

The Grisons - Switzerland in miniature

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Those compatriots who would like to see the text of the message from the President of the Confederation **for the New Year** should apply to the Swiss Embassies and Consulates

For the New Year

Dear Swiss compatriots abroad! At the end of this year we should like to wish you most warmly a very happy 1977. Wherever you may be, be assured that your homeland does not forget you. You are the representatives of «Fifth Switzerland», and our authorities will keep a watchful eye over you.

During the whole of the past year we have tried on one hand to bring our country and on the other hand your rights nearer to you. Since the Article 45bis was accepted, making you fully acknowledged Swiss, much has already been achieved. Just now the law regarding political rights, a very delicate matter, is coming into force. As from 1st January 1977 you will be able to take part in federal plebiscites. This is, therefore, a new year present which each of you is receiving. Accept it in truly civic spirit! Stay alert, remain tied to your homeland. As far as we are concerned, our task is clearly outlined: we want to inform you in the widest sense of the word.

Dear compatriots, whether you are in difficulties or in a happy position, the Executive of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad is trying to look after your interests. It trusts in your bond with your homeland and hopes that 1977 may be a year of fulfilment for all of you.

The Grisons – Switzerland in Miniature

Short Biographical Notes

Andri Peer was born at his place of origin of Sent (Engadine) on 19th December 1921. He grew up in the Engadine and went to the teachers' training college in Chur. He taught at Schams and then studied Romanic philology at the universities of Zurich and Paris (doctorate in 1951). At present, he teaches French and Italian at the Cantonal *Gymnasium* in Winterthur and he is a lecturer on Rhaeto-Romanic literature and language at the University of Zurich. He is president of the Rhaeto-Romanic writers and of the PEN Centre of the Italian and Romansh-speaking parts of Switzerland. In addition he is vice-president of the National Swiss UNESCO Commission.

As poet and narrator he writes above all in his mother tongue, the *Ladin* of the Engadine (poems, stories, essays, one-act plays, radio plays). More and more, he also writes in German, specially prose and dramatic works, as well as journalistic commentaries which appear in dailies and periodicals at home and abroad. Some of his publications in German are «Sgrafits» (poetry in Romansh and German 1959), *Tales* (Gute Schriften Zurich 1968), «Arosa» (text for a picture book, RA-Publishers Rapperswil 1972), «That afternoon at Poschiavo» (tales, Reinhardt Basel 1974), «Active Service» 1939–1945 (documentary Ringier Zurich 1975).



Hunter's
head
(Photo
Schocher)

The Grisons (Grischun in Rhaeto-Romanic, Grigioni in Italian and les Grisons in French) is the largest Swiss Canton with its 7113.5 square kilometres, for it covers a sixth of the area of the whole country. It is situated completely in Alpine territory. The main valleys widened by glacial development and heaped up alluvially, reaching right up to 1800 m, form the main settlement areas and were known at their milder levels already in prehistoric times. The numerous and polymorphic

side valleys (the Grisons are known as «the country of one hundred and fifty valleys») and the many sunny terraces are inhabited. The Grisons are a watershed *par excellence*. The Rhine has its source not far from the Gotthard and collects its tributaries like the branches of a huge tree. The Inn carries the crystalline sand of the Bernina massif far away into the Black Sea, whilst the Rombach (Münstertal) flows into the Etsch, and the Poschiavino, the Mera of the Bergell and the Moesa swell the Adda and stream towards the Adriatic.

Near Piz Lunghin it merely depends on the direction of the wind whether a raindrop reaches the North Sea, the Black Sea or the Adriatic.

Naturally, the Grisons are much less densely populated than the regions of the Swiss Midlands. Although the extensive grass areas are utilised to very high altitudes, the share of barren high mountain landscape is immense. Apart from agriculture (cattle breeding and dairy farming) and forestry, tourism plays an ever increasing and important role. Resorts like St. Moritz, Pontresina, Davos, Klosters, Arosa, Flims are world-renowned.

Industry, too, has developed increasingly in the Canton during



Alp Vaüglia in the Swiss National Park.

(Photo SNTO)

the last decades. The largest power plant of the Grisons are the Emser Works. Water power is well developed and reaches a maximum output which constitutes nearly a quarter of electro-energy production in Switzerland.

