

# Swiss security policy [Concluded]

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# CHRISTMAS PROGRAMME 1975

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SERVICES IN GERMAN: 30th November: 1.  
Advent, Family service 10 am. Guest  
Preacher: Rev. E. Schwyn, Biel

7th December: Liturgical Communion  
service with music (10 am)

14th December: Family Christmas, with  
Christmas Tree (4 pm) (no morning  
Service)

21st December: 4th Advent: Preacher  
Rev. P. Bossard

28th December: no Service at Eglise  
Suisse)

SWISS CATHOLIC MISSION: John  
Southworth Centre, 48 Great Peter St.  
SW1

Mass every Sunday at 11.30 am in English  
and at 6.30 pm in German

24th December: Midnight Mass  
(possibility of overnight accommodation  
for young Swiss)

## JOINT ACTIONS

3rd December: "Music in Advent", Eglise  
Suisse, 7.30 pm. Works by Couperin,  
Bach, Teleman, Liszt (S. Wilson, Cello; M.  
Nelson, Bass; L. Rabes, Organ; U. Stefan,  
Flute)

Joint programme for Protestants and  
Catholics at the John Southworth Centre  
(Swiss German)

24th December: Christmas Eve. After the  
Service at 6.30 pm a meal will be served  
with candlelight, music and good  
conversation

31st December: Silvester. Service at 6.30  
pm followed by a light meal and  
festivities to mark the end of 1975.

# SWISS SECURITY POLICY

## Continued from September

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

WGS

"The question of credibility of a  
small nuclear force *vis-à-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 of 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 détente and in development aid projects
- To make a contribution towards the achievement of the strategic goals in case of war."

Dr Aebi then went on to concentrate on the most important aspects and problems of Swiss Foreign Policy.

#### Swiss-European Relations

"One of the biggest challenges to Swiss foreign policy in the postwar period has been to find a *modus vivendi* with the European Economic Community (EEC).

"Switzerland has very close economic relations with the members of the European Community with 75 per cent of all imports coming from the enlarged Community and 60 per cent of its exports going there. Full membership has always been precluded for reasons of neutrality and because the Community was never prepared to admit the European neutrals as members which would have only been possible by exempting them from certain provisions of the Treaty of Rome.

"Yet some solution had to be found. Later, when the political constellation allowed the enlargement of the EEC from six to nine members, it was also possible to find an acceptable free-trade formula for industrial goods to govern economic relations between the Community and the European neutrals, leaving them the necessary free hand in their international economic relations which they consider necessary if they do not want to impair the credibility of their neutrality.

#### Participation in European Conferences

"Switzerland also welcomed the opportunity to participate in the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe, which gave it not only a chance to defend its interests and explain its position on the different issues raised by the Conference on a paneuropean level, but also to demonstrate together with the other European neutrals the continued relevance and utility of neutrality through successful mediation efforts.

"The Swiss, keeping within their

professed goal of furthering the rule of law in international relations also used the Conference as a platform to launch an elaborate plan for a mandatory European arbitration system. However, the future of this project is not too bright, having been 'shelved' for further study.

#### Relations with United Nations

"Switzerland has chosen until now to abstain from full United Nations membership but is participating in the work of most of its specialised agencies. She has also signed many of the conventions drawn up under UN auspices, has made financial contributions to United Nations Peacekeeping Operations and played an active role in the Korean truce supervisory commission since 1953.

"Several reasons account for the Swiss reluctance to become a full member:

- The status of Neutrality is basically incompatible with the provision of the United Nations Charter
- Fear of being drawn into situations inimical to its position as a neutral (for example demands to participate in sanctions)

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— An expectation that the chances of Switzerland to be called upon as a mediator would be enhanced as a non-member.

"All these arguments are no longer convincing. Austria and Sweden are a living proof that, *de facto*, Neutrality is certainly not an obstacle to full membership. Those two countries even found membership in the Security Council for a two-year period compatible with their neutrality. Switzerland had a special status in the League of Nations, exempting it from participation in military and non-military sanctions. A demand for a similar status within the United Nations would probably not be accepted and would only give rise to a general debate within the UN about neutrality, which would neither be in the interest of Switzerland nor of the neutral UN members.

