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SUCCESSFUL MOUNTAIN RALLIES

Despite rain and snowfall at high altitudes, the mountain marching rallies sponsored by the Swiss National Tourist Office in conjunction with the Swiss Alpine Club were a resounding success. Of the 380 groups with a total of 2,953 hikers who had registered, 322 groups with 2,331 marchers reached one of the seven rendezvous points of Lauterbrunnen, Wildhaus, Airolo, Engelberg, Leukerbad, Les Diablerets and Disentis, even though some of the passes had to be closed due to the sudden snowfall. There was not a single notable mishap, and the mood of the thoroughly soaked marchers when they reached their goals could not have been better. In general the participants were very satisfied with the event and expressed the wish that it should be repeated in future. [S.N.T.O.]

"INN SIGNS — SYMBOLS OF SWISS HOSPITALITY" ...

... this was the motto of a promotion, carried out two years ago by the Swiss National Tourist Office, which consisted of a travelling exhibition and a richly illustrated brochure. The exhibition was seen in Basle, Paris and many other cities. Having been restored by specialists, one of the finest pieces from the exhibition was recently returned to its old home at the village inn "Zum Rössli" in Ernen, near Fiesch (Upper Valais); it is the valuable sign "Knight St. George", dating from the sixteenth century. [S.N.T.O.]

WHY NOT GO HOME TO THE HOME AT DUERRENAESCH?

With a flash, the little village of Duerrenaesch in the peaceful Aargau countryside became known to the world on Wednesday, 4th September, 1963. Suddenly it emerged in the world news headlines when the Swissair "Caravelle" crashed and a small farming village in the Canton of Zurich lost practically its entire adult population in one of the worst disasters in aviation.

Today, a simple stone monument marks the spot where the tragedy occurred, and the soft green lawns hide the scene of undescrivable chaos and stark destruction. The monument is just outside the village which I visited for the first time on a fine day last August. The reason for my visit was to see the HOME for the Swiss Abroad, of which I had heard so much over a number of years.

To say that I was impressed would be an understatement. I was quite bowled over. From the moment I set foot in the "village within the village" as the whole HOME area with its eight houses is called, I felt not only welcome but accepted as if I had belonged there for years.

The HOME is the work of a generous Swiss, himself a former "Auslandschweizer". He wants to remain anonymous and is happy just to have created this centre and to keep it alive.

At a very reasonable price, the HOME affords holidays to Swiss from abroad. The amenities are those of a well-run smaller hotel. The food is plain but wholesome and well prepared. But what "gets" you, is the atmosphere which is so friendly and natural. For those

who want it, excursions and special functions are arranged, and the National Day Celebrations and Christmas and New Year Parties of the HOME have become well-known in many parts of the world, wherever a Swiss lives who had the opportunity of spending a holiday at Duerrenaesch.

The fact that it is in the country, makes it an excellent holiday place for anyone trying to find peace and quiet, to go for lovely walks or to sit in the garden under the old trees. It is ideal for families, too, though those who are not fond of children, need not fear any disturbance, as the individual houses are spread out enough to prevent a collision of interests.

During the peak holiday periods, the HOME is full. Its capacity, which can be stretched by camp beds for youngsters, is somewhere about 100-120. The bedrooms are well furnished, simple, but homely and there are plenty of lounges and sitting rooms. A "Locanda Ticinese" in the basement of the main building is specially suitable for any "do's" the younger generation may wish to put on. The Swiss Hall provides facilities for dances, lectures and film shows.

When I was there, the youngest visitor was a baby of a few weeks, and the oldest a gentleman of over 90 who, incidentally, still went for a swim in the near-by Hallwilersee two years ago.

The HOME is most efficiently run. The impression I got was that all wheels were competently, but lovingly oiled, and that the well-being and the comfort of the visitor was the most important thing. No-one was a number, every guest was treated as an individual, as a friend. No wonder, many Swiss return year after year to spend their holidays at the HOME!

The HOME not only provides holidays, it also affords an abode for Swiss returning home for good, who have to find work and don't know where to live at first. This is particularly valuable for those of our compatriots who had to leave their countries in a hurry owing to political upheavals. For them, the HOME is a haven.

Unfortunately, there is an off-peak period, too, when the HOME is not full. In order to make use of the accommodation and the staff and to reduce overheads, various courses and working parties are being arranged for the in-between-seasons. One of these schemes was started last year, when a group of twelve English women representing the Townswomen's Guilds, the National Federation of Women's Institutes and others, visited the HOME to explore a possible course of action. That visit set an avalanche in motion, and the first study group in spring of last year was such a success that the idea has spread like wildfire. Nearly all the courses for 1966, from the end of March to the end of June, and for September and October, are booked. There are thirty women in each party. A basic programme of study subjects and a great variety of visits and excursions is arranged. The British have discovered the HOME, and by the look of things will go on using it during the times when few if any Swiss from abroad visit Duerrenaesch.

If I write today, it is partly to express my gratitude to the management of the HOME, who received me most warmly and showed me a good part of the lovely Aargau on top of it. But above all, I should like to induce some of my compatriots to spend a holiday there some time. The next opportunity will be at Christmas, and the advertisement on another page explains the very favourable conditions of a winter holiday at the HOME. If you have not yet made up your mind where to spend Christmas — there is a chance, and you will not regret it.

MM