

On horseback through the alps

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"SUMMIT CONFERENCE" IN THE ALPS

About 250 journalists, radio and TV reporters, photographers and filmmakers, and an equal number of guests from all over the world, assembled recently at Zermatt for a week-long celebration in honour of the centennial of the first successful climbing of the Matterhorn on 14th July 1865, by the Englishman Edward Whymper. At a press conference, Dr. Werner Kämpfen, Director of the Swiss National Tourist Office, re-emphasized the *leitmotiv* of the current Year of the Alps festivities: the restorative and healing powers of the mountain world and its high-altitude climate. At the same time he declared that the assembly which had been convened on the Riffelberg above Zermatt was a special kind of "summit conference", which should become a tradition in the years ahead, as the various Alpine lands come to enjoy closer relationships. Each year, he suggested, a similar meeting should be held in one or another Alpine nation, "at the foot, or at least within sight of a well-known mountain". Such events would serve to strengthen the sense of unity and relationships among the Alpine people, the inhabitants of the "backbone of Europe". In keeping with an ancient Celtic custom, a cairn (a mound of stones) was erected during the Riffelberg ceremony, beneath which was buried a Golden Book with the signatures of all the participants. The cairn will in future serve as a signpost for climbers and hikers. Dr. Kämpfen suggested that, at future meetings, similar cairns should be erected on other mountains.

During the celebrations, Zermatt became a museum as well as the meeting place of mountaineers and friends of the Valais and the Swiss Alps. For much of the Valais cultural treasure has been on show, and paintings and mountaineering relics have been exhibited.

Some 500 guests were invited to take part in the festival week, and visitors flocked to Zermatt from all parts of the world. Messages were received from governments and mountaineering organisations and well-known personalities. The particularly strong British delegation included Lord Sandford, Sir John Hunt who delivered the greetings of the British Government, Lord Lunn, members of the British Alpine associations and thirteen descendants of the first climbers, with them Edward Whymper's daughter Mrs. Blandy.

On 13th July, a Swiss woman climber stole a march on the televised centenary assault of the Matterhorn. Mrs. Yvette Vaucher, aged 27, a shop assistant from Geneva, climbed the treacherous North Wall and reached the summit on the morning of the centenary climb.

It may interest readers to learn that one of our subscribers, Dr. Hugo Rast, was amongst those who climbed the Matterhorn this summer.

(A.T.S. and S.N.T.O.)

THE FIRST BOOK ON SWITZERLAND

No. 193 in the "First Book" series published by Edmund Ward Ltd., is dedicated to Switzerland. It is written by Sam and Beryl Epstein and costs 11/6.

The book gives a picture of Switzerland past and present. As we are informed by the publishers, it deals with "the life of the villages, governed by the movement of flocks and herds up and down the mountains to pasture; the modern cities, commerce and industry, with the tradition of craftsmanship and skill; the making of the famous cheeses and chocolate, and the tourist trade that brings visitors from all over the world. Swiss government is explained and the system of democracy that is at its root —

a system that grows naturally from the historical background of the Swiss Confederation and has led also to the important position of neutral Switzerland in international affairs.

Varied and colourful, independent but hospitable, Switzerland is a fascinating country, of which the text and many photographs throughout present a clear and lively account."

The first chapter, preceded by a sketchy map of Switzerland, is headed "Mountains, Mountains Everywhere". From there we soon proceed to "Cheese and Chocolate", an interesting account of how they are produced. By that time, the English reader will have his ideas confirmed that Switzerland is mainly a country of herdsmen and cheese makers, and the more critical Swiss reader who has been trying for years to convince his English friends that Switzerland is an industrial country, is getting slightly annoyed when he finds that only a couple of pages or so are devoted to watchmaking, precision instruments, drugs and textiles, with exactly one sentence to machinery, i.e. marine and diesel engines — all under the heading of "Also Made in Switzerland".

The chapter on communications shows Switzerland as a more up-to-date country, the efficient Zurich Airport and Basle Harbour being given their rightful places. History gets a chapter, but there, again, rather too much emphasis is put on the legendary William Tell. The chapter reserved for "Democracy, Swiss Style" explains Swiss political institutions and government in plain and easy language, and a most interesting account of local customs and festivals follows one on language.

Voting methods and the "Landesgemeinden" get a chapter to themselves, and there is a short, but to the point explanation of what it means to be a Swiss citizen. The Swiss reader will not altogether agree with the authors on "What Neutrality Means"; on the other hand nobody could quarrel with the chapter on Geneva and the Red Cross, and the chapter on "Citizen Soldiers" gives a simple, but fair picture of the Swiss Army. The book ends on another, longer chapter on tourism.

The First Book on Switzerland is profusely illustrated, and most of the pictures (mainly supplied by the Swiss National Tourist Office) are first class, specially considering that they are reproduced on a mat paper. The volume is pleasingly got up and written in an easy style. The biggest criticism is that there is too much stress on mountains, cheese and folklore, and that the modern industrialist and business side of the country is not in the right perspective.

