

Swiss federal shooting festival

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SWISS FEDERAL SHOOTING FESTIVAL

If one asks an Englishman which he considers to be the Swiss national sport he is likely to answer ski-ing. In fact, there are two national sports, gymnastics and shooting. Every village has its gymnastic society, every village can boast that most of its men are good shots. The fact that Switzerland has not only a militia army in which every fit man serves but also a compulsory annual shooting programme which every man has to go through outside his military service, ensures that the Swiss are well trained in shooting. It is therefore not surprising that 70,000 shots took part in their Federal Contest which was held in Zurich from 24th July to 12th August.

In this century still Switzerland can look back on seven hundred years of existence. Her will to fight has been kept alive through a turbulent history. For their freedom the Swiss fought as successfully with halberd, crossbow and sword as later with firearms and modern war material, though a kind fate prevented them from being drawn into tragic battles. There was a time, too, when the Confederation had to fight again for its full independence, at the beginning of the 16th century when the French had the upper hand in Europe. The Swiss will to defend the country gave birth to many political, cultural, soldierly and sporting bodies. The large organisations of shots, singers and musicians were founded in the period before the Federal Constitution of 1848 was made.

The Swiss "Schützenverein" was founded in 1824 in Aarau. The fermenting liberalism of the day found a welcome outlet in this patriotic organisation. At that time the Federal Shooting Contests took place every year or two, and they were real folkfestivals. They were demonstrations of the will to be politically independent and gave an opportunity of showing glowing patriotism. Gradually, the festivals lost their character of impulsive political and federalistic demonstration and became more and more a sports competition. By opening the Festival with the "Day of the Army" it still has a military-patriotic note.

The oldest Cantonal shooting society was founded in 1826, that of Appenzell-Ausserrhoden. The Federal Association comprises 25 Cantonal ones. There is a Central Committee of fifteen members, but the Association is largely decentralised which gives it a true Swiss federalistic character. Including a few specialist groups like the small-bore shots, the bow and arrow friends and the Veterans, the SSV counts over 4,600 groups with nearly half a million members — the largest sports association in Switzerland. Nevertheless the whole organisation is entirely run by amateurs, i.e. people who devote their leisure time to shooting. The Confederation subsidises the shooting societies by monetary support and free ammunition. The Swiss soldier keeps his rifle and ammunition at home.

The first Federal Shooting Festival took place in Aarau in 1824. Altogether 24 towns have been host to it. The last one took place in Bienne in 1958. This year's was the fifth in Zurich, the previous ones having been held in 1834, 1859, 1872 and 1907. There used to be 17 targets, now they total 400. The number of shots participating in the contest grew from a few hundred to over 60,000. The number of cartridges used at one festival reached the three million mark. A few days sufficed at the beginning — now three weeks are barely enough. The whole country contributes to the gifts of honour whose value is more than Fr.600,000.—.

The 48th Federal Shooting Festival opened at the "Albisgüetli" in Zurich on 24th July with the "Army Day" at which 541 military groups comprising 2,700 officers, n.c.o.'s and men took part. This day is organised by the army and precedes the official opening the next day. Federal Councillor Chaudet attended the army contest and gave an official address.

With over 300 events to be shot and three weeks of festivities it would require a book to describe all the details. It is necessary to confine ourselves to a few points. The actual shooting contest began on 25th July. Saturday, 27th July, was the day of the "Berner", and the Federal Flag, the "Eidgenössische Schützenfahne" was transported from the place of the last Festival, Bienne, and carried in triumph through the gay town of Zurich where it was received by the organisers of this year's "Tir Féderal". The 27th July was also the day of the press.

The last day of the month was the "Official Day". It began in excellent weather with a procession through the town. Five of the Federal Councillors attended, Members of Parliament, representatives of the Cantonal Governments, the Army, the Cantonal Shooting Societies and other important bodies. Groups of women in national costumes, maids of honour and colourful uniforms gave the procession a very picturesque character. The President of the Organising Committee, Mr. Bernhard Truninger (who, incidentally, is a subscriber to "The Swiss Observer"), received the guests on behalf of the organisers. He extended a special welcome to the Swiss shots from abroad. Following the banquet at the "Festhalle" on the "Albisgüetli", the President of the Swiss Confederation Federal Councillor Spuehler delivered the official address in which he referred to the democratic way of life and the responsibility of the individual.

The Swiss National Day was reserved for the Swiss abroad. It was marked by a banquet which was attended by a large number of Swiss living away from home. It was followed by a tour on the Lake of Zurich on board the "Linth". The results achieved by the "Auslandschweizer" were made known during the trip. The Société Suisse de Tir, Paris, was first. (The handsome results achieved by the London Swiss Rifle Association are reproduced on another page.)

The 2nd August was the Day of the Veterans, and then followed special days for the various parts of Switzerland, The "Suisse Romande", North-Western Switzerland, Ticino and Central Switzerland, Eastern Switzerland, each with a splendid procession through the town. The 9th August was reserved for the "Akademiker" (university graduates and undergraduates). The last few days were reserved for the final placing of the "King of Shots". For 300 metres it is August Hollenstein from Bettwiesen (Thurgau), whose results were $275.8 + 187 = 462.8$. For 50 metres it is A. Specker (Zurich) with $341.45 + 184 = 525.45$. He was already "King" of the pistol shots in 1953 in Lausanne.

