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Swiss peacekeeping units are an intensification of the policy of good offices of the last few years. Our picture: UN soldiers near Sarajevo in July 1992. (Photo: KeyColor)

IMPRESSUM

Swiss Review, the magazine for the Swiss Abroad, is in its 19th year of issue and is published in German, French, Italian, English and Spanish in more than 20 regional editions. It has a total circulation of over 286,000. Regional news appear four times a year.

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Along the centuries right down to the present Switzerland has mostly succeeded in keeping out of wars and conflicts. The Swiss people owe their togetherness, prosperity and peace to one or two virtues of their own, such as their will to remain independent and their permanent armed neutrality – even if they also owe it to geography and luck. A longstanding will to serve the cause of peace and to seek pacific solutions to conflicts and differences also have much to do with it. Such virtues are essential for a small country like Switzerland. They allow her to raise her voice – and sometimes to be actually heard – in the community of nations. Original thinking and imagination take the place of power.

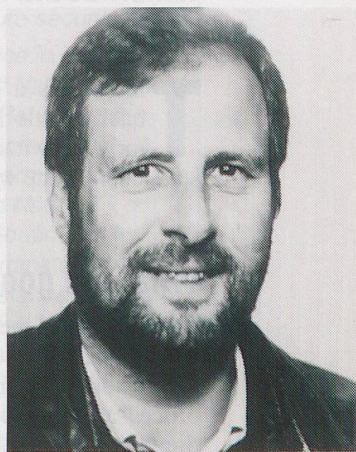
Three years ago the cold war came to an end, and the world entered a new age of cooperation. Switzerland must adjust to this brave new world. Are its special characteristics still to be described as virtues? Permanent armed neutrality has become suspect. Many of those outside think it is a mask to hide absence of solidarity. How is it possible that a democratic country, attached to human rights and the rule of law, can stand aside from an international community striving to make these very values prevail?

It is true that Switzerland is still not a member of the United Nations. But that does not prevent it from being committed with enthusiasm to UN operations: it was the first country in the world to apply sanctions against Iraq; it was in the front rank of those applying sanctions against Serbia; it is taking part in the international aid effort in favour of cen-

tral and eastern Europe; it provides facilities on its territory for negotiations to bring peace to ex-Yugoslavia; it has sent a military medical unit to help the UN in Western Sahara, as previously in Namibia; it is preparing to set up a contingent of blue berets for peacekeeping operations on behalf of the UN or the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. These few examples show that Switzerland is by no means backward in international solidarity.

Should Switzerland change its virtues, abandon its permanent armed neutrality and its other special characteristics? Would peace and cooperation reap any benefit? Neutrality is a threat to nobody. Indeed it is at the service of peace and peacekeeping operations – and it furthers Switzerland's good offices, which are the main subject of this Review.

Switzerland does not cultivate its virtues – neutrality, availability, good offices, promoting peaceful solutions to conflicts – out of pure idealism. They are in our own interest too, in the interest of our own inner stability, of our prosperity and of our image. And the Swiss people are deeply attached to them. Why then should the new order in Europe and the world not be able to accommodate a few eccentricities? Real peace would be impossible in a world which could not tolerate diversity



Pierre-André Tschanz