

Swiss Television wins an International Award

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Apart from the Air Force jubilee, several other anniversaries were celebrated this year. There was the centenary of the Swiss Non-Commissioned Officers' Association in Fribourg in June. A special film "Hedgehog Switzerland has many Spikes" was produced for the occasion. Its purpose was to show the voluntary aspect of some of the military activities outside compulsory service, but also that in spite of formidable modern weapons, the army of the future above all depends on the man.

There was the Golden Jubilee of the Swiss federation "Volksdienst-Soldatenwohl", the welfare organisation started by Mrs. Else Zueblin-Spiller, which opened the first "Soldatenstuben" at Glovelier and Bassecourt in November 1914. Three years later there were already 178, and today this body runs soldiers' canteens, welfare offices, laundry services, etc. Its jubilee was celebrated on the Bürgenstock in August, when the chief of military training, Corps Commander Frick, officially expressed the Army's thanks for the important contribution the organisation was making to the well-being of the soldiers.

In spring it had been twenty years since the first "Pädagogische Rekrutenprüfungen" were held. Comparative results show that the largest increase of recruits, occupation-wise, has been in the skilled workers, whereas farmers and unskilled workers have decreased in numbers, a sure sign of the times. There are more university students but fewer specialised technical students which shows the need for more technical training colleges.

Incidentally, young Swiss still join the French Foreign Legion whose recruiting campaign started again with full swing in 1963. The number of objectors to military service on religious grounds went up from 29 in 1962 to 47 last year, 7 were conscientious objectors for other reasons and 16 refused because of rebellion and anger. An advisory office for conscientious objectors was formed in Zurich recently.

In this connection, the activities of the movement for the country's spiritual defence are of great importance. National Councillor Peter Dürrenmatt chaired the second conference on the problems of this aspect of national defence in Berne early in September. "Heer und Haus" which is the soldiers' own periodical can also play some considerable part in the moral and spiritual condition of the Swiss armed forces.

A year ago, a credit of 268 million francs for military buildings and army centres was asked for by the Federal Council. The proposed centre in the Franches Montagnes has been the object of very heated argument, but the authorities insist on it. Another discussion concerned the use of the Thun centre for armoured troops.

The "Mirage" affair and its consequences have put in the shade somewhat the reports of various manoeuvres of the Army. There were several recently, the exercise of the communication services comprising the whole of Switzerland in September, manoeuvres of the Third Mountain Army Corps and of the First Mechanised Division in October, and early in November, those of the Fourth Army Corps in Eastern Switzerland.

The debate in Parliament on the "Mirage" has already been reported. The compromise has been made and the number of aircraft ordered reduced. There are doubts, however, about the wisdom of the reduction from 100 to 57 with regard to the original demand based on exigencies of defence.

A reorganisation of the Federal Military Department with closer parliamentary control over its actions was voted for by the Upper House.

The vote came a few hours after an announcement that Corps Commander Jakob Annasohn, the Chief of Staff, had offered his resignation and that Colonel Etienne Primault, the air chief, had been dismissed, in connexion with what has become known as the "Mirage affair".

The resignation offer by Corps Commander Annasohn was announced by the President of the Confederation. It was stated that he had been asked to remain in his post for the time being to ensure continuity while a successor was found. Colonel Primault is relieved of his duties immediately and his official "resignation" will take effect from 1st January 1965.

Colonel Annasohn will still be at the disposal of the Federal Council for special duties.

Two other senior officers — Brigadier Oskar Keller, the head of the war materials department, and Brigadier Othmar Bloetzer, head of the pilots service — have been moved to other posts while members of the Federal Court determine their responsibility in the affair. In making his announcement Federal Councillor von Moos stated that confidence could not be re-established without certain changes of personnel.

In the words of "The Times" "The theme of the debate in both Houses was that such a thing should never be allowed to occur again. Mr. Paul Chaudet, the political head of the military department, who came under heavy fire, said he would draw from this experience the lessons which it imposed."

The Federal Council has appointed Dr. Mark Hauser, a lawyer from Zurich, as Commissary for the revision of the "Mirage" contracts.

The Federal Council, in consultation with the Defence Commission have decided on the following changes in army personnel:

The new Chief of General Staff is Corps Commander Paul Gygli, hitherto Commander of the Fourth Field Army Corps. He is 55 and citizen of Utzendorf (Berne). He studied law. Readers may remember him when he was Military and Air Attaché at the Embassy in London. His successor is Corps Commander Ernst Uhlmann, hitherto in charge of the Second Field Army Corps.

The new Commander of the Second Field Army Corps is Divisional Commander Alfred Ernst, born 1904 and citizen of Berne and Aarau. He will be promoted to Corps Commander.

For the first time, a Corps Commander will be in charge of aviation and anti-aircraft troops. This is Divisional Commander Eugen Studer. He is 51, a citizen of Trimbach and Solothurn.

Brigadier Fritz Gerber, aged 61, has been appointed Chief of the Swiss Air Force in succession to Colonel Primault.

Generally, the changes have been accepted with a sense of subdued optimism and a certain feeling of relief, though the thought persists that justice has not necessarily been done in all quarters. It is felt by experts, however, that the changes are a step in the right direction towards overcoming the crisis in Switzerland's defence policy.

(Based on news received by courtesy of A.T.S. and "Basler Nachrichten".)

SWISS TELEVISION WINS AN INTERNATIONAL AWARD

The Onda Prize, given for the best scientific television programme, was won in Barcelona by the Swiss TV. The award was made for one of Hans A. Traber's broadcasts on the "Wonderful World of Microscopy".

[O.S.E.C.]