

Press review

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PRESS REVIEW.

G. PADEL.

In the discussions to be found in the Swiss Press regarding domestic politics a certain amount of space has been taken up recently in regard to the foundation of a Committee for Action against the equipment of the Swiss Army with nuclear weapons.

In these discussions regarding our internal policies a good deal will be heard in the future about the activities of this recently constituted Committee, whose aim is the prohibition of nuclear weapons for the Swiss Army. This, because the Committee, which is under the leadership of a Social-Democrat member of the Bernese Cantonal Government, intends to make this question a subject for a Constitutional Initiative. This means that a Popular Referendum will be held on it if sufficient signatures to make the Initiative valid are forthcoming from those citizens who possess voting power. The following Press comments can therefore only be looked upon as being the first signs of the attitude which is being adopted in regard to the aims of this Committee for Action.

The Liberal-Conservative "Basler Nachrichten" writes as follows: "This action merits respect, in so far as it proceeds from good faith and from a justified fear of atomic dangers. But its aim is directed away from reality when it concentrates on Switzerland. For Switzerland neither possesses nuclear weapons nor — even if she wished to do so — could she either produce them or buy them in any reasonable space of time. The main point, however, is that a platonic renunciation of this kind on the part of a small country, does not lead to the result aimed at, which is an outlawing of atomic war, so long as all the atomic Powers themselves cannot be induced to proceed to such measures and to an effective control."

On the other hand this Initiative comprises the danger of kindling an atomic panic in Switzerland, also, and of paralyzing the will for resistance by defeatist feelings.

The "Nouvelle Revue de Lausanne", also stresses the fact that the motives of the Committee for Action no doubt are deserving of all due respect. In the opinion of the paper, however, disarmament must either be total or else it cannot possibly be carried out. There is no middle way.

The "Nouvelle Gazette de Lausanne" proceeds as follows: "Our country, the Army of which possesses an exclusively defensive character, must promote all purposes which serve the cause of peace. On the other hand, however, it must come to terms with hard reality; and it is hard reality that, in case of war, those forces which might threaten our safety would have nuclear weapons at their disposal. Have we then the right — based on the highest moral considerations — to renounce from making use of these same weapons

against the enemy? This would be practically the same thing as if we were to ride out in an ancient knight's armour, to fight against an Army equipped with modern guns. . ."

The Independent "Tat", of Zurich, expresses the opinion that the problem of acquiring nuclear weapons for the Swiss Army is to-day still a long way off from being ripe for decision. One cannot therefore quite rid oneself of the impression that the whole problem has now been dragged forward by the Left circles and is being bolstered up with a view to serving as electioneering propaganda for the parliamentary elections which are to be held next year.

At the same time it should be observed that Social-Democratic newspapers have also already expressed criticism of the proposal put forward by the Committee for Action. Thus, for instance, we read in the "Basler Arbeiterzeitung" that one can only agree with the Committee's view that an atomic catastrophe must be prevented. But when it comes to the question of ways and means opinions may differ. This is what the paper writes, textually: "Were Switzerland alone to possess nuclear weapons we could very easily decide on their prohibition. We could then always defend ourselves with the remaining weapons. To-day, however, it is the Great Powers and their Satellites who possess the nuclear weapons. We still do not possess any. We only know that without any nuclear weapons we should be practically defenceless against the enemy in any future war. Not to possess any nuclear weapons means nothing more nor less than giving up the policy of armed neutrality. For in case of war the question arises as to whether we should capitulate unconditionally to the enemy, because we do not wish to expose our country to atomic bombardment, or whether we should choose suicide by means of a fight with unequal arms. This is how the matter rests, pure and simply."

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