

Home affairs

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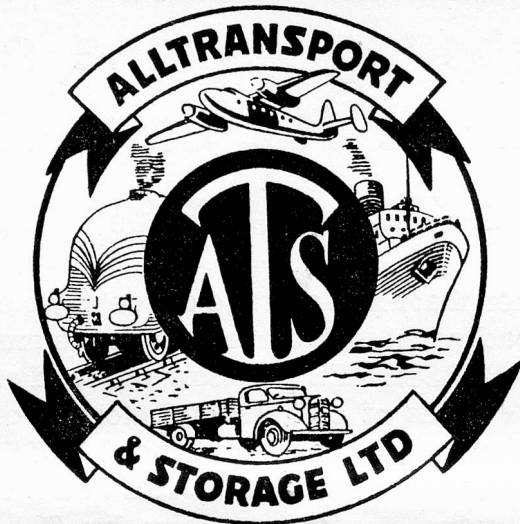
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HOME AFFAIRS.

by PIERRE BÉGUIN.

*“Military Exercises and the Protection of Nature
Beauty Sites.”*

If the Swiss Army wishes to remain efficacious, it must have at its disposal, inter alia, that arm which is at the same time very well protected and very mobile, in other words, armoured tanks. Thus, an order was given, some time ago, for a number of such tanks, in order to re-inforce the strength of the modest quantity which we already possess. What is lacking now is suitable training space, where our soldiers can learn how to handle this arm. In view of the fact that such exercises cannot take place without causing important damage, it is impossible for them to be held in the open countryside, on arable land.

For some years past efforts have been made to find suitable terrain, which could be reserved exclusively for these exercises. Unfortunately, these efforts have not proved to be at all fruitful. Several plans which had been drawn up with difficulty, have resulted in failure, as they met with practically unsurmountable local resistance.

There was a question, at first, of establishing such exercise grounds in a forest, situated in the centre of the Valley of the Rhône, in the Canton of Valais. But, the lovers of Nature and men possessing a deep respect for historical sites, protested against this and proved victorious. It was therefore decided to give up the idea of sacrificing this forest, which is considered to be one of the finest in this country. It also proved necessary to abandon any attempt to harm a site on which a famous battle was waged, and which was therefore of local historical importance to one of our Cantons.

There was some idea, later on, of establishing exercise grounds for armoured tanks in the Canton of Vaud, in the vicinity of the small town of Aigle. The terrain chosen was not particularly productive. But, the neighbouring population rebelled against this project, urging that the peace of these idyllic sites would be disturbed by the military exercises. A popular Referendum confirmed this refusal.

A third spot deemed suitable for the purposes, in the Canton of Vaud not far from the little town of Nyon, was also refused. Here, again, it was the protectors of Nature beauty spots, who led the opposition. As a matter of fact, nowadays, in the Canton of Vaud, no Commune has the right to sell any of its land to the Army, should one of the Communes which is contiguous to it raise any objections.

It must be recognised that such resistance is legitimate. Gradually, as the country becomes more and more industrialised, as the towns encroach upon the countryside, as the valleys are flooded in order to make dams for hydro-electrical plants, one finds public opinion getting upset at the offences which are being committed against the beauties of Nature. There is

something truly healthy about this reaction and we can only be thankful that it exists.

On the other hand, national defence possesses its exigencies and our Army, if it wishes to remain an effective instrument must be able to train in a regular manner. To prevent our Army from proceeding with this necessary training for the formation of specialised troops, would be tantamount to exposing to danger, these same natural beauties that we are so eager to defend.

However, it would appear as if, at last, at the beginning of 1956, there is a solution in sight. Our military authorities have now fixed their choice on some ground, of small value, situated in the Canton of Fribourg. The density of the local population is very slight, and there is no important agglomeration in the vicinity. Practically nobody's peace would be disturbed by noisy exercises. In short, it would really appear as if the solution to this problem had been found. This is something to be congratulated upon, for an exercise ground for armed tanks is indispensable, but obviously, it must be accepted willingly by the interested populations. This, of course, is one of the characteristics of our régime, that the State cannot decide upon anything in a sovereign manner, but must obtain the adhesion, in all matters, of those persons who are directly concerned. This tends to complicate matters, sometimes. But, for that, once something has been decided upon, it really is decided. And it's that, that's important !

