

INSTITUTE OF CURRENT WORLD AFFAIRS

WWU - 27

NEUTRALITY'S CLASSIC VIRGIN

Hotel Im Park
Zurich, Switzerland
September 5, 1959Mr. Walter S. Rogers.
Institute of Current World Affairs.
366 Madison Ave., New York 17, N.Y.

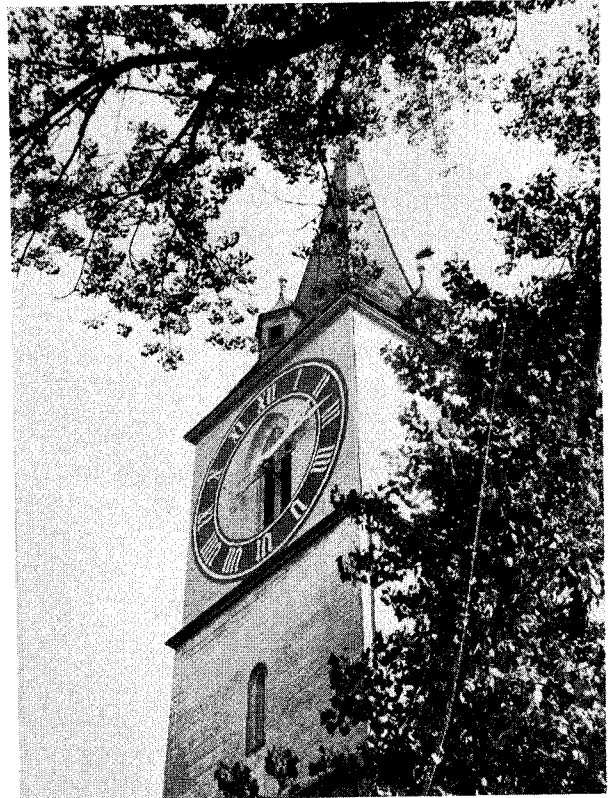
Dear Mr. Rogers:

Switzerland is as near the classic example of neutral as this world has now or has known. She is both respected for it and ridiculed. But, withal., she pretty much remains a neutral above reproach. Her neutrality doesn't bind her press and, for the most part, the newspapers are outspokenly anti-East and pro-West. But neutrality does have something to do with Switzerland remaining aloof from United Nations membership. And even though she does belong to a good many UN subgroups, such as UNESCO, and plays host to Summit Meetings and a string of international conferences, the Swiss by and large consider their Alps the only real summit, their internal problems the only meaningful problems and couldn't care less for the international squabbling which goes on all around them.

Now I had better interject that I was in Switzerland all of 3½ days so you had better do a swift devaluation of my conclusions.

Although it is true that the Swiss are the obvious non-members of the UN, the news today is that the situation is changing. Slowly, to be sure, for conservative "haves" like the Swiss would always rather cling to the status quo than reach for the uncertain. But no less a figure than Max Petitpierre, Swiss Federal Councilor and the equivalent of his country's Foreign Minister, is beginning to emphasize more and more strongly that Switzerland's traditional concept of neutrality should adjust to the changing times if it is to continue to be effective.

Switzerland's neutrality antedates everybody else's. As far back as the Fifteenth Century, Niklaus von Flue, called "The Devout Man of Einsiedlen," cautioned his confederates to stay away from foreign alliances when threatened with internal rifts, to remain within their country instead of taking part



ZURICH CLOCK TOWER: ON TIME, IMPARTIAL



THE CAPITAL: MEDIEVAL BERN

in battles outside of it, and to fight for their homeland if attacked. This was the concept of "Stillesitzen," a wonderful German word which means to "sit tight." But the Swiss didn't sit as **tight** as Holy Nick had cautioned them. It was only after Switzerland had exhausted her winning streak in incorporating new territories -- particularly from today's Northern Italy, -- suffered reversal at the Battle of Margnano in 1515, and saw what it was like to be invaded herself that Stillesitzen became respectable. The Swiss had also begun to realize that since they were divided between Catholics and Protestants, as well as by federation, they might well find themselves the center of a perpetual tug-of-war between Europe's greats. They then set out to make agreements with their neighbors for the protection of their land in time of war. And just to make sure the agreements worked, they cross-ruffed a good deal, promising France, for instance, the identical quid pro quo they promised Austria. In 1674, the Swiss Federal Diet decided to make it official and declared the Federation would remain neutral from a war which had just broken out. The Swiss had come to look

