

“Neutrality allows no compromises”

by Jacques Baud,* Brussels

(CH-S) On 29 August 2026, the national rally “For Neutrality & Peace” took place on Bern’s Bundesplatz, attracting over 1,000 participants. Jacques Baud was one of the eleven speakers at this event. His speech was broadcast live from his home in Brussels and could be followed on the big screen.¹

My name is *Jacques Baud*, I am a former member of the *Swiss Strategic Intelligence Service* and a Colonel in the General Staff. I would much rather be with you in Bern today, but I am a prisoner of the European Union in Brussels.

On 15 December 2025, I was sanctioned for exercising my right to freedom of expression. Since then, I have not been allowed to leave Belgium, not even to visit my family in Switzerland. I have no access to my bank accounts and am only surviving thanks to the help of my friends here in Brussels, who bring me food. I was able to survive until the end of June 2026 thanks to a humanitarian exemption, but that has now expired and, since 1 July, I no longer have that option.

“I no longer have access to my bank accounts”

I can no longer buy any food; for about two months, I have been without any resources and have no access to my bank accounts, even though there is money in them – but I cannot access it. Furthermore, *Basler Versicherung* in Switzerland and *Swisscard American Express* have terminated my contracts without giving any reason, and UBS has restricted access to my bank accounts in Switzerland – even though Switzerland has expressly refused to apply the European sanctions in my case.

I must point out that I have not broken any laws, either in Belgium nor in Europe. I have



Jacques Baud live from his home in Brussels.
(Video screenshot)

never been brought before a court, I have never been heard by a court, and I have never been given the opportunity to defend myself in court with the assistance of a lawyer.

The EU is attributing statements to me that I have never made, and which it therefore cannot prove. There are no secret reports, or intelligence reports whatsoever that prove any connection between me and Russia, because I have none. Our authorities are fully aware of this situation, yet our government has sided with the EU.

“Our government has sided with the EU”

With the exception of a note of protest dated 9 January – incidentally, just a few days after an article in the *Weltwoche* about my situation – the Swiss government has taken no action. It has done absolutely nothing else to intervene with the EU. It even appears that the FDFA [Federal Department of Foreign Affairs] had already approved my inclusion on the sanctions list before 15 December last year. Journalists from “SRF”, “RTS” (Swiss French television), the “Tribune de Genève”, the “Blick” and the “Neue Zürcher Zeitung” were delighted by my situation. So much for their understanding of democracy. – That is my personal situation.

Allow me to continue in French to address the issue of neutrality. Contrary to what the initiat-

* *Jacques Baud* is a retired Colonel in the General Staff of the Swiss Army and worked for the Swiss Strategic Intelligence Service. He spent several years working in various roles on behalf of NATO in Brüssel and Ukraine. He served with the UN in African countries, including as an adviser on security for refugee camps in Eastern Zaire during the Rwandan War.

He has also made a name for himself as the founder of the *Geneva International Centre for Humanitarian Demining* (GICHD) and is the author of numerous books and articles on intelligence services, asymmetric warfare, terrorism and disinformation, as well as the current crisis zones in Ukraine and the Near und Middle East.

ive's opponents claim, the issue of neutrality goes far beyond the sanctions against Russia. Moreover, it is not even certain that the initiative will have any impact on these specific sanctions. The issue is much broader.

"Our country is barely visible on the world map"

This is about the future of our country. Our country is barely visible on the world map – and yet it is one of the best-known and most respected. This is due neither to our chocolate nor to our watches, but to the fact that it is the most reliable country. It is the credibility that stems from its neutrality that defines its greatness.

I have observed this myself. Even in UN missions, the Swiss cross on the flag carries greater weight than the UN flag when it comes to persuading the parties to a conflict to engage in dialogue.

Neutrality is based on credibility and the trust it inspires. Credibility and trust are two qualities that either exist or they do not. One cannot be halfway credible or halfway trustworthy. The reliability of neutrality is an indispensable component of its credibility.

Just as there are different interpretations of democracy, so too are there different interpretations of neutrality. France sees itself as a model of democracy. But from a Swiss perspective, it bears more resemblance to a monarchy.

Sweden was also one of Europe's neutral countries. And yet it never possessed the political influence that our country enjoys. Quite simply because those who have preceded us in Switzerland, understood that neither democracy nor neutrality allow for half-measures. You cannot be half-democratic or half-neutral. You cannot be neutral one day and not the next. This consistent exercise of neutrality has made Switzerland a country whose flag is respected worldwide. That has made us to what we are.

