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pened on a large scale can now be observed in a smaller way. During the last decades our Alpine Glaciers have shrunk considerably. At their end we very often find small lakes behind morainic dams.

Since the Ice-age the water has been busy altering the characteristic shapes created by the glaciers. The V-shape of valleys is being restored. Moraines are being washed away and lakes filled in with sand and gravel. In steep sections of the valleys, the water is cutting gorges leaving the typical terraces of our Alpine valleys on either side of the gorges.

But the water has a long way to go before it has reached its aim. Until then, say during the next 100,000 years, we have ample time to enjoy the immense beauty of mountain valleys which are so varied and rich in form just because the action of water has been superimposed upon the great simple shapes created by the glaciers."

Great applause greeted the lecturer on the conclusion of the show, and the President, on behalf of the company thanked Mr. Müller very warmly on his fine and interesting performance. A very sumptuous afternoon tea was then provided, much to everyone's delight and later on the younger generation indulged in singing and dancing, whilst the older one's enjoyed a game of "Yass".

All too soon this pleasant afternoon came to a close, and after a few words by the President, everyone left the "Midland" with the feeling of having spent a few happy hours amongst good friends.

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### NOUVELLE SOCIETE HELVETIQUE, A Fine Film Show.

There was a "full house" on Friday, May 18th, at the Vienna Café, when a remarkable film dealing with military ski patrols was shown.

Dr. V. Umbrecht, Commercial Attaché, at the Swiss Legation, gave a very lucid and competent introduction to the film, which had as its title "Ski Patrols in Action".

We Swiss have always been proud of our army, although it has for over two centuries had no opportunity to prove its fighting worth, we feel sure, that should it be called upon to defend our frontiers it would give a good account of itself.

The deeds of heroism shown by our soldiers at Morgarten, Sempach and St. Jakob an der Birs, would inspire our present army with the same spirit to defend every inch of our native soil. There would be no quarter given.

Switzerland possesses to-day the largest army in Europe, and foreign military experts agree, that with regard to equipment and efficiency in shooting, it is second to none.

Our country has made, and is making tremendous sacrifices in order to have a first class fighting force at its disposal should it be needed, and the film shown, portrayed very vividly what has been achieved in winter training of our soldiers for the last 45 years.

\* \* \* \* In his introduction, Dr. Umbrecht said :

"As will easily be understood, the Swiss army needs a great number of winter trained soldiers. This ski training has been rendered particularly necessary since the days when our authorities arrived at the conclusion, that in case of war, Switzerland would have to fight in the last resort in the so-called "réduit national"; this means the central part of Switzerland, which is, of course, completely surrounded by mountains.

The first time the Swiss army organised a voluntary ski course for soldiers was in 1905, some 45 years ago, when the frontier guards were invited to take such a course of training. The frontier guards are to this day the backbone of our ski-patrols, and they are really the troops who have spread among our soldiers the interest in ski patrols. In 1908 a team of these frontier guards participated for the first time in an international military competition in Chamonix, and won a fine victory. Since 1909, there have been regular competitions and championships for ski patrols in our country, partly with foreign participation. These competitions helped considerably to attract the attention of our younger people, and to increase their interest in ski patrols.

During the first world war winter training in the Swiss army was staged on a large scale, and in 1916 the army had about 180 fully trained ski patrols. This number was not very impressive, but it was quite a big one compared with those of other countries.

After the 1914-18 war, stagnation set in, so much so that when there was an international military competition in 1923, again in Chamonix, Swit-

zerland was unable to muster a team. This, of course, was not very encouraging, and the reaction came at once in the sense that the army authorities immediately organised new camps for voluntary training. The results were very soon visible, and at the Olympic games of 1924 the Swiss military patrol gained first place.

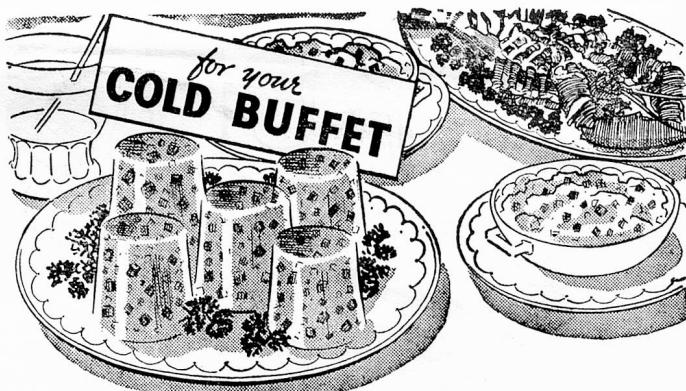
Since then a steady upward development has taken place. The training was extended, but always on a voluntary basis. It was so until 1939, at which moment the first part of our film begins. This first part shows different ski patrol competitions in Switzerland between 1938 and 1948. During the second world war, 1939-45, the instruction of our troops in winter conditions was resumed on as broad a basis as possible.

