

WHY IS THE SWISS ROAD TO PEACE RESEARCH SO TORTUOUS?By Johan Galtung

The International Peace Research Association (IPRA) has just concluded its tenth biannual conference; the twentieth anniversary of IPRA and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) as well as the 25th anniversary of the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO) are coming up next year. In short, the field is somehow coming of age - at the IPRA conference in August 1983 there were even three papers on the history of peace research. Like for any discipline or research community, one may certainly voice doubt and criticism about the quality of the work. But there can be no doubt that there is such a community, even of considerable size: the order of magnitude being 10^3 rather than 10^2 , with a high productivity, exploring anything related to the conditions for reducing large scale violence. Moreover, the field is unmistakably transnational and transdisciplinary, bringing together, often inside one person, the approaches of several disciplines and the perspectives of various nations. And like the vast research field of medicine, it is unashamedly committed: peace is preferred to war and violence; like health is preferred to disease and decease.

In all of this Switzerland is missing: almost all other European countries show up, as authors, as participants; not the Swiss. And this in spite of (or because of) the fact that we can soon celebrate the 20th anniversary of an effort by the parliamentarian Max Arnold to establish a Swiss peace research institute; and the third anniversary of the founding ceremony of the Geneva International Peace Research Institute (GIPRI) on Armistice Day, 11 November 1980, is just coming up. So, where is the problem, what is holding it up? In spite of the fact that excellent people like Adrian Preiswerk dedicated so much of their time and energy to the enterprise? Difficult to tell, but some insights may perhaps be obtained by comparing with peace research in another small European country, roughly of the same size, Norway. Being myself a party to all of this, my objectivity may perhaps be doubted, but let me try, nonetheless - having a fair amount of experience also with the Swiss scene.

If I should try to characterize the Norwegian situation back in the mid-1950s, when the first ideas about peace research in Norway started taking shape, I think would focus on the following factors, not necessarily in order of significance:

[1] The ideological confusion created by the transition from a foreign policy doctrine of neutrality (since 1814) to a doctrine of membership in a very powerful alliance, NATO.

[2] The experience of the occupation, and the concomitant question: how to react to avoid or to fight an occupation.

[3] The opening to the world society, through active UN membership and technical assistance, to Kerala (India) already from 1952.

[4] A quite strong social science tradition, characterized both by being empirical and by being tied to philosophy. One name has to be mentioned in that particular connection: Arne Naess, philosopher (University of Oslo), with very respectable work in empirical social science (semantics) and philosophy of science, in addition a pioneer in gandhian studies; and a participant in non-military resistance during the occupation.

It should be noted that the first point does not refer to any particular security ideology, but to a transition phase. I would agree with official Norwegian ideology on this point: 9 April 1940, the German invasion, was a shock, not only politically, but also intellectually. I do not think the Norwegians felt that safety derived from the complexities of a doctrine of neutrality so much as from being peripheral in Europe, being outside the cauldron down there in the center with evil forces competing for the positions on top. Evidently we were either more important in the strategic game than we believed (as evidence by the number of foreign armies ultimately fighting in our tiny land), or the world had simply shrunk so much that even Norway was within reach of German and French troops or - most probably - both. There was something virgin in the attitude, or perhaps rather something very innocent. From defining the country as unattractive to others there is now (1983) no limit to how important and attractive it is considered to be - in the eyes of Norwegians defending alliance membership. But there is a general consensus that the world has shrunk and that Norway has joined the world, even as an actor in her own right. The question is what role to play.

Peace research was launched in the center of that uncertainty, and whatever one might think of the outcomes of the studies there was agreement that it was relevant to the three problems mentioned. There was from the beginning an effort to discuss security doctrines, a field of unending curiosity to Norwegians. But, and this is a major point: it is certainly not so attractive to the Swiss, or the Swedes for that matter, the debate to some extent being closed by the option chosen. It is not only the obvious point that heavily armed neutrality has been tested and proved, at least to the satisfaction of the believers, to be valid so that no further debate is needed. Beyond this there is another factor: to study neutrality or doctrine in general is to question it and may therefore be seen as undermining the credibility of the neutrality. This point, needless to say, holds even more for countries where there is consensus about alliance membership and a doctrine of (strong) deterrence with highly offensive weapons such as the two superpowers, where peace research is also rather weak.

However, peace research in Norway had to deal not only with the problem of major concern, how to avoid 9 April 1940 - but also with the problem of what to do afterwards should the occupation nevertheless take place. Not that ideas about nonmilitary defense (non-cooperation, civil disobedience, nonviolence in general) are held by more than a minority, to a large extent clustered around the many conscientious objectors in Norway. But the interest in there, and it has for a long time been a completely legitimate field of research, some of it inspired by gandhian studies.

