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News from Switzerland

15th SALON OF HOUSEHOLD ARTS

The 15th Salon of Household Arts, covering an area of approximately 240,000 sq. ft., and including in particular a new hall in the Exhibition Palace of an area of 11,000 sq. ft., was held in Geneva recently. This year this important event comprised over 300 stands and featured more than 1000 Swiss and foreign makes in the field of articles for the home. Swiss Television set up a fully equipped studio there and broadcast a daily programme for viewers in French-speaking Switzerland. (Osec)

UNIFORMS WERE FIRST SEEN IN SWITZERLAND

Books of reference give the second half of the fourteenth century as the time when uniforms were first used. The Turkish Janissary force, a noted corps of foot soldiers who acted as the Sultan's bodyguard — the earliest standing army in Europe — was fully organised by Amurath I, in 1362. The formation of standing armies among the Western powers, which may be said to have introduced the modern military system, dates from the establishment of "compagnies d'ordonnance" by Charles VII of France in 1422.

In England, the Yeomen of the Guard constituted by Henry VII and at whose coronation they made their first appearance, on 30th October, 1485, is the oldest corps in the British service. The Honourable Corps of Gentlemen-at-Arms, formerly called the Gentlemen Pensioners, was instituted in 1509 by Henry VIII and formed the Sovereign's bodyguard.

The Beefeaters or Warders of the Tower, whose Tudor uniform has had much to do with their attractiveness to sightseers, wear the Yeoman's uniform, without the shoulder-belt, and had their origin in the reign of Edward VI in 1547.

France is generally believed the first country to adopt uniforms for soldiers, in 1422; now in Switzerland this custom is much more ancient. At the battle of Morgarten in 1315, the troops of Zurich were all dressed in white and blue. A corps of Bernese Troops, in 1365, wore a white costume with a bear of black cloth sewed on the breast. Troops from St. Gallen were all clad in red at Grandson in 1476, etc., etc.

It is thus fully established that Switzerland already had uniforms more than a century earlier than France and long before the Janissaries existed.

WORKS OF ART FOR HIRE

The town of Zurich is trying out a new idea intended to assist artists. A certain number of works by contemporary Zurich artists, both paintings and sculptures, can be rented by private individuals for a period of two or four months for a fee equivalent to 5% of the market value of the work for two months and 7.5% for four months, 4/5ths of the proceeds of the rental fee go to the artists. We wish the best of luck to this clever new idea called "ars ad interim" by its promoters. (OSEC)

NEW ULTRA-MODERN FACTORY

George Fisher Co. Ltd. of Schaffhausen have decided to start building a new factory for the production of grey iron in the spring of 1968 to replace their present foundries at Schaffhausen and Brugg. The first stage in the construction work is expected to be completed by 1969. Once completely finished, this new foundry equipped with the latest automatic casting plant will be one of the most modern of its kind in Europe. It will provide employment for some 500 to 600 people. (OSEC)

FACTS ABOUT SWITZERLAND

Gotthard Road Link

The plan for a ten-mile road tunnel through the Gotthard massif has been taken a big step nearer reality. Construction of the tunnel, which will provide an all-weather road link between south and central Switzerland will probably begin in 1969. It will take about seven years to build. The Gotthard tunnel has been taken into the Swiss national highways programme which is due for completion by 1985. The programme covers over 1000 miles of highways, 20 per cent of which are already in use.

Free at Last

It has taken the people of Winterthur, in Northern Switzerland, 500 years to free themselves from the thrall of their bigger neighbour, Zurich. But finally they've done it. Five hundred years ago, Winterthur was pawned to Zurich for 10,000 gilders. Now the money has been paid back — in chocolate coins, and Zurich has generously waived all the interest accumulated in the meantime. When Winterthur was put in pawn, it was also brought into the Swiss Confederation, so with their freedom regained, its citizens have had plenty to celebrate.

Down with Butter

The Swiss government has reduced butter prices as a means of getting rid of large stocks and of increasing sales. As a result of a big increase in production and a fall-off in sales, butter stocks doubled within a year to over 9000 tons. Some housewives had stopped buying butter because of price increases earlier in the year.