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ON HORSEBACK THROUGH THE ALPS

The little mountain village of Elm in Canton Glarus recently was the scene of the completion of a most unusual undertaking within the framework of the current Year of the Alps celebrations. A group of six horseback riders, which included a housewife, a vicar and an apprentice gardener from Zurich, a director of personnel and a secretary from Winterthur, and a police constable from Nidfurn (Canton Glarus), ended a two-week saddle trip through little-known parts of the Prealps and Alps. High point of their unorthodox vacation trip was the Panixer Pass (altitude 7,290 ft.), which leads northward from Ilanz, "first city on the Rhine". Mounted on sure-footed Icelandic ponies, the equestrians carefully followed in their travels the route taken 166 years ago by Russian Field Marshal Suvorov who brought his army to this part of Switzerland for what turned out to be a disastrous cam-

paigned against the French. The pony ride through the Alps was under the patronage of the Swiss National Tourist Office, which sent messages of greeting via the riders to the various local authorities and tourist offices along their route. In its message, it underscored the necessity of "becoming aware again of the wonders, values and beauties of nature in this age of machines and automation".

[S.N.T.O.]

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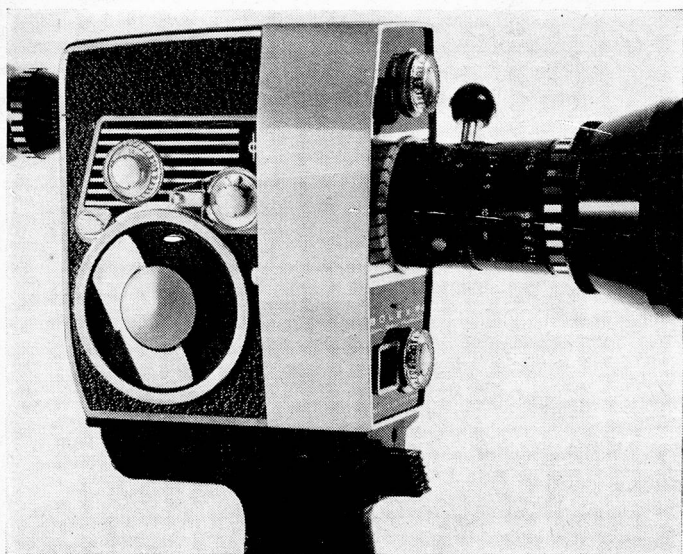
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TRANSPORT THROUGH THE AGES SWISS MUSEUM OF TRANSPORT IN LUCERNE

Safe tracks for 140 km/speed

All over the country, cities and communities are connected by railways. Maps and charts on this rail network and traffic service can be studied by the visitors coming to the Swiss Institute of Transport in Lucerne. An interesting demonstration piece is a section of a standard rail with gauge, connections, welding and contact spots, on steel ties, creosoted wood or concrete ties, as the location of the rail tracks may require. Also on exhibit are numerous sample pieces of heat-treated rails, some of it corroded and deformed, broken or bent, as the result of heavy use and traffic.

Swiss navigation in old times

"Four streams rush down from the mountains", from a poem by F. Schiller significantly greet the visitor as he enters the section of Navigation at the Swiss Institute of Transport in Lucerne, where this form of traffic on Swiss rivers and lakes is on display.

One of these major Swiss rivers is the river Rhone, entering the Lake of Geneva and leaving again at the City of Geneva. The once turbulent river was only usable in its lower part for floating beams of lumber. Discoveries of an ancient tree-trunk canoe from lake-dwellers and Latin inscriptions found on the shores of Lake Geneva denote that this lake was a traffic route already in Roman times and before. Military necessities also helped develop navigation on the big lake. But commercial lake traffic really took its start with the launching of the first Swiss steamship, the "Guillaume Tell" in the year 1823. Of this historic steamship which was in service till 1838, an exact model is in the Swiss Institute of Transport in Lucerne. "A pleasant mixture of mountains, rocks and lakes..."

With these words, the Swiss writer, Albrecht von Haller, in his famous lyric "The Alps" described for the first time the majestic beauty of the mountains, and thereby set aside the age-long fear from alpine glaciers and high icy peaks. Up to that time, scientists and explorers had occasionally climbed some high mountains, but avoided glaciers and ice-covered peaks. The inspiring poem of A. von Haller published in 1729 brought about a change, and later the ascent to the top of the Mont Blanc (highest mountain in Europe) in 1786/7 was the start of Swiss alpinism. It may be noted that the English in particular, conducted by experienced Swiss alpine guides did pioneer work in alpine climbing. In the Swiss Institute of Transport in Lucerne one may see pictures of these prominent alpinists, together with their ice-picks and other equipment often used in the first conquests of Swiss alpine peaks.

[O.S.E.C.]

SWISS TELECOMMUNICATIONS IN 1964

In 1964, Swiss telecommunications continued to develop in all sectors. 762,527,000 local calls were recorded (increase over 1963 = 2.3%), 790,792,000 trunk calls (+8.6%) and 49,328,000 three-minute periods for foreign calls. At the end of 1964, the Swiss telephone network numbered 1,388,680 connections and 2,131,521 phones (increase of over 6%). The telegraph service handled 1,055,572 inland telegrams (+2.2%) and 4,683,048 international cables (+1%). The telex too continued to develop at a rapid pace and the increase in traffic approached or exceeded 20% on all points. There were 4,246,711 inland communications and 9,806,150 international messages. At the end of 1964, the Swiss telex network was the densest in the world with approximately one link-up per 1,000 inhabitants (5,754 subscribers).

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