

Television in Switzerland

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mit any sin against Europe, just as by collaborating with Europe in the way of organisation we do not commit any sin against neutrality.

From this it will be seen that the Swiss authorities, at one in this with the overwhelming majority of public opinion, are not changing their attitude. For us, neutrality is a reality and a principle which maintains all its value. But we also know that European organisation, that is to say in our close neighbourhood, is also a reality that we cannot ignore and must take largely into account.

This plainly shows that there is nothing doctrinary about Swiss policy. It is, above all, realistic and pragmatic.

TELEVISION IN SWITZERLAND

It had been decided a year or two ago that Switzerland would proceed warily in the matter of introducing television because it was thought that the geographical position and the difficult natural contours of the country would present technical problems of a high order and it was anticipated that it would be a number of years before television could become a practical possibility in Switzerland.

The tremendous strides that have been made in television have, however, made the Swiss authorities revise their attitude, particularly since a transmitter station has been taken into regular operation in Zurich, furnishing a daily, if rather restricted, programme.

As far back as 1950, when the question of television was first mooted, Swiss manufacturers began to investigate the possibility of producing television equipment because they quite rightly foresaw the vast possibilities in this new industry. Naturally, before Swiss manufacturers could begin to construct equipment, they had to know what kind of service would be expected and particularly the number of "lines" on which transmissions would take place. The standard used in the United Kingdom is a picture of 405 lines, and, in France, pictures are transmitted on the old standard of 441 lines and the new standard of 819 lines. In the United States of America the standard is 525 lines. However, except for the countries mentioned and those behind the Iron Curtain, the standard laid down by the C.C.I.R. (Comite Consultatif International des Radiocommunications) provides for a standard of 625 lines.

It had been realised from the very beginning in Switzerland that a purely Swiss domestic programme would not meet the needs of the Swiss population which would expect to have access

to programmes transmitted by large neighbouring countries and by other countries, e.g., the United Kingdom, within reasonable distance for reception purposes. There are now about half a dozen Swiss firms able to manufacture television receivers but, as might be expected, prices are extremely high in view of the costly adjustments which must be made to enable reception to be effected from transmitters sending out pictures on varying lines.

One problem facing Switzerland is that with which other countries have had to deal as well and it is the question of paid advertising. At present, the Swiss Government frowns severely on paid advertising in the wireless transmission services and it also intends to prohibit the use of television for such purposes, although it is felt that the licence fee for possessors of television sets will have to be fairly high if administrative costs are to be covered from that source alone. The Swiss Government has recently authorised television to be shown publicly in cafes and restaurants, but this has brought the inevitable protest from cinema interests which threaten to retaliate by boycotting the Swiss-produced weekly newsreel shown in all cinemas more from a prestige point of view than from that of public interest. The introduction of television is, of course, one of the burning problems of the day in all countries but it has particular significance in a country like Switzerland where education interests play such a large part in the national economy, and it is therefore to be expected that the Swiss authorities will exercise strict control over the use of television as a public service.

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