

Farewell Campione!

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FAREWELL CAMPIONE!

(*"Evening Citizen,"* 11.11.39.)

Farewell, Campione! I say it with a tinge of sadness in my voice, for the Campione that I knew is no more. It has been killed by international complications, Fascist finance, and a few of the other ills our flesh seems especially heir to at this time.

Campione (four syllables, please!) is a geographical puzzle. If you have a big enough map of Switzerland, look at the Canton of Ticino, which borders Italy. There, on the Lake of Lugano, you will see a small spot coloured differently from the rest of Ticino. That different colour indicates that, in the middle of this part of Switzerland, there is a corner which is forever Italy!

But the map has to be a very big one, for this bit of Italy in Switzerland is only a few hundred square yards in area, and most maps don't bother to show it at all. When I was there last the Swiss didn't bother to point it out either. They seemed to resent the fact that this tiny piece of land belonged to Italy.

I asked lots of people in Lugano why this place on the other side of their lake should be Italian, but not one was able to tell me. Indeed, they tried to avoid speaking of Campione at all.

I discovered that the reason for this attempted vow of silence was that Campione, being Italian, was able to run a real casino, with roulette, baccarat, chemin de fer, and what have you! Thus it stood, a gambling den amid the polite and proper Swiss entertainments.

In Lugano itself there was a casino of sorts, but the Swiss Government wouldn't allow you to throw away more than 2/0 a time on your number. The atmosphere in the Lugano Casino was rather that of a church whist drive where the minister isn't quite sure that this is the right way of raising money for the organ fund.

Lugano is a tourist town, and the Swiss, naturally, wanted their visitors to spend their money there, and not go gambling it away in Campione. So there was this conspiracy of silence — which Campione silently answered by having a big electric sign which flashed over the calm waters of the lake every night.

On the Lugano shore were motor boats ready to chug you across to the den of iniquity. You could

visit part of Italy by crossing the lake in 15 minutes, and you didn't even need your passport.

In the spring Lugano is beautiful. On the border of the lake it is warm, although there is still snow on the mountains which rise around you. If there is a moon (and there was when we were there) it shines upon the white tops of the mountains and on the shimmering violet of the lake. You walk over the pebbles to the little motor boat. Behind you the café music pleads with you to stay in Switzerland. But in front there beckon the lights of Campione.

As the boat crosses the lake you see the lights of the Swiss resorts on the Campione side. They want to attract you too, but they have no gambling to offer.

We land at Campione and walk up wide steps to the floodlit casino. In the darkness a sentry with a rifle slung over his shoulder stalks by. The Italians are great on sentries. A few miles away there is a mountain which is the boundary between Switzerland and Italy. Right on the top of this mountain the Swiss have built an hotel, and the Italians have built a sentry post.

The Campione casino has that elegance which women novelists adore to describe. There is a sophisticated cocktail bar and a restaurant with a dance floor in the most Ritzy tradition. You can see an excellent cabaret here and you can dance as much as you like — all for the cost of a drink. A lady near us is having a great time on a pot of black coffee.

So far, we might as well be still in Switzerland. But when we go upstairs, things are different. We enter the gambling rooms now. I go to change some money into counters, and I fancy that the cashier gives me a somewhat contemptuous look when he sees that I want only about a pound's worth.

The people round the tables are quite different from those you see in the Lugano casino. They are better dressed and they don't look so pleased with life. The Lugano croupiers are elderly men who look as if they were grocers during the day. The Campione croupiers are dark, suave and in evening dress. Fortunes are won and lost at these tables, and it's not long before we lose our pound and decide to go home!

But now I must write of Campione in the past tense, for, as I have already told you, Campione is no

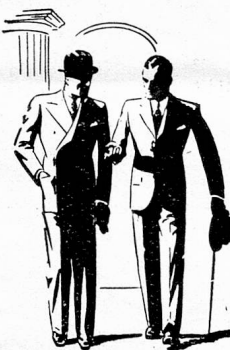
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more. Signor Mussolini was surprised at the large number of Italians who wanted to go into Switzerland so that they could gamble at Campione. As you probably know, the Italians are not allowed to take much money out of the country with them. But there could be no objection to them taking any amount of money across the border if they were going to spend it in a part of Italy.

