

Eintretensvotum von Bundesrat K. Villiger, Chef des EMD

anlässlich Besuch
Donald J. Atwood

Bern, 30. März 1992

Dear Colleague

If I would list up all important events which happened since we met last time, the two hours at our disposal would not be sufficient. During the last two years, Europe changed in a way, nobody would have thought of before. And the rapid changes go on: A few weeks ago, for the first time in history the members of NATO met with representatives from the former Warsaw Pact at the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC). ~~How long will we have to wait, until the first Eastern-european Nation will become a member of NATO? I don't take the risk to make a forecast.~~

The new situation led the Swiss government to review fundamentally our security policy. In a report, which was published in 1990, we presented a new concept which is based on two pillars:

- A pillar of political, economic and military cooperation and
- A second pillar being the classical military defense.

The philosophy of this new concept is very simple: If you live in a situation of uncertainty and instability, as it is the case today, where we don't know, whether the chances or the risks will prevail, we have to do two things:

- 2 -

- We have to undertake every possible effort to realize the chances; and at the same time
- We have to take the necessary precautions for the ^{bad} worst case.

Of course, under the present circumstances, where everybody asks for a peace dividend, it is much easier to realize the first part of this philosophy than the second: People prefer to nourish good hopes than to believe in cautioning appeals.

Of course, the international development has important consequences for the whole of Europe. We think that the NACC is a useful tool for integrating former Warsaw Pact member-states. However, there are certain concerns that the establishment of the NACC could prejudice the status of the neutral and non-aligned states: As a consequence of NATO becoming the nucleus of a new cooperation scheme, the role of other European organizations, particularly the CSCE, might loose in importance. Nations which are only members of the CSCE, but not of NATO, might be put in a offside position and might have to watch, how a new European security order is being built without their participation.

We think, that in the process of establishing a new system for safeguarding peace and security in Europe, the proven institutions must not be weakened. A combination of different approaches and participation of different organizations might be appropriate. We think that the concept of "interlocking institutions" is a realistic one.

- 3 -

Of course, for Switzerland, these new developments lead to many questions:

- Can our traditional neutrality be combined with efforts to build a new European security order? What about participating in a possible collective security system with commonarmed forces?
- And how can the military forces cope with the new risks, which have replaced the East-West confrontation?

Apart from East-West developments there is another set of important changes which influence Swiss policy: I am, of course, referring to the process of European integration.

We have taken note very carefully of the decisions of the European Council at Maastricht. After all, the European Community is striving very decisively for a European Union with a strong political commitment, which might even include a common defense policy, from 1996 onwards.

As you know, we are at present negotiating the creation of a European Economic Space. Membership in this European Economic Space should not directly influence our security policy. But joining the European Community might be a different case. There, the question of neutrality will be on the table. And as our government has set EC-membership as the ultimate goal of our foreign policy, we have to deal with this question.

Last week, a report on the future of Swiss neutrality has been published by an official group of experts. As this group was not

- 4 -

only composed of diplomats and lawyers, but also of members of Parliament and businessmen, the conclusions of this report may be considered as representative for a larger part of the public opinion. These conclusions are, that neutrality and EC-membership are compatible if Switzerland abandons her restrictive policy of neutrality and switches to a strictly legal understanding of military neutrality in case of conflict. This would mean, for instance, that we would have to give up our reservation to take part in economic sanctions. *(as we did during the Irak-conflict)*

Of course, if the EC should develop a common defense policy, the conclusions would be different. The question is, whether, by that time, we will have a new European security order which might in any case render obsolete the classical form of neutrality.

The experts think, that neutrality and membership in a collective security system are compatible. This conclusion differs from the attitude of our government taken during the Gulf-war, ~~where we did not allow military flights over our territory during the conflict.~~

The government has not yet presented its view on the conclusions of the report, but I think, that it might share the opinion of the experts according to which military enforcement measures of the international community do not fall under the provisions of the Hague-Convention on neutrality.

This new attitude is based on the opinion, that under the current international circumstances solidarity plays a major role. And it

- 5 -

must not be the attitude of a neutral state to stay away from solidarity.

Let me add one thing: Particularly the younger generations begin to loose their trust in our capability to stay neutral in a military conflict. As opinion polls show there is a close link between increasing doubts about our capability to defend ourselves on an autonomous basis and the motivation to do military service. This aspect to will have to be kept in mind when we talk about the future of our neutrality.

