

Roundabout Swizerland

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS IN SWITZERLAND MUSIC.

JULY, 1952: 11th/13th St. Gallen. Yodelling Festival. 15th/23rd Braunwald. Traditional Music Weeks. 19/Aug.13th Engadine. Recital of Chamber Music.

August: Mid Aug. mid Sept. Zermatt. Summer School for voice and violin. 20th/Sept. 20th. Lucerne & Ascona. Music Festivals. Sept. 28th/Oct. 5th Geneva. Concours International d'interprétation.

SUMMER SCHOOLS & EXHIBITIONS.

May 15th/July 31st Lucerne. World Exhibition of Photography. Summer 1952 Summer Schools have been organised as usual by the universities of LAUSANNE, GENEVA and NEUCHATEL (French language), FRIBOURG (French & German), and the Rosenberg College in St. GALLEN (German). July 3rd/13th Locarno. Annual International Film Festival.

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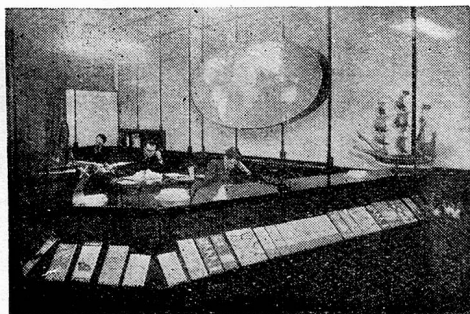
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ROUNDAABOUT SWITZERLAND by Derek Meakin

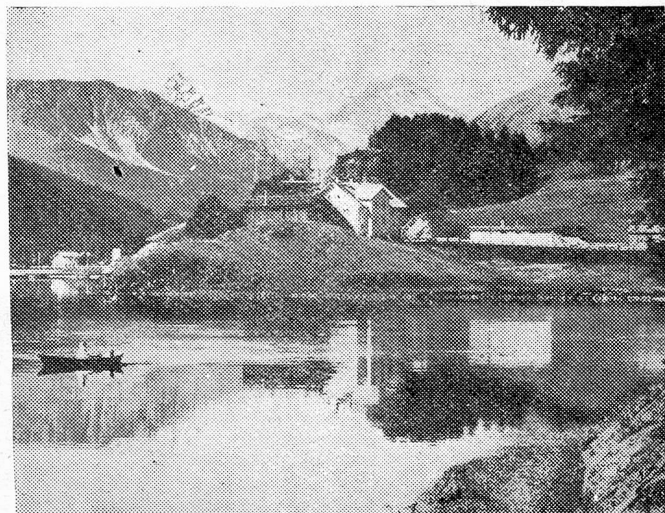
My main object in visiting Davos in this latest "Roundabout" tour of Switzerland was to see for myself something of the ambitious Ministry of Health experiment in sending National Health Service patients there for free TB treatment.

Nearly 250 patients a year are now going to Davos for what I am told is almost a certain cure, and I estimate they cost the British taxpayer between £1,500 and £2,000 a week.

When the scheme started last October many people at home asked whether it was worth the cost when Health Service expenditure was already reaching such giant proportions. But anyone who goes to Davos and sees the progress now being made by these once-doomed sufferers will agree that no cost would be too great to put them back on the road to health.

Many of them had never even seen the inside of an English sanatorium. Not that all the sanatoria are full. The trouble is that through lack of nurses, beds are lying empty while TB cases are being left to die at home.

In Switzerland there is no such shortage. The Ministry was able to completely take over the whole of the six-floor Angleterre sanatorium and obtain the use of a further 80 beds in the luxury Park sanatorium. There, two doctors, who are noted for their skill in



Part of the resort of Davos, where TB sufferers from Britain are being nursed back to health. In this article—the sixth in the present series—Derek Meakin tells of the big Ministry of Health experiment that is costing between £1,500 and £2,000 a week.

fighting TB — Doctors A. Walser and F. Charles — are in charge of the treatment.