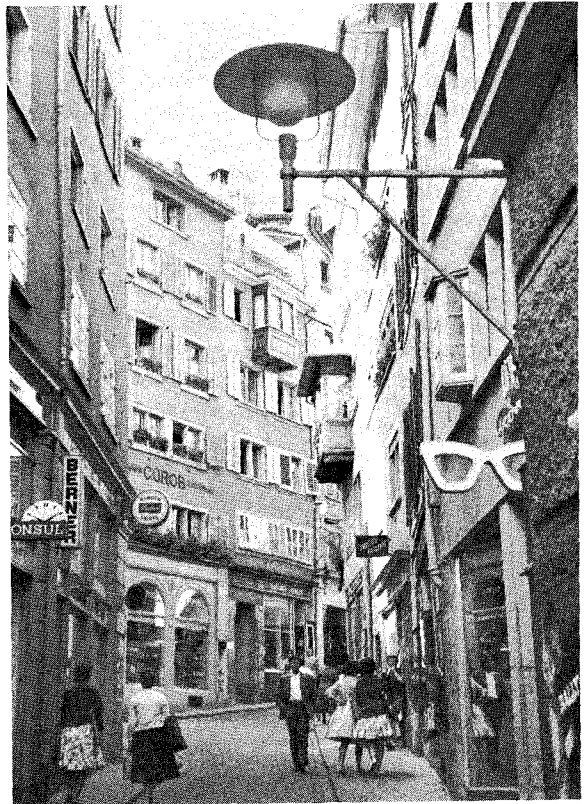
upon themselves as the fulcrum in maintaining a European balance of power. And their fancy balancing worked until Napoleon came along and made the Alps his door-mat for his marches into Italy and Austria. Then, at the Congress of Vienna which sought to restore Europe from its Napoleonic scourge, Switzerland succeeded in having the great powers agree to a clause declaring, "The neutrality and inviolability of Switzerland, as well as her independence from all foreign influence, corresponds to the true interests of all European states." Swiss neutrality thus was codified into international law. And the Swiss even began abandoning that fine old revenue habit of exporting mercenaries abroad, lest the Swiss hirelings on other peoples' battlefields begin to cause doubts as to Switzerland's impartiality.

Switzerland managed to keep out of both World Wars in this century. During World War I, perhaps it was a matter of her determined, armed neutrality being respected. But in World War II there was something more telling. The Swiss mined their various bridges and mountain passes, particularly the St. Gotthard Tunnel into Italy. And as much as Hitler might have liked -- and actually planned to remove this insignificant "hedgehog" which blocked his direct access to Mussolini's Italy, he seemed to sense that the Swiss meant it when they let it be known that any Nazi invasion would set off the mines. And with the tunnels and bridges blown up, Switzerland really wasn't worth all that trouble.

In a future war, however, the Swiss are beginning to wonder whether the combination of neutrality and the threat to blow up the passes is enough. Federal Councilor Max Petitpierre, mentioned earlier, gave some indication of this in a talk before the Austrian Society for Foreign Policy and International Relations in Vienna last April. Petitpierre made an outright pitch for closer camaraderie between Neutral Austria and Neutral Switzerland. And then he went on to say:

"Our own conception of neutrality has also changed in a certain sense...For a long time neutrality was virtually a passive conduct although we

were always of the view that it also involved obligations in the humanitarian field...But today this is no longer sufficient...Neutrality may not appear as the expression of a narrow egotistical interest. It attains its full justification for existence only if, in addition to her own immediate purposes, it also serves the higher aims of general peace. Impartiality, which the neutral state must aim at, must not imply non participation. (Petitpierre referred to India's neutrality as "more a neutralism, a declination of a point of view, in the ideological conflict which separates the communist states from the West.") For the first time in history, the world has become a whole, politically and economically, so that a change in any part of the globe can work out everywhere...The ideological conflict can cause the neutral states difficulties because the totalitarian states have little understanding of the difference between neutrality, such as we conceive it, and a moral and ideological neutrality, which we decline. The neutral state preserves its complete liberty to act vis-a-vis communism as a political doctrine, and nothing prevents it from resisting communist action on its own territory..."



ZURICH: Some walls date back to Rome

Petitpierre, Switzerland's longtime foreign policy chief, also explained why his country had joined the League of Nations in 1920 but not the United Nations in 1945. The League, he recounted, put in a special clause declaring "Swiss neutrality was justified in the interests of general peace." It also exempted Switzerland from any League military sanctions, should a conflict break out. Switzerland was thus able to adhere to its concept of "perpetual neutrality": to refrain from any peacetime obligation which could involve it in a war, or impair its neutrality during a war; to maintain the obligation not to begin a war, and not to participate in any conflict between states; and, of course, the obligation to maintain an armed neutrality in order to protect its own territory.

