

The nation Hitler feared conquering

Why Hitler never occupied Switzerland: The power of armed neutrality

by Felix Abt*



Felix Abt. (Picture me)

Switzerland's survival was no accident – it was a masterpiece of military deterrence and strategic manoeuvring. Switzerland's survival during the Second World War was not by chance, but the result of a deliberate and calculated strategy of armed neutrality. While Hitler conquered most of Europe, Switzerland remained independent, unoccupied and defiantly neutral, despite being surrounded by hostile Axis powers.

Nazi Germany had an invasion plan (*Operation Tannenbaum*), and Hitler despised Swiss democracy. But the invasion never took place. Why? Because Switzerland masterfully balanced defiance and pragmatism, ensuring that the costs of occupation far outweighed the potential benefits for the Third Reich.

Neutrality as a protective shield – backed by strength

Switzerland's neutrality was not just a diplomatic stance, but a military doctrine. Unlike other neutral nations such as Belgium or the Netherlands, Switzerland did not rely on promises or treaties to protect itself. Instead, it deterred attackers through the following measures:

- A fully mobilisable citizen army (with a peak of 850,000 soldiers – almost 20% of the population).
- The National Redoubt strategy, which turned the Swiss Alps into an impregnable fortress.
- A policy of total resistance – General Guisan declared in 1940 that Switzerland would fight to the last bullet rather than surrender.

Hitler was aware that invading Switzerland would have the following consequences:

- A protracted guerrilla war in the mountains.

- The withdrawal of half a million soldiers from the Eastern Front.
- The loss of important banking and trade links. Neutrality only worked because Switzerland was prepared to defend it at all costs.

Economic concessions – but never submission

Switzerland made pragmatic agreements with Nazi Germany but never became a puppet state.

- Swiss banks handled Nazi gold (including stolen assets), but the country refused to be fully integrated into Hitler's financial system.
- Swiss factories sold machinery to Germany but never allowed the Nazis direct control over production.
- Germany used Swiss tunnels as supply routes, but Switzerland strictly regulated deliveries and denied unrestricted access.

These concessions made Nazi Germany dependent on cooperation with Switzerland – an invasion would have been economically counterproductive.

Diplomatic tightropes – mastering strategic manoeuvring

Switzerland's neutrality was not blind idealism, but cold, calculating realpolitik:

- Espionage hub – Both the Allies and the Axis powers used Switzerland for intelligence operations, but Switzerland never openly took sides.
- Humanitarian influence – The Geneva-based Red Cross provided aid to prisoners of war (including Germans), which gave Switzerland moral influence.
- Refugee policy – a dark compromise – Although Switzerland rejected many Jewish refugees, it took in thousands, carefully navigating between Nazi pressure and international scrutiny.

Switzerland survived by never taking sides too strongly and maintaining just enough independence to remain intact.

The lesson: neutrality must be defended

Switzerland's survival during the Second World War proves that neutrality without the power to

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defend it is meaningless. Hitler did not spare Switzerland out of respect – he avoided invading because:

- The military costs were too high.
- The economic advantages were too valuable to lose.
- Swiss resistance made occupation impossible.

Other neutral nations such as Belgium, Denmark and Norway were overrun because they lacked the unique combination of geographical location, military preparedness and ruthless pragmatism.

Conclusion:

Why Switzerland's neutrality worked

Switzerland's survival was a masterpiece of realpolitik:

- It armed itself to the teeth – neutrality without strength is surrender.
- It signed agreements but never gave up its sovereignty – economic cooperation is not synonymous with occupation.
- It played both sides without committing itself – diplomatic skill ensured its survival.

Switzerland's independence was not a gift from Hitler – it was secured through steel, strategy and sheer tenacity.

Neutrality is not passive. It is a struggle – and Switzerland has won it.

A warning from history:

Switzerland's neutrality is under threat

Switzerland's strategy during the Second World War is still highly relevant today. In an era of shifting global power relations, small nations cannot survive by hoping for mercy – they survive by ensuring that aggression remains too costly to pursue.

It is worrying that some Swiss elites seem to have forgotten the lessons of history – precisely those principles that have enabled Switzerland, a nation marked by adversity, to prosper despite a lack of natural resources, insufficient arable

land to feed its population and no access to the sea.

Take the “Neue Zürcher Zeitung”, Switzerland's most influential newspaper. During the Second World War, its editor-in-chief, *Willy Bretscher*, was a staunch advocate of neutrality and rejected both National Socialism and Communism. Under his leadership, the “Neue Zürcher Zeitung” combined criticism with pragmatism and recognised that Switzerland's survival depended on not aligning itself with any ideological orientation.

Today, however, *Eric Guyer*, editor-in-chief of the “Neue Zürcher Zeitung”, takes a completely different stance. As a staunch transatlantic ideologue, he repeatedly attacks Russia¹ and China², openly rejects neutrality, describes it as a “burden”³ and favours integration into NATO. This change of course is dangerous.

The Swiss people must resist it!

Neutrality is not a relic, but the foundation for Switzerland's survival. If the country abandons its strategic independence, it runs the risk of becoming a pawn of the major powers, much like smaller nations that fell victim to Hitler's ambitions.

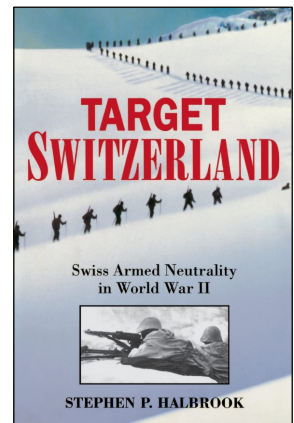
The lesson of history is clear: a Switzerland that forgets its neutrality is a Switzerland that is gambling with its survival.

(Translation “Swiss Standpoint”)

¹ <https://felixabt.substack.com/p/the-suffering-of-young-russians-in>

² <https://felixabt.substack.com/p/revelation-repressive-china-suppressed>

³ <https://weltwoche.ch/story/neutralitaet-als-schweizer-talisman/>



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