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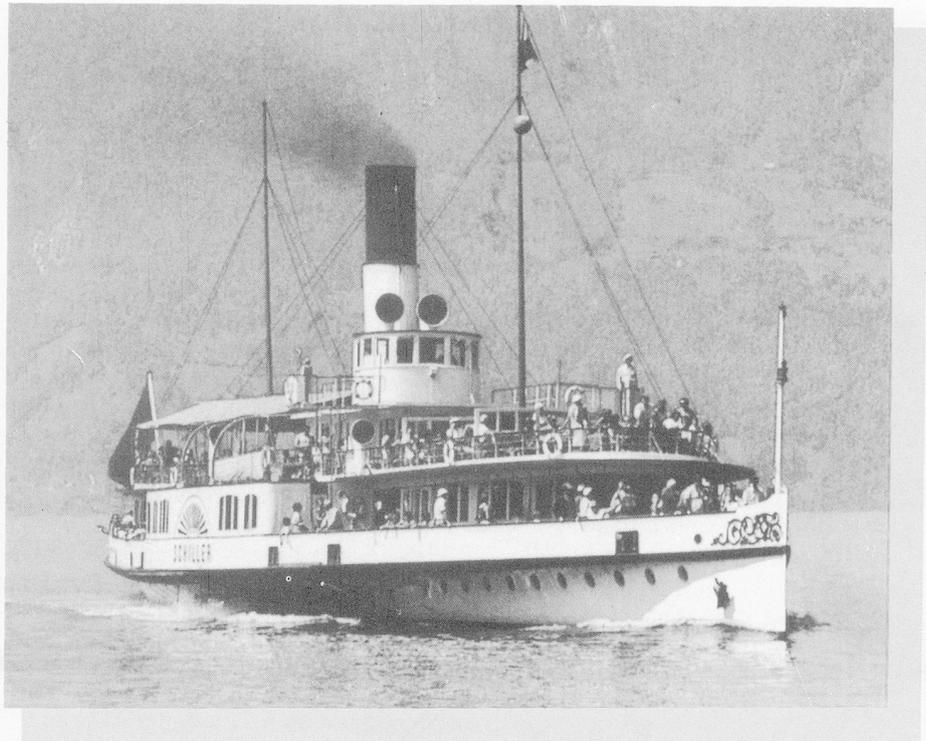
TRANSPORT OF DELIGHT

Visitors to Switzerland - and certainly the Swiss themselves - flock in their thousands to the country's many lakes in Spring, Summer and Autumn. The lake fleet which awaits them is used widely by tourists, but also for conferences and receptions, as well as by commuters for whom services connecting directly with rail, road and air networks are also provided throughout the Winter. The boats and ferries, controlled by the Federal Transport Ministry, run to tight schedules and are noted both for reliability and punctuality.

Such is the efficiency of the system that a tourist can check in his baggage at the boat station in, say Weggis, board a ship, change to the train for Zurich Airport, then continue by air to meet up finally with the baggage at, say Auckland. On being checked in at the boat station, the baggage is sealed inside a strong polythene bag for security reasons and to protect it from the elements - another important aspect of the thoroughness of the system.

A report on shipping on 13 major lakes, including "international" lakes like those of Constance, Geneva and Lugano as well as the Swiss stretch of the River Rhine, indicates that there is a total of 1,217 kilometres of lake and waterway routes being served by 164 vessels and 14 paddle-steamers with seats for 54,539 passengers. To give an idea of the total number of passengers carried in 1993, ships on the Lakes of Geneva and Lucerne alone respectively accounted for around 1.1 and 1.7 million second-class passengers with an additional 50% in first class.

Increased business is being sought with the introduction of large ultra-modern vessels, designed especially to cater for conferences. One such ship, the "MS Lausanne" is already operating on Lake Geneva. Launched in 1991 at a cost of SFR 13.5 million, it has a pas-



DS Schiller, which plies the Lake of Lucerne, was built in 1906 in the UK.

senger capacity of 1,500 with covered seating for about 700. A second similar, but smaller, vessel costing SFR 9 million, is scheduled for service on the lake of Thun, in time for the tourist season of 1995. Yet to be given a name, it is currently referred to as the "MS 2000". It will carry 1,000 passengers and have a covered seating capacity of about 500.

These are the "Queens of the Lakes, with plush interiors of mahogany and burnished brass fittings and wall-to-wall carpeting. But tourists of a more nostalgic disposition for yesteryear need not despair. There still remains many vintage paddle-steamers, renovated to modern standards of engineering and safety, while preserving the elegance and grace so evocative of a bygone age.

SWISS AIR FORCE TRAINS IN THE UK

In the past, the Swiss air force had its training ground in Sardinia (Italy). This year, it was decided to transfer the training to the Royal Air Force base at Waddington in the UK.

For security reasons, faster than sound training flights below 10,000 metres cannot be performed in Switzerland according to the Military Department. The country is too small and such flights could also endanger the very congested civilian air corridors that criss-cross Switzerland. So faster than sound flights must be performed in more isolated areas, preferably over water where the sonic boom is less of a nuisance than over inhabited areas.

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NOTE TO SECRETARIES

Next issue of the Helvetia magazine: FEBRUARY 1995. All contributions must be in by 15 January. Many thanks for your kind cooperation.

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