

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK

Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

Band: - (1960)

Heft: 1358

Artikel: Citizen and soldier

Autor: Bieri, E.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-687824>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 05.02.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

30th SWISS WATCH FAIR IN BASLE

In connection with the 44th Swiss Industries Fair, there will also be the 30th Swiss Watch Fair to be held from 23rd April to 3rd May 1960 in Basle.

Having regard to the undoubtedly predominating position occupied by the production of Swiss watches — Switzerland manufactures something like one-half of all the watches produced in the world and supplies 85 out of every 100 watches bought by countries with no production of their own — the Watch Fair in Basle, with its 160 exhibitors manufacturing every type of watch, is the most comprehensive and important exhibition of goods covered by this branch of production. It provides visitors with a unique display of the wide range of the goods produced by the Swiss watchmaking industry in which, greatly to the advantage of buyers from all over the world, the never-tiring spirit of invention combines with the experience of centuries.

In addition to the Watch Fair in the narrow sense of the term, there will also be in Basle a noteworthy display by some 30 exhibitors of public clocks and electric clocks together with tools and accessories for the watchmaking industry.

Another striking exhibit will be the Jewellery Pavilion with a choice display of the dazzling products of the leading Swiss manufacturers which will not fail to draw the attention of experts in the trade and the general public.

* * *

Increasing Demand for High-Class Products of the Swiss Textile and Clothing Industry.

The new live trend on the textile markets has had a very early repercussion on the various sectors of the Swiss textile and clothing industry. Increased demand from foreign countries is just as much responsible as home consumption for this improvement in the general position in an industry which has always been closely influenced by export trade. It is becoming more and more evident that interest is being aroused by the top-line range of high-class goods to which Swiss production has always devoted attention for the simple reason that competition made it imperative to do so.

Probably the best opportunity of obtaining a really comprehensive idea of Swiss production of fashion goods will be afforded by the Swiss Industries Fair, due to take place in 1960 from 23rd April to 3rd May. The special textile group comprises some 150 individual stands and the trade shows "Création", "Madame-Monsieur" and the "Knitwear Centre". The increased demand for high-class textile goods is expected to arouse renewed interest on a wide scale from the textile trade at the display presented by the textile and clothing industry in Basle.

CITIZEN AND SOLDIER

By DR. E. BIERI

For the past 150 years no foreign soldiers set foot on Swiss territory except as refugees. Switzerland has known no aggression despite the fact that it is located in the middle of a continent that meantime suffered three great wars involving some or all bordering states. How can we explain this small country's fortunate escape?

Certainly not by an out-of-the-way strategic position. Quite to the contrary, situated in the heart of Europe, Switzerland holds a key position, controlling the shortest Alpine passes connecting North and South. Furthermore, as the German and French armies clashed on the Rhine it would have offered great advantages for turning the enemy's flank. And surely Switzerland does not owe its preservation from war solely to the formal declaration by the European powers after the Congress of Vienna that they would respect the inviolability of the Swiss Confederation always. The main reason was Switzerland's own effort: a policy of strictest neutrality and military preparedness, in short "armed neutrality."

During World War II Switzerland was in a position to mobilize 800,000 soldiers and auxiliary troops, that is almost one-fifth of the entire population. In no other country did the armed forces reach such a high percentage. To-day 10% of the population have had military training and are assigned to the different units. Every year 300,000 Swiss do their military service, 10% are recruits receiving the initial training of 4 months, the rest attend the repetition courses of 3 weeks. In the course of the forty years during which an able-bodied citizen is liable to military service the time served totals at least one year; training for non-commissioned officers and officers takes considerably longer.

Typical for the Swiss system is the fact that military service is divided into a relatively short basic training and a series of even shorter repetition courses. Characteristic also is the total lack of a standing army. Switzerland has not adopted the mixed system of other countries consisting of a small career army of volunteers and the big mass of "conscripts"; there exists but one army to which all belong. We thus have the unique situation of an army actually training itself: the senior officers are teachers and pupils at the same time because there are no career men to assume the task of training. A corps of 550 permanently employed army instructors only assists the militia staff in training an army of 500,000 men. The results obtained are good, not merely in a relative sense, considering the short training periods but with regard to combat efficiency which of course

BUFFET
H B
ZURICH
R. Candrian-Bon

... in a class
of its own

THE MAIN STATION
AND AIRLINES
TERMINAL RESTAURANT

must be the decisive standard. This is recognized even by foreign military experts who believe an organization of career troops to be the necessary backbone of any army and are apt to look with scepticism upon the "citizen in uniform."

