

Left-wing committee campaigns for the neutrality initiative

“Switzerland should once again become a credible voice for peace”

by Daniel Funk*



Daniel Funk. (Picture ma)

Left-wing organisations are campaigning for the neutrality initiative through a new pacifist and internationalist support committee. The focus is on peace, non-alignment and an independent Swiss foreign policy.

In Bern on 2 July, the newly founded pacifist and internationalist Committee for Neutrality¹ launched its campaign in support of the neutrality initiative. Representatives from left-wing parties, peace organisations, trade unions and solidarity groups outlined their reasons for voting “yes” to the initiative and emphasised that their support stems from an explicitly left-wing, internationalist and peace-oriented perspective.

The speakers painted a picture of a Switzerland which, in their view, is increasingly moving away from its traditional neutrality. In particular, they criticised the closer alignment with NATO, the adoption of sanctions outside the framework of the United Nations, and the political trend towards increased rearmament. The committee contrasted this with the ideal of an independent Switzerland that sees itself as a mediator between parties to a conflict and bases its role in the international system on diplomacy, dialogue and international law.

In the committee’s view, neutrality is not an outdated idea, but rather an important instrument of peace policy, particularly at a time of growing geopolitical tensions. The initiative is intended to prevent Switzerland from being gradually drawn into military alliance structures



Eight left-wing organisations have joined forces in a committee to help the Neutrality Initiative gain traction in September. They put forward their arguments at a press conference. (Picture <https://kommunisten.ch>)

or from participating indirectly in wars. At the same time, it aims to strengthen the country’s commitment to international law and the UN. It was emphasised on several occasions that the left-wing support committee assesses the initiative independently of the individuals and parties that launched it, focusing exclusively on its content.

Timeo Antognini:

Left-wing arguments for neutrality

Timeo Antognini, co-president of the Swiss Labour Party (PdAS), explained that the committee particularly wishes to appeal to people on the left of the political spectrum. The committee was not concerned with the initiative’s political origins, but with its content. The crucial point was that it would keep Switzerland out of military alliances and make any direct or indirect involvement in wars more difficult.

Antognini described a solidarity-based and credible neutrality as an important contribution to a more peaceful world order. At the same time, he made it clear that on certain points the committee’s position would go beyond the wording of the initiative due to be put to the vote. Among other things, they are calling for a complete ban on arms exports. However, they reject sanctions unless these have been decided by the UN, as the initiative provides for. The working class, in particular, is among those who lose out because of

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international conflicts and economic confrontations.

Massimiliano Ay:

Neutrality is also a left-wing cause

Massimiliano Ay, General Secretary of the *Communist Party*, refuted the frequently expressed view that the neutrality initiative is exclusively a project of the political right. In his view, it is precisely the rejection of NATO membership that is in line with classic left-wing principles.

Ay highlighted three key elements: preventing involvement in military alliances, banning participation in wars and overseas missions, and rejecting economic sanctions outside the UN framework. He warned that Switzerland is already heavily integrated into NATO structures, both technically and militarily. The initiative could set limits on this development. In view of a changing world order and increasing rearmament, Switzerland needs to adopt an independent stance. In his view, further rapprochement with NATO would increase the risk of Switzerland itself becoming a target of military conflicts.

Lydia Elmer:

Against militarisation and rearmament

Lydia Elmer spoke on behalf of the *Linksbündig* association.² She justified her support for the initiative by citing her opposition to Switzerland's integration into NATO structures and to a European defence system. In her view, the public debate was increasingly giving the impression that Western values were being defended in Ukraine. She rejected this portrayal.

Elmer also criticised developments in security policy within Switzerland. She argued that military and civilian spheres were becoming increasingly intertwined, leading to the gradual militarisation of society. In her view, the additional billions spent on the army stood in stark contrast to neglected social issues such as the implementation of the care initiative. She also took a critical view of sanctions, arguing that their aim was to weaken entire states economically. Even if they were legally permissible, she argued, that did not make them legitimate by any means.

