

### *Basic problems of small countries*

threatening all of Europe - East and West - in this decade is the explosion and venting of radioactive fallout from one or more of the 40 obsolescent and illmaintained, unsafe nuclear power plants built by the Soviets throughout Eastern Europe and Western Russia and Ukraine. The threat of one or more Chernobyl-type environmental disasters, including possibly worse ones, has been estimated by responsible scientific groups as over 50% in the next decade, yet national and international efforts to obtain and spend the \$20 - \$50 billion necessary to build the needed containment vessels and equipment upgrading are still lagging.

Small countries are at least as vulnerable as large countries to this threat, but have proportionally fewer financial resources to contribute to its solution. Wealthier, more technologically advanced small countries are likely to be able to protect themselves better than poorer countries, by a combination of widespread radiation monitoring equipment, and radioactive fallout shelters (such as are required by law in Switzerland for all new construction) for people and food supplies. Certainly here there is common cause for prompt international cooperation in passively safe reactor technology reform, environmental monitoring and public health cooperation in the prevention of such catastrophes. Prevention costs much less than cure.

When we apply ecological thinking to small countries, and small state theory to ecology, we can well imagine geopolitical environments in the world in which small states thrive, such as in the crenelated topography and diversified advanced cultures of Europe, and other environments of relative cultural and topographic homogeneity where small states are less likely to exist (such as the steppes, the Argentine pampas or Siberia). The Soviet Union's breakup has launched at least a dozen new or renewed small states in Eastern Europe. Conceivably the collapse of still highly centralized governments in China, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Indonesia together with much ethnic diversity and some bitter class- and communal conflicts among these 2 1/2 billion people (about half the world population) could result in dozens of independent new small states in the next century.

How well do we educate our children for the future in small countries, in comparison with large ones? Switzerland and Luxembourg invest between 4 1/2 and 5 % of their GDP in education, while Liechtenstein invests only 3 1/2 %. (This may be a misleading comparison, because many Liechtensteiners may attend schools in neighboring Switzerland.) Considering that future industry and commerce is likely to be very science-intensive, it might be wise to invest somewhat more in education and training. Nevertheless