For the Swiss army is more than an assemblage of "citizens in uniform," more than a citizen force of much good will but little power and lacking discipline. The principle of compulsory military service is not a mere slogan but deeply inscribed in the hearts of all young men. They want to do their service and be a soldier heart and soul. Love of their native land is inseparable from the determination to defend this homeland at all cost. Anti-militaristic tendencies have been noticeable with a minute minority only. For a Swiss it is dishonourable to ridicule military defence or to regard it as an annoying burden to be shaken off by all means. He is proud to take his kit including his rifle and ammunition home with him and to keep his shooting ability up to par even outside of the military courses.

How can the military task be performed in keeping with the principle of democracy? In fact, a certain contradiction exists between the individual's right to freedom and the severe, collective organization of the army. By its nature an army must be based on a hierarchy, on discipline and obedience; a free country is democratic, founded on discussion and free will. Theoretically this contrast can be overcome in two ways. Either the military principle is adopted to the state as well, leading to an authoritarian regime or even to dictatorship, or the democratic principle is applied to the army which no doubt would impair if not destroy its efficiency. Switzerland has done neither one nor the other. The two contrasts are there, but probably the happiest result of this policy is the fact that the Swiss militia system in itself represents no contradiction of the two separate groups of people, the "democratic masses" and the "military cast." The latent contrast thus becomes a most intense and fruitful as every man is citizen and soldier in one. As citizen he enjoys the full freedom of the individual and as soldier he is prepared for the ultimate sacrifice. Seen from outside his life moves from the career of a civilian to short termed military service and back again to civil life. Yet, deep inside he will feel that the two aspects of life, much as they may differ in their methods, are each fully justified while constituting a whole — faithfulness to the country. The citizen should uphold the country's defence not during actual service only, he should do so morally as well as financially and keep up his training on a voluntary basis; the soldier should know that the army he serves in is an instrument to safeguard the country's independence and the rights to freedom and no "contrast" to democracy, serving its own purposes.

If Switzerland's policy of armed neutrality is further to be successful a strong army is necessary the spiritual and technical training of which must be continued and perfected. However, the most beautiful proclamations, the best laws and the largest credits cannot replace the most important factor in independence: the citizen's will to be and remain free and as soldiers to form an army able to embody and enforce this will in the face of the world.

THE SWISS FLAG AND ITS ORIGIN.

The Swiss flag is, when compared with those of the states of present day Europe, both one of the most ancient and one of the most modern. The white cross upon a red ground, which floats upon its folds, goes far back in history but it was not until the XIXth century that it became really, by popular consecration, our national flag, and by a decision of the competent authorities, the rallying sign of the Federal Army. This decision, due to the far-seeing initiative and perseverance of General Dufour, marked as one realises to-day, one of the first stages of the political unification of our Federative State.

Thus it was to this peace-making General to whom Switzerland owed the rapid termination of her crisis of growth (or growing pains) that we owe the adoption of the Federal flag by all the Cantons, and the victory over the Sonderbund. It cost him no less than ten years of persevering effort to insure this measure. He presented the proposition in 1830 at Geneva with the first declaration of the Confederation's neutrality, in a series of revolutions that threatened to draw the whole world into a European war.

Then a Colonel of Engineers, Guillaume Henry Dufour insisted upon the organisation of all the defensive forces of the country. Among the questions which should, according to him, be placed before the High Assembly he specified that of the flag.

"The Diet," said he, "must see whether it is not advisable to give the Federal flag to all our battalions; the same cockade to all our soldiers. There is more

ALL IN
Favour
 OF CONTINENTAL
Flavour
 LOVE

MAGGI
SOUPS