

The left's assault on Swiss national defense

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Switzerland's national defense is being challenged by two popular initiatives which ultimately aim at making it impossible. First, the referendum that will take place on April 5, as a result of an initiative taken by the left; it proposes that all major decisions in matters of major programs of military equipment be taken by means of referendums, to give the population the last word in questions of armament; second, another initiative that proposes to abolish the army, and which would be submitted later to the popular vote.

Both initiatives are closely interrelated, and serve the aims which both the ultra-left and their numerous intellectual backers proclaim: They intend to deliver a defenseless Switzerland to any aggressor. The country would thus not be in a position to protect its neutrality and independence, both of which are recognized in international law. One needs little imagination to figure out who is pulling those strings!

In 1979, the Swiss Socialist Party (SPS) had decided, against the will of its leadership, to launch an initiative concerning a referendum on armament. The party leaders had been overwhelmed by the party's left-wing, anti-militarist and pacifist wing. But in spite of strenuous efforts, of the 100,000 signatures required to place an initiative on the ballot, the SPS only succeeded in gathering 82,000. Rather than giving up the whole exercise, the SPS leftists, using methods that are current nowadays, sought help from the ultra-left, such as the Socialist Workers' Party (formerly Revolutionary Marxist League), the Communists, etc., who diligently delivered one-third of the required signatures. By 1983, 111,126 signatures were presented.

The SPS cannot free itself of the spirits it conjured up, and, coyly, squeezed and pushed, supports the initiative under the hypocritical pretexts of "greater democracy," "popular co-determination in armament policies," and "massive cuts in the billions of military expenditures, redistribution in favor of social welfare." Hypocrisy it is, if one considers that defense expenditures in the total federal budget have plummeted from 37.3% in 1960 to 20.5% in 1986, while social welfare outlays have jumped in the same period from 12.5% to 21.5%. Out of total budgetary outlays at federal, cantonal,

and local level, national defense accounts for no more than 9%, a poor fifth in the rostrum, after education, welfare, transportation, and public health!

The SPS makes much hay of their desire to spare and save public money at the expense of defense. But the same Socialists reject the proposed idea of submitting the whole budget to a referendum, as it would probably affect their own "holy cows."

Let no one forget that the Socialist Party, from 1917 to the outbreak of World War II, brutally opposed any national defense, and did their damndest to sabotage defense expenditure and the necessary rearmament, even in view of the National-Socialist danger. A solid skepticism is therefore well-grounded today in front of the arguments of appeasement they bring forth. The Socialists are not even united, for that matter. The leadership of the Swiss Labor Federation, for example, opposed the referendum on grounds that very many jobs would be lost.

The text of the initiative calls for subjecting state funds committed to research and development to referendums, which would make it impossible for Swiss armament to keep pace with modern requirements. In short, the aim is to prevent a balanced, timely, and economic military equipment program. Swiss defense would thus have its teeth pulled out and would become useless.

Contrary to what occurs in many other countries, our Parliament, which is co-responsible for defense together with the Federal Council, also shares responsibility for military programs. The Federal Council's proposed arms program is reviewed by seven committees, and is then twice presented to the National Council [Lower Chamber] and the Council of the States [Upper Chamber], first in the framework of government expenditure for R&D, and next the procurement credits for military equipment programs. This much democracy in matters of armament is unknown anywhere else in the world!

It is obvious that, in the framework of the army's operational doctrine, some armament programs have to remain secret, and the citizen-voter cannot be fully informed about them. He would in that case become the powerless victim of the emotional blackmail of the enemies of the armed forces.

The ultra-left can do without hypocrisy: Their aim, pure and simple, is to abolish the armed forces. This is the aim they pursue with the second referendum—and they have in mind the Sword of Damocles of the constitutional use of army units to defend against domestic revolutionary disorders.

On the basis of those facts and arguments, the Swiss voters will have, on April 5, to inflict a resounding defeat to the hypocrites as well as to the ultra-left traitors who intend to destroy this Peace in Freedom which can only be secured through a strong, well-armed and modern army. The warning issued once by Marshal Mannerheim has lost none of its truth: "Every people has its Army—either its own, or a foreign one!"