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HOME AFFAIRS.

by PIERRE BÉGUIN.

"A New Initiative on National Defence."

No doubt our readers have not forgotten the Initiative for a reduction in military expenditure which was launched last year, and which was set aside by Parliament because of the various errors of form, which it contained. This Initiative was called after its author, the "Chevalier Initiative". It gave rise to very lively controversies, both in the Federal Chambers and in Public Opinion. It was buried, and done with. However, it was only to be expected that its authors should take up their ideas again, being very careful this time not to commit the slightest error in regard to the formal requirements of the Law. This has now been done.

Thus, a new Initiative is to be launched very soon. It is inspired by the same spirit, as was the case previously. But, taken as a whole, it is infinitely more moderate in tone, so that one can predict a certain success for it. A great many citizens, who were shocked by the summary, not to say plain, character of the first Initiative, will no doubt decide to subscribe to the second one. Moreover, all those citizens — and they number thousands — who could not admit that a Popular Initiative should be set aside merely because certain formalities had not been accomplished, will not fail to register their protest by signing the second Initiative. Finally — and this is a very important fact — whereas the first Initiative was under the exclusive patronage of a humoristic journal which only circulates in the French-speaking part of Switzerland, the second Initiative benefits, right from the start, from the support of certain circles in the whole of Switzerland. Among these are to be found pacifists, idealists, conscientious objectors and some isolated Socialists.

Last year, Monsieur Chevallier proposed that military expenditure should be reduced by half, in 1956. This was to be a single operation, which would not be renewable. Such a decision could not have been applied materially. It would have been tantamount to a simple manifestation in favour of disarmament, or, to be more exact, to a refusal on the part of Switzerland to participate in the armament race. The new Initiative simply proposes that the ceiling for military expenditure should be fixed at 500 million francs, it being understood that any exceeding of these credits be submitted to the approval of the people. Thus there is no longer any question of disorganising national defence during the period of a year. It is now a question of limiting military expenditure, but, at the same time, admitting that the people will always be free to recognise and to approve the necessity for supplementary appropriations. Thus, the anti-militarist accent is much less marked and, from this point of view, the second Initiative is relatively less unacceptable. Or, anyway, in appearance. In reality, it would be rash to paralyse our authorities and to force them to have to make use of the heavy functioning of the machinery of direct democracy, every time that the international situation called for a new military effort.

Furthermore, the first Initiative provided that

the economies realised in 1956 in regard to the military budget, should be devoted in equal shares, to the building of cheap housing accommodation in Switzerland, and to helping those regions abroad which had been devastated by the war. This proposal, also, has suffered a modification. Now, it is simply a question of appropriating each year a sum equivalent to one-tenth of the military budget, i.e. a minimum of 50 million francs, for welfare schemes, to be carried out in Switzerland or abroad. This is therefore a new scheme, as it means additional expenditure and not the ear-marking for a special purpose of economies realised at the expense of the military budget.

There can be no doubt that this second Initiative will obtain the necessary number of signatures. But, now it will be possible to discuss it with a cool mind, without any excessive haste. Public Opinion will have to be shown that there can be no question of fixing a ceiling for military expenditure, in an arbitrary manner, but that it will be necessary to decide, clearly and definitely, whether we wish to remain faithful to the principles of national independence and of national defence, and if, above all, we are willing to pay the price, the whole price. First of all, it is the questions of principle that must be settled. Methods of application can be dealt with later on. We are convinced that if the question of principle is asked, the Swiss people will once more obey, as they have done throughout their long history, their national reflexes, which have always functioned admirably, in spite of the solicitations of illusionists.

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HOME AFFAIRS.

by MAX NEF.

The Swiss Papal Guard in Rome.

A remarkable anniversary is being celebrated, four hundred and fifty years having flowed by since the creation, in Rome, of the Papal Guard, or the Swiss Guard. It was Pope Julius the Second who, in 1506, that is to say in the same year when he laid the foundation-stone of the present St. Peter's Church, also created this troop of élite soldiers. At that time the foot-regiments of the Confederate States enjoyed the reputation of being invincible. At the turn of the 15th century, the Confederates played an outstanding role in European politics. As Allies of Pope Julius the Second it was they who decided Italy's fate, through the intervention of their armed forces.

