during this time with the Swiss who gave Liechtenstein an assurance of solidarity. There was full agreement with Switzerland in this matter, extradition would not take place under any circumstances. Finally, the expression "war criminal" is not known in the legislation of Switzerland and Liechtenstein. Furthermore, a country's own laws shall be applicable, not those of a foreign power.

The only Language they understand

The Soviet delegation departed eventually, but the Russians did not give in, from time to time their Embassy sent an officer from Berne. Finally, they did give up.

On the 2nd December, 1945, the General issued an order of the day, the last in his long military career, in which he ordered his officers and men to discard their uniforms. He said that the removal of the badges of rank (clothes rationing prevented the removal the actual uniforms) should not prejudice domestic order and discipline in their relations with each other. And the Russians complied with this command which juridically was only a request.

As well as disbanding his troop the General at the same time officially informed the Government of this step and declared his duty as Commander of this troop to be at an end. In an open letter, which he later wrote to the Country's press, he thanked the population in the name of all his men and concluded with the words: "May God bless the Principality of Liechtenstein".
There is also Family Life in the Camp

The number of internees diminished constantly. Not only did men return to the Soviet Union, others went to other countries and regions, primarily to the neighbouring French zone of occupation. In the end, there were 146 internees in Liechtenstein. The new year, 1946, brought the refugees nothing but uncertainty. Accommodation had become a problem and, concerned with their own problems, the people's interest lessened. But with good organization this was not disadvantageous from the point of view of providing for the internees, the only point was, they were left more to themselves than they used to be.

Because the number of internees became smaller and housing them became more difficult, the Government decided to disband the camps at Camprin and Ruggell and to organize a collective camp for them at Schaan. But life went on at the camp, this fact was proven by the five babies born there.

Meanwhile, the General intensified his efforts to find a new home for the men entrusted to him, the men who had followed him through thick and thin. The way the internees themselves speculated about their future was interesting.

On the one hand, they noticed that the Government in Vaduz, together with the Prince, and with his backing, did not submit to intimidation from Russia, on the other hand, they learned through their contacts with the people and from newspaper articles that extradition was still going on in Europe, that the Pope had felt obliged to protest about this. They also found out that the Vatican had published a secret clause from the Yalta Agreement. But there were not many countries willing to accept anti-communist Russians, because firstly the Soviet Russians as allies had become politically presentable and, secondly, their strength was undeniable, moreover, they were everywhere. Confrontation was unwise and best avoided.
Permission to emigrate to Argentina was at last obtained through the good offices of the Russian Orthodox Church in Germany. Argentina had declared its readiness to accept altogether 24,000 Russians, those from Liechtenstein among them and Peróhad expressed personal interest. The cost of transporting the Liechtenstein internees, amounting to 1,300 francs per person, was to be borne by Liechtenstein. Later, the Federal Republic, as successor to the former German Reich, reimbursed Liechtenstein for that outlay and for other accrued expenses. At the time of departure nothing was known about these arrangements.

As has already been stated, the fate of those who undertook the journey to the Soviet Union is, to say the least, uncertain. For it may hardly be assumed that they escaped the frequently proven end suffered by their companions in fate who were handed over by various states of the alliance and by Scandinavia. Following the reassurances given by the French, these persons had decided to depart, via Feldkirch, for the Soviet Union. It had also been alleged that stateless persons and workers from the countries of Eastern Europe had, in any case, nothing to fear; a belief which in most cases also turned out to be a fallacy. Of the 237 members of the troop who did not wish to travel to Argentina, four returned to the camp because doubts prevailed. The two Poles and the Englishman returned home via Switzerland immediately after crossing the border. Of those who did not go to Argentina, these are the only ones about whose fate we know at least the beginning.
A fateful Time draws to a Close

At the time of the events described here, Liechtenstein was still a poor country and the monthly outlay for the internees amounting to 30,000 Swiss francs was a significant sum, particularly when it is considered that the Country's annual budget was two-million francs. After all, the costs to Liechtenstein, that had suffered economically as a result of the war and had supply difficulties to contend with, added up to a total of 449,298 Swiss francs, which, as already stated, was subsequently reimbursed by Bonn, in three instalments, the last one being paid in 1956. The diet had been as plain as that of a large proportion of the population. In September, 1945, the allowance per man per day was $\frac{1}{10}$ 1 full-cream milk or $\frac{1}{2}$ 1 skimmed milk ($\frac{4}{10}$ 1 full-cream milk for women), 500 g bread, 400 g potatoes, 40 g low-fat cheese, 20 g soup thickening and 16 g sugar. There were special rations for sick people, according to medical prescription. In addition, there were four eggs per month and 50 g meat twice weekly. By no means a varied or luxurious diet by today's standards.

By order of the Government and in agreement with the Commander the Army was officially disbanded on the 18th May, 1945.

Now the time of parting was drawing near. For the last of the Russian internees it arrived on the 20th February, 1948. They had lived in Liechtenstein, in involuntary internment, for more than two and a half years, in a country most of them had not even known by name. During that time, however, they had, they averred, experienced more Christian charity than in all the previous years. They had come as strangers and were now leaving as friends. Very many of them were not ashamed at that moment to shed a tear.
An official ceremony of farewell took place on the 22nd September, 1947, to which the General invited his Liechtenstein friends. He expressed his sincere thanks to all those who had helped him and his people. He spoke with conviction and deep emotion. The General had already written to the Reigning Prince Franz Josef II, also expressing thanks and later he wrote to the Government, confirming his gratitude. He left Liechtenstein together with his wife on the 1st October, 1947. As mentioned, those willing to emigrate boarded ship in Genoa. The General and his wife, however, had to fly. The Americans had hinted that it was impossible to guarantee that the Italians would not hand them over to the Russians.

On 2nd March, 1948, The Security Corps of the Principality of Liechtenstein reported to the Princely Government in Vaduz, that all internees had left the Country. In 1980, a memorial was erected in Schellenberg.
REFERENCES

"War and Politics", New York, All Slavic Publishing House Inc., 1957
Selected Essays and Speeches, Buenos Aires 1953

Grimm Claus, Prof. Dr.: "Internierte Russen in Liechtenstein", (vol. 71) of the Historical Society of the Principality of Liechtenstein, Vaduz.


Toland John: "The Last 100 Days". EX Libris Book club, Zurich, 1968.


"La politique pratiquée par la Suisse à l'égard des réfugiés au cours des années 1933 à 1955. A report addressed to the Federal Council by Prof. Carl Ludwig, Basle, concerning the intentions of the Legislative Council.

Liechtenstein National Museum, Vaduz.

Liechtenstein National Archives, Vaduz.

General Holmston's private archive.


Further newspaper and magazine articles also tape recordings and other documentation from the author's private archive.


The political situation in East Germany greatly affected the welfare of the former inhabitants of the Austrian State, known as "la Staatliche geimpft", 1933-1945. A report addressed to the Federal Council by Prof. Karl Ludwig. Berlin: Contemporary the implications of the Legislative Council.


Liechtenstein National Archives, Vaduz.

General Solstein's private archives.


11.7.76, 17.7.76, 29.10.76, 1.12.77, 29.12.77. Etsch 78, 80, 82, 83, 84, 85 and others.


Further newspaper and magazine articles also tape recordings and other documentation from the author's private archives.