

Recent happenings in the canton of Ticino

Autor(en): **[s.n.]**

Objektyp: **Article**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1967)**

Heft 1530

PDF erstellt am: **17.09.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-695606>

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any other I know of. I shall never forget my own first entry into the Ticino. Up in the north the spring was late coming. Cold showers and sudden frosts had continually blighted our hopes. As we now climbed the ramp to Göschenen the leaden skies were blotted out by a blizzard of draughty snow. We plunged into the Gotthard tunnel, and my Dutch colleague's talk of better weather beyond seemed to me the empty prating of a wishful thinker. I had not learnt that the great mass of the Gotthard, reaching up into the sky, sets a sea-mark even for the winds and clouds, dividing weather from weather.

And suddenly we were out of the darkness and into the light; from an ultramarine sky a dazzling sun shone down on a green world that rose to crystal peaks. We were elated, and half-blind with the brilliance. Farther south, the climatic difference was no less astonishing. While news from those we had left behind in the north still told of cold and dreary days of rain, we wandered in shirt-sleeves through a sun-drenched world. The big magnolias were bursting in exotic blossom, the woods were wild and sweet with violets. We walked from the crest of the San Salvatore above Lugano across to Morcote, that clings like some show-piece of southern scenic beauty over the blue waters of the lake. Wherever we turned, basking lizards started from the stones, becoming for me, as I suppose they have become for others, almost the heraldic beast of the Ticino: small, nimble little creatures that cling to the granite like greenish gems, motionless till some movement alarms them, and they are gone.

In the intervening years the Ticino has ceased to be what it was for me at that first encounter — an almost incredible landscape out of a fairy-tale — and become a familiar yet no less desirable home from home. And little by little it has revealed its many facets. For the Ticino is not only what the tourist sees in the bright, colourful days of spring or summer, strolling along the lakeside or under the arcades of Lugano and Locarno. In the high valleys it has also preserved much of its rich individuality and charm. Indemini still has something of the aspect of a robbers' hide-away when one looks down on its clustered stone roofs in the green and precipitous gorge. True, one is no longer aware of suspicious eyes observing one stealthily from windows, as my wife and I were when we first walked through its cobbled alleyways. The tourists have discovered it, and in summer at least one can pass through it without a feeling that one is trespassing on forbidden ground. No less fascinating, Corippo still adheres to the hillside in the high Verzasca Valley, a small maze of steep cobbled ways between stone houses, pervaded with the almost tangible sense of a simple century-old tradition. True, our technical and touristic age is affecting the scene.

Once to "go to Corippo by boat" was the local wag's paraphrase of the impossible, since the Verzasca was a small rock-strewn torrent and the valley was steep; but today from Corippo's eyrie one can already see the waters of the new storage lake glint below in the sunlight.

Times change, but the inimitable charm of the Ticino and its cheerful people does not wither. I have felt it so often: on the lake at four o'clock of a dim, pellucid dawn, watching the fish fall from the nets like silver into a gently rocking boat; wandering through an unbelievable wilderness of Alpine flowers beyond Lake Ritom; rowing lazily on a warm somnolent afternoon where Gandria's romantic houses were mirrored in the lake below; sitting before an open fire under black beams while chestnuts roasted in a long-handled pan over the blaze; stepping from the rock

to patterned rock in the bed of the foaming Maggia; or standing in the windy sun above Locarno when the whole hillside was ablaze with the yellow conflagration of the broom.

The reader will note: here is another Northerner who has fallen under the spell. And why should I demur? Perhaps my case is less curable than others, for when I married, it was a girl born and bred on the shores of the Lago Maggiore. But even without this bond I believe I should have succumbed as completely and finally as any of the numerous other travellers who, crossing the Gotthard, have found beyond it a landscape cut to the measure of their dream.

(By courtesy of Swiss National Tourist Office: "Switzerland Review".)

RECENT HAPPENINGS IN THE CANTON OF TICINO

The ordinary budget for 1967 estimates a deficit of seven million francs; expenditure is forecast at 348m. francs. The extraordinary accounts are expected to show a loss of 31m. francs, expenditure budgeted being 44m. francs.

The spring elections showed that the Canton enjoys political stability, the five Councillors of State being confirmed in office (2 Radicals, 2 Conservatives and a Socialist). The 65 seats of the Cantonal Parliament were filled as follows: Liberal/Radicals 26 (28), Conservative Democrats 22 (22), Socialists 11 (10), Farmers and Citizens 3 (3), Workers' Party 2 (1), Liberal Radical Workers' Union 1 (new). Nearly 80% of the electorate went to the poll.

The population of the Canton has doubled in the last century. At the end of 1966, it numbered 225,340 inhabitants, of whom 198,490 are Ticinesi.

Federal Councillor Celio attended the Golden Jubilee of the Ticino Chamber of Commerce, and this year is the first in the second century of the "Corriere de Ticino".

Wine growing in the Ticino went up in 1966, especially of the famous Merlot wine, of which 29,400 hl. were produced, the total standing at 69,600 hl.

The Giovanni Hospital in Bellinzona will be enlarged at a cost of 12.3m. francs. A new building will be erected at Faido to house the district hospital and the home for the aged. The new goods station at Chiasso was opened in July, after the electronic centre had become operational in Chiasso station at the end of May.

Upkeep of Ticino's national roads will cost 42 francs, of which 29m. will have to be borne by the Canton. The first motor highway in the Ticino has been in use this year.

[A.T.S.]

"SWITZERLAND CALLING"

Change in Frequencies

We have been informed by the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation and Overseas Services in Berne that there will be a change in frequencies starting on 3rd September and lasting to 4th November. It concerns the English programme and *Reflets Suisses* (*Schwyzerspiegel*) to the U.K. and Ireland: GMT 19.00 to 20.45 hours, 6015 kHz-49.88m. (replacing 11,865 kHz- 25.28m.).