

# Home news

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\* \* \*  
Dr. Richard Feller, Professor of History at the University of Berne, has been elected by the senate as rector.

\* \* \*  
Professor R. Burri, head of the bacteriological office at Liebefeld—Berne has celebrated his 70th birthday anniversary. Dr. Burri holds the degrees of *doctor honoris causa* of the Universities of Berne and Syracuse. (U.S.A.)

\* \* \*  
M. Fritz Ingold, a former teacher of gymnastics in Burgdorf has died at the age of 70. The deceased was an honorary member of the Federal and Cantonal Association of Gymnasts.

#### BASLE.

The Senate of the University of Lüttich has conferred the degree of *doctor honoris causa* on Dr. Robert Bing, Professor of the University of Basle.

#### BASLE-COUNTRY.

Dr. Straumann, a member of the National Council from 1911-1919 has celebrated his 75th birthday. During the late war, Dr. Straumann was surgeon-in-chief of the "Etappen & Territorial Dienst."

#### GRISONS.

At Pontresina died at the age of 76, Mme. Anna Kessler, the well-known "Bergwirtin" of the Morteratsch glacier.

#### VAUD.

The Federal Court of Justice in Lausanne has appointed Dr. Ulisse Rezzonico from Lugano, as Secretary of the Federal Supreme Court, in succession to Dr. Pometta, who has recently been appointed to a Judgeship at the Federal Court. Dr. Rezzonico was hitherto legal adviser to the General Management of the Swiss Federal Railways.

### A CITADEL OF NEUTRALITY.

#### The Swiss Citizen Army.

(The Times.)

(Continued.)

#### Rhine Crossings.

The wider manoeuvre has a larger promise, but the more the problem is studied the more the prospects would seem to depend on the surprise of an unprepared opponent — on crossing not only the Rhine but the hill-belt before any opposition was offered. Apart from the possibility of seizing the bridges, there are several points along the Rhine where a surprise crossing is feasible. Between Rheinfelden and Sackingen the bend of the river forms a projecting salient for a pincer-like attack; to the east there are smaller salients opposite Waldshut and Kadelburg; and some miles west of Waldshut there are several places where the river becomes very narrow. It would be unwise to ignore the possibility of a night crossing at such places, made with no appreciable warning. And, in these circumstances, a mobile force might reach the central plateau beyond Olten within a couple of hours after leaving the Rhine.

Hitherto such a possibility has existed, so long as the stroke was attempted when the Swiss Army was unmobilized. For during the greater part of the year no trained troops have been available to offer resistance in the frontier zone. From November to January there were no men with the Colours, and from then until August only schools of recruits. The Frontier guards, a force of only some 1,800 men, can hardly be counted when its tiny size is measured against the length of the Swiss frontiers: it represents a scale of rather less than one man for each kilometre. Until now the Swiss have really trusted for their security against strategic surprise to rapidity of mobilization, which could be completed in two days. This is helped by the far-reaching decentralization of equipment arrangements. And it is being reduced for the troops near the frontier to a matter of hours from the moment the order comes from Berne. But it is questionable whether even this is quick enough, especially as it might suffer interference from the air, unless there is some force to hold the hill-belt and delay the invaders.

At the present time the Swiss Army is in process of large reorganization and re-equipment, following the new National Defence Act of 1936. In place of the existing six divisions of the cumbersome pre-War type (with 18 battalions apiece) there will be nine divisions of a handier kind and three independent mountain brigades, more suitably distributed. One division covers the eastern frontier near Lake Constance, three cover the Rhine frontier, two cover the Jura frontier. Besides these "cover" divisions, two form a central reserve around Berne and Lucerne respec-

\* \* \*  
Dr. Louis C. Vauthier in Leysin, founder of the University sanatorium has celebrated his 50th birthday anniversary. During the last 15 years, Dr. Vauthier has rendered great services to this institution.

#### GENEVA.

The Zoological Gardens in Geneva have opened a bear pit.

#### PERSONAL.

We express our deep sympathy to Mr. John Jenny Managing-Director of the Plaza Hotel and "Gruyere Cheese" Restaurant in St. Martin's Street, on the death of his mother, which occurred in Baar (Zug) at the age of 70.

