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Swiss Union for Civil Protection

The Swiss Union for Civil Protection has been constituted in 1954 on proposal of Federal authorities with the aim of creating a positive attitude of the governments and the public toward civil protection in general as well as in order to establish an independent body for the systematical and complete information of the Swiss about the possibilities and the importance of civil protection in favour of the population in case of war and disaster. Mr. Edward von Steiger, former Federal Minister of Justice and Police, was the first President of the Union for Civil Protection. Under his experienced chairmanship the Union was rapidly growing in number and influence, and was able to give full support for the preparation of constitutional articles and laws for civil protection. The actual President, Mr. Gion Darms, who recently resigned as a member of the Federal Parliament, has served the cause of Civil Protection since a very long time. He was presiding the Union group of the canton of Grison, before he accepted his actual function.

The Swiss Union for Civil Protection always remembers the public that protection, rescue and assistance of the population in case of war and disaster and the preservation of cultural objects is a duty we must be willing to accept for ourselves, for others and for our whole community.

The Union studies carefully all the problems and possible issues connected with civil protection, informs periodically the public about the development and implementation of protective measures on all levels, governmental and individual, as well as the usefulness of these measures for both, normal times and crisis times. Close and excellent relationship with civil and military authorities responsible for civil protection and with a lot of private associations and institutions has constantly been developed in order to concentrate all efforts for the most economical and effective ways and means of information. We are pleased with the extent to which i.e. the Swiss Society for preservation of cultural objects in times of danger, the Swiss Professional Association for Civil Protection of Towns and Important Agglomerations, the Swiss Red-Cross, the Union

of Samaritains, the Voluntary Military Associations, the Swiss Service of Information, the Union of Rescue-Workers and the Swiss Association of Fire-fighting Volunteers, have participated in a constant survey of requirements and activities on behalf of Civil Protection in the whole country. The Swiss Women Associations are always achieving best results in order to promote Civil Protection and take a very active part in building up local and household defense organisations. But their participation has still not yet allowed to recruit enough women on a voluntary basis for all the specified jobs in Civil Protection to be assigned to them. Perhaps it has not been fully recognized everywhere that Civil Protection is an element of national and personal security.

The mutual exchange of information, ideas, views and concepts with similar foreign organizations and institutions has proved to be more and more helpful in gaining better understanding, but it is obvious, that foreign experiences and thinking must be adapted to local conditions. The Union knows that there are always better ways to increase the ability to transmit ideas and to reduce misunderstanding.

The foremost concern of the Union is to get the full attention of the public that apart from moral and humanitarian considerations, Civil Protection is an integral part of the total defense capability, without forgetting the combined respond to natural disasters too. In this context, newspapers, radio-stations, the television, movie-companies and cinemas, exhibitions, window-displays, conferences and demonstrations are strongly in favour of Civil-Protection. Public information films have been prepared and new motion pictures will be released soon.

The official review of the Union, the "Zivilschutz", "Protection civile", "Protezione civile", "Proteccziun civila" is now fifteen years old and has 24 000 subscribers, is issued once monthly, and informs the public about Civil Protection preparedness and Total Defense progress reports. National and international activities are periodically discussed and identified.

The assembly of delegates is the highest authority of the Union, and

has to approve the activity reports presented by the central committee and the different sub-committees, to examine and to accept the budgets and programs for the future. There are sixteen regional branches in eighteen cantons, representing 18 000 individual and collective members, representatives of communes, enterprises, associations and institutions. The Union has constituted working groups and sub-committees for the different "disciplines", like:

- laws (interpretation, application, proposals for amendments, alterations)
- finance
- propaganda
- films
- press, editorship
- youth in Civil Protection
- technical.

In the central secretary's office (Mittelstrasse 32, Schwarztorstrasse 56, Berne), the Union has concentrated a special film-loan service for foreign and Swiss motion-pictures, a distribution-center for all available information materials, publications and displays to newspapers and individuals. A special agreement with the Swiss Federal Office of Civil Protection has recently been signed for the different fields of activity and distribution of material to the public.

Together with the Federal Office, the Union periodically organizes seminars for speakers and lecturers, who are explaining the role of Civil Protection to their respective groups of the population.

The Union for Civil Protection is a politically neutral body and emphasizes on all levels that Civil Protection is a necessity of our time and is in conformity with our ethics. The Union repeats everywhere that Civil Protection must become a strong integral part of our Swiss state of readiness, as a result of the demands of modern warfare and the dangers of our technical age. The Union knows that there is no absolute possibility of protection against modern arms, and informs the public about this, but at the same time remembers everybody that proper preparations will greatly improve the chances of survivability in and of our community.

Zivilschutz

ist Selbstschutz