

Over Switzerland's highways [to be continued]

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Confederation. Of the total population of Switzerland about one-third is French-speaking, about one-fifth Italian-speaking, and the rest German-speaking.

And yet Switzerland maintains a Federal army on the basis of conscription and a certain number of weeks' training per year for every adult male — what we should call a conscripted Territorial Army.

Territorial Basis.

How can you say "Achtung" to a crowd of recruits who only understand "shun"? This, roughly, is the problem which Switzerland has had to face for years past in connection with the training of her citizen army. One wonders how, through the centuries, the Swiss mercenaries, who were hired out to this and that Court of Europe, succeeded in understanding the commands of their superior officers. On the other hand, no historical student will deny the international drilling power of a nation which for over three centuries supplied the finest professional troops in Europe.

As might be expected, modern Switzerland has solved the language problem in her army on a purely territorial basis. Italian-Swiss recruits are incorporated in Italian-Swiss regiments and brigades. So, too, with the French and German-Swiss citizen soldiers, but there still remains the question, not altogether out of practical politics, of a general mobilisation of the Swiss army. This problem also has been adequately tackled. Officers in the Swiss army are required to know at least two of the three official languages of the country. With such a provision it is clearly possible to ensure that the brigading of regiments can always be arranged in such a way that the language difficulty can be overcome.

Mention should also be made of a general factor in the problem, namely, the high level of linguistic education among the Swiss. While no one would expect a Swiss citizen to know all his three national languages, the elementary schools in Switzerland teach at least one language of the particular Canton.

The Waiters.

It is also of interest that the requisite for any waiter in any reputable hotel in any part of Switzerland is that he should know at least one language other than the language of his birth. Maitres d'hotel, directors, and others are required to know at least French, German, and English — and preferably also Italian. I know of one Romansch Swiss, now a hotel proprietor in Geneva, who, when he was called to the Swiss army as a conscript many years ago, knew not only his native tongue — an Italian-French dialect surviving in the mountains on the borders of French and German Switzerland — but also German, French, English, Italian, and Spanish.

This example is, perhaps, an exception, but it can generally be argued that most Swiss citizens are at least to some extent bilingual. Consequently, there can be little difficulty in the assembling of a Swiss national army. Roughly speaking, eighty per cent. of the German-Swiss speak French, and more than fifty per cent. of the French-Swiss speak German. Of the Italian-Swiss, those who do not speak French, know German.

In any case, there is no practical language difficulty in the organisation of the Swiss national army. Also there is no national rivalry whatsoever between the languages which its soldiers speak. If I have obtained one impression more strongly than any other from my many years' residence in Switzerland, it is: "Woe betide the foreign statesman who seeks to divide the Swiss on the basis of the division of their languages."

Observer.

OVER SWITZERLAND'S HIGHWAYS

By JAMES LAMAR

Why not bring your car along and turn, during your next vacation, into a happy and care-free six or eight cylinder gypsy wandering over Switzerland's highways of romance?

In no other land can you find such variety in so small an area, for Switzerland is composed of many tiny worlds, all of them close together and easily reached. And your car will be the key to this treasure chest for vacationists.

You can wind your way close to the glittering snow regions of the high mountains, and a few hours later drive along one of the Tessin's limpid lakes, where the rich sub-tropical vegetation reminds you of the Mediterranean. It is only a two-hour trip from the green rolling hills of pastoral Appenzell to Zurich, Switzerland's largest city. On Lake Geneva the castle of Chillon is pensive in the shadow of the jagged peaks of the Dents du Midi, and a few miles down the lake is Geneva, buzzing with business men, diplomats and Utopians.

Besides the pocket-book appeal of the recently depreciated franc and the very low gasoline prices, all possible has been done to aid the motorist during his stay in Switzerland. At the frontier, where formalities have been reduced to

a minimum for all tourists, agents of the Automobile Club of Switzerland and the Touring Club of Switzerland are prepared to give, free of charge, any assistance related to touring and customs clearance.

The T.C.S. maintains a motorcycle patrol on all the main roads during the summer to aid those who have been unfortunate enough to have had accidents or breakdowns. Both organizations have collaborated in erecting a fine system of free S.O.S. telephones, and there is a free A.C.S. water supply service on the principal mountain roads. On those passes which are open during the winter, stations have been established to help fix snow chains. Each week bulletins on road conditions appear in the leading newspapers, and the A.C.S. broadcast weekly tourist bulletins from the Berne and Basle radio-stations.

There are services to convey your car through the famed St. Gotthard, Loetschberg and Simplon tunnels, through which the electric "flyers" bore their way under massive chains of snow mountains. There are even ferry services for automobiles on the lakes of Lucerne and Zurich, and two lines connect the Swiss and German shores of Lake Constance.