Neutrality has made us to what we are

It is this attitude that fosters the dialogue that has been part of our democracy. We do not seek to judge or condemn, but to understand and find solutions. The *Vienna Declaration* of 20 March 1815 states:

Switzerland's neutrality and viability, as well as its independence from any foreign influence, are in the true interests of the politics of the whole of Europe.

In other words: neutrality is not a means of staying out of other people's conflicts, but a means of helping others to resolve them. This principle is the foundation of our armed neutrality. By defending ourselves, we not only defend our territory, but have also thereby acted as a barrier to war between the major European powers. We have inherited this responsibility within Europe, which consists of preserving our neutrality as a contribution to European security.

It is therefore important to bear this firmly in mind: it is neutrality itself that constitutes our contribution – not merely its application in the policy of good offices and similar initiatives that we might undertake. Today, of course, we are no longer in the year 1815. Our topography has largely lost its strategic significance. Yet Switzerland, in moral and political terms, has retained this role.

Today, it is up to us, Switzerland, to preserve our territory free from any foreign influence. Just as it was at the *Landsgemeinde* [cantonal assembly]: anyone who voted had to carry a sword to be able to defend their cause. Our country must have an army to defend its positions.

"Neutrality allows no compromise"

Neutrality allows no compromise. It must be absolute and without exception. Why should we be neutral in one conflict and not in another? How can we convince our partners of our sincerity if our neutrality is wavering?

Some believe that neutrality can be temporary or adapted to the situation. That is wrong. Either one is neutral, or one is not. Neutrality is part of our culture. Neutrality compels us to maintain greater distance from conflicts and crises. This distance has brought us greater composure in the political debate between nations. This composure is also reflected in our own democratic debate and contributes to the stability of our country.

Among our neighbours, domestic politics is deeply divided by intolerance, cronyism and fanaticism. They have lost the credibility they once had. Do we really want to emulate this model? To abandon neutrality, as practised throughout the 20th century, would mean abandoning the very soul of Switzerland.

The *International Committee of the Red Cross* adheres strictly to neutrality. This is effective and commands respect. The ICRC is inspired by Swiss neutrality. Today, it is up to Switzerland to follow the ICRC's example.

As I have already said, neutrality is not a means of staying out of conflicts. It is a means of helping our neighbours and partners to resolve them.

**To abandon neutrality
is to abandon the very soul of Switzerland**

In the 1960s, the Americans were suspicious of Swiss neutrality and declared, as the American President *George W. Bush* later put it: "You are either with us or against us". Nevertheless, we managed to hold our ground throughout the Cold War.

It was in Switzerland, in particular, that the greatest rapprochements between East and West took place. When I was working for the intelligence service, our partner services – that is, the Western services – respected our analyses precisely because they were independent. At the time, they shed a different light on the world.

Today we find ourselves in a world where international relations are being forced into a binary framework. International relations are becoming increasingly polarised, and our politicians fear they are no longer on the same page. Western diplomacy has largely been replaced by a policy of pressure. Our major neighbours no longer have a foreign policy. They are caught up in a constant power struggle and pursue gun-boat diplomacy.

**"We prefer
to condemn rather than solve problems"**

Leaders lacking in character, who cannot assert themselves through intelligence and subtlety,

are trying to impose their will by force. International relations have become more radical, more polarised and more violent than they were during the Cold War.

We prefer to condemn rather than solve problems. But condemnation solves nothing. Our authorities were unable to convince our neighbours that neutrality could be of benefit to them. Today, the Europeans have no way out of the conflict in Ukraine and are doomed to escalation.

Switzerland could have offered this way out. But to do so, one must be credible in the eyes of everyone. And when I say "everyone", I really do mean everyone. Our contribution to this changing world does not lie in aligning ourselves with increasingly radical positions, but in demonstrating that we are committed to dialogue.

"Using neutrality to build bridges"

There are enough countries working doggedly to deepen divisions, where Switzerland's contribution is negligible. You do not set yourself apart by doing what others do – but by using neutrality to build bridges. In this way, we can play a role that is not only more visible, but also more constructive and honourable.

Let us safeguard our neutrality!

Long live Switzerland, thank you!

Source: Video message to mark the national rally "For Neutrality & Peace" on 29 August 2026 at Bundesplatz in Bern.

(Translation "Swiss Standpoint")

¹ See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FsdJ-ZErYNY&t=66s>