The best example was, of course, set by the Finnish ski patrols, which in the winter of 1939-40 so cleverly demonstrated the value of winter troops on ski in fighting against the Russians. These successes opened the eyes of other nations. They also helped to show once more to the Swiss that an intensified winter training was indispensable. They led to the introduction in our army of so-called central courses: courses where three to five officers from every division and brigade were assembled and instructed in winter alpinism. These officers were sent back to their units in order to organise similar courses. The success was very great. In the winter of 1939-40 alone, we had about 50,000 Swiss soldiers being trained as "patrouilleurs". In 1942, a special Swiss army championship was created, of which some pictures will appear in the first part of the film. This championship was divided into two parts: for heavy and for light categories. The heavy category is for those patrols which come from mountain districts, where they have much more opportunities for training, and the light category for troops from the lowland. At the 1942 championship in Davos, we had a participation of over 400 patrols. In 1950 the participation rose to over 2,000 patrols, which made it necessary to have heats, and only the heat winners were allowed to take part in the championship proper. In the international field Swiss military patrols have done very well. They have gained many brilliant victories, so in 1944 against France, in 1945 and 1946 again against

France, in 1947 at the international race in Chamonix, in 1948 at the Olympic Games in St. Moritz, in 1949 in Oslo against all the Northern countries, and in 1950 in Andermatt against 14 international patrols.

We can safely state that at present no army in Europe, excluding Russia, has the same number of trained ski-patrols as Switzerland. There are more than 850 immediately available patrols, and more than 2,000 patrols that could be recalled at short notice. The number of soldiers being able to ski and play their parts as patrol members is very high indeed, over 100,000. The training of all these patrols is voluntary. No soldier is compelled to take part in it. It is moreover unpaid; the soldier has also to provide his own ski equipment, sticks, boots, wax, etc. He does not receive an indemnity for using his own equipment. He is, however, insured against injury suffered in the course of such voluntary training.

The work of a ski patrol is based on comradeship and not on mere technique. Of course, technique goes with it, and the team members have to be in a very fit and tough physical condition. The course of patrol competitions normally covers more than 30km. (= 20 miles), with ascents of over 1,200m. As you will see in the film, the members of each team, except the leader, are carrying a pack, which



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normally weighs 22lb. (including the rifle). It is an unwritten rule that the leader of the patrol takes over one by one the packs of the members of his team.

We have since 1942 a military ski commission in charge of the training of military patrols. The chairman of this commission is Colonel Erb, on whose initiative our film has been made. He has also arranged that the film be sent over for to-day's showing, which I acknowledge with grateful thanks.

Before showing the film I should like to make one or two final remarks. The first is that, being a Swiss film dealing with competitions in our country, it mostly shows Swiss patrols and Swiss officers. You will also see members of the Swiss Government congratulating the victorious Swiss patrols. It is a habit in our country to give handshakes very freely if a Swiss team wins a race. My second remark is about a technical point which will arise in the film. There is in every patrol competition a shooting range where the members of the patrols, except the leader, have to shoot at a field target. Every member of a patrol has 3 cartridges. If the targets are hit with the first shot by each man there is a time bonus for the patrol of 9 minutes, which will be deducted from the actual racing time. For every missed shot there is a deduction of 1 minute, so that a patrol which uses one cartridge more than the three gets a time bonus of 8 minutes; if two cartridges more are used, the bonus is 7 minutes, and so on. It happens very often that a team which has the best

racing time loses the competition because of bad shooting."

\* \* \*

The film was then thrown on the screen and was accompanied by a running commentary by Dr. Umbrecht.

Beautiful winter mountain scenery in the Bernese Oberland, the Grisons and the Valais, as well as in the French and Norwegian alps were shown and greatly admired.

We followed the work of the many national and international ski patrols at various competitions, sometimes under most trying conditions; we saw, how at intervals these patrols stopped on their long trail to effect target shooting. We admired the excellent team work especially of the Swiss, Finnish and Swedish patrols. It was very interesting to witness the prize giving to the various victorious teams by high ranking Swiss army officers, among them General Guisan.

Federal Councillor Dr. Kobelt, head of the Federal Military Department, and late Federal Councillors Dr. Celio and R. Minger also appeared amongst those who shook hands with the successful competitors. Prominent in the pictures was Colonel Erb to whose incessant efforts it is largely due that Switzerland possesses one of the finest ski patrol forces. He, too, was the instigator of the fine film, which we had the pleasure to witness.

Foreign countries have taken a great interest in this specialised branch of our army, and these periodical competitions, as could be seen from the film, are always attended by a large number of accredited military attachés.

At the conclusion of the film show, Dr. H. W. Egli, President of the N.S.H. expressed, on behalf of the audience, heartiest thanks to Dr. V. Umbrecht for his interesting *exposé*, he also voiced his appreciation, together with Dr. Umbrecht, to Colonel Erb and the film Company, Burlet Film A.G. of Zurich, which very kindly supplied the film free of charge.

So came to a close a most interesting evening, which has vividly brought before us, what great strides have been made, in a relatively short time in the training of our soldiers; it has also enhanced our confidence, that in case of need we can rely on our army as a fine fighting force.

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