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English captions

1 The narrow gorge of the Vorderrhein near Versam, where the Safien Valley joins it

2 The Men Poo house in Sent in the Lower Engadine was built in 1823

Farming folk from Curaglia (3) and Trin (4, 5). The Rhaeto-Romanic proportion of the population is particularly high in the upper Vorderrhein Valley. Thus 97 per cent of the inhabitants of Val Medel, leading to the Lucomagno Pass, designate themselves as Rhaeto-Romanic, while lower down in Trin, near the tourist centres of Flims and Laax, only half the people speak Romansh

6-9 "Romeo e Giulietta", open-air theatre in Romansh, performed in Laax. Shakespeare's play, translated into the local dialect, is presented by a large company from the surroundings of the tourist centre above the Vorderrhein Valley, where the dialect today is mostly drowned in the babel of languages spoken by foreign visitors

10 Many communes are endeavouring to teach their children Romansh as long as possible. Of the 213 communes of the Grisons, 167 have their own elementary school with at least five pupils. At 67 of them the teaching is done in Romansh, at 82 in German and at 18 in Italian. In 23 Romansh-speaking communes the population is too small to justify a village school. In the higher classes teaching is normally in German instead of Romansh. The school system in the Grisons is further complicated by the five Romansh idioms (Sursilvan, Sutsilvan, Surmiran, Putèr and Vallder), which differ so much among themselves that a joint textbook for the whole region is impracticable. The new standard language, Rumantsch grischun (Grison Romansh), is not accepted by all Rhaetians, and its use in schools is thought by some to endanger the local idioms

11 A pupil is here writing synonymous expressions in Sursilvan on the blackboard

12-15 The monastery of Disentis/Mustèr is an important centre for the Surselva, which is predominantly Roman Catholic. The votive pictures shown here express gratitude to the saints for their aid in times of need

16 The monks and the monastery school have long done their part to preserve Romansh by employing it in their pastoral work

17 The church of San Gian, enjoying an idyllic hilltop situation to the south of Schlarigna (Celerina), is mentioned in all the travel guides

18 Looking down from Muottas Muragl on the open valley with the Upper Engadine lakes

19 Tschlin in the Lower Engadine, where Vallader is spoken, still has an intact village image. The impact of multinational tourism is here less pronounced, so that a large proportion of the population still speak Romansh

20-23 Engadine villages owe their character to their impressive masonry houses embellished with surface ornaments, drawings and inscriptions. Giuliano Pedretti of Schlarigna (Celerina) here demonstrates how the wall is first plastered, then covered with a thin layer of fine mortar in which the ornament is scratched. The oldest extant sgraffiti date from the 15th century. Since the Grisons at that time maintained closest contacts with the south, resemblances to the Florentine style are not fortuitous

24-27 Following double pages: Houses with sgraffito decorations in Ardez (24, 25), Bever (26) and Tschlin (27)

28 The highest cembra pine woods in Europe are to be found at Tamangur beyond S-charl, in a lateral valley of the Lower Engadine

29 Agriculture was long the main source of income for the Rhaetians. But since 1955 the number of workers employed in this sector has dropped to less than one third

30/31 Can the character of a language zone be captured in pictures? These two photographs from Curaglia, a farming village above Disentis/Mustèr on the Lucomagno Pass road, sum up the situation of Romansh. The valley is remote, but there is an important summer road connection with the south. The big houses are almost all occupied by an aging population, though one that exhales great vitality. The natural scene attracts the lowland holiday-maker, but the land is hard to cultivate and to live off. Tourism offers a certain economic future, but only if kept to a moderate scale. Even so, foreign visitors impose many changes; the locals must adapt to requirements, for instance speaking more German

32-34 Concrete and asphalt in the hills: in an environment where typical features are disappearing and everything begins to look the same, old customs tend to become the concern only of the folklorist and the museum. The big standardized façades are the result of uncontrolled growth, the reverse of the medal for a booming holiday paradise. These house fronts might just as well hide a Mediterranean beach or the landscape of the Rockies

35 In spite of the creation of a standard Rhaeto-Romance language, which is intended primarily for written communication between speakers of the various dialects and for official statements and inscriptions, there is as yet no Rhaeto-Romance daily newspaper

36-39 A glance at the walls and at more or less official signs reveals a confusing variety of idioms that is typical of this area

40 The "Gasetta Romontscha", which publisher Giusep Condrau here presents, is the regional newspaper of the Surselva

41 Romansh language courses are a way of facilitating integration for newcomers and regular holiday guests

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Redaktion und Gestaltung / Rédaction et conception

Roland Baumgartner
Esther Woerdheoff

Photos

Lucia Elser, Luzern

Ständige Mitarbeiter / Collaborateurs permanents

Henri Dreyfus (Ausstellungen)
Rose Steinmann (Bücher)

Übersetzer / Traducteurs

Edmond Müller, Redacta SA (français)
Giorgio Gerosa (italiano)
Stanley Mason (english)

Mitarbeiter dieser Ausgabe / Collaborateurs de ce numéro

Reinhard Bichsel und Bruno Pedretti,
Basel, Mitarbeiter des Nationalfond-
Projekts «Sprachen in der Schweiz»
(Teilprojekt des Nationalen
Forschungsprogramms Nr. 21:
Kulturelle Vielfalt – Nationale
Identität); Manfred Gross, post
d'infurmaziun, Lia Rumantscha, Cuir

Comics

Peter Haas, Hatrick-Film AG, Domat
Ems («Die Geschichte der
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Jacqueline Kehrli-Rommerts,
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