On Monday, 12th August, at 5 p.m. the Festival ended, a contest which went, if not without a hitch, at least without an accident which is most remarkable. Even the weather favoured Zurich. Several thousand people worked hard to make the whole three weeks a success, and the organisers may be congratulated. The electronic working out of results enabled them to be published much sooner than usual. The final figure of participants is 70,578 men

competing in groups and 1,139 competing as individuals, a total of 71,717 men and women, for women, too, took part and some of them very successfully. The experts also say that the discipline of the shots was exemplary.

When the writer arrived in Zurich the Festival was over. But everywhere she heard about the successful organisation and the congenial atmosphere. The Swiss

have a reputation for arranging and enjoying festivals and no doubt the two great "Federals" in 1963, that of the gymnasts and that of the shots will go down as "bull's eyes" in the annals of festival history.

(Based on reports from A.T.S., "Basler Nachrichten" and an article by Remy Häusermann, in "Zurich", the official periodical of the Zurich Tourist Office.)

TWO-WAY TRAFFIC

The Swiss Abroad meet at St. Moritz

The Assembly of the Swiss Abroad is held in a different place in Switzerland every year, either a town or a holiday resort which commands enough hotels to accommodate between three and five hundred Swiss at the height of the tourist season in August. It stands to reason that more people attend an assembly held in a town which is easily get-at-able than in a rather remote place like St. Moritz where this year's rally was held from 16th to 18th August. Even so some 350 Swiss from all corners of the earth journeyed to the Engadine which presented itself in brilliant sunshine on the first day of the Assembly.

Friday was devoted to the exacting work of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad (ASK), the true "Parliament" of the Swiss living away from home. On it the majority of Colonies have their representatives, from countries as far apart as Peru and Turkey, South Africa and Scandinavia.

The Swiss Colony in Great Britain was represented at the meeting of the Commission at St. Moritz by Mrs. Mariann Meier for the South and Dr. H. B. Knuchel for the North.

The Chairman of the Commission, Dr G. Schürch, opened the first session at 9.30 a.m. at the well-appointed and luxurious Kulm Hotel. The Commission was hard at work all day and there was little time to rest before a press conference was held at 5 p.m. followed in turn by a reception given by the commune of St. Moritz. Its President welcomed the Commission, and generous refreshments of precious local wines and delicious dried meat were presented.

After dinner the first plenary session was opened by the President of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (ASO), Dr. G. Schürch. Amongst the Guests of Honour who attended the gathering were Federal Councillor Bonvin, members of the Cantonal Government and a representative each of the highest Federal Legislative, the National Council and the Council of States. Many Government departments were represented, the Swiss radio and the press, and in addition several members of the Diplomatic and Consular Services were present, amongst them Consul and Mrs. Ribi (formerly of London, at present in Zagreb), the Swiss Consul in London and Mrs. Tosio and the Vice-Consul in Manchester and Mrs. Sollberger. Germany, France and Italy had the largest contingents (between 25 and 40 members each) whereas from Great Britain, apart from the Consular representatives, only few people attended, such as Mr. and Mrs. A. F. Suter and daughter, Mrs. G. O. Davidson, Prof. J. Inebnit, Dr. H. B. Knuchel, Mr. J. A. Reiber and the Editor of the "Swiss Observer" with her son and three daughters.

The President gave a short picture of the Organisation, followed by brief reports on various aspects of the

work done by the Secretariat in Berne, specially by Dr. H. J. Halbheer, the Director. A short statement on the Solidarity Fund was presented by its President Dr. Froelich.

The party then split up into three groups. One discussed questions affecting the Colonies and the activities of the Secretariat, the second concerned itself with the service for young Swiss abroad and the third with Old Age Insurance and Military Service Substitute Tax. The delegates of the Solidarity Fund held their Annual Meeting. The members of the Fund in Great Britain were represented by their delegate Mrs. M. Meier. It was nearly midnight when this group at last disbanded.

On Saturday the theme of this year's assembly "die Selbstbehauptung der Schweiz in der Welt von heute und morgen" (how Switzerland can hold her own in the world of today and tomorrow) was considered.

The first speaker was Corps Commander R. Frick, the Chief of Training of the Swiss Army who spoke on Switzerland's Military defence. Next followed the former Federal Councillor Prof. Max Weber (member of the National Council) who spoke on Switzerland's economic position. The third speaker, the Central President of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique, addressed the assembly on the spiritual defence of Switzerland.

It is rare to have three excellent lecturers of a very high standard in a row. They gave a most convincing and reassuring picture of Switzerland's position.

Next Fürspreh M. Jaccard, Head of the Service for the Swiss Abroad of the Swiss Foreign Office dealt with the proposed Article of competence concerning the Swiss abroad which is at present with the Swiss Political Department.

The head of Information of the Swiss National Exhibition 1964, Mr. J. Beglinger gave the latest news about the "EXPO", and a short message in Italian by one of the inland members of the Commission rounded off the morning session.

There was a special lunch preceded by separate meetings which had been arranged by the Protestant and Catholic clergy in charge of church questions concerning the Swiss abroad.

After lunch it was the turn of the Swiss living abroad. Speakers from several countries gave short talks on the main theme. The representative of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain, Mrs. M. Meier, opened the session. She was followed by speakers from France, Austria, Italy, Sweden and Spain.

Prof. Inebnit made a plea for international civil service. The Chairman promised that the subject would be put up for discussion at next year's Assembly when the theme would be "Switzerland and the Developing Countries".