

# Comment

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The Christopher Colombus of the Alp Horn was the Valaisan composer, Jean Daetwyler, one of Switzerland's best known musicians, particularly in the band music sphere. To penetrate the authentic character of the instrument, Daetwyler began research at the Swiss National Library in Berne and he acquired a complete vision of the Alp Horn's literature and learned how it achieved its popularity in Switzerland. Movement by movement the first Concerto for Alp Horn and Orchestra was finally created in Lucerne by this composer. Early in 1972, under the baton of Jean Daetwyler, the concerto was played in Paris with the collaboration of the Lamoureux Concert Orchestra for the inauguration of the Swiss National Tourist Office. Again at Lucerne, this work received an enthusiastic reception when soloist, conductor and orchestra were recalled twelve times for applause!

The adventure had only begun. Another musician established in Lausanne, Etienne Isoz, has also written a concerto for the Alp Horn which has been recorded with the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra. Jean Daetwyler has also pursued his interest with more compositions for the Alp Horn, with flute and organ and one with a brass quartet. Enthusiasm grows and it is known that in several places other musicians have been tempted by the discovery of this instrument. For Jozsef Molnar the experience continues in the same way for authentic musical discovery and several concerts are already in view, sustaining

everywhere the same interest and enjoyment.

What do traditional musicians think of the Alp Horn? After some understandable irritation they are soon won over by the playing of M. Molnar.

This traditional, historical instrument which figures in the spinal imagery of Switzerland now has a second rôle. Musicians to whom this adventure appeals can obtain recordings made by M. Molnar; there are also radio programmes in which the instrument is featured.

*CODA: The Swiss National Band Journal is probably the only tri-lingual band publication of its kind, being printed in German, French and Italian; besides the German title already quoted it is called Revue des Musiques Suisses and Rivista Bandistica Svizzera.*

## Comment

### COMPULSORY SHOOTING RECONSIDERED

One of the most traditional scenes of Swiss life is to see men in Sunday clothes, their ordnance rifles slung on their shoulders, making for the communal firing range in order to carry out their compulsory shooting tests. These exercises have to be completed every year before a date in August. A *Livret de Tir* duly stamped by the military authority or an official of the firing association

certifies that the tests have been passed. The tests are really within reach of the most inefficient marksman, but can always be failed. For this reason, it is wise to give oneself a weekend or two to spare just in case of a mishap. Failure to complete the tests before the August deadline will entail a compulsory weekend, in uniform in some faraway barracks where the "culprits" will be made to undergo the trials under the watchful eye of a military instructor. This unfortunate outcome occasionally befalls on absent-minded people for whom seven months' notice is not sufficient, or for those who are too busy.

Despite these disadvantages to the quality of life, the burst of rifle fire on Saturday mornings is a familiar sound. The duty of carrying out a set programme has also helped to maintain marksmanship to be among the most popular sports of the Swiss and contributed to keep Switzerland among the leading nations in that field.

As in the case of all traditions, calls for change have been raised and this has led to a reassessment of the problem by an official commission chaired by a national councillor from Lucerne, Mr. H. R. Meyer. There are three arguments against traditional and compulsory weekend shooting exercises.

The first touches on the environment. It cannot be denied that the succession of resounding bangs shaking the windows of houses in the neighbourhood of firing ranges are an environmental nuisance. Most Communes

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of any importance have a firing range. Although these installations are located away from densely populated areas, some of the largest ones, particularly in Geneva and Zurich, are close to blocks of flats. Their tenants, who probably spend their working week in the din of a factory or the bustle of an office, can hardly appreciate to hear the silence which they deserve at weekends being punctuated by bolts of gunfire. One of the most illustrious complainants over this nuisance was Charlie Chaplin, whose residence at Corsier, above Vevey, is close to a communal firing range. The retired filmstar's dealings with the Corsier municipality made news for many years in the local press.

The second argument is expediency. Life is short, people are more busy and the rhythm of life has been stepped up. As a result, many consider the two hours that should, under normal circumstances, be claimed off them every year for these compulsory tests are an excessive demand. They believe that the tests can be carried out during the three

weeks of yearly repetition courses. This widely-supported argument is rejected, however, by the Military Department, which claims that men who have previously carried out their tests score much better at exercises held during repetition courses than those who had not touched their rifles during the year. The inference is that compulsory shooting tests contribute to making Swiss men eligible for duty more able to meet sudden war emergencies. The obligatory shooting programme and repetition courses are the two arms used by our militia system to produce fit soldiers.

