

# Swiss vote against abolishing Army

by Laurent Murawiec

In a nationwide referendum on Nov. 26, Swiss voters rejected a proposal “for a Switzerland without an Army and for [conducting] a global peace policy,” by a margin of 64.4% to 35.6%. But while no one had doubted that the referendum would be rejected, few had expected such a relatively high vote for the pacifist initiative. Initial reports indicate that a majority of the young electorate voted for it—a worrisome sign of opposition to Switzerland’s strong soldier-citizens’ militia army. The ultra-left and Socialist promoters of the initiative had not expected to win, but they used the campaign on the referendum as a means to transform the overall political climate, and destabilize the military.

A fair part of the anti-Army vote can be ascribed to a rag-tag grouping of malcontents, permanent protesters, etc. But the damage of Gorbymania in the largely left-oriented media has also taken its toll: Many voters could not reconcile the need for a strong Army with the fiction they are being fed of an “increasingly peaceful world” and the “end of the Cold War.”

One of the high-profile campaigners for abolishing the Army is old leftist film-maker Brodmann—who before World War II was a card-carrying member of the Nazi-sympathizing National Front. “We defended the Army instead of attacking its opponents,” complained Brigadier Friedrich Guenther (ret.), an outspoken opponent of the initiative.

The large anti-Army vote has consequences way beyond Switzerland: The initial idea of launching a Swiss referendum on the matter came from West German Green and left-wing Social Democratic circles, who will now use these results as a lever to assail West Germany’s own army, the Bundeswehr.

The Swiss Army—surprisingly, given the small size of the country and its small population (6.5 million)—is one of the most impressive and effective in Europe. Article 18 of the Swiss Constitution prescribes: “Every [male] Swiss [citizen] has to perform military service.” This service extends over a span of 30 years, with active duty every year, after the four months of basic training received at age 20. For years thereafter, each citizen serves for three weeks per year. As a result, within a few hours, Switzerland can mobilize no fewer than 620,000 trained combatants in fully operational gear. Each year, 400,000 Swiss citizens perform military service—probably a world record, and a unique instance of a people in arms.

The professional officer corps is very small, comprising 600 officers and 900 non-commissioned officers, the latter mostly instructors. But the high quality of the professional core and the constant updating of the troops’ military training make it a force anyone would have to reckon with. During World War II, in spite of its deficient equipment, its presence and determined spirit of resistance played an essential role to deter a planned Nazi onslaught. The German Reichswehr did not relish the prospect of conducting mountain warfare against such a tough army in the middle of Western Europe.

## Trained in guerrilla warfare

The rules of engagement of the Army call for three Army Corps to defend the country’s central plain, and the one Mountain Army Corps to operate as an alpine redoubt. The Army is prepared to carry out guerrilla warfare if need be, while civil defense facilities allows 80% of the population to be protected in concrete bunkers and shelters. Special care has been given to making an aggressor’s life impossible, through the demolition of the indispensable road, bridge, and tunnel infrastructure (see interview with former Chief of General Staff Joerg Zumstein, *EIR*, Nov. 24, 1989). Switzerland is the pivot of Western Europe, especially for North-South connections. The loss of the ability to move through it would be disastrous.

Special care has also been given to training and organizing the troops against *spetsnaz*/airborne assault. “Combined defense”—the chief concept in the Army’s war-fighting doctrine—would weaken the invader by attrition, dislocate his echelons, and use the difficult terrain to counterattack with the main armored forces and the Air Force. Switzerland probably has highest density of fortifications, fortresses, and underground facilities of any nation in the world.

The material deficiencies under which the Army labored, especially at the beginning of World War II, have been more than made up for in the meantime. With 820 main battle tanks (including the formidable Leopard II), the Army possesses two-thirds of the armored force of the entire French Army. With about 1,330 pieces of artillery (TOWed, self-propelled howitzers, multi-barreled rocket-launchers, and 120 mm mortars), it boasts 85% of the artillery of the Bundeswehr in neighboring Germany. And its 272 combat aircraft compare quite favorably with France’s 598 and Germany’s 507.

Why the Soviet controllers of the West German Greens, and their Swiss cohorts, should want to weaken that Army is obvious. Already in 1987, they provoked the calling of another referendum to deprive the Parliament of the right to vote on procurement programs, and submit each and all to popular vote. The gradual subversion of a military institution which is still the pride of much of the population—shows that Swiss patriots are going to have to launch a reconquest of popular, and especially youth sentiment.