More important, however, was the opening to world society. In one sense, being a nation with many missionaries and many sailors, the opening had always been there: Christian as well as world logic dictated that "we are all one." But there was a difference: instead of withdrawing to our periphery location and neutrality, Norway should now also build her security on a balance between Nordic, Western, European and world belongingness. The fear of the Soviet Union eliminated "Europe as a whole" and the result was a complex combination of Nordic, Western (NATO/OECD/EC) and world (UN) orientations, with shifting emphases and occasional openings towards the East in Europe (eg during the conservative, "bourgeois" government from 1965). Again, no complete consensus but tremendous interest, curiosity in a young country run from Stockholm in the period 1814-1905; before that for four hundred years from Copenhagen--).

Then, the role of social science. Just as Norway did not have very strong foreign affairs theory, there was no very strong theory for social affairs either, no very heavy crust, sedimented through centuries, cemented by a mixture of theology and jurisprudence and popular, "native" theory. There was all of this but at the same time a receptive attitude to empirical social science, even a public thrill at participating in the voyages of social discovery. Today I would even talk of an overacceptance of social science, a tendency to treat short term empirical findings as if they were natural laws. Basically, however, the point was that there was not too much of a protective national myth. And the social scientists were relatively competent, like in the other Nordic countries: a steady flow of Fulbright scholars to and from the United States, the social science Mecca of the 1950s and the 1960s, played an important role.

But the role of philosophy was equally significant. The narrowness of any single social science discipline was also deplored. Perhaps never formulated as such, but efforts to "put it all together again," from psychology via sociology/politology/economics to international relations, if possible also making use of the classical social science organized around time (history) and space (geography) would meet with relatively little resistance. All of those efforts, not only peace studies but also development studies and future studies got some kind of public, institutional support. The protestations from singular social science disciplines, that

peace research is a branch of political science and that development studies and future studies (for the Third and Fourth Worlds, respectively) were essentially the exclusive domain of economists passed relatively unnoticed. The same happened in Western Germany, a country even more uncertain of itself.

Seen in retrospect: there were facilitating factors. Or, better expressed: the resistance was there, political conservatism on top and intellectual conservatism underneath, but it was not that strong. The strategy chosen, trying to show by means of concrete and hopefully competent research what peace research could be like, paid off. Instead of endless critiques of the classical approaches based on one discipline and on the perspective of the elites of one country, that of the author - even masquerading as "objectivity" the constructive approach of the concrete alternative - a flow of research projects with a somewhat different perspective. And instead of endless discussions of whether peace research is possible simply adopt a "learning by doing" approach, get started, listen to criticism, participate in a maximum of dialogues. For myself I can say that the critique I took most to my ear was the need to have longer time perspectives. The oldest social science, history, had to play a major role, but not necessarily in the way the critics, often marxists, wanted.

Now, let us turn to Switzerland. The conclusion emerges immediately like a ripe fruit: these four facilitating factors were and are not present. Let me try to be more specific.

[1] There was and is no ideological confusion in connection with problems of security. The theory and practice of a heavily armed neutrality had been reinforced by the relative success of that policy, for Switzerland, in the Second World War. There were scars: the neutrality tilted towards the axis countries (but then Switzerland was in the jaw formed by Italy, Anschluss-Austria and Germany) even to the point that Swiss arms factories were bombed. But the key dictum of genuine conservatism could prevail: "when something works do not try to change it." Merely to study it could be seen, by some, as a challenge and hence reduce the credibility, as argued above.

[2] There had been no experience of occupation, no agonizing confrontation with the bleak reality of the twentieth century, the need to find some space between total capitulation and loss of dignity, and total repression and loss of life. The Swiss assumption remained that this problem is solved by not being occupied; merely to study what one does afterwards might reduce the credibility of one's own faith in the national defense.

[3] There was no new opening to the world society after the Second World War. The League of Nations became the United Nations. Switzerland remained the same, outside both of them, selling the services of Geneva, at considerable profit, to either. A

contented, somewhat self-righteous country not in search of a new identity in a confusing and changing world but firm in its belief that the world has to adjust to Switzerland as it is, rather than vice versa. This may now be changing, however. My own guess would be that the impact Japanese (and other) watches have had on the Swiss watch industry, not to mention the coming rise of a major Far East capital market, will be more important enforcing revisions in the Swiss world images than the Second World War and the whole history of decolonization combined.