One of the greatest factors in making a motoring tour in Switzerland are the uniformly fine hotels. Even the smallest pension in a tiny mountain village is immaculately clean, and the food is always excellent and plentiful. You will be surprised at the size of the meals served, and even more astonished at the amount you eat. The Swiss laugh and say the increase in appetite is due to the Alpine air. And this is as good and as accurate an explanation as any.

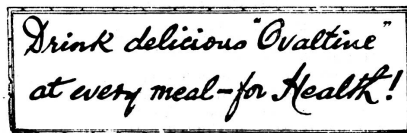
Switzerland's roads as a whole are excellent, especially the larger mountain passes and the highways along the lakes. There are always surprises waiting for you, and one of them may be the ludicrous predicament, if you are careless, of suddenly finding yourself lost on a country road where a herd of cows or sheep serenely blocks your way. Then the liberal traffic laws, which allow you to go as fast as you wish on the open road, won't be of much use.

Naturally one of the first things you will want to do in Switzerland is to tour a few of the mountain passes. There are twenty-three of these roads twisting and winding their way far above the valleys. Most of them open only in June, but a few can be traversed as early as the middle of April, the time varying according to altitude. From October till spring the passes are covered with snow. Nevertheless, the Ofen, Mosses, Maloja and Julier passes are now being kept open all year for the convenience of winter sports enthusiasts, and snow plows work late into November to keep the St. Gotthard route open for traffic.

Among the most famous passes are the St. Gotthard and the Grimsel, largely because they are both marvelous examples of modern road building. The St. Gotthard, which is the main north-south route through central Switzerland, curls downward in the Tremola gorge for a stretch of over seven miles, but the distance as the crow flies is not even a mile and a half.

The Grimsel, which connects the Bernese Oberland with the Rhone Valley, is especially noteworthy in the recently completed Seeuferregg section, where the new Grimsel Hospice looks over the nine miles long Grimsel reservoir lake, which now helps in supplying a good share of the country's vast electric power. Approaching Gletsch, the road winds a tortuous way down to the stark valley, and from here the Furka pass starts to Hospenthal, going close by the huge wrinkled Rhone glacier from whose grey-green ice trickles the stream that is the start of the mighty Rhone.

(To be Continued).



FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Wednesday, February 17th, at 8 o'clock — Swiss Mercantile Society — Annual General Meeting — at Swiss House, 35/36, Fitzroy Square, W.

Friday, February 26th, at 6.45 p.m. — Swiss Club Liverpool — Dinner and Dance at the Bear's Paw Restaurant, Lord Street, Liverpool.

Friday, February 26th, at 8 o'clock — Nouvelle Société Helvétique — Monthly Meeting — followed by Lantern Slides — by E. Wepf, Esq., at "Swiss House," 34/35, Fitzroy Square, W.

Saturday, March 13th, at 7 o'clock — City Swiss Club — Dinner and Dance — at the Mayfair Hotel, Berkeley Square, W.1.

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Dimanche 7 Février. 11h. — "Jésus à Nazareth,"

Luc 4 v. 14 ff. — M. R. Hoffmann-de Visme Ste Cène.

11h. — Ecole du Dimanche.

6h.30 — Culte de Communion et service spécial avec le Choeur des Mineurs Belges.

Mardi 9 Février — à 3h. au Foyer — Réunion de couture.

Dimanche 14 Février — Le pasteur Corsani: collecte en faveur des Vaudois du Piemont.

MARIAGE.

Helmut von Frisching — de Berne — et Ann Thomas de Blackwood, Mon., le 30 Janvier 1937.

M. R. Hoffmann-de Visme reçoit à l'église, 79, Endell Street, W.C.2. le mercredi de 11h. à 12h.30 et sur rendez-vous à son domicile, 102, Hornsey Lane, Highgate, N.6. S'adresser à lui (téléphone: ARChway 1798) pour tous renseignements concernant les instructions religieuses, les mariages et autres actes.

SCHWEIZERKIRCHE

(Deutschsprachige Gemeinde).

St. Anne's Church, 9, Gresham Street, E.C.2.

(near General Post Office.)

Sonntag, den 7. Februar 1937.

11 Uhr morgens, Gottesdienst und Sonntagsschule.

7 Uhr abends, Gottesdienst.

8 Uhr, Chorprobe.

Anfragen wegen Religions-bezw. Confirmationsstunden und Amtshandlungen sind erbeten an den Pfarrer der Gemeinde: C. Th. Hahn, 43, Priory Road, Bedford Park, W.4 (Telephon: Chiswick 4156). Sprechstunden: Dienstag 12-2 Uhr in der Kirche.