Now in Sweden and Finland I'd been told that Switzerland had "refused" to join the UN. Here I find this is not quite the story. When the UN Organization met in San Francisco in 1945, those countries which had preferred neutrality to joining up during World War II were markedly unpopular. A French delegate proposed a clause in the UN Charter declaring, "Participation in the organization entails obligations which are incompatible with neutrality." Petitpierre said the clause was rejected, "only because it was considered superfluous." The result, he said, was that Switzerland had to choose between joining UNO and retaining neutrality. The Swiss held on to what they had.

But one of the most interesting parts of Petitpierre's speech in Vienna was the stress he put on the very same UN members who had looked dimly on neutrality during Switzerland's consideration now giving it their blessing with

Austria's UN admittance in December, 1955. Said he: "As a result of joining the UN, Austria's neutrality was doubtlessly strengthened and at the same time neutrality was recognized as a valid tenet of international law."

The Swiss seem perpetually on the look out for such documentary niceties which will reassure them of their position. For instance, they long have been bothered that the U.S. never gave Swiss neutrality the legal recognition the great European powers did at the Congress of Vienna. Then along in June, 1953, the easy going State Department penned a note to the Swiss Minister to Washington urging Switzerland to join a commission for the repatriation of Korean prisoners of war. State casually said: "The Government of the United States fully understands the desire of Switzerland to maintain her policy of neutrality and her impartiality." Finally! Bern had Washington on the dotted line! That little note is probably now safely tucked away in some Federal treasury under the Alps.



RUBBLE, PATRIOTS &, OF COURSE, CLOCKS

Currently, in addition to thinking about applying for UN membership, the Socialist Party (Switzerland's single largest) has "consideration" of such a subject on its agenda for the convention platform preceding this Fall's national elections. Switzerland seems to be splitting fine hairs over which international organizations she can join without soiling her virginity. The Swiss might well prefer not joining any one of them. But economic necessity in this seesaw world of tariffs and preferences requires some compromises.

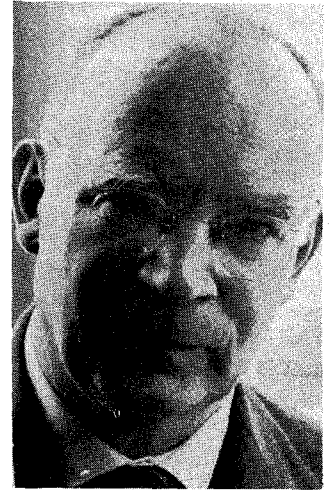
For instance, Switzerland joined the Marshall Plan conference in 1947 -- "with reservations." Then she joined the Organization for European Economic Cooperation, the Marshall Plan's outgrowth, because, as Petitpierre explains, "Neutrality was not an obstacle. The national sovereignty of each country was preserved and each country was bound only by the measure of the obligations into which it had entered." The Swiss also have joined the International Labor Organization, the World Health Organization, the European Payments Union, the European Conference of Ministers of Transport and the European Organization for Nuclear Research. This last raised some eyebrows among the neutral fundamentalists. Then the Swiss Federal Council fixed things by declaring: "It sometimes happens that international organizations, while being wide open to the other states, nevertheless only comprise, for various reasons, countries belonging to a specific region. It has, for example, been found in recent years, that the Eastern European States are not interested in the activities of certain international organizations...If we were to abstain from participating in organizations, or if we withdrew from them for the only reason that they do not embrace all European countries, this would greatly restrict our liberty of action without helping to guarantee our independence..."

The Swiss, however, have drawn the line against joining NATO. And, similarly, they declined a Russian invitation in November, 1954 to attend a conference on European security. The Council of Europe, although not military, is looked upon as a "border-line" case and avoided as "politically tainted." The European Coal & Steel Community (France, Germany, Italy and Benelux), as well as its nuclear power outgrowth, Euratom, are also being avoided because Switzerland sees in them the possibility of big state dominance and super-personality administration. But since the Six are pushing a Common Market and Switzerland is enormously interested in having other nations buy her goods on competitive terms, she now has aligned herself with the "Outer Seven" (Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Austria and Britain) in their attempt to neutralize the Six's growing influence. (See WWU-25 & 26).

"We think we should be left to do as much for ourselves as we can do. We want the suppression of nationalism. But we should not like to suppress the plurality of European culture," Willy Bretscher told me.

Bretscher is editor in chief of the Neue Zurcher Zeitung, Switzerland's most respected newspaper, and also editor of the Zeitung's English language monthly, Swiss Review of World Affairs.