The approximately 150000 inhabitants are Protestant by about half, and Roman Catholic the other half. German, Rhaeto-Romansh and Italian are the three official languages of the Canton. Rhaeto-Romansh, the oldest of the Grisons languages, was acknowledged the fourth national

language of Switzerland by the Swiss electorate in 1938. The emigration of many Rhaeto-Romans for economic reasons (first to foreign lands, and lately above all to the larger agglomerations in German-speaking Switzerland) and the immigration of people of other tongues who are not willing or able to integrate, have been very detrimental to Rhaeto-Romansh. This means that one has to foster and protect consciously the beautiful language derived from the Latin, whose five written idioms could

Typical Engadine-houses in Guarda.

(Photo SNTO)



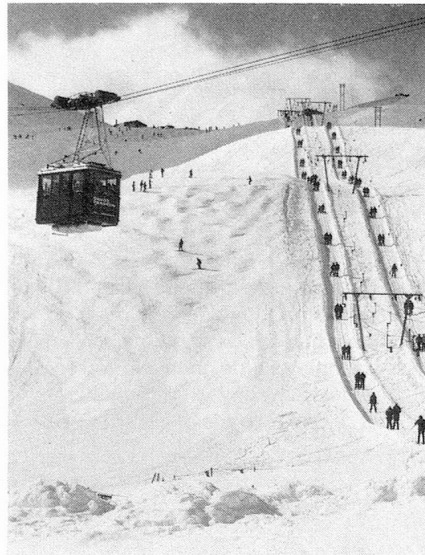
A few figures

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Surface area: | 7,113,5 km ² |
| Population: | 162,086 inhabitants for 220 communes (32,700 in the town of Chur) |
| Denomination: | 85,803 Roman Catholics 74,391 Protestants 1,892 other religions |
| Languages: | German, Romansh and Italian |
| Agricultural estates: | 8,539 |
| Tourism: | 1,071 hotels (47,308 beds) |
| Industrial undertakings: | 119 (7,841 employees) |
| Limited companies: | 5,399 |
| Net of roads: | 3,178 km |
| Total of engine-vehicles: | 43,914 |

not be merged into one written language. This is done for instance by setting up Romansh kindergartens, by promoting schools, literature, the press etc.

In the valleys going South: Poschiavo, Bregaglia, Mesolcina and Val Calanca, Italian is spoken. Before the passes (St. Bernardin tunnel, Bernina railway and road, Maloja) were made negotiable in winter, these *Valli* were very isolated from the other parts of the Grisons. The majority of the Grisons citizens speaks German. Chur is the capital, a settlement (*Welschdörfli*) already inhabited by the Romans and the first bishopric North of the Alps. The Grisons people get on well with one another across languages and denominations: the boundaries of speech and religion are not identical, and that results in a very motley picture in every respect, all the more since Alemannic-speaking immigrants came over from the Valais (Walser) in the Middle Ages. They settled amidst the originally Rhaeto-Romanic region. Magnificent forests, glaciated mountain massifs, lakes (like those of the Upper Engadine), varied pass roads, attractive villages of architectural characteri-

Winter holidaymakers at Pontresina on a gay sled-outing to the Roseg Valley. In the background to the right, the Bernina mountains. (Photo SNTO)



The Parsenn region near Davos has some of the most varied ski descents.

(Photo SNTO)

stics according to the respective valley – they all make the Grisons one of the most beautiful regions of our country, most celebrated by friends of nature. In their praise, the healthy, sunny high-mountain climate and world-famous spas (Scuol, Tarasp, St. Moritz, Passugg, Vals etc.) are given pride of place for all those who are in search of healing.

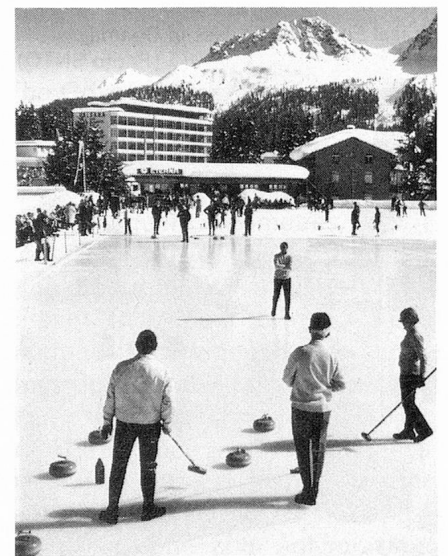
The Swiss National Park lies in an ideal part from Scuol to S-chanf South of the course of the Inn and enjoys an ever increasing reputation at home and abroad.

