

Press Review

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PRESS REVIEW.By **Théo Chopard.**

Recently, we mentioned the discussion which is now taking place on the subject of a possible re-organisation of the Swiss Army, which was announced in two speeches made by the Head of the Military Department. What is it all about, really? The "Tribune de Genève" observes that the striking development which has taken place in regard to technique and to atomic weapons, has surprised us, just as it has surprised most of the other countries. The necessity is being felt everywhere of adapting the structure of the Armies to the new conditions. However, really satisfactory solutions have not been found anywhere, up to the present. What aspect does this problem assume? According to the newspaper, "La Suisse", what should be done is to create, outside the scope — so to speak — of our Militia Army, an armoured force which is comparable by its mobility and its firing power, to the big foreign units. Without going so far as to establish a regular army, one would have, nevertheless, call upon the service of professional or semi-professional soldiers, specialists in the matter.

At the very mention of a "regular" Army, part of the Press sees red. The "Tribune de Genève" notes that, apart from considerations of a technical order, there is no question of any giving up of the militia system, because one could not possibly break up the original, fundamental identity of the people of the Swiss Cantons and of their Army. Secondly, it would be impossible to recruit the sixty odd thousand men who would be necessary, at the lowest evaluation, for an army of technicians. This is confirmed by the "Basler Nachrichten", which states: Either the Confederation is a nation at arms, or else it is not Obligatory military service and the militia army constitute one of the vital elements of the Swiss State. The rifle that the Swiss citizen keeps in his home is a sign of his citizenship more even than is his voting ticket. One could not create two classes of citizens — those who are soldiers and those who are not. In the opinion of the "National Zeitung", the moment is badly chosen to speak of a re-organisation of the Army and of increased military expenditure, just when a relaxation in international tension has taken place. The example given by a small peace-loving country, of re-enforcing her Army, would give rise to anxiety. It would be a thing that would be still less easily understood here, than it would be

abroad. We possess other methods for adapting our Army to present conditions, without creating a Swiss "Reichswehr". The "Thurgauer Zeitung" also issues a warning against the temptation to found our national defence on an entirely mechanised small army and to renounce, in practice, from the advantages, both psychological and political of the militia system. The "Gazette de Lausanne" sets things straight by reminding readers that there can be no question of any transformations, which may appear to be necessary, being carried out in a manner which would temporarily weaken the existing defensive machinery. This reason, to which must be added the obligation to stagger the financial effort over a certain number of years, excludes any possibility of this re-organisation taking on a spectacular form. Moreover, that which already exists possesses a value that should not be under-estimated. What has been accomplished, since the end of the war, in order to strengthen and to modernise our Army, is simply prodigious. The "Gazette de Lausanne" concludes by remarking that these transformations have, first of all, to be studied by the political power, for it is incumbent upon the latter, and to it solely, to take upon itself the responsibilities which they demand. This declaration is essential. One may rest assured that nothing will be done without the consent of the citizen. Whatever may emerge from all this, the discussion now taking place shows that Swiss public opinion is deeply attached to the militia system which — as the "Tribune de Genève" observes — makes a soldier of every citizen, and turns every Swiss into the natural defender of all the others.

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