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raux, had been eagerly expected. It was clear from his remarks that a great deal of goodwill existed and that a positive and consistent policy was being pursued with regard to the Swiss schools abroad. The proposed closing of the schools in Genova and Florence in 1983 would

present a kind of special stimulus to this policy.

Finally, comments were made regarding the traditional day of the Swiss from abroad at the Swiss Industries Fair and the forthcoming Assembly of Swiss Residents Abroad which will take place in

Solothurn from 21st to 23rd August.

As usual, the delegates met for lunch after the meeting. For many, this provided a welcome time for social intercourse and for comparing notes on many subjects.

Varied Swiss Shooting Scene

by Paul Betschart

Large, structurally complex yet efficient, with a richly varied range of functions in sport and state – that is still the Swiss shooting scene in 1981. Besides the Swiss Rifle Association (SSV), which heads the list with its 3874 clubs and 553 379 members, there are approximately 20 nation-wide associations and other organizations engaged in official and unofficial shooting activities in Switzerland. They cover a whole field which enjoys nothing like so high a status in any other country in the world. The organizations cater for 543 592 compulsory programme shooters, about 1000 archers in 36 clubs, some 3000 crossbowmen in 125 sections and 282 participants in the sport of «combat shooting» in 19 clubs. And it should be noted, to round off the picture, that the associations have their «own» insurance, the Swiss Rifle Associations' Accident Insurance (N.B. run by unpaid workers), in which approximately 630 000 members from some 5000 clubs are insured, and which pays out about a quarter of a million francs per year for physical injuries or material damage.

Admittedly, shooting is now far less important within the framework of the Swiss state than it was in the last century, but it remains a factor to be taken into account. This is illustrated by these figures: last year about 75 million rounds were

fired on Swiss shooting ranges, not counting exercises during military refresher courses. In 1980 the Confederation contributed over 22 million francs towards the costs of compulsory shooting duty, which is conducted by the clubs, of courses and of cartridges used in exercises. When, in line with general economies, it recently wanted to fix a quota for the amount of ammunition used, it very quickly had to beat a retreat in the face of protests from the clubs and associations – to pick a fight with the marksmen, even in

1981, 157 years after the founding of the Swiss Rifle Association, is not politically advisable!

The Swiss shooting scene occasionally becomes confused because of its complex structure. Some of the national associations come under the SSV, the umbrella association; the small-bore marksmen and crossbowmen are loosely affiliated; but the archers, for example, go their own way. This often leads to complications, especially over questions of finance or of sending delegates to international

March to the federal «Feldschiessen»; with well over 200 000 participants, this is still *the* big demonstration of the strength of unofficial shooting in Switzerland. (Comet-Photo)



events. With the creation of a joint committee we are beginning, after many years, to see some progress towards more efficient cooperation. A study group drawn from various national associations is currently occupied with the question of amalgamation; but anyone familiar with the typically Swiss spirit of independence, of «club loyalty», must doubt the possibility of creating a unified association.

The endeavour to forge closer links is not dictated by changed circumstances alone. The Swiss Rifle Association is still the leading organization from the point of view of membership and finance. However, although it is the richest association, thanks to its size, it still has its problems. Ten years ago a levy of a «Sportsrappen» was introduced for every 300-metre or pistol cartridge used at voluntary events, but this is no longer enough. On average, the tax brought in about 420 000 francs a year. This year it is to be doubled, mainly in order to cover the huge increase in expenditure on competition shooting. In the provisional budget for 1982 the SSV estimates a total annual expenditure of nearly 3 million francs, of which 850 000 francs are earmarked for marksmanship under international rules. If the section delegates refuse the increase to two Rappen the SSV will have to think again.

But financial soundness is offset by an international development, namely a change in the types of shooting in international competitive sport. In the first few decades of the world championships, which have been held ever since 1897, Swiss marksmen collected vast quantities of precious metal. The trophy cupboards of our top marksmen were adorned by 129 gold trophies alone by the time war interrupted the sport after the world title contests in Lucerne in 1939. Glorious receptions for the home-comers, with thousands of enthusiastic supporters, were the order



Daniel Nipkow (Zollikerberg), world and European crossbow champion, is also Switzerland's present best small-bore marksman and internationally the most promising in that sport. (Ria-Photo)

of the day; reports, commentaries and analyses filled whole pages of the newspapers. The main interest centred on the 300-metre «Stutzer» match, while the trophies won in the pistol match were really only recorded in passing. But in the post-war period there has been growing resistance abroad to shooting at 300 metres, which was obviously less firmly rooted in other countries than in Switzerland, with approximately 2500 ranges of that size. Shooting noise and problems of space have brought small-bore shooting, and later 10-metre shooting (airguns) too, increasingly to the fore. However, both these sports are catered for by the Swiss Sport Shooting Association, with approximately 11 000 members in 656 sections. 300-metre shooting has disappeared from the programme of the Olympic Games, but archery, on the other hand, has returned to the Olympic family. Thus the SSV, as Switzerland's representative in the International Shooting Federa-

tion, has largely shed its sporting legitimacy.

Nevertheless, important things are still being achieved in shooting of all kinds. Even if, for the time being, the scene is dominated by a generation equipped with automatic rifles, the old-style shooting events are still much in demand. This was most recently demonstrated in 1979 at the 50th Federal Shooting Festival in Lucerne, with an almost record number of 82 343 marksmen, and in 1980 at several cantonal shooting matches which attracted an excellent number of participants. But the historic shooting matches, too, for example on the Rütli or at the Morgarten, enjoy undiminished popularity. In 1980 the «greatest shooting event in the world», the «Feldschiessen», drew 244 000 entrants in the rifle and pistol classes.

At the same time, people everywhere have been turning to the customary international programmes. The cantonal associations are no longer limited to a supervisory role, drawing up a few annual programmes and occasionally holding old-style shooting events. The past few years have also taught the shooting officials that an effort must be made to interest the younger generation in the sport of shooting. Young people are being taught «Stutzer» shooting and all branches of pistol shooting, and we are already beginning to see the first results of giving them a thorough training. So we may hope that in the coming years, too, Swiss marksmen will occasionally distinguish themselves by their outstanding performances. However, we must not expect the same measure of success as in the past. Worldwide competition is too great for that and the technical equipment – which gave our marksmen an advantage in the early days – has become too standardized. Moreover, the «state amateurs» have also dominated the sport of shooting for a good 20 years.