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# SWISS SECURITY POLICY

(Continued from January)

(This, the second part of the text of Dr Aebi's talk to the Nouvelle Society Helvetique in London last July concludes publication of his text. The first part appeared in the September edition of the Swiss Observer.)

Switzerland has limited human and material resources.

"If this goal seems somewhat modest, it should be remembered that

"Also, in the calculus of dissuasion, it is not the absolute number of men, tanks and airplanes that is relevant, but the relative ability to make an opponent or opponents think twice before making a decision to attack.

"Today's concept of area defence, with the brunt of the defence task borne by the Infantry, is the product of a long debate between adherents of a mobile and area defence. The decision in favour of the latter was made not only because it was realised that a mobile defence would require a higher degree of mechanisation and, as a consequence, some fundamental changes in the structure of the Feld Army units, a more numerous and technically always up-to-date Air Force, but also because the militia system with its short periods of service would clearly not have been able to guarantee the functioning of a technically highly sophisticated force.

"The military system is historically and psychologically deeply rooted in Switzerland and it would almost be impossible to make any fundamental changes here."

"One may be wondering how Switzerland is planning to defend itself without nuclear weapons, when both Alliances in Europe possess such weapons and are likely to employ them in a limited as well as in a general conflict. The Swiss military defence concept of 1966 accepts the likelihood of a nuclear attack, distinguishing between three possibilities: Nuclear blackmail without an actual attack, limited employment of tactical nuclear weapons or general attack with nuclear weapons.

"The first two possibilities are thought to be most likely, with the third considered to be quite irrational, although not entirely to be excluded.

"Strategy, tactics, training and equipment have gradually been adjusted to ensure that the defence efforts would not be paralysed in case of a nuclear attack. The Civil Defence efforts play here an extremely important role because it will have a considerable psychological impact on the soldier in the field to know that the protection of his family is ensured.

"The official Swiss position concerning possible acquisition of nuclear weapons is that as long as they exist and could be used against the country, the government has an obligation to examine all the advantages and disadvantages of taking such a step.

"This would include a thorough evaluation of protection possibilities and dissuasive effects, a study of how nuclear weapons would increase the fire power of the armed forces, an examination of the basis upon

which a decision to acquire nuclear weapons would be possible in the first place and the question as to when further proliferation would force Switzerland to acquire nuclear weapons.

"It is interesting to note in this connection, that the Federal Council had signed the Nonproliferation Treaty in 1969, but has not yet submitted it to Parliament for ratification.

"The arguments against a small nuclear force vis-a-vis a super-power are well known. The most important problems are their high vulnerability, continuing obsolescence and of course the most basic one of credibility.

"The question of credibility of a small nuclear force *vis-a-vis* another small country with or without nuclear weapons is of course an entirely different matter. If nuclear proliferation continues, a situation may conceivably arise where Switzerland would feel itself obliged to exercise the nuclear option.

"However, the practical problems in implementing such a policy would be formidable. There would be the financial side, leading probably to the neglect of the conventional sector if the French experience can serve as a guide here, the problem of the availability of fissionable materials, absence of suitable testing sites.

"Another possibility, the purchase of nuclear weapons would probably involve such conditions as to their use, to be unacceptable for a neutral country.

"Seen strictly from the military point of view and assuming that nuclear proliferation can be stopped, the acquisition of nuclear weapons by small and middle powers in general would probably pose more problems than it would solve. But unfortunately, policy-makers are not always guided only by rational considerations. As one author pointed out:

*Examined solely in terms of military security, analysis suggests that, on the margin, the utility of nuclear weapons for the remaining non-nuclear powers is not likely to be high. But when political and psychological factors are added to the analysis, the calculus of utility has to be readjusted.*

"In concluding this part it can be stated, that the military aspect of neutrality has been the only one to remain constant. Today the question has to be asked, whether in the light of the rapid advances in weapons technology, the small neutral state is still capable of fulfilling the military obligations this status implies.

"This means maintenance of sufficient military strength to prevent a military vacuum which could invite outside intervention.

"Today, maintenance of the Swiss armed forces at a credible level becomes more and more difficult. It should however be noted here, that a small neutral state cannot be expected to arm itself against all conceivable threats. There exists a general legal principle — *Ultra Posse Nemo Tenetur* — which means that duties are limited if they cannot be performed as a result of technical impossibility. An example would be the defence against ICBMs overflying the country on their way to

targets abroad, which would only be possible by the possession of an early warning system, which for a state with modest territorial dimensions like Switzerland would be impossible, not to mention the lack of interception means. Such duties are then considered suspended.

"Another problem is the increasing competition for funds between the defence ministry and other ministries. The balancing of the legitimate demands of the various ministries without jeopardising the credibility of the national defence is a difficult undertaking.

