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# HELVETIA



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Groupe New Zealand of the N.H.G.

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5th YEAR : VOL. 2.

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## Switzerland relies on her army to safeguard neutrality.

Switzerland has always been a staunch believer in preparedness. She was prepared in 1914, and during all those tragic years of the first World War her army kept vigil on all frontiers at a tremendous expense. At that time the world's oldest republic became an island of peace in the sea of war, and a good samaritan to all war sufferers alike.

The great conflict of 25 years ago was to end war forever, but quite some time ago it became apparent that all humanity was not ready for perennial peace. Discords and jealousies arose as disturbing factors, and military preparedness became once more a dire necessity. Four years ago peace-loving Switzerland became convinced that she, too, had to improve her defence system, and in December, 1935, a first credit of seven million dollars was granted for fortifications along the northern border. However, this was only the beginning of things and in April, 1936, the nation enthusiastically voted and considerably oversubscribed another credit of one hundred million dollars to safeguard its cherished homeland. Since then a further emergency defence loan was granted.

Switzerland with a population of 4,066,400, maintains proportionately the largest armed force in Europe, at the largest per capita military expenditure of any country in the world. The army now numbers 500,000 men and half of this number can be mobilized over night. Every able-bodied Swiss citizen is liable to do military service from his twentieth to his forty-eighth year. The Federal forces comprise three different divisions, i.e. the so-called "Auszug", the "Landwehr" and the "Landsturm". To the "Auszug", or Elite, belong the young men up to the age of 32; the "Landwehr", or First Reserve, includes the soldiers from 32-40 years of age, and in the "Landsturm", or Second Reserve, are men from 40-48 years old. Citizens physically unfit for front line duty have to report for reserve service, and a decree issued recently extends the liability to serve in the Swiss Army in an emergency up to the age of 60.

Military instruction is imparted at the expense of the Swiss Confederation. Young men of 20 years of age, or even 19, have to attend Recruiting School for a period of 3 to 4 months. Afterwards up to the age of 32, there is a yearly training period of about 3 weeks, the exact length of the same varying somewhat for different units. While "Landwehr" forces are expected for repetition courses lasting approximately 3 weeks about every second year, "Landsturm" men have training periods averaging 3 weeks about

3 times in their respective time of service.

Special courses and training are, of course, required in the case of soldiers who are aiming for a higher rank. Officers of the general staff receive their instruction at Berne; regimental officers attend the Central Military College at Thun, and a training school at Basle undertakes the teaching of the sanitary troops.

Swiss soldiers have been drilled in gymnastics from early boyhood on, and Rifle Shooting Clubs for boys and men exist in all parts of the country. Every soldier is obliged to do a certain amount of rifle practice each year and a record of his capacity in this line is carefully kept for him. There is hardly a village which has not its own rifle club. Cantonal and Federal Shooting Festivals, where all these men can show off their skill are consequently a feature of Switzerland.

Ski instruction and vigorous winter training have for many years played a vital part in the Swiss Army. Ski courses for officers and soldiers are given in all divisions, not only for mountain service, but also for ordinary field service. The training includes the technique of ski-ing, life saving, transporting the wounded, etc. Ski patrols are clad in white in order to escape attention.

Recent Swiss army improvements are responsible for a considerable increase of the air force. Observation and listening posts are now found in all strategic points in the hills and mountains and nests for anti-aircraft and anti-tank guns are well distributed.

Swiss soldiers, regardless of their political affiliations and four different mother tongues ( German, French, Italian and Romansch ) are allowed to take their rifles and uniforms home after army maneuvers, together with 200 rounds of ammunition. This fact alone speaks eloquently for the perfect unity of the Swiss people.

So well drilled for any emergency are these men that as soon as the signal is given they know exactly to which post they have to go and what is expected of them.

Foreign armies have come to grief in the Swiss mountains ever since the beginning of the little Republic in 1291. In the year 1815 Swiss independence was guaranteed by international treaty, giving assurance of "perpetual neutrality, inviolability and independence", with the right to organize a Federal Army.

The second World War, too, has found Switzerland well prepared, with three divisions each stationed along the northern and western frontiers and two reserve divisions in the neighbourhood of Berne, and Lucerne. The 9th division takes care of the St. Gotthard district, and three independent mountain brigades are protecting the southern and southeastern frontiers.

Since the Swiss Army has no general in peace time, the Federal Assembly, convening at Berne in war emergency on August 30, elected Colonel Henri Guisan, commander of the First Army Corps (1st, 2nd and 3rd divisions), as General of the Swiss Army, at that time mobilized for defence of the Swiss frontiers. Guisan, a resident of French speaking Switzerland, is sixty-five, and one of the very few professional Swiss Army officers.

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#### Der Lebenslauf General Guisans.

Der neue Oberkommandierende der schweizerischen Armee, Henri Guisan, den die Bundesversammlung am 30. August zum General gewahlt hat, ist gebuertiger Waadtlaender. Als Buerger von Avenches wurde er am 21. Oktober 1874 in Mézières im Gros de Vaud geboren. Nach dem Besuch des Lausanner Gymnasiums studierte er an den Universitaeten Lausanne und Freiburg i. Ue. sowie an den landwirtschaftlichen Schulen von Hohenheim ( Wuerttemberg ) und Lyon und uebernahm dann die