"Neutrality is a means of preserving the independence of Switzerland. It is not an end in itself," Bretscher declared. "And it is an unwarranted extension to say that we have to be neutral in our outlook towards world events. We have maintained strictly that neutrality binds the state but not the people." The editor said that Hitler complained bitterly about the Swiss Government professing neutrality during World War II while the Swiss people and press were avowedly anti-Axis. And today, he said the Russians are annoyed with the Swiss Council's decision to reserve the right to equip the Swiss Army with nuclear weapons. The Swiss Parliament's Communists (four out of 196 members) had tried to secure a Constitutional amendment forbidding nuclear weapons. Russia, according to Bretscher, felt neutral Switzerland's defiance might set a bad precedent in Europe and complained through diplomatic channels, as well as through press and radio. Stalin, by the way, never lost any love for the Swiss, even if they were also neutral against Germany. The Churchill Memoirs quote Uncle Joe using the word "swine" in regard to the Swiss. And when Switzerland sought an exchange of diplomatic relations with the USSR in 1944 she was rebuffed for having a "fascist attitude." The diplomatic exchange managed to squeak through two years later.



"...not the people"

What about UN membership these days? Bretscher finds it "ironical" that the UN's "very ineffectiveness in collective security might make it possible for us to join. Collective security is not being realized in the UN. And the sanctions which were thought to be so stringent are not so stringent any more." He thought his country might be induced to apply for UN membership "in a year or two" and noted that "the Foreign Minister is not so adverse."

Bretscher concluded: "The existance of a few neutral countries such as Sweden and Switzerland, which are resolved and prepared to defend their independence and bear willingly the sacrifices demanded by military preparedness, does not seriously impair the defense of the West...Switzerland must be satisfied

with defending Europe within its own borders (and) with its unquestioned will to fight for its independence and with its highly qualified military preparedness it actually does defend Europe to the best of its means."



I found the pickings exceedingly slim during my 3½ days here. Someone described the Swiss to me as being "constitutionally constipated." The one interview I found worthwhile was with Bretscher, and he had a double schedule of weekend editions coming up and couldn't take out much time. The U.S. Embassy in Bern, much against my better judgment, insisted on making political appointments for me -- "because we are such good friends with the Swiss, we never have any trouble at all." (Actually, before I left Washington both State and USIA suggested I make my own appointments so as to avoid embarrassing either Government or press and perhaps to give the subject a chance to talk more freely. Until Switzerland, I had followed this advice.) Well, the Embassy in Bern got turn-downs from the political and economic departments and were told that I should go through proper channels, a press representative. He came forth with a Dr. Henri Zoelly, a man in the legal service of the Swiss Federal Political Department whom no one in the Embassy had ever known existed. Zoelly kept me waiting for an hour before seeing me. And then once I did sit down in his office and start to reach for a notebook, Zoelly went into panic. First he started stuttering. Then he picked up a magazine and started holding it between his face and mine as I asked questions. All I managed to get out of him was that the Pope's Swiss Guards are the only Swiss mercenaries still permitted, they number only 100 and it's doubtful whether they can be looked upon as a compromise of Swiss neutrality since they are not very military. Oh yes, when I asked Zoelly why Switzerland didn't join the UN, he replied: "It is not yet universal, almost, but not quite. Germany, our neighbor, is not a member."

ZOELLY: He stuttered

Zoelly strongly suggested that I look up Dr. Dietrich Schindler, an assistant professor of international law at the University of Zurich. When I left Bern for Zurich and phoned Schindler I found him in a stuttering dilemma too -- trying to decide which restaurant we should meet at. The lunch conversation expired in mid-entre. The one note I took was that the Swiss "are not interested in the UN. People think, 'Why join? The UN is not successful.' It is also difficult to have to vote on Afro-Asian situations and combine them with a neutral policy." I found out at the end of the lunch that Schindler didn't even know Zoelly: Zoelly had been a student of Schindler's father, another professor.

Another thing, my lengthy quoting from Federal Councilor-Foreign Minister Petitpierre was done from a U.S. Embassy translation of his Vienna speech. But at least I got the satisfaction of a personal turndown from Petitpierre's secretary after I went to his office and left my card.

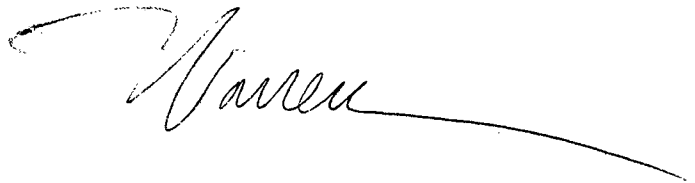


SCHINDLER: "Why join?"

Well for a country with only 635 unemployed out of a total population of 5.2 million (as of June 30), an enormously high standard of living, perhaps the strongest Army in Europe, who can blame neutrality's classic virgin from stuttering: "Don't change anything!"?

And who cares about being constitutionally constipated? The skiing, scenery and fondu are marvelous.

Cordially,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Warren", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Warren W. Unna

Received New York October 7, 1959