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“SELF-INTRODUCTION”

BY THE EDITOR

Dear readers,

I have both the pleasure and honour of succeeding Mrs. Meier as editor of the “Swiss Observer”. This is the opportunity for me to thank her for the kindness with which she has shown me into the secrets of running such a publication. If in future I manage to run it nearly as well as she did, I should have every reason of being satisfied with myself. Furthermore, I am looking forward to receiving contributions from her in the future.

As was stated in her farewell address in the last issue, I am “a young journalist”. Young, I am, being 27, but being a freshman in the trade with still a lot to learn, the term “journalist” is almost too much honour, as far as I am concerned. The fact that I have lived 12 years in this country has made me a bi-cultural animal, strongly anglicised, but with enough swissness to be attached to the “Swiss Observer”, with which I have been acquainted for many years.

The aim of this paper, it seems to me, is both to act as a binding cement to our expatriate community and to maintain its ties with Switzerland. In this spirit, it seeks to present its readers with reports of organised community events, with personal news, and attempts to give a picture of life in Switzerland.

The interest and need for such information are linked with what meaning the idea of a “Swiss Community” still has in the minds of the bulk

of Swiss residents who form the legal Colony, as well as with their remaining ties to the homeland.

It is well known that our organised community life has been diminishing, as it has in other foreign communities here. There are far fewer national societies today as there were, say, twenty years ago. The average age of their regular participants is constantly rising. This is also true of the broader and disseminate Swiss population of Great Britain because hardly anyone emigrates here nowadays. Those who have, in the good days before the war, now form the backbone of the Community. But in the majority of cases, their children have opted for British nationality and have become assimilated to this country. To this must be added the influence of modern communications, which in shrinking the world have had the effect of bringing Switzerland to our doorsteps and of unifying our cultures, so that the “expatriate” aspect of our life abroad and the distinctness of our Swiss identity cannot be felt today as strongly as in the past.

These are irreversible historical trends which, in the long run, make life more difficult for a patriotic paper such as the “Swiss Observer”. Fortunately, history still has a lot to move. Swiss residents in England are still well alive and interested in what other fellow residents are doing. I have ample evidence that a great many people have a keen interest on what is happening back home and on the organised activities of the Community. These still attract newcomers as well as older residents, and as such deserve to be reported in a communal paper. I know of a solid core of elderly and poorer Swiss for whom the “Swiss Observer” is the most important remaining link with what was once home, and even though its news is usually outdated (a technical inevitability), they do not complain because they get the picture and evocation of Swiss life which they need. Another important feature is the growing commercial, financial and industrial importance of our country, which arouses increasing interest among the British. There is therefore a real prospect of enlarging the circle of English readers which the “Swiss Observer” already enjoys.

I therefore strongly believe, that in spite of historical trends which tend to loosen our Community, the purpose for which this paper was founded — serving it by keeping it bound together and tied to home by the information presented — is still meaningful. This is a task worth working for and which I will do my best to accomplish. If, perchance, I also manage to afford some entertainment, the job will be all the more rewarding.

Pierre-Michel Béguin

THE ARMY

1969

The military budget for 1968 was 1.942 billion francs, that for this year, 1.935 billion, the first decrease in the military budget since 1960. In 1968 it accounted for 30% of confederal expenditure. This year it will only account for 27%. Expenditure on defence has increased by about 60% since 1961, when the military budget was 1.1 billion, but has risen slower than the national income. Out of the 1969 figure, 153 millions were devoted to civil defence (a rising post) and 1.770 for the army proper. Of this latter figure, 195 million were devoted to military installations, 22 on new training grounds, 145 million for anti-aircraft weaponry, 86 million for 60 new helicopters, 84 million for continued mechanisation of the army, 360 million for the pay of professional officers, instructors and arsenal personnel. Total expenditure on defence amounted to a little less than 2.9% of national income. If one includes voluntary work done by instructors and officers of all ranks in off-service training, instructing and organising as well as the unpaid work done by all troops in up-keeping their equipment, then the value of effort devoted to defence is worth 2.1 billion francs 3.6% of national income but no more than 2.9% of social product.