The strange thing was, however, that the sums taken into Switzerland grew larger and larger, but the money drawn at Campione didn't seem to vary much.

Then Signor Mussolini discovered the duplicity which was being practised. Lots of these people who were taking money out of the country weren't gambling at Campione at all. They were banking it in Lugano! Thus good Italian money was going to Switzerland. Hurt by this revelation of the depths of human nature, Signor Mussolini took the only step he could take. He closed Campione.

Well, I don't suppose the Swiss are caring about it. The good people of Lugano will no longer have to worry about the gambling den. They are probably worrying about quite different things now. But I like to look back on that moonlight night, the sweep of steps, the Rhumba on the dance floor, the air of pleasant vice — yes, even the lost pound. Farewell, Campione!

Jack House.

AN ANNIVERSARY.

(“*The Aeroplane*” 16.11.39.)

Swissair has published an excellent booklet to commemorate twenty years of aerial traffic in Switzerland. The book is well printed and is profusely illustrated with pictures which trace the history of civil flying in Switzerland since 1919. Traffic figures, diagrams of the aerial services, both internal and to destinations outside Switzerland, and photographs of the machines in use, as well as the outstanding events, are given for each year.

The latter half of the book deals mainly with Swissair, the company which has built an international reputation for itself since 1931, when it was founded by the amalgamation of the companies Ad Astra, the original Swiss aerial transport company, and Balair.

Tourist flying in Switzerland was started in 1910 by Aero-Gesellschaft at Lucerne, which operated dirigibles, seaplanes and landplanes, and carried 883 passengers on 506 flights without an accident. The enterprise was liquidated in 1914.

The first air-mail service in Switzerland was operated between Zurich-Berne-Lausanne-Geneva. It was flown from April 30th to October 30th by military pilots and machines, and carried 23,530 letters.

Traffic figures show just how transport flying in Switzerland has progressed. In 1922, when figures were first available, there were 122 paying passengers; in 1938 there were 66,852. Mails in 1922 amounted to 198 lb. and in 1938 to 1,384,133 lb.; and the distance flown in 1922 was 59,216 miles and in 1938 2,153,422 miles.

Swissair, like other transport companies, had to suspend its services at the outbreak of War.

SWITZERLAND DURING THE LAST WAR.

(Continued from the last issue.)

These neutrals by duty like the Swiss have their troubles and their humiliations; they are surrounded by unjust suspicions. The belligerent blames them for everything, for the language they speak, the sympathies they express, their associations, their words, their silence. There were many amongst these neutrals in French-speaking Switzerland particularly who were grieved that their army should have no part in deciding, not as has been said, the fate of the world — no war has ever decided the fate of the world — but the fate of the country they loved and admired.

Again it was said: Neutrals profit by the war. Doubtless there are amongst neutrals, as amongst belligerents, individuals whom the war does not impoverish, who, on the contrary, draw a profit from it. They have to be reckoned with. The mass of the people suffer, above all in a country like ours, which does not produce enough to feed itself. Switzerland also fought. She fought in order not to fall into economic subjection to the bigger states; she fought to remain united and independent. She shouldered ruinous sacrifices to guard her frontier, and consequently also that of her neighbour; it was an effort made without display, but intense and devoted because the very existence of our country was at stake.

The nations fought because they were, or believed they were, forced to go to war. They fought for their immediate interests or for their safety. None of them went into the conflict for the love of fighting or for a simple desire for justice. Happy those whose cause is at one with justice.

If Switzerland did not share in all the sufferings of the belligerents, neither did she share in their enthusiasms or their pride. She fought to live.

The continuous reproaches addressed to neutrals by the belligerents, and even by an unbalanced section in Switzerland, were absurd and unjust. Switzerland is neutral by virtue of a treaty. But every state can be neutral in its turn if its interests demand it. In 1912, when the little Balkan States were fighting against Turkey, where were the armies of the great powers which were fighting now? And if one goes back into the history of the European War the same question can be asked of each nation in turn. The belligerents of to-day were the neutrals of yesterday. They will be the neutrals of to-morrow. In 1921, just

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