[4] There was no strong social science tradition. In fact, one might go further: Switzerland fosters technicians rather than intellectuals. None would question the competence of Swiss engineers, bankers, physicians, etc.; in short, Swiss professionalism. But intellectual life is something else. Its essence is not merely to produce answers to already known questions, as professionals do. Its essence is to produce new questions, even to question the unquestionable. And here there are various layers, even levels. At level 0 is the non-intellectual, often very learned in appearance, a walking depository of conventional wisdom, never taking any risk. At level 1 the conventional wisdom of others is questioned, but with protective measures taken, even security nets. One such protective measure is only to permit those questions that have already been formulated elsewhere, usually in the metropolises of intellectual inquiry: Paris for French-speaking Switzerland, Germany for the German-speaking part, and then the Anglo-Saxon world for both of them (in Italian-speaking Switzerland it is more difficult to discover any type of intellectual life). Another is to make a closed circle of people formulating the same questions and sharing many of the answers, protected by non-dialogue, and often also by lack of knowledge of the object of their criticism.

At level 2, then, this is done without security nets, often at considerable risk, often by loners, the first to see certain problems in conventional wisdom (although they may also have been seen elsewhere in the world, and at other times). The punishment may be banishment, in the Swiss case taking the form of self-exile by the many famous Swiss scholars (Le Corbusier, Piaget), preferring foreign soil and atmosphere to a life at level 0, possibly 1, at home. And then there is level 3: questioning oneself.

To this I would now add one factor that seems to me very important in understanding the profound lack of originality in Swiss social science, with some very few exceptions. Switzerland is not egalitarian in terms of power and privilege; and old families play a role in military and academic establishments, for instance by combining economic, political, military and academic status. But the country is profoundly egalitarian in another way: no Swiss is recognized as a prophet, a guru. Gurus have to be imported, for a short period, or reside outside the country. So, the question: who

are you, to challenge the national doctrine, who are you to believe that you know something the rest of us do not know, takes on more significance than in many other countries.

And there is, indeed, Swiss national ideology, or myth if one wants. The punishment for challenging it is seen very clearly in the extremely harsh treatment given to conscientious objectors in Switzerland, matched only by Eastern European countries in Europe. The comparison is not random; Eastern European countries in general, and the Soviet Union in particular, are also weak on peace research. And the reasons seem to be the same as a third weakness these countries share with Switzerland: a weak peace movement. The reason is this: a national ideology stands in the way, state marxism in the Eastern European case and confederate armed neutrality in the Swiss case - combined with a strong fear at the center of losing the monopoly on foreign/military affairs. In the case of the countries of bureaucratic socialism, the monopoly on foreign/military affairs is about the only one left after the erosion of the state monopoly on means of production, and the dwindling faith in official doctrine. And for a confederation, the legitimacy of the center rests, above all, on this monopoly. In addition, of course, Eastern Europe would also rank low on intellectuals in this field: in the Eastern European case because of too little democracy, in the Swiss case - in a sense - because of too much. When the views of everybody in research count equally the result is amateurishness, to the left as well as to the right.

Given this type of analysis it might look as if there will never be any peace research in Switzerland: the case looks overdetermined. But that is not the conclusion; what I try to show is only why the road is so tortuous. The first two factors of the four hold for the whole country, but the other two less so for the canton (and republic) of Geneva. Of course there is more of an opening to world society. The two institutes in the University of Geneva system dealing with this opening, the IUHEI for international relations in general and the IUED for development studies, bring in lots of outsiders, particularly students, probably with better contacts with the Swiss than the isolated, huge UN research establishment in Geneva. Exactly what impact this has on HEI right wing conventionalism and a certain IUED left wing conventionalism is not so obvious. More important, perhaps, is the fact that at the Institute of Development Studies a transdisciplinary focus had already been established, built around "development" rather than "peace." And, of course, Switzerland also produces a considerable number of highly transnational individuals, already trained in transnationalism inside that quadrilingual country - extending their experience through worldwide travel and work.

Adrian Preiswerk was one of the these. He brought to the task so much of what was needed - if it did not yet succeed it was

certainly not because he contributed too little but because the other factors, the non-facilitating ones, were still too strong. Himself an officer in the Swiss army, he knew the system, its strengths and weaknesses. Being a world citizen coming into development studies from the outside (law), the two factors of transnationalism and trans-disciplinarity were already present at what in Switzerland is an almost inconceivable level - particularly outside Geneva. But even in spite of this the two basic problems remained: the resistance of the Swiss center (Bern) to any such inquiry not steered by them, and the resistance of the Swiss periphery (peace movement, for instance) to any such inquiry that could challenge their doctrines. Both would welcome an institute never questioning their own dogmas, both would question an institute if it has as much as contact with the other side, leaving alone having contracts with the other side. Between institutionalized conformity, the alternative offered by the establishment, and institutionalized amateurishness/populism, the only way out, it seems, is sufficient time and money and good people to produce sufficiently interesting research. The conditions for that are not yet there.

But one day, time will be ripe. In my mind the key would be to start with Switzerland's success, its security policy, and try to understand the conditions for that success; not only with Switzerland's failures - its lack of true participation in the world community and the exploitation, in various ways, of Third World countries. So, maybe the tortuous phase could relatively soon come to an end.