The comparison with defence spending in other countries is of interest. In 1966, Russia spent 250 billion francs (22% of national income), U.S.A. spent 274 billion (10.3%), Germany spent 24 billion (6.2%). Sweden devoted 4.5% of its national income on defence, Belgium 3.6%. The only country to make a smaller effort on defence than Switzerland is Austria, which spends 600 million francs, or 1.7% of its national income.

“Mirages” and Copters

In February of this year, 33 “Mirages 111 2” built in Switzerland under licence had already been delivered to the airforce. 17 others, of the reconnaissance type, were about to be handed over and were nearing their acceptance trials. The cost of our Mirages has not exceeded the estimate figuring in the Mirage Report of July 1968. Their cost will be 1,185 million francs.

These planes have given good results and had flown over 5400 hours by the end of last year.

The formation of pilots has been made very much cheaper thanks to the new simulator at Payerne, a mock cockpit in which every conceivable situation encountered in flight can be reproduced — with no risk to human life and to hardware. The Swiss-built

"Mirages" have proved to be very satisfactory planes which have, to yet, suffered no crash.

This year, 60 "Alouette" helicopters are to be purchased for the armed forces. Federal Councillor Gnaegim, responsible for defence, has evoked the need to increase the use of these machines. Which, with the mobility they bring with them, have revolutionized the tactics of modern warfare. They were increasingly used in other armies, and, besides serving in offensive missions, were being increasingly used in the transport of troops. The Federal Councillor has spoken of the need of a necessary long-term planning in the introduction of helicopter troop transport, envisaging the possibility of airborne transportation of troops at company level, and even at battalion level. The order means an increase from 9 to 15 helicopters in each Army Corps squadron. The Mountain Army Corps 3, will in future receive special attention as regards helicopters because of its special needs.

About to receive its complete order of "Mirages", the airforce is already contemplating the purchase of a new jet fighter to be introduced between 1973 and 1975. It has a total of 400 fighter planes, two hundred of them being obsolete "Venoms", which will be the first to be replaced. Airforce specialists are interested in a ground attack fighter (the "Mirage" is more of an "interceptor") and are studying 9 versions of modern fighter jets. The odds are that these planes would be imported and not built under license because of a short delivery delay.

Infantrymen are also to share the army's modernisation. They are going to receive infra-red sights to their assault-rifles which will enable them to see areas illuminated by an infra-red projector, but which remain entirely dark to the naked eye.

Integral Defence of the Land

Far reaching changes are to be made in the way the integral defence — both military and civil — of the country is to be organised. Military defence had hitherto been the responsibility of the army and its General Staff. Civil defence had been the responsibility of a number of federal, cantonal and communal bodies. The need has been felt for some time to coordinate those two aspects of a complete defence, as well as that of keeping the Federal Council better informed over these matters.

Following a report prepared by ex-army corps commander Annasohn, a Council for Integral Defence (Gesamtverteidigungsrat) is to replace the Council for Defence created in 1958, which, burdened with coordinating responsibilities, had not been as useful as anticipated. The future Council for Integral Defence is to comprise non-governmental specialists

who are to be responsible to the Federal Council and who will have an exclusively consultative role. Two other bodies, a Staff and a Central Office for Integral Defence will be created. The first will comprise officials from various public departments and the director of the Central Office for Integral Defence. It will have to elaborate a general conception of integral defence, outline projects and scan the possible defence issues. The Central Office has a full time director who, with his associates, works out the details and assesses the feasibility of the plans conceived by the Staff for Integral Defence. It comes to grip with the practice issues and has an important coordinating function. It is responsible to the General Staff but works independently.

Major changes are about to be carried through in the "Territorial Service" (Territorialdienst). It is responsible for those elements in our militia army which are midway between combat troops and civil defence. Territorial troops are supposed to back both civilian and military authorities in times of war and help to smooth the running of a war-time economy. The "Territorial Service" is to be replaced by the "Organisation of Territorial Services" (Territorialdienstlich Organisation) which will be responsible for air-defence troops, sanitary services and landsturm forces. One of the aims of the planners of our new territorial defence is to coordinate the war-time responsibilities of army and civilian hospitals more closely. The territorial services are to be organised in six main districts. Their delimitation had been up to now inspired by purely tactical considerations. It will henceforth be subsumed to cantonal boundaries.

