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AS THE INSCRUTABLE SEE US

We are indebted to Sir Charles Lamb of Winchester who has drawn attention to the following article, which appeared in a recent edition of Peking Review, which is published in English, presumably for propaganda purposes. The article, which is reproduced without comment, was entitled "Small Nations should also be Prepared" and might be regarded as an interesting insight into how others see us.

Switzerland, with its beautiful scenery, is known as the "garden of Europe". However, beneath a superficial tranquillity rages the fierce contention between the two superpowers – the Soviet Union and the United States – for the domination of Europe. The military threat from social-imperialism, in particular, is arousing ever more concern among the Swiss people.

The conventional force now maintained by the Soviet Union in Europe far outnumbers that of NATO.

In the past year, with ulterior motives, Moscow has strengthened its offensive capability at an alarming tempo – in both quality and quantity – and especially its tank and air forces.

Pierre Graber, former President of the Swiss Confederation, stressed that in Central Europe, "military concentrations are denser and with better equipment than elsewhere". "Competition here is of more decisive significance" than in any other place, he added.

Travelling in the country, one can see how vigilant the general public is against the danger of war. Many Swiss friends told us that their country must strengthen its defences and be prepared at all times to resist foreign aggression, and that only in this way can its independence be safeguarded.

According to a policy based on this idea, we were told, the country maintains a system of compulsory military service under which tens of thousands of youth are recruited every year for training. Besides, every male citizen between the ages of twenty and fifty is obliged to practice marksmanship with live ammunition every year. This ensures that a force of over 600,000 men can be immediately mobilised and dispatched to the frontier in case of outside aggression.

A country that has a standing army of only several thousand men, Switzerland often stages military exercises for a review of the combat readiness and

fighting capability of its troops. It held some time ago a ten-day exercise in the Schaffhausen area of north-east Switzerland, involving nearly 40,000 people. This was regarded as the biggest manoeuvre Switzerland has carried out since the Helsinki conference. It proceeded according to a hypothetical invasion by an enemy advancing deep into Swiss territory after crossing the Rhine River. With the support and co-operation of air and tank forces, the Swiss troops fought back and mounted a counter-offensive. Swiss soldiers swam across the Rhine in pursuit of the enemy, recovered Schaffhausen and finally drove out the invaders.

In Switzerland, more and more people are realising that in repelling aggression launched by a superpower, it is necessary to rely on the masses of the people, not only the armed forces.

The *Handbook on Civil Defence*, required reading for every family in Switzerland, emphatically points out that safeguarding the country is not the business of the troops alone. For resistance to outside aggression to be effective, people should be fully prepared in advance; one should not wait until one is thirsty to dig a well. A Swiss friend said that his country now follows a policy of "total defence", covering all aspects of life – military, civil, economic and social.

An officer of the Federal Civil Defence Office told us that the country has already built underground shelters for two-thirds (4.5 million) of its population and 600 underground civil defence command posts. Efforts are being made by civil defence authorities to ensure that shelters are accessible to all in case of need.

Accompanied by an officer of Berne Civil Defence, we made rounds of some underground works dug under a stadium in the city. There we found comprehensive underground civil defence facilities, covering an area of 10,000 square metres. It comprises a command post, a

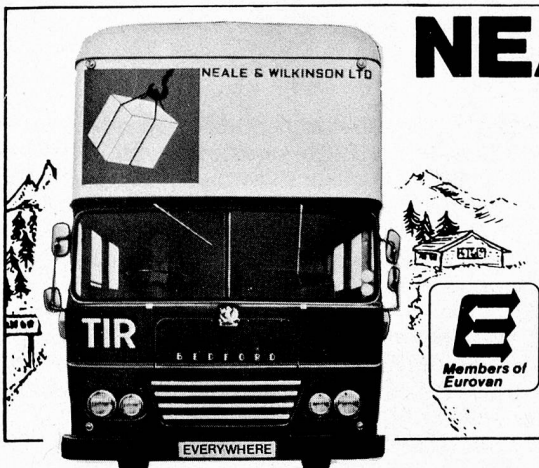
hospital, a waiting post for defence personnel and a mass shelter, complete with alarm and communication systems, air filters against chemical warfare, and also pumps and generators. There are also three canteens capable of serving 300 people at once, with enough food and liquor supply to last 1,000 people half a month. The hospital has 110 beds, with wards for serious and slight injuries.

The defence staff has an emergency post provided with facilities for receiving and executing orders, sapper's outfits and vehicles and equipment for first-aid missions. The mass shelter affords protection to 500 persons; anyone who lives far away or has no dugout at home in the vicinity can enter.

Every household in Berne is advised to dig its own shelter, while factories and government offices in the city generally have their own underground installations, the civil defence officer accompanying us explained. Thus, in case of war or any other emergency, everyone can seek protection underground, he said.

The precautionary measures taken by Switzerland have aroused great interest in Europe in recent years. Civil defence organizations of Sweden, Denmark, Norway and other countries have sent their men to Switzerland to study its defence facilities and to exchange experiences.

Switzerland is a neutral country. Its peace-loving people have a glorious tradition of fighting against foreign aggression. A Swiss friend recalled that during World War II, Switzerland was twice threatened by foreign invasion. But the aggressors were deterred because some half-a-million Swiss troops were sent to the frontiers in no more than 24 hours, he said. Another Swiss friend, speaking about the international situation today, stressed that the peace and neutrality of Switzerland must be defended with arms. A third friend emphatically refuted the particular notion that Switzerland, being a small nation, needs no modernized national defence of its own. No Swiss citizen will agree to such an assertion, he declared. As things stand today, small nations should also be prepared, he said.



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