"There have also been efforts to find a solution to the problem of conscientious objectors without endangering the principle of universal military service. The Swiss Constitution does not as yet allow alternative services.

#### *Foreign Policy Components of Security Policy*

"Within the context of Swiss security policy, Foreign Policy is assigned the following tasks:

- Defence of the country's international legal interests
- To uphold the principles of armed neutrality in its dealings with foreign governments and to consciously employ this principle as a contribution to the preservation of peace
- To ensure the flow of goods from abroad by means of a forward looking economic policy
- To strengthen the confidence in methods of peaceful conflict resolution through appropriate means and actions
- To be available for 'good Offices' and initiatives to help reduce tensions, if circumstances permit
- To participate in humanitarian actions, long-term projects to detente and in development aid projects
- To make a contribution towards the achievement of the strategic goals in case of war."

#### *Development Aid*

"It is not unintentional that I mention development aid last in my discussion of the important elements of Swiss Foreign Policy. The underlying security rationale of development aid, aside from humanitarian considerations, is to help build up the economies of underdeveloped countries as a prerequisite for the expansion of trade relations with them.

Through a more universal trade pattern, it is hoped to reduce the rather one-sided economic relations with the West.

"There are no illusions that this is a long-term process and that the contribution of Switzerland can only count together with the efforts of other countries. The danger of over-estimating the possibilities and effects of development aid exist also here, leading, in spite of general scepticism concerning development aid, to periodic initiatives for an expansion of this aid, usually at the expense of national defence.

"An important aspect of Swiss relations with the Third World concerns the possibility of an outright confrontation between the rich North and the poor South. Switzerland, being a member of the com-

munity of rich nations, would be involved automatically here without any doing on its part. Obviously, this would have a direct bearing on the credibility of its neutral policy."

After having examined the most important aspects of Swiss security policy, Dr. Aebi drew the following balance sheet:—

"On the minus side:

- The original *raison d'être* making conventional weapons still relevant. As a result of this development, Switzerland's defence preparations should be sufficient to prevent a political and military vacuum in central Europe
- Switzerland would probably not become the lone victim of aggression by a great power but would more likely be involved in a general conflict only. It is also conceivable that it may again avoid involvement in a future conflict
- Even if a small state like Switzerland cannot really influence the international political constellation, it can set against it the continuity of its own foreign policy and through that create at least one factor of stability and security.
- Swiss neutrality has been and still is of advantage to other states.

"Does Switzerland have any alternatives to its policy? I am inclined to agree with the author who said that '*.....the security of small powers is always in danger. There is no policy option open to them which does not create newly as many difficulties as it avoids.*'"

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"Aside from neutrality, Switzerland would practically only have two other ways by which to enhance its security; by joining an alliance or hoping for an effective functioning of the United Nations. Since the United Nations accurately reflect the present state of international relations and therefore will not be able for a long time to come (if ever) to guarantee international peace and security, the only remaining viable alternative would be to join an alliance.

"Assuming for example, that Switzerland decided to join NATO quite a number of obstacles would have to be overcome, if the country wanted to play an active role within the Alliance.

"Switzerland's armed forces are uniquely defence-orientated and are based on the principle of area defence.

"The armed forces of NATO members are generally mobile and have a high degree of mechanisation. Switzerland would most likely have to adapt its armed forces to comply with NATO norms. The obstacles in the way of such an adaptation were already mentioned in connection with the debate between the adherents of a mobile or area defence.

"Considering all the pros and cons, it can probably be said that a policy of neutrality still constitutes the best means to satisfy Switzerland's security needs in the absence of viable alternatives in the foreseeable future."

*(Concluded)*

## News of the Colony

### AUCKLAND SWISS CLUB PICNIC

The day was as perfect as anyone could have wished for. One of those very rare summer days this year. And people came in droves. There has never been such an occasion, I think, when our farm facilities were used to capacity. We were, of course, very privileged to have amongst us two groups of Swiss travellers who obviously appreciated the beauty of the surroundings. And a very friendly and outgoing lot they were too! Along with the soccer team came their new friends, members of the Glenfield Soccer Club, whose team they had beaten on Saturday. Never mind, they certainly have got an excellent darts-thrower in Brian Lane, who won the "Zopf" with 128 points for three throws. One of their group also took home the delicious looking fruit basket, won in the raffle.

Unofficially here and very much on holiday were also our Ambassador and his wife, who by now are becoming quite well-known to a lot of us.

It was about midday when our president welcomed us all. Following were a few friendly words from Mr Adams and we were then addressed by the spokesman for the travel group from Brugg, who amongst other things mentioned that it was a welcome change to see an Ambassador in shorts rather than the traditional tailcoat. Did anyone hear Mr Adams reply that there had, of course, never been an