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HOME AFFAIRS.

by MAX NEF.

(Postage Stamps and their Purpose.)

Formerly, postage stamps served solely for the purpose of franking postal matter. Recently, however, they have been used, to an ever-growing extent for publicity purposes, by the relevant countries, in order to promote cultural, political or tourist interests. Above all, however, they have been used to serve the interests of social welfare. Thus, for instance, the "Pro Juventute" stamps that are issued in Switzerland each December, are sold at a price which is higher than their current value, this surcharge going to the "Pro Juventute" Institution, a welfare organisation devoted to the care of children and youth. The sums obtained from the sale of these stamps provides a considerable financial aid for this social work.

Such publicity stamps and special series cannot be issued for all purposes. The Swiss Postal Administration, therefore, restricts itself, as a rule, to putting out a single issue per year, whereupon the various surcharge values are devoted to a special idea. The newest issue of such publicity stamps — which, by the way, possess the ordinary postal value, and replace the ordinary stamps for a specified length of time — is devoted to commemorating important dates in the history of traffic.

Fifty years have elapsed since the Swiss Postal Administration put the first motor vehicle into the service of regular passenger transport. This first old motorised postal coach will be represented on the new five centime stamps. This motor-coach service was started in 1906, between Berne and its environs. At that time, this new mode of traffic was still subject to a great deal of controversy. The condition of the roads and the still feeble capacities of the motor, were sources of continuous break-down and repairs, and as soon as there was even a little snow, the vehicle very often could not go on. However, as time went on, postal motor-services were introduced along the Swiss Alpine roads, to an ever increasing extent, and this means of traffic became more and more popular. To-day, the network of postal motor-coach services spreads over a far greater area, than that covered by all the normal railways in Switzerland, put together. During last year, more than twenty-two million passengers travelled in these coaches.

It is also fifty years since the Simplon Tunnel made possible a busy railway connection between the Swiss Canton of Valais and the Italian Valley of Ossola. The Simplon Line has now become an international traffic artery, of the utmost importance. What it meant in those days, to pierce the Alpine wall, over a distance of almost twenty kilometres, is made evident by the fact that this work took more than six and a half years to accomplish. It was an unimaginably hard fight that had to be waged against the mountain, against the pressure conditions, against the hard rock and against the constant inroads made by water. The stamp, commemorating this event shows the Northern entrance to the tunnel, and in front of it the ponderous towers of the ancient Stockalper Palace, the principal landmark of Brigue, which is the Swiss entrance station to the Simplon Tunnel.

And, finally, there is the Swissair, the Swiss

national air navigation company, which can look back upon an existence of twenty-five years. Already during the second year of its foundation, it caused a considerable sensation among the European air lines, by purchasing some very rapid American aircraft, and thus placing itself at the head of all the European companies, in regard to its efficiency. To-day, the Swissair planes are well-known on many an airfield, on the various continents of the world. The Swiss Air Navigation Company carries out regular flights also over the North and the South Atlantic. Even if its fleet of aircraft is small, when compared with foreign conditions, the Swissair has, nevertheless, acquired a good reputation for itself in international air traffic. It is the forty centimes stamp, with its two aircraft flying through a cloudy sky, which will represent the idea of closer contact between the peoples and the countries, and thus publicise an idea which Switzerland has felt herself to be bound to promote, already for centuries past.

The fourth stamp belonging to the most recent Swiss publicity issue, does not really advertise traffic, but renders a service to a most urgent traffic problem, namely that of protection from accidents. With motorization increasing as rapidly as it does, the number of accidents in Switzerland is also going up, each year. The picture on the stamp shows two children on the pedestrians' crossing, with the relevant danger signal, and in this way it contributes towards the numerous other actions taken to promote traffic safety on the streets.

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HOME AFFAIRS.by **MAX NEF.**

It is just twenty-five years ago since the various regional companies in Switzerland, which had taken into their hands the introduction of radio into our country, amalgamated into the Swiss Broadcasting Company. This anniversary offers us an opportunity — which we will seize — to give a brief survey of the development of radio, in Switzerland.

