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Shots from «Höhenfeuer» by Fredi M. Murer, winner of the «Grand Prix» at this year's film festival in Locarno.

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The New Swiss Film:

In the Limelight

The «Grand Prix» of this year's Film Festival of Locarno was awarded to Fredi M. Murer's «Höhenfeuer». Connoisseurs were not surprised at this award to a Swiss Film. Freddy Buache, Director of the Swiss Film archives, outlines the way of the Swiss Film to international recognition.

Film production in Switzerland, during the time of the silent movies, is hardly worth mentioning, in spite of the enthusiasm of a few pioneers: Lazar Zwickler, founder of the Company of Praesens in the year 1924, the airman Walter Mittelholzer or the Genevan C.-G. Duvanel, who with Arthur Porchet as cameraman, did the shooting of the newsreel for a Lausanne enterprise, the first Swiss weekly filmshow, that because of the too-costly and complex technology of sound films, disappeared again. From 1930 on, the polyglot of languages in the country prevented the coming-up of a seventh national Art, which would have been easy to convey over the whole of our territory. The French part of Switzerland, fascinated in those days with what came from Paris, displayed no great interest in production. The main centre developed itself in Zurich, where until 1939 documentary films and also rarely a few longer feature films were shot. The main ones being *Füsilier Wipf* (1938) and *Wachtmeister Studer* (1939), both by Leopold Lindtberg. Then, however, the situation of our country changed in the middle of a Europe at war, when the filming of the battle against totalitarian ideology was required. By virtue of the decree of plenary powers, the Federal Council introduced in 1940 the Swiss weekly newsreel, a weekly current affairs film-show of 8 to 10 minutes in the national languages, which had to be compulsorily shown in all the movie-theatres. As for the rest, several

film-makers were spurred on by the necessity to strengthen the morale of the Confederation. They brought the classics of Swiss literature to the screen, namely from Gottfried Keller, which were adapted by Hans Trommer with magnificent lyrics in *Romeo und Julia auf dem Dorfe* (1941) and in Lindtbergs *Die missbrauchten Liebesbriefe* (1940). During this span of time 10 to 12 films were produced annually.



«Derborence», 1985
Photos: Cinémathèque Suisse

New Aspect

With the return of peace, this vitality slowed down and the market opened itself again for the productions from abroad. One had to wait for the development of the new films from western Switzerland, until Zurich caught up with this upswing with delay and once more became the centre of great activity. Different films