

Home affairs

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HOME AFFAIRS.

by MAX NEF.

The Federal Council has just decided to shorten the period of training for candidates for commissioned rank in the Army, in several arms of the service, in order to facilitate, in this way, the recruiting of officers. Such candidate-officers, as are affected by these new regulations, will, henceforth have to put in about 450 days of military service, from the time when they start in the School for Recruits, as a recruit, until they finish the course with the rank of a Lieutenant. This means that they will have to serve about 21 days less, than was the case formerly.

Already for some time past, our Army has been having difficulties in recruiting a sufficient number of men for its future cadres, both as regards officers and non-commissioned officers. It is true that in this regard there exist certain regional differences, so that it is possible to achieve a certain equalisation by sending officers from the German-speaking Cantons, for example, to the military units in the Western part of Switzerland. (Normally, it is the custom in Switzerland to draw recruits according to the principle of their place of residence, and to incorporate them in troops which originate from their home Canton.) Such displacements, however, do not suffice to cover the need for young men wishing to become officers, so that the Federal Council has been obliged to meet these difficulties with the help of other measures.

The decision taken to reduce the training period for officers in no way means that military service, in general, could be shortened, in Switzerland. On the contrary: the Swiss armament programme and the introduction of new arms and equipment, necessitate the most intensive training, if they are to be used in the most effective way, in case of war. For many reasons, there would appear to be no question of any prolongation of the length of military service, but, in any case, the present order must be maintained. The introduction of certain facilities, such as are comprised in the afore-mentioned resolution passed by the Federal Council, are only intended to be applied to certain categories of would-be officers.

In order to be able to achieve a better understanding of this new regulation, it might perhaps be advisable to say a few words about the structure of the Swiss Army. As, is generally known it is based on the principal of general compulsory military service. Every Swiss citizen is liable to military service, and he is bound by the Constitution to carry on this service *personally*. The obligation for military service begins when a man has attained his 20th year and ends when he is sixty. Obligatory military service, however, is apportioned in such a manner that the majority of the militiamen are able to get through with it, when they are still young.

At the beginning of his military service, every young soldier has to go through a School for Recruits, which lasts from four to five months, according to what branch of the Army he is in. During the following years, in fact until he is 36 years old, he has to attend Refresher Courses with the Army — each one lasting three weeks — at least eight times, taking part occasionally in the big manoeuvres. Between the

age of 37 and 48, he must serve another 40 days, divided up into various courses. After approximately 320 days of military service have been carried out, then a man's active service comes to an end, and he is only called up again should the Army be mobilised in case of war.

At the end of the School for Recruits, a soldier who has been proposed for further training for N.C.O. rank, must attend an instruction course, lasting one month. After that, the young man must go through an entire School for Recruits in the capacity of a Non-Commissioned Officer, where he will be, at one and the same time, a teacher, or rather trainer of the recruits who are under his orders, and also a pupil, as he must practice his duties as a N.C.O. during four months, and assimilate all the necessary knowledge and abilities, before he can act as a N.C.O. in the Army itself. The same system repeats itself in regard to the candidates for a commission. All these must first have finished their training as N.C.Os., after which there follows a three months course of instruction and then — for the third time — they must return to the School of Recruits for a full course in the capacity of an officer. Once more, these future officers have to be both teachers and pupils, at the same time, in the tasks which will be theirs one day when they take up their duties as officers in the Swiss Army.

These are the characteristics of the militia system which is proper to Switzerland. With the exception of a small number of regular, i.e. career officers who act as military instructors, there are no regular officers or soldiers and no standing Army.

In accordance with the Swiss Law, every serviceman can be obliged to accept a certain specified rank and to carry out the duties attached to it. In practice, however, a man's economic and personal conditions are taken into consideration, in individual cases. The present difficulty experienced in recruiting men for the new generation of officers arises out of many causes, not the least of these being the prevailing economic prosperity. As we have already mentioned, the training of an officer requires almost two years, and this is just the moment when the young citizens are usually engaged in studies or in learning a trade or profession. A certain reduction in the period required for training should help to overcome the problem of finding sufficient young officers for the future.

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HOME AFFAIRS.

by MAX NEF.

Switzerland's status of permanent neutrality prevents her from belonging to any international alliances or organisations, which pursue a unilateral political course or military aims. Our country, however, feels it to be its duty to co-operate wherever charitable or other peaceful aims are striven for on an international plane. In certain situations, in fact, neutrality is a primary condition for the fulfillment of tasks of this kind.

Thus, in accordance with its foreign policy principles, Switzerland is not a member of the U.N.O. and she remains aloof from all those State Alliances which have been created by, or are dependent on, the U.N.O., which possess a military or a marked political character. On the other hand, there exist a great many international organisations in which our country takes a very active part, the Offices and Secretariats of which are established, partly, on Swiss soil, mostly in Geneva, but also in Berne.

Among such International Institutions are the World News Association, the World Postal Union and the International Labour Organisation. To these have been added, more recently, the World Health Organisation and the International Organisation for Air Navigation, as well as the World Meteorological Organisation. Still more widely known than these Institutions, and also more important in the scope of their activities, there are the Food and Agricultural Organisation for the United Nations (F.A.O.) and the so-called U.N.E.S.C.O., that is to say the U.N.O. Organisation for Education, Science and Culture. In all these, Switzerland co-operates as an active member, in certain cases possessing representatives in leading positions.

Another important domain in which our country deploys a very extensive activity, ever since the end of the war, is that of the economic collaboration among the various countries. Sometimes — as for instance in the case of the Economic Commission of the U.N.O. — this takes place within the framework of the U.N.O. Organisations at other times, also, in inter-Governmental Institutions of a European character, which are independent of the United Nations. The best known of these is the Organisation of European Economic Co-operation, together with the European Payments Union, which was set up by it for the purpose of achieving payments compensation among the member countries. Both these institutions have con-

tributed to a large extent to the reconstruction of post-war Europe. Switzerland, in that she is the sole creditor country and has never had recourse to any help from the Marshall Plan, occupies a special position among the European countries which are members of this Union.

Similar purposes to those of these Institutions, are served by the Bank for International Payments Compensation and the Central Office for International Railway Traffic, the activities of which are supplemented by the European Conference of Ministers of Transport, and the European Company for the Financing of Railway Rolling Stock, the so-called E.U.R.O.F.I.M.A., which has been founded by the said Conference of Ministers. In conclusion, we would like to mention, in this connection, the Central Committee for Navigation on the Rhine, which deals with problems indicated by its name.

The promotion of public health is served, inter alia, by the Permanent Central Opium Committee, acting as a controlling organ in regard to drugs, as well as by the Committee of Experts on Public Health. Furthermore, if we venture onto charitable grounds, there are the International Children's Aid Fund, the High Commissariat for Refugees and the Organisation for Technical Aid to Backward Countries, to all of which Switzerland belongs.

And, finally, too well-known for any need to describe its activities in detail, there is the Swiss foundation of the Red Cross, with its International Committee, having its seat in Geneva and having a Swiss for its President.

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