### HELVETIA CLUB

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tively, ready to march in any direction. The ninth provides the garrison for the St. Gotthard fortifications, facing south, and has an extra mountain brigade as an outpost down in the Ticino. Of the three independent mountain brigades one is in the Grisons, one in Valais covering the Simplon, and one garrisoning the St. Maurice fortifications which block the Rhone valley above the Lake of Geneva.

#### Mixed Policy.

The divisional artillery has been reduced and the corps artillery increased so that artillery support can be given more flexibly according to the needs of the moment. Each division will also have a motorized company of nine 47mm. infantry guns for anti-tank purposes; and a divisional reconnaissance group, to consist of a squadron of dragoons, a company of cyclists, and a detachment of four light tanks; a mixture which does not impress one as a very workable combination.

A similar mixed policy is being followed in converting the three cavalry brigades into light brigades, for rapid reinforcement of the frontier troops. Each of these will comprise two light regiments (each of three cavalry squadrons and a cyclist battalion) and three motorized companies (one of light machine-guns, one of 47mm. infantry guns, and one of sappers). A section of armoured cars may be added.

The air arm is being increased to provide a first-line strength of nearly 300 machines of new types, built in Swiss factories, while an even larger proportion of the defence loan is being devoted to ground defence. Apart from the multiplication of anti-aircraft artillery, coupled with a network of observation and listening posts, the passive defence of the civilian population has been elaborately organized and some 26,000 specialists are in training for this function.

#### At Short Notice.

The most significant feature of the new organization is perhaps the formation of special frontier defence brigades, ready to man at short notice the chain of small fortified works which are being built behind the Rhine frontier throughout its whole length, and at the passes through the Jura in the north-west and the Alps in the south. A close veil of secrecy has been drawn over their construction, and many of the by-roads in the frontier districts are now closed to tourists. Hitherto there have been only a few scattered works on the Austrian border, near Sargans, in the Ticino, and on the Simplon, apart from the two important fortress systems on the Gotthard and at St. Maurice, which are permanently occupied by skeleton garrisons; they were developed, after the establishment of the Triple Alliance in the eighties, to meet the danger of a junction between the Italian and German armies in Swiss territory.

The new frontier defence brigades will be equipped with a high proportion of anti-tank guns and light machine-guns, as well as with

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their own artillery. They will be composed of trained men (not only of the first line) whose homes are on the spot, so that they can take up their positions within an hour or two of being warned. Even this measure might not provide security against a stroke that came as a complete surprise, especially if such a stroke was preceded by an infiltration of picked men disguised as ordinary civilians and assigned the role of seizing some of the key points of the defensive line. As a further safeguard it is now proposed to raise a special frontier force of some 6,000 men, voluntarily enlisted, to provide permanent garrisons for the line of defence.

#### The High Level.

The Swiss are thus being brought to recognize, reluctantly, the advisability of some departure from the strictly militia form of their forces. The increases in the length of service which have already been adopted are another symptom of change.

And even these do not go far enough to satisfy many concerned with the defence problem. The cause of doubt lies in the militia system itself, rather than in any inefficiency of application.

Apart from the disadvantage of not having a force permanently available, it yields a remarkably good result in the military preparation of the troops. Helped by their long-standing military tradition, the high level of education among the people, and the way that a man's military duties are adjusted to his civil experience wherever possible, the Swiss pick up the elements of soldiery more quickly than could be expected in other countries. Among the officers, too, tactical sense and administrative capacity are better developed than in many professional armies. It is rather in the more specialized military technique, and in the smooth functioning which comes from habit, that the handicaps of the Swiss system are apt to be felt. They are inevitably becoming more marked under modern conditions, where the means and methods of warfare are becoming more complex.

Whether they are a dangerous handicap is doubtful. Because of the essentially defensive role of the Swiss forces and the way the territory lends itself to defence, what the Army lacks in technical efficiency may be largely compensated by the inherent superiority of defence over attack in present-day warfare. And the country's prospect for the defence of neutrality might be still further improved if the training, organization, and action of the forces were more fully adjusted to, and more definitely concentrated on, the defensive role.

But a survey of the problem of Switzerland in the light of the current trend of warfare does not encourage the idea that her system is suitable for export to a country such as ours, where its natural assets would be lacking and its defects more pronounced, owing to the greater range and variety of the factors in Britain's problem of Imperial defence.

The End.