In those days, the body of 150 and later of 200 men, constituted not merely a body-guard for the Pope, with simple guard-duties, but an experienced and warlike, if small, body of soldiers.

Similary to what occurred, at the time of the French Revolution, when the Swiss Guard was cut down, defending Louis the XVIth, during the famous attack on the Tuillerie, so also was the Swiss Papal Guard almost completely wiped out at the sacking of Rome, in 1527, by a Germano-Spanish army. Only a small unit, with the help of which Pope Clement the Seventh managed to escape to Engelsburg, remained alive.

This signified the end, for some time, of the Swiss Guard acting as the body-guards of the Pope and protecting the Vatican Palace. However, twenty years later, the Guard was set up again. From that time until the present century, Lucerne has provided, regularly, the Commanding Officer.

In addition to the Papal Guard, in Rome itself, the Popes maintained, in the same way as did the temporal rulers of that time, considerable troops of Swiss soldiers. Over-population and economic distress in the Helvetic regions, turned this matter of foreign military service into a necessary national custom for many a man from the mountains, for many a peasant lad. This service was subject to the supervision of the Confederation, in so far that this small Federation of Peasant and City Republics granted permission to foreign Governments to proceed with the recruiting of soldiers, but this only in exchange for the delivery of cereals and other essential goods, and for economic privileges. Indeed, the more the Swiss Regiments, which were considered to be invincible, became indispensable to the European Rulers, the more did the foreign military service of the Confederates become a security for the existence of the Swiss people.

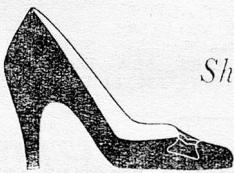
Gradually, however, this mercenary service ceased to thrive, until it finally died out altogether. When

the present Swiss Confederation was founded in 1848, Article 11 of the Federal Constitution prohibited the Cantons, expressly, from concluding so-called "military capitulations", which was the name given to agreements signed with foreign countries in regard to the recruiting of soldiers for foreign military service.

In view of the fact that, meanwhile, the Swiss Guard in Rome had developed into a simple police body-guard of the Pope's which on the one hand, had the duty of guarding the entrances to the Vatican and, on the other hand, appeared in their role of a Guards Company on all solemn occasions, without for that having to fulfill any real military duties, their co-operation in the maintenance of order, is not considered to rate as foreign military service. This was expressly maintained when deliberations took place in regard to the Swiss Military Penal Code, as otherwise, ordinary military service in foreign armies, without the consent of the Federal Council, is liable to punishment. Not only does enrollment in the Swiss Guard in no way constitute any violation of the law against foreign military service, but, as a matter of fact, as a general rule, the Pope's Guardsmen first attend their School of Recruits and their other training courses in Switzerland. After that, however, they are dispensed from having to turn up when there is a mobilisation of troops.

In memory of their glorious ancestors, the Swiss guards, in Rome, still wear the ancient uniform of the Renaissance period : the bright-coloured, stripped, puffed hose, the starched ruff at the neck and, on solemn occasions, the mediaval helmet, ornamented with a tuft of plumes, and also a breastplate. Their arms are the same as those which served them when the Papal Guard was first founded, namely the ancient Swiss halberd, together with a dagger or a sword. Newly-arrived recruits are sworn in, during the course of a solemn ceremony which always takes place on the 6th of May, the Memorial Day for the heroic fight at the Sack of Rome, in 1527. The Standard of the Papal Guard bears the same colours as the old uniforms, which are blue, yellow and red. A white cross divides this honourable ensign into four parts, in which are to be found the arms of the Pope who founded the Swiss Guards, those of the reigning Pope, and those of the family of the Commanding Officer of the Guard.

This honourable service at the Vatican, which has become a century-old Swiss tradition, is carried on to-day, also, in accordance with the ancient forms. Its 450th Memorial Day will be celebrated with due pomp and dignity.



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