Civil Defence and paratroops

Considerable stress is now being laid on the non military aspects of defence. The Federation and Federal Office for Civil Defence have made great efforts in training new instructors and educating the public. 21,000 persons took courses in civil defence last year, and atomic shelters for some 300,000 persons have been projected. A civil defence pendant to the well known "soldier's booklet" is now being circulated. Conceived at the time of the invasion of Czechoslovakia, the booklet is full of vivid foreboding and presents a picture of foreign tanks in front of Zurich's Gross Munster. "The resistance will be hard, it requires to be fully planned and organised so that innocent people need not suffer, and blood not be uselessly shed" it tells us.

Right at the other end of the defence spectrum, the spearhead of our elite troops is to be yet sharpened: the creation of a company of paratroops has been decided. Picked from the Grenadiers, who have always been

the toughest infantrymen of the army, the paratroops do one more month of basic training than ordinary recruits, where they learn the special techniques particular to their corps. They are supposed to have practised parachuting as a hobby in civilian life. The army has presently 28 of these men. Of a first batch of 43 grenadiers, 9 were insufficiently trained and 6 insufficiently resistant to be trained as paratroops. They made the first show of their skills to the press at the training ground of Losone in April. They demonstrated their ability in sabotage, ambush and parachuted assaults. They are intended to be used in small groups of three to five, penetrate 50 km behind enemy lines in reconnaissance, guerrilla and sabotage missions. Pilatus Porter aircraft are their means of airborne transportation. The army means to have a full company of these men by 1972. They must be the proudest soldiers alive.

Training

4,000 corporals and 20,000 recruits filled the recruit schools of the country in the winter course of this year. 10,000 were infantrymen, 2,700 belonged to the mechanised troops, 2,500 to artillery. This illustrates once again the way our army depend on its infantry. In the summer course, a total of 29,000 corporals and recruits were in recruit schools, the former making their first steps towards higher grades and learning the art of commanding, the latter doing their basic training and having their first taste of military life.

The training of such vast numbers of recruits needs vast free spaces. A tank training ground of 8,000 hectares has been created in Bure. But the problem of the lack of training grounds is becoming acuter every year. According to Army-corps Commander Hirschy, Switzerland has lost 18% of possible training sites at company level, 33% at battalion level since the war because of the development of tourism and the invasion of built-up areas. Federal Councillor Gnaegi has evoked the possibility of training troops in Austria. Mirage planes, who can dart from Basle to Chiasso in six minutes, already train occasionally in France, where there exist possibilities of practising the use of air-to-ground missiles.

The problem is that the Army's efforts in increasing its training grounds rubs against the opposition of those civilians directly concerned with this military implantation. Sometimes they resent the plain idea of the "Army" being present in their Communes, but most of the time it is the noise of guns and the detriment to their natural surroundings which they apprehend. All these reasons prompted a strong body of citizens of Genevez, Lajoux and Montfaucon, in the Jura to form a movement for the repurchase of an

army training site for mounted-transport units on their soil.

Still, over 10,000 hectares of land have been bought by the army since the '50s. The policy is to use acquired areas as intensively as possible. When the land is not the army's own, then contracts have to be passed with landowners. There are presently about a hundred projected land-acquisition schemes filed in the army's training headquarters. For them it is prepared to devote some 800 million francs to the end of the '80s.

Not only is land lacking, but so are the indispensable instructors. There are 1,232 of them in the recruit schools. This amounts to one instructor for 35 recruits, a proportion which is

distinctly too small in the more specialised units.

The general trend of defence policy then seems to aim towards a perfecting of the type of defence on which Switzerland has traditionally relied. The army remains essentially defensive; the introduction of helicopters does not alter the fact that infantry forms the backbone of our defence. The efforts that have been made in developing civil defence, the plans for coordinating it with military defence and the new organisation of the territorial services point towards a firm (and perhaps static) but more efficient protection of every foot of Swiss soil.

(Compiled from news received by courtesy of Agence Télégraphique Suisse)

THE SWISS RAILWAYS TODAY

By G. Unsel

Switzerland is a small but densely populated country, covering an area of just under 16,000 square miles which is about twice the size of Wales. The extreme distance from west-south-west to east-north east is 226 miles and 137 miles from north to south. Only about half the territory can be lived in throughout the year. The remainder is made up of mountains and lakes. The population of the cultivated areas is 950 per square mile, which is about 1½ times as high as the comparative figure for the U.K. and Northern Ireland.