Of course, our neutrality has a very long tradition. It used to be a very effective instrument of protection, as long as rival nations in Europe had an interest in it, because it was a sort of a guarantee that their potential adverseries could not use Swiss territory for the deployment of their troupes.

Today, the geo-strategic situation is quite different. There is no risk of an armed conflict among the neighbours of Switzerland. Of course, we cannot totally exclude that one of our neighbours might be involved in a conflict with a third country: The civil war in Jougoslavia was a reminder to that respect. However, generally speaking, we note that the traditional protective effect of neutrality is diminishing.

The Swiss neutrality also used to be an instrument of cohesion of our multicultural country. During our history, there are several periods where the various parts of the nation had more sympathy for their foreign neighbours than for each other. At the

- 6 -

beginning of the first world war, there was a major gap between the german speaking and the french speaking part of our country for precisely this reason. Today, the international antagonisms having disappeared, the cohesive effect of neutrality has lost its importance too.

Of course, the Swiss government knows that there is another reason to reexamine our traditional neutrality: the military security. The Gulf-war made obvious how important the most modern electronic and satellite based communication-systems are. It also made obvious that a small nation like Switzerland cannot defend itself against ballistic missiles. Therefore, rather sooner than later, we might find ourselves in a situation where our need for security could force us to abandon the idea of an autonomous defense and consequently of neutrality.

A few weeks ago, I have developed some personal thoughts about a new understanding of neutrality, which one might call differential or qualified neutrality. This is not an official government position but an attempt to launch a public discussion on our future.

The new concept is based on the idea, that Switzerland would declare in advance that she might keep or abandon respectively, her neutrality, depending on the type of conflict she would be confronted with. Of course, one would have to be able to define so-called standard-scenarios. Only if this is possible, one of the most important principle of our permanent neutrality can be maintained: The principle, that the neutral stance must be

- 7 -

predictable in advance. Only if that condition is fulfilled, the notion of permanent neutrality can claim a certain credibility.

One might think of 3 types of basic scenarios:

- A conflict among European nations, where Switzerland would continue to stay neutral
- A conflict in which Europe is not involved, where again we would stay neutral
- A conflict between European and Extra-European nations, where Switzerland would declare her solidarity with her neighbours.

Not to be compared with these 3 scenarios is a fourth one, where a collective security system based on a UN-model would intervene in Europe: As this would not be a classical bilateral conflict, the question of neutrality would not be involved.

Of course, many questions in connection with this concept are still open:

- Is it possible to define clearly enough so-called standard-scenarios?
- Would it be necessary to renegotiate the status of permanent neutrality under the international law of neutrality?
- Would it be necessary to amend the Swiss constitution?
- a.s.o.

We don't have definitive answers on these questions. But I think that we should develop a more flexible attitude and seek a closer cooperation with our European neighbours in the field of security policy, in order to be prepared to participate in a European

- 8 -

security system in one form or the other. Otherwise we shall be bypassed by history.

With that in mind we follow very carefully how NATO and the NACC will further develop. There might come a time where the neutrals in Europe might have to reexamine their relationship with these organizations.

After these political remarks you will allow me one last word about our army.

The Swiss army must be in a position to respond to future political developments whatever they are. If Switzerland should continue to keep her classical neutrality, the army must be able to guarantee an autonomous defense. On the other hand, if we would join a European security system, the army must be structured in a way that such an integration will be possible.

For this reason, we have started a major restructuring of the Swiss army. The main idea is that we should not create new structures which are solidified for the next few decades, but structures flexible enough to be adapted at new circumstances.

We want to create a framework which allows to realise various different options: If political developments in Europe go in a positive direction, the strength of our forces should be further reduced. If, on contrary, the situation did deteriorate, the building up of new forces must be possible. According to this basic idea we adapt the concept of the army's mission. ~~We create~~

- 9 -

~~a territorial structure less and, in addition, we create new mobile troupes which allow a flexible response according to varying threats.~~

If necessary, ~~such~~ mobile unities might be integrated in a European collective security system. Of course we are not yet at the point, where such decisions are to be made, but we want to enable the army to cope with future political developments.

More on the restructuring of our army you will here from Mr. Häsler.

- The army is → main instrument of the 2. pillar of security policy

- ^{but} The army contributes also to the 1., more political pillar:

- military observers (Golan, Yugoslavia)
- Blue helmets

→ we want to create a corps of blue helmets.