I asked some of the patients what appealed to them most about their stay in Switzerland.

Twenty-three-year-old Oscar Mortimer, who comes from Nestlé's Avenue, in Hayes, said how pleased he was to find patients had a liberty that was denied them in an English sanatorium. "At home there is an atmosphere of hospitalisation with people walking around all the time in white coats", he told me. "Here everything is run on the lines of a luxury hotel. The routine is far more flexible." Oscar is in a good position to make a comparison. Before moving to Switzerland he had spent four months at Harefield sanatorium near his home.

Clifford Kershaw, who is 30 and is from Clayton, Manchester, is another of the handful of patients who have been in an English sanatorium. He said: "After seven weeks at Manchester's Baguley sanatorium I can see that as regards food this place beats it 500 per cent. We have a patient's committee here which is supposed to sort out complaints with the management, but who wants to complain when they give us a meal such as roast pork and meringue and whipped cream followed by a glass of beer?"

Praise for the staff came from 29-year-old Michael Vaughan, of Hornchurch, who said: "The two doctors are the finest gentlemen I have ever met in my life. They have one idea — to get us better. All the sisters and nurses are Swiss but they speak good English and make us feel very much at home. We are all in very good spirits."

And Mr. J. Larkin, a bank clerk, from Stretford, added: "The doctors don't hide anything from us. They bring along the X-ray photos, explain them in detail, and tell us frankly about our progress. I consider they are far more thorough than those in Britain."

What do the women patients think of it all? The youngest, 19-year-old Eileen Fearnley of Golborne, near Warrington, couldn't stop telling me about the view from her bedroom window of skiers shooting down the snow slopes.

Muriel Shacklady, 22, of Tyldesley, said none of them was homesick, and all were thrilled at having the sun all the year round.

Lying in bed wearing a vivid yellow and red pullover, 25-year-old Freda Sinclair of Fallowfield, Manchester, said: "The food is cooked differently and is rather rich, but we like it and are putting on weight. We have even taught the cook how to make an English cup of tea."

In every room I visited the story was the same. Confidence in the medical treatment, pleasure at the unrationed food — they all had huge appetites — excitement at their changed environment and the thought of spending the next few months in this beautiful valley with its clear health-giving air high among the Alps. All of which was a terrific morale-booster itself, which would play an important part in their recovery.

But in another part of the ultra-modern Park sanatorium (so called because it stands in its own private 40-acre park with sheltered walks and rustic pools) I was told of patients who were still living in a world of fear. Their worry was not caused by their disease, but by the frightening thought they might have to go home before the treatment was finished.

Here was one of the most distressing paradoxes of Britain's National Health Service.

Not far from where the Ministry men and women were enjoying expensive treatment that did not cost them a penny were these other British patients. They, too, had regularly paid their national health contributions before the illness struck that made them go to Switzerland to seek health amid the mountains. But not for them the reserved coaches travelling down the length of Britain and speeding across the Continent to the Alps, nor the constant patience and unceasing care of the Red Cross nurses.

Instead the cost of the long journey and of their stay, which can run up to £3 a day, had to come out of their own pockets — if they could succeed in persuading the Ministry of Health and the Treasury that their case was serious enough to warrant official permission to take a limited amount of sterling abroad. And they were in a constant dread that their allowance might run out before the cure was complete.

But for those under the Government's wing there were no such worries. And they knew nothing of the plight of their less fortunate compatriots.

At the moment the eyes of Ministry officials in Whitehall are on the Davos experiment, for if it is successful the scheme might well be widened to include many more of those sufferers who are kept out of English sanatoria because of the lack of beds.

At the same time the Treasury could be well advised to take a more lenient view of those patients who also want to seek a cure in Switzerland but who will in no way place an extra burden on Britain's national purse.

* * *

Next — The man who fought Everest.

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