The third argument is more technical. Some circles consider that the present organisation of the military test programme, which is handled by non official rifle associations, is not rational. The procedure apparently entails considerable expenditure in time and effort among these rifle association volunteers. Critics would like the burden to rest on the Confederation, but the Military Department claims that the present system works very well and sees

no justification in altering it.

Many people feel that shooting exercises should be replaced by physical aptitude tests. There is some sense in this because the restful and easy conditions under which the obligatory tests are carried out are far removed from the realities of war. It is doubtful that, when it will come to the crunch, soldiers who have won their marksmanship stripes will have a mat to lie on, a monitor beside them with field glasses to record kills, a pen-knife to correct the sights, and an "A" or "B" target sitting quietly at 300 metres. Physical fitness and endurance are surely the most important requisites for the successful warrior. But the implications of claiming of citizens' certain minimum standards of fitness and athletic ability would be equivalent to turning Switzerland into a Spartan Republic.

However, the last word on these problems have not been said and the conclusions of the special commission might well lead to a change in a well-established practice. P.M.B.

## SWISS EVENTS

### FEDERAL OBSERVERS WILL SUPERVISE THE JURA PLEBISCITE

Federal observers will supervise the orderly organisation of the plebiscite which will take place in the Jura on 23rd June and which will enable the French-speaking people of the Jura to say whether or not they wish to form a 23rd Swiss canton separate from Canton Berne.

The Federal Council announced this measure in accordance with the federal guarantees voted by Parliament in October, 1970, with the aim of making sure that the constitutional amendment accepted by the whole of Canton Berne on 1st March, 1970, was properly carried out. This amendment to the cantonal constitution left the way open for the creation, through the exercise of self-determination, of a separate Jurassian canton.

The federal measures will enable federal observers to supervise polling stations before and during the plebiscite. They will also control the way ballot boxes are sealed and transferred, and they will check the count.

The measures also stipulate that voting procedures are to be the same as those implemented during ordinary cantonal and federal votes. Voting by proxy is forbidden and men performing their military duties will be given leave to go and vote. Ballot slips will be devoid of

all official recommendation and will contain the simple question: "Do you want to form a new canton?"

Observers have generally welcomed these measures because any irregularity in such a crucial vote, the first of its kind to be held in the Jura, would give rise to a situation even more confused and potentially dangerous as the one prevailing now in certain parts of this region.

### NEW CALL FOR AN INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE

A call for an extended international "civil service" open to all men of military age not wishing to carry out traditional national service has been launched by the "Swiss association for an international civil service", a movement created fifty years ago by the French-Swiss intellectual *Pierre Cérésol*. This call was made as part of a pacifist campaign at the end of April. Two days earlier, an organisation called "Movement for Peace" had called for a gradual phasing out of the army, an abandonment of outdated concepts of defence as expressed in the Government's latest report on national security.

Ways of setting up an international civil service for the benefit of *genuine* conscientious objectors are currently examined by the Government following federal acceptance of the so-called Muenchenstein Initiative. The objectives of the Basle teachers who sponsored this initiative was to allow young men with moral convictions and a sincere unwillingness in handling weapons of death to spend their time more usefully than by breaking stones in a military labour camp.

But this latest call is far more demanding and bears on nothing less than a complete and open choice between

military training and a whole variety of non-military services at home and abroad. It has been considered as a pious and unrealistic day-dream by most commentators because the whole principle of obligatory national service, enshrined in the Constitution as a fundamental duty of all able Swiss, is put into question.

### AN ARMY OMBUDSMAN MAY BE INTRODUCED

The ombudsman whose job is to bring the grievances of German soldiers to the attention of the higher authorities of West Germany and to report yearly to Parliament on the life of Bundeswehr had been invited to give details on his functions to the Military Commission of the National Council, which is actually studying proposals to introduce such an ombudsman in Switzerland.

The go-between of the ordinary West German private and the Bundestag is Mr. Fritz Rudolf Schultze. By being constantly informed of the difficulties and complaints of soldiers and officers alike, he is able to give Parliament, or the Ministry of Defence, a detailed picture of what is happening in the armed forces and thus promote new regulations. This system not only guarantees the soldier's rights, but also strengthens political control over the military. Any soldier who has been aggrieved by a violation of his rights, or who has particular problems, can call on the services of the ombudsman. Although the latter will not be able to offer immediate redress, he will make sure that these individual cases are examined by the divisional commands, the ministry of defence, or even Parliament.

This system has been applied in Germany since the re-armament of that