"Concerning the fear of being forced to apply sanctions it is interesting to note, that the Swiss Government felt itself obliged to apply the sanctions against Rhodesia because of the otherwise feared adverse international public opinion.

"Also the belief of having a better chance to be called upon as a mediator by staying outside the United Nations has turned out to be a myth. Furthermore, the increasing multilateral nature of world politics brought about mainly by the activities of the United Nations is another argument for Switzerland to become a full member.

"The negative security implications of a continuing partial participation in the work of the United Nations seems to have been generally recognised by the political leadership of the country.

"The biggest obstacle to Swiss membership is now the uncertainty about the attitude of the Swiss electorate which has the last word. Unfortunately, the recent developments within the United Nations, leading to a disproportionately great influence of the Third World countries, usually at the expense of Western interests, has given additional weight to the arguments of the opponents of full membership.

"The United Nations issue will be a test of the country's capacity to adjust its foreign policy in order to be able to better meet new challenges.

### Good Offices

"There has been an increasing identification of neutrality with an intermediary role. The Hague Convention of 1907 concerning the peaceful settlement of disputes recognises the right of Neutrals to offer their 'Good Offices'. It also states that such an offer could not be construed as an unfriendly act by the parties to a conflict.

"However, no obligation exists under the law of neutrality for Neutrals to be available for 'Good Offices'. They consider this possibility an important element of their security policy, because

it gives them a chance to demonstrate the impartiality of their policies during times of peace, making its neutrality more credible in time of war.

"The term 'Good Offices' is usually used in a wide sense and includes among others the following activities:

- General mediation efforts for the preservation of peace and towards the re-establishment of peace
- Observer and Truce Supervisory missions; Contributions to United Nations Peacekeeping Operations
- To make available facilities and cities on neutral territory for the holding of international conferences and to accommodate international organisations
- Humanitarian actions (for example the work of the International Committee of the Red Cross).

"Admitting the importance of this element of the security policy of a neutral state, there is however always the danger of over-estimating the possibilities and effects of 'Good Offices'. A neutral state would soon lose its credibility if it were constantly taking spectacular initiatives. Experience has shown that a small neutral state is most effective in those areas which are outwardly the least spectacular, but which nevertheless make an important contribution to the smooth functioning of international relations.

"An example would be the representation of the United States' interests *vis-à-vis* the Cuban Government by the Swiss Embassy in Havana since the



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break-up of diplomatic relations between those two countries. Many other examples of this sort could be cited here.

"The most spectacular mediation undertakings, those involving questions of peace and war, are usually reserved for those states who have means of power and influence and are willing to bring this power to bear in their efforts to reach a settlement of the conflict in which they offer their 'Good Offices'.

"The successful mediation by the United States leading to the initial force disengagement agreement in 1974 between the belligerents in the Middle East, is an example.

"Neutrals, in their efforts to make contributions to international peace and security by means of their 'Good Offices' would do well not to forget that, in the words of the chief legal adviser to the Swiss Government, *Good Offices are not an end in themselves, but a consequence flowing from the status of neutrality.* Switzerland did not become neutral in order to be able to offer its 'Good Offices' to other countries, but primarily to serve its own interests.

### 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 community 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 Aepli 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.'*

"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-oriented 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.

"The basic contradictions between neutrality and an increasingly interdependent world will probably never be resolved conclusively, at the very best roughly patched over.

"Finally, as long as the present alliance systems and the strategic balance between the two superpowers persists, Switzerland, together with the other two European neutrals benefits just as much as anybody else from this balance.

"Switzerland also contributes to this overall balance by ensuring through its defence efforts, that there will be no political and military vacuum in a still important area of central Europe. But should there be any unforeseen deterioration in the present international security system, the policy of neutrality might still be justified as having been the best possible option for a small country whose choices are very limited."

An animated discussion followed the talk during which many points were raised. The colour film "Fortress of Peace" concluded the lecture. The President, Mrs Mariann Meier, thanked the speaker on behalf of the Society. By courtesy of the Swiss National Tourist Office, Heiniger's film "Switzerland" was shown to bring the meeting to a close.

## Concluded



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