The mountainous and hilly nature of the landscape presented a tremendous challenge to Swiss railway engineers and their contractors. Twenty-two years after the Stockton-Darlington opening (1825), Switzerland opened its first Railway, Zurich-Baden 19 miles.

During the second half of the last century, Switzerland's Railways consisted of five relatively large and some smaller private concerns. (The Jura Simplon Railway opened an Office in London 1893). The Swiss Federal Railways were established at the beginning of this century by the so-called "Redemption Law" which the Swiss electorate passed by an overwhelming majority. The change from privately owned railways to a State Railway (nationalisation) was carried out under the slogan "The Swiss Railways for the Swiss People".

Today the Swiss Federal Railways own a well equipped electrified network of approximately 1,800 route miles. The gauge is standard, 4 ft. 8½ inches except for 46 miles of the 1 metre Brunig Line Lucerne-Interlaken. A network of similar size is still under private ownership, but apart from the

Loetschberg Railway, South Eastern Railway, Bodensee-Toggenburg Railway (all standard gauge) and the Rhaetian Railway (metre gauge), the 300 companies are mainly small concerns including rack-and-pinion railways, funiculars, aerial cableways etc.

As a result of the unpleasant experience gained during the first world war, when no coal or oil could be imported, the electrification of Switzerland's Railways was started early. The Swiss Federal Railways started this tremendous task in 1919 and completed the last stage in 1960. The resp. investment of £150 million although huge for a small country, was well worth while, because without electric traction the Swiss Federal Railways could never have coped with the extraordinary volume of traffic offered during the second world war when all other branches of transport almost completely broke down through lack of oil and petrol. Nor would it have been possible for them to cope with the vastly increased traffic brought about in the last two decades by the economic boom and the Common Market trade. Electrification also contributed considerably towards increased efficiency and rationalisation of operations. These factors all reflected in the satisfactory financial results of almost 20 years during which the Government was not called upon to take over any financial burden, but collected nearly £15 million in the form of interest on capital.

The big Stride

Increased efficiency all round helped by the improved performance of electric traction have achieved re-

markable results but especially on the busy Gotthard route, where the tonnage of the goods traffic carried has increased almost threefold between 1950 and 1962. The *daily average* of goods carried between Wassen and Goeschenen for example was 19,400 gross tons in 1950 as compared with 66,600 tons in 1968. Some peak days registered as many as 100,000 tons.

The Swiss Ae 6/6 locomotives of 6,000 h.p. have virtually revolutionised traffic operations between Erstfeld and Chiasso where they haul 15 four axles passenger coaches or goods trains of 26 wagons of 25 tons at 47 miles an hour on gradients up to 1 in 40. This corresponds to a weight of 650 tons being lifted approximately 21 in. a second. Overtaking of slow goods trains on this route by express passenger trains is a thing of the past, as they run at the same speed. The introduction of a whole number of special measures coupled with the amazing progress made in locomotive design made this outstanding performance possible. Centralised train operating supervision introduced in 1956, operating and locomotive control, up to date signalling equipment (illuminated panels representing the track layout of the controlled area), shorter and automatic block sections, (81%) were some of these measures.

Another important contributory factor is the modern rolling stock especially the EUROP freight wagon pool, to which each member administration contributes a certain number of freight wagons, and which cuts out the empty run back to the home country. More than ¼ of a million such wagons are freely available to the member administrations. The modern freight wagon is naturally equipped with air brakes which make it possible for whole trains to be moved by a single manned electric locomotive and only one guard.

Three Titans

The phasing out of the first electric locomotives which have given over 40 years of service, is well under way. Their output was 2,000 h.p. which now looks very small compared with the latest locomotives. In their time however, they represented a considerable improvement on the last steam locomotives of 1,580 h.p. used on Swiss main lines.

Today the building programme is limited to three types of main line locomotives.

1. *The Ae 6/6* class which has two three-axle bogies (all axles power driven), a normal rating of 6,000 h.p. (which can be developed to as much as 9,000 h.p.). Of the original order of 120, all were in use by last year. Weight 120 tons. Maximum speed 77 miles per hour. Working heavy trains on steep gradients.

2. *The Re 4/4 II* class with four power driven axles (2 bogies) and an