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# HELVETIA

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## FORTIFICATIONS IN SWISS ALPS GUARD MOUNTAIN REPUBLIC.

The amazing network of fortifications which helped Switzerland escape invasion by Hitler are discussed by Dean Jennings in the April 24th issue of The Saturday Evening Post. He emphasized that these secret forts are being strengthened constantly, and that Switzerland today is as determined and ready to fight aggression as she was during World War II.

Jennings writes - "Switzerland in 1948 is a giant anthill to an extent that would surprise any tourist who came here before the war. There are miles and miles of corridors, tunnels, caverns and whole towns under the earth and inside the rocks - a total of 3,000 separate installations squeezed into the little country's 15,944 square miles. The smallest can generally be found along the western border, one line of which, for example, might run through Geneva, Le Locle, Delemont and Basel. These positions consist of concrete dragon's teeth, dozens of squat blockhouses disguised as private homes, and miles of barbed wire, and each single unit is usually occupied by ten men. This network of minor defenses, located on rolling land in the long open valley, was never intended to do more than slow down an enemy advance for a day, perhaps, or a week.

But the pride of the army lies in the elliptical area known as Le Réduit, or Redoubt, and it was here, in the white heart of Switzerland, that a seemingly hopeless dream was hammered and drilled into reality. The chain of great forts begins at St. Maurice, an ancient town first fortified by the Romans, at the mouth of the deep Rhone gorge, and extends north-eastward across the frosty heights through Brig, Gletsch, Andermatt and Chur to Sargans, on the Liechtenstein border. Along this route, as the map shows, there are pockets reaching toward Italy, and these, too, are studded with forts. One of the army's main supply depots and arsenals is located at Thun, long a popular tourist town, and during the war, the gateway to the Redoubt was at nearby Interlaken, the picturesque city at the foot of the soaring Jungfrau. Interlaken is also a repository for fortress ammunition and millions of gallons of high-octane gasoline and oil. Sharp-eyed travellers coming from Berne can spot the arsenals just to the right of the railroad tracks by their telltale splashed doors flush with the mountainside. Gasoline is stored in gargantuan underground tanks on the edge of the old town where many an American tourist has idled away a Summer's day under the shade of the nut trees.

Each fort is a completely independent unit and will hold from 500 to 1,500 men. Diesel engines furnish electric current, subterranean streams are tapped for water, and all rooms are air-conditioned and gasproof. Like any other city, each fort has its own doctors, hospital, sleeping quarters, recreation room, showers, radio station, news room and storage chambers. Many can be reached by camouflaged, narrow-gauge rail tracks; others are entered through hidden doors and mole-like tunnels which are frequently changed, and most are equipped with electric elevators which spear through rock for hundreds of feet."