

# Rail and road traffic in the Swiss mountains [continued]

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The decision to call off the assault was taken on November 22nd. The long delay in passing the news on the Zurich was due to the difficulties in forwarding information in this wild and uninhabited region.

This is the method decided on by the Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research, sponsors of the expedition, and shows how word from the men on Everest finally reached civilisation. Messages are sent out by a portable short-wave transmitter on Everest itself and picked up at the base camp on the Khumbu glacier, and are then carried by native runner to Jaynagar, on the Indo-Nepalese frontier. From there they are forwarded to Patna, a town on the river Ganges, by ordinary Indian postal service. A Jesuit father in charge of a local school sends the messages in code from there direct to Zurich by radio. A small troupe of runners was on duty at the base camp since the assault party started on the long and wearisome climb up Everest. Every seven or ten days, one of them left for the journey to Jaynagar, 150 miles away. The route he followed took him along narrow mountain paths, over bitterly-cold snow-covered passes, across flimsy bamboo bridges thrown over gaping gorges, and along hot and dusty tracks hacked out of the jungle. A young and powerful runner knowing the country well can do the journey in ten to fifteen days, if he is lucky. In mountain country, he may cover only ten miles a day, but once he reaches the plain, he may be able to do 25 miles in a day. He travels light, with few clothes, little food, and the precious messages. And with him is his wicked-looking hunting knife, always at the ready. In those parts, you never know what might attack you.

#### M.V. "Berna" Launched.

The motor vessel Berna, 19,000 tons, was recently launched at Monfalcone, near Trieste. It will be the largest Swiss owned ship.

#### New Chairlift at Champex.

A new chairlift reaching right into the heart of the Alps has been inaugurated at Champex, the well-known resort in the Canton of Valais. In 20 minutes the chairlift takes passengers to a height of more than 7200 ft. to the mouth of the great Trient Glacier, near to the 8800 ft. Orny Hut and the Mont Blanc Massif. From Martigny (on the international Simplon line) Champex, 4920 ft. above the sea, is easily reached as far as Orsieres by train and postal coach beyond.

#### Castle of Chillon.

The popularity of the Castle of Chillon, noted landmark on the Lake of Geneva, is increasing year by year. The 800-year-old castle, made famous in the English-speaking world by Byron's poem, "The Prisoner of Chillon," was visited by 134,000 people last year—25,000 more than five years ago. Two hundred different groups were

taken over what is now one of the greatest historical attractions in Europe.

#### Surplus of 8000 in Switzerland.

The housing shortage has disappeared and there is now a housing surplus of 8000 houses in Switzerland as a result of last year's building boom.

#### Experimental Television Discontinued.

Experimental television in Basle has been discontinued through lack of public interest, the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation announced.

### RAIL AND ROAD TRAFFIC IN THE SWISS MOUNTAINS

By H. O. ERNST, Manager, London Office, Swiss National Tourist Office and Swiss Federal Railways.

(Continued from January issue)

Avalanches are of two main types: "Staublewinen" and "Grundlawinen." Literally translated the former means "dust avalanche." It is so to speak airborne and consists of loose dry snow which travels with ever increasing speed more or less parallel to the ground. Its main destructive power lies in the tremendous air pressure created by its downward swoop. This force is sufficient to flatten whole forests, carry away buildings, road vehicles and to derail trains. The "Grundlawine" or "ground avalanche" consists of a mass of solid snow which has accumulated high up on a slope. Through interior strains and stresses caused by changes in temperature, rain or warm winds, it starts first to "creep" and cracks appear on its surface. As the adhesional force to the base diminishes, the movement increases and the whole weight, in many cases thousands of tons, is precariously balanced on the slope. At this stage a shout, a sound of a shot, or an animal, human or otherwise, walking or skiing in the vicinity, will start the avalanche. With tremendous force, preceded by a roaring gale of compressed air, it rushes valleywards, gathering not only speed but large rocks, tree trunks and almost anything else in its way. Torrents and rivers on its course are dammed and overflow. Roads and rail tracks are either carried away or buried under a huge pile of snow and debris. Some of the worst features of these avalanches are the suddenness with which they occur and the havoc and human misery they create. They are by no means infrequent, as the following figures show: In January last year Switzerland suffered the following avalanche casualties:

98 people lost their lives,  
162 heads of cattle destroyed,  
368 sheep and goats perished,  
919 houses destroyed.