The merit of having established, in 1922, the first public transmitting station in Switzerland, goes to the town of Lausanne. This transmitting station was, at that time, the third in the whole of Europe, and served primarily to ensure the safety of air traffic. During the intervals between the weather forecasts, it transmitted music, from records. On the basis of this circumstance, a Federal Law was passed, which gave the Administration of Telegraphs the exclusive right to set up radio-electric stations and to operate them, and also, as a result of this prerogative, to issue concessions to other corporations for the same purpose.

Already in the first half of the "twenties", the transmitting station on the Geneva airport was occasionally used for broadcasts. Then, in rapid succession, there came the transmitting stations set up by the towns of Zurich, Berne and Basle, for their own use.

The very first attempts made in Switzerland to listen in to radio broadcasts, go back, of course, much further, to be exact, to 1911. At that time, a Zurich watchmaker built a receiving set, in order to get the time-signal transmitted by wireless from the station on the Eiffel Tower, in Paris. Three years later, at the outbreak of the First World War, there were fifty-eight persons in Switzerland, possessing radio licences, this number rising to seventy in 1920, most of them being radio amateurs.

Towards the end of the "twenties" it was discovered that the transmitting installations then existing in Switzerland, were too weak, whereupon the Administration of the PTT put up the two national transmitting stations in Beromünster and Sottens. Two years later, the Tessin transmitter at Monte Ceneri began to operate. In regard to the structure of the programmes and the job of broadcasting, itself, it soon became apparent that a concentration of the Regional Broadcasting Companies, with their studios, was desirable from the organisational point of view. This led to the foundation, in 1931, of the Swiss Broadcasting Company, which was granted a concession by the Administration of the PTT, for the transmission of radio programmes to the Swiss listeners. As regards the work of elaborating programmes, a large amount of independence was granted to the various studios.

What was very characteristic of the evolution of Swiss broadcasting, was the fact that it developed under a permanent and strict regard for regional, and therefore also linguistic peculiarities of our country. A great deal of discussion takes place abroad in regard to the possibilities for satisfying the wishes of listeners — wishes which differ considerably — through the introduction of so-called "Second" and "Third" Programmes. Switzerland, for her part, can point out that *she*, practically from the start, has broadcast three different programmes, namely in the three

national languages, in German, in French and in Italian, a fact that seems perfectly normal to the Swiss, and even, a foregone conclusion.

A similar development is now also taking place in regard to the building up of Swiss television, which, for reasons of expediency, has likewise been entrusted to the Swiss Broadcasting Company. Here, also, regional, separate transmissions, in two languages were instituted, right from the beginning. For it is only in this way that it is possible to take into consideration the cultural heterogeneousness, and the regional and local characteristics of the country, which have remained vitally strong, throughout centuries of tradition, and to present them in a lifelike manner.

The programmes broadcast by the Swiss Broadcasting Company to-day extend over about 1,570 hours a month. At the end of January last, the company numbered 1,235,000 subscribers. Television, for its part now has 12,000 subscribers, programmes being transmitted during 110 to 120 hours, each month.

Nouvelle Société Helvétique

(LONDON GROUP)

OPEN MEETING.**Tuesday, July 10th, 1956, at 7.30 p.m.****at the Bush House Restaurant,****Bush House, Aldwych, W.C.2.**

On the occasion of the 40th Anniversary of the formation of the London Group of the N.S.H.

PROF. A. LAETT

the first Secretary of the Group will speak in English on:

" SOUVENIR OF THE EARLY YEARS OF THE LONDON GROUP "

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CITY SWISS CLUB

Will members kindly note that the next

MONTHLY MEETING

will take place on **Tuesday, July 10th, 1956,** at **6.30 p.m.** for **7 p.m.** at the **Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, W.1 (Stanhope Room).**

The Dinner will be followed by a game of Jass, Bridge or Canasta.

Members wishing to be present should send their card to the Manager of the Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, W.1, to reach him not later than Monday, July 9th, 1956.

THE COMMITTEE.