Richard Newnham:

Living neutrality consistently

Richard Newnham of the *NO UE – NO NATO Association* described the international situation

as increasingly dangerous. The current arms race must not result in Switzerland, too, aligning itself ever more closely with NATO in military terms. In his view, such a development would itself turn the country into a military target.

Neutrality cannot be interpreted on a case-by-case basis. It must be applied consistently and must not be sacrificed for the sake of geopolitical interests.

Mithily Masilamany:

Neutrality means independence

Mithily Masilamany from the *Swiss Peace Movement*³ explained that neutrality is not a relic of the past, but an expression of state independence. However, Switzerland is increasingly adopting the positions of individual states or alliances, particularly by adopting EU sanctions.

The peace movement draws a clear distinction between sanctions adopted by the United Nations Security Council and unilateral sanctions imposed by individual states or alliances. In her view, the latter particularly often affect countries in the Global South, such as Cuba. At the same time, they also have an impact on people in Switzerland, for example on pensioners resident in Belarus or Russia. Switzerland should therefore cultivate its relations with all regions of the world and strengthen its political autonomy.

Stefano Araujo: Against

NATO's influence in society and education

Stefano Araujo of the *SISA trade union* warned of the consequences of closer cooperation with NATO. In addition to the risk of an intensified arms race, he also sees a growing prevalence of military-style thinking in politics, universities and society.

He warned that young people could in future be drawn into overseas missions or wars which, in his view, have no legitimate basis.

Kaspar Trümpy: Two conceptions of neutrality

Kaspar Trümpy of the *PdA Basel* distinguished between a national-conservative and an internationalist conception of neutrality. Whilst the political right advocates a strong, armed neutrality, the left associates neutrality with pacifism, international solidarity and the smallest possible army.

However, both positions share the common goal of strengthening Switzerland's independ-

ence from NATO. Furthermore, greater self-reliance could reduce dependence on foreign military equipment, particularly from the USA. Trümpy acknowledged that the real challenge lay in convincing the mainstream left of the initiative's aims.

François Page:

Neutrality as a tradition of peace policy

François Page from the *Switzerland-Cuba Association* also spoke in favour of perpetual neutrality. In his view, Switzerland can only act credibly as a mediator if it does not align itself unilaterally with geopolitical blocs.

Discussion:

Distancing from NATO and transatlantic policy

In the ensuing discussion, the speakers elaborated on their criticism of developments in Switzerland's security policy. It was repeatedly argued that the Social Democratic Party had increasingly aligned itself with a transatlantic security policy course in recent years. The wars in Yugoslavia, amongst other events, were cited as a turning point.

Massimiliano Ay reiterated that the Swiss Army is already closely integrated with NATO systems in numerous areas from a technical

perspective. Timeo Antognini explained that the left-wing committee deliberately wanted to organise independent events and address left-wing circles directly. Ultimately, he argued, it is the content of the initiative that matters, not the question of who originally launched it. An initiative should not be rejected simply because it comes from the "wrong source".

With the founding of the pacifist and internationalist support committee, the neutrality initiative now also has backing from a section of the political left. Those involved see this as an opportunity to understand neutrality not as isolation, but as an active contribution to peace, diplomacy and international understanding. They are convinced that a Switzerland which neither joins military alliances nor supports unilateral economic wars can more credibly uphold its humanitarian tradition and act as an independent mediator within the international system.

Source: <https://bene.swiss/linkes-komitee-wirbt-fuer-neutralitaetsinitiative-die-schweiz-soll-wieder-eine-glaubwuerdige-stimme-fuer-den-frieden-werden/>, 2 July 2026

(Translation "Swiss Standpoint")

¹ <https://www.comite-gauche-neutralite.ch/de>

² <https://www.linksbuendig.ch/>

³ <http://www.friedensbewegung.ch/>