

War-Time Orient Express

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Two further military aircraft have come to grief in a thick fog over Berne when endeavouring to effect a landing; in the collision the two pilots, Lt. Gaston Delaporte and Lt. Jacques Kehrli died in the crash.

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Some modification in the existing control of foreigners has been decided upon by the Federal Council. On the recommendation of the Army Command some foreigners may be interned or concentration camps may be established to house political refugees.

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There is a movement among some of the political parties to bring before the new Parliament a proposal to levy a special tax from all foreigners permanently residing in Switzerland.

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The Swiss railway system which is in control of the military director Col. Maurice Paschoud is divided into three operating districts corresponding to the divisions of the Federal Railways. The managers of the first and second divisions, Col. Fernand Chenaux and Col. Cesare Lucchini, remain at their posts as divisional military directors, while the third division is in charge of Col. Werner Baerlocher.

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The September review of the Swiss Bank Corporation — which has now opened an agency in New York — supplies instructive information about the part Swiss immigrants played at all times in the public life of our great sister republic. Admiral Eberle was supreme Commander of the U.S. Navy from 1923 to 1927 and names like Studebaker (Emmenthal), Rickenbacher (Schwyz), Chevrolets (Bernese Jura) and Hoover (Argovie) are household words to-day.

WAR-TIME ORIENT EXPRESS.

The following is part of an article from "The Times" (21.10.39) and records the impressions of a traveller while passing through Switzerland on this famous express.

The Orient Express has resumed its journeyings across a troubled Europe. But no longer does it wait importantly for the traveller at Calais. It sets out

upon the long journey to Istanbul from the Gare de Lyon in Paris at 9 o'clock each evening. Its departure, across the French countryside, begins almost in silence. Even the cry of the conductor, "En voiture, mesdames et messieurs," has become a whisper rather than a chant.

Sitting in a compartment with the blinds drawn and trying to read a severely censored French newspaper is not likely to keep anyone awake. The beds had been made hours before. I followed the example of most other passengers and turned in. But not to sleep, nor to dream. The journey across France was one of hesitations, stops, and sudden rapid movements.

It was a queer experience to awake in a country which was not at war. Flicking up the blind in the early morning and seeing the green, clean-swept Swiss countryside with its background of mountains dusted with snow, induced an exhilaration which I felt was undeserved. There was a keen sense of being alive after those groping nights in London. When the train stopped and I heard the gurgle and tumble of a Swiss stream, the distant tinkle of cow bells, and the importunings of a vendor of chocolate the war vanished as a nightmare in the clear dawn. Only the newspapers told of grim happenings beyond the mountains. The restaurant car with its white napery, its coffee and rolls, its lavish display of pats of butter and its attentive waiters easily suggested the beginning of a winter sports holiday.

Passengers materialized. The majority, I discovered, were British. Two middle-aged ladies were journeying as far as Baghdad by way of Istanbul. They were the wives of British officials in Baghdad, and had no doubts about reaching their destination. Two or three men in the Colonial Service were going as far as Trieste, there to board an Italian liner going East. Other passengers included bank clerks returning to their posts in Belgrade, Bucharest, or Athens. A sprinkling of French passengers bound for Rumania, a Greek merchant from Manchester returning to Athens because his business in England had come to an abrupt end, and a couple of Rumanian officials nursing at all times a big, spectacularly sealed document — these constituted the obvious voyagers on the Orient Express.

There was no sign of war in Switzerland, not even a preponderance of uniforms. Only when the Orient Express entered Italy did the atmosphere of tension make itself felt again. As the train steamed past Lake Maggiore, with the fateful Stresa basking in the sunshine, passengers saw increasing numbers of greyish-green uniforms against the countryside. Buildings, too, were camouflaged. Through the windows one glimpsed infantry on manoeuvres. They were advancing in open formation. The soldiers looked back over their shoulders at the Orient Express, with its passengers safely sealed behind glass and steel.

Few of us were sorry to be leaving Italy and entering Yugoslavia. Meals and the ordinary purchases of travellers at railway stations throughout Italy had proved expensive. And throughout the 24 hours it had been impossible to obtain coffee. No explanation was offered; only a shrug of the shoulders and the alternative of tea and a slice of lemon.

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