It is, by the way, a remarkable fact that at the height of the winter sport season there were no victims amongst our guests from abroad.

To give you an idea of the paralysing effect avalanches can have on railway traffic, I would mention that on January 20, 1951, 56 per cent. of the Rhaetian Railway system in the Grisons was out of commission. Similar disasters occurred in other parts of Switzerland, notably at Andermatt and Zermatt.

The winter 1950-51 was, however, exceptional. Unusually heavy falls of snow and adverse weather conditions generally were responsible for these disasters. In normal years the danger is less acute, although always present. But the normal precautions against the adverse effect of heavy snowfalls are sufficient to keep communications open. Avalanches do occur every winter, but their courses are known and each of them has a tendency to come down at a certain time, so much so that they have their names like, for instance, crack trains. This facilitates measures to harness or to deviate them. It is therefore the avalanches in unexpected places and at unpredicted times which are so dangerous.

It is evident that the Railway Companies, the Swiss Federal Post who run their own coach lines, and Motoring Organisations do their utmost to protect their installations and the lives of their passengers against the special dangers to traffic at high altitudes. I would, therefore, now like to give you an idea of what has been done to achieve this aim. Measures vary according to the type of transport and locality. Let me begin at home by telling you how state-owned Swiss Federal Railways guard against these contingencies.

(To be continued)

## THE NEW LAW ON SWISS CITIZENSHIP

Some important points resulting from this law, which came into force on January 1st, 1953, are the following:—

### (a) Loss of Swiss Citizenship (Section 9).

A Swiss woman loses the Swiss citizenship through marriage with an alien if she acquires through the marriage the nationality of her husband, or if she already possesses it, and unless she makes a written declaration stating that she wishes to retain the Swiss citizenship. In the event that a fiancée residing in New Zealand wants to sign such a Declaration, she has to send in the Declaration to the Swiss Consulate in Wellington, **prior** to the celebration of the marriage. The Consulate will furnish the official form on request.

According to New Zealand law, an alien woman does not become a national of this country

through marriage to a New Zealand citizen. Consequently, a Swiss woman who marries a national of New Zealand does not acquire New Zealand citizenship through marriage, and for this reason she remains a Swiss citizen by virtue of Swiss law. Therefore in such a case she does not need to sign the Declaration in question. If, however, she still wants to make the Declaration, she is at liberty to do so.

### (b) Loss of Swiss Citizenship Through Birth in a Foreign Country (Section 10).

A child born in a foreign country of a Swiss father also born abroad loses the Swiss citizenship at the age of 22 years if he has a second nationality, unless he has been announced by his parents or a relative or friend to a Swiss authority for the registration of his birth in Switzerland or made the announcement himself, or unless he has made a written Declaration stating that he wishes to retain the Swiss citizenship.

### (c) Acquiring of Swiss Citizenship Through Restoration (Sections 18-25).

A Swiss woman who has lost the Swiss citizenship by marrying an alien before January 1st, 1953, can regain her Swiss nationality under certain circumstances, in particular if her husband has passed away, or if the spouses have been divorced or have lived apart for three years, or if the woman has become stateless. Special provisions apply to children of such marriages. A woman who was Swiss by birth (not by marriage or naturalization) and lost the Swiss citizenship through marriage prior to January 1st, 1953, can regain it while still married, provided she makes application to the Swiss authorities before the end of 1953 (Sec. 58). Applications for reintegration, i.e., regaining the Swiss citizenship, are to be made to the Swiss authorities before December 31st, 1953. The applicant must procure certain official certificates, in particular Certificates of Good Conduct from all the places where she resided within the last five years. Consequently it is advisable that such persons contact the Consulate at their earliest convenience. The application form will be mailed to them upon request.

These provisions of the law are of the utmost importance for Swiss people living abroad, and every reader of the "Helvetia" should make them known to their Swiss friends who are not subscribers.

Persons affected by this new law and interested in retaining or regaining the Swiss citizenship should contact the Consulate.

Consulate of Switzerland,  
P.O. Box 386,  
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