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HOME AFFAIRS.

by MAX NEF.

Viewed from the standpoint of the military defense of the country, 1952 was a *transitional* year for Switzerland: the new Order of Battle brought with it, partially, and organisngly, far-reaching changes in the formation of the body of troops. Thus, the usual military courses, prescribed by law, (in particular the so-called Refresher Courses,) were chiefly made to serve the purpose of welding together the newly formed units and making them acquainted with their new mobilisation centres. Moreover, during the year in question, various new weapons and also new war material were distributed to the troops, in order to supplement and strengthen the already existing material. In this way, the Infantry received a new, and much more effective, machine-gun and was, furthermore, equipped with a new anti-tank gun, with a medium range, which has been specially developed in Switzerland itself, for the particular requirements of our Army. The modernisation of our Artillery, (through its equipment with guns) having a longer range has now been completed, and mechanisation has also now attained the degree aimed at.

Quite naturally, all these innovations require a corresponding training and re-training of the men, who are to make use of the new weapons and material. It is for this purpose, that armoured vehicles are being introduced gradually into the Swiss Army; there are already sufficient available for training in their operation to be started in the School for Recruits.

All these innovations make it understandable that, this year, new instructions are to be issued by the competent authorities, in regard to the training in the Swiss Army. These will shortly be made public by the Chief of Armed Training.

Although, for several years past, the duration of the Refresher Courses has been extended to three weeks, and the reorganisation of the age categories for military service has been carried out with a view to strengthening the capacity for defense, it is, nowadays, quite out of the question that the greatly increased volume of military exercises (which all branches of the armed forces have to learn) can be got through with, during the space of a single Refresher Course, per year. It has therefore been decided to introduce a three-year rotation in respect of the training, or rather, the advanced training of the troops, after they have finished their fundamental training in the School for Recruits and the Cadre Courses. It is true that the first part of the annual Refresher Course, lasting approximately one week, will not be affected by any change, even in this three-yearly programme. It is only in the second half of the Refresher Course that there will be a change taking place in rotation, during the three-year period. During one year, firing exercises on a large scale will be carried out by combined Infantry and Artillery. The following year, there will be manoeuvre exercises in which re-inforced Regiments will take part together. And, in the third year of this intended rotation it is proposed to have big manoeuvres, when a Division will be set against a Light Brigade or a Mountain Brigade. The Brigade being the smaller unit, it will be supplied with a more powerful firing power and equipped with a greater number of motor vehicles. A similar rotative pro-

gramme gave excellent results in former years. It has now, however, been planned in a more systematic manner and adjusted in accordance with the lessons learnt from experience.

Recently, some lively discussions have been taking place among the Swiss public in regard to the present methods of training in the Army. Even if nothing that is really fundamental has been changed, the application of what was learnt from the war, has brought with it a certain increase in strictness with regard to discipline. When, even abroad, where the period of training is much longer than is the case in Switzerland, with her Militia system, it has been found necessary to make the training methods more severe, any negligence in this regard, or any slackening, would be very much out of place in our country. One difficulty which arises in the Swiss Army composed of every citizen who is capable of bearing arms, is caused by the fact that each man, being as he is a citizen of a direct Democracy, is intent on his individual freedom and independence, whereas, as a serviceman, he is obliged to be taught obedience and discipline in order, that as a soldier, in case of war, he may be capable of performing all that is required of him. The training and education of a soldier, from the point of view of character, is a task which has not grown any easier during the last few years.

However, the determination to defend their country, which is based in Switzerland on a century-old tradition, is so deeply rooted in the hearts of the entire Swiss people, that even should greater demands be made upon them in military service, these will be carried out with comprehension and willingness.

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