The Grisons have a troubled history. Originally they were inhabited by the Rhaetians, were then subjugated by the Romans in 15 B.C. and became the centre of the Roman province of Raetia Prima. After a.d. 536, the Grisons belonged to the Franconian, after 843 to the Eastern Franconian and later to the Germanic Empire, but kept a certain independence under the Bishop of Chur (hence the name *Churraetien*). Aristocracy, townsmen and peasants united politically fairly early. The already mentioned immigration of the Walser expedited the Germanification of Rhaetia. The threat by the Dukes of Austria caused the

valleys of Domleschg, Oberhalbstein, Bergell and Engadine to unite with the town of Chur and the Chapter, and to constitute the *Gotteshausbund* in 1367. In 1395, the Valley of the Vorderrhein, Schams, Rheinwald and Misox formed the Upper or Grey Union (*Grauer Bund*), and the death of the Count of Toggenburg in 1436 hastened the foundation of the *Zehngerichtebund* with Davos, the Prättigau and the domain of Maienfeld. These three federations soon had a closer relationship with one another (Lia Chadè and Ligia Grischa joined up with seven of the eight old Cantons [*Alte Orte*] of the Confederation in 1497). From 1512 to 1797, the three Federations governed the districts of Bormio, Veltlin and Chiavenna, subject territories which they finally lost during the Revolution. (Hence the jest that the Grisons people have to reconquer the Veltlin by the half-litre). Already in 1521, the Reformation came to the Grisons and at first no blood was shed. In 1524, the three Federations united constitutionally. Denominational tensions and egoistical tendencies of some families brought the Grisons to the brink of disaster in the 17th cen-

Curling on the skating-rink of Arosa.

(Photo SNTO)





Arosa, one of Switzerland's largest winter sport resorts. (Photo SNT0)

ture when the power constellations wanted to secure the Grisons passes. On one side were Austria, Spain, Milan and on the other Venice, where numerous Engadine emigrants lived, and France. Partisanship led by respected families like the Planta (in favour of the Austrians) and the Salis (Francophile) resulted in bad feuds, in which an adventurous figure like that of Juerg Jenatsch could live life to the full. Between 1649 and 1652, Austria sold her rights to the Grisons, above all to the relief of the Lower Engadine; the partisan struggles abated only gradually. The 18th century may be considered a happy period: politics and schools became aristocratised: the private schools of Haldenstein, Marschlin, were pioneering achievements of educational training; the arts and trade flourished. In 1798, the Grisons, as Canton Rhaetia, were united with the Helvetic Republic by Napoleon and became the 15th Canton of the Confederation as a result of the Acts of Mediation in 1803. The Canton gave itself a new constitution in 1814, but in fact it did not become a uniform political structure until 1854 with the demand

by the people for full majority, a claim obvious and natural for the Grisons citizens. In 1892, a revision of the Cantonal Constitution took place, and from then onward, it may be said that the Grisons adjusted elastically and with solidarity to the demands and the needs of federal politics.

The troubled history, the importance of the Alpine crossroads since prehistoric times, emigration and political life marked not only the character of the Grisons citizen – Conrad Ferdinand Meyer described it as steadfast and reliable as in the North and cunning as in the South – but also habitation and customs. The Grisons are rich in ancient monuments, amongst them some famous ones like the Monastery of Mustair with its Carolingian frescoes or the Romanesque church ceiling of Zillis, not to mention castles, aristocratic palaces, stately townhouses, numerous altars and mural paintings in large and small churches. The Grisons may be called a work of art of nature; with its three languages and cultures, with its troubled and often enough dramatic history a Switzerland in miniature, strictly speaking no Canton but a country.

Andri Peer



You see, that's why I knitted the arms so long.



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