

Swiss military debates the SDI

by Laurent Murawiec

An intense debate within the Swiss military has broken out on the subject of the Strategic Defense Initiative and potential forms of Swiss participation in it. The Swiss Army, a very respectable force in its own right, and one based on an efficient militia and active reserve system, plays a social-political role out of proportion to its numbers, and far greater than that played by the military in most other Western nations.

During his visit to Washington in spring 1985, Defense Minister Delamuraz made positive comments on the SDI. More recently, *EIR's Global Showdown* Special Report has received a great deal of attention among military circles, and more military figures have gone public on the SDI issue.

Corps Commander Josef Feldmann, the 4th Army Corps commander who very nearly became the new chief of the General Staff of the Swiss Army, told the Zurich Officers' Society on Oct. 28 that "the attempt to move out of the frozen strategy of mutual deterrence has increased in the last few years. . . . And the point is not to militarize space, but rather to render the enemy's weapons useless." The Swiss general discussed the role of particle weapons and boost-phase defense, stressing that the major obstacles lie more in battle-management than in technology. "The Soviets could certainly react with a strengthening of their offensive potential," Feldmann added, but "not necessarily. What is certain, however, is that an American defense system that would be even partially efficient would strongly reduce the chances of success of a Soviet first strike." Commenting on the activities of the pro-Soviet Green Party—"red-green agitation centers"—against the SDI, Feldmann sarcastically noted that it would be harder for peaceniks to mobilize against a strategy aimed at "protecting lives."

"Denouncing the ABM Treaty, once the SDI were to become realizable, would become necessary, and this would expose the Americans to the charge of political immorality. Such an accusation could be sustained neither ethically nor logically," Feldmann concluded.

In the ensuing debate, many questions were raised, in particular that of the SDI's capacity to defend against low-

flying missiles and to be an effective defense in Europe.

Two days after the Zurich meeting, the outgoing chief of the General Staff of the Army, Joerg Zumstein, attacked the SDI during his end-of-tenure address to the Federal Press House. His criticism of the SDI did concede that it was a "perfectly understandable" strategy "from Washington's standpoint and in purely military terms," especially since "the continued increase in nuclear weapons has led the superpowers into a military dead-end." As a result, Zumstein explained that he "fully understood the United States' attempt to establish their defense on a new and finally credible basis." But "from a European, and from a Swiss standpoint," he added, "the implementation of SDI and the resulting feeling of safety in the U.S.A. could lead them to withdraw the American troops from Europe, and, as a result of this abandonment of physical presence, it could lead to a destabilization of the situation on this side of the Atlantic."

On Oct. 31, Gen. Gustav Daeniker, the General Staff's chief of operational instruction and a strategist of great influence, used a meeting of the European Conference for Human Rights held near Bern to state his own views, within the constraints of those expressed the day before by his chief. Daeniker stated, "The possibility of a war in Europe is no less real now than previously. But it is unlikely as long as strategic balance persists. What would be dangerous is a situation where the Soviet Union would convince itself that it could not match any more [American] space defense systems. Then, the danger of a preventive strike would be at its highest. . . ."—a curious misestimate of Soviet plans and intents.

One more intervention in the debate came from Dr. Rudolf Walser, the secretary of the Swiss Trade and Industry Association, who discussed in an article in the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of Oct. 25 the technological avenues opened by the SDI, and also by the Eureka project, comparing the well-defined objectives of the former, to the latter's unclarity. But the perspective of participation in either project is being kept under review by Swiss industry, whose excellent high-precision industries, e.g., in optics, could clearly take part in the projects.

Whether the debate will openly continue is unclear, given an order by the Defense Ministry to stop public pronouncements, but the discussion is expected to spread through other channels. Many officers in Switzerland argue that the defense of Switzerland must be rethought in light of its inability to repel a missile assault, which makes directed-energy weapon defense against short- and medium-range missiles an ideal solution to their predicament. The necessity to link up with other Western nations to ensure that Soviet respect for Swiss neutrality be based on something other than international treaties, is also prominent. As a senior officer recently said, "our staff exercises start from the same point as your *Global Showdown*—the fact of Soviet military superiority—and follow roughly the same scenarios."