

How the Swiss people live and work

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HOW THE SWISS PEOPLE LIVE AND WORK.

Shortly before the end of the war, a pamphlet of 176 pages entitled "Le peuple suisse et son économie" was published in Switzerland under the auspices of the "Redressement National". Profusely and handsomely illustrated, it consists of a comprehensive survey of the economic life of the Swiss people in all its aspects. It is packed with information. The subjects studied are agriculture, industry, scientific research, commerce, banking, wages and cost of living, savings, insurance, taxation and social services.

Great changes have taken place in the social structure of Switzerland within the last 150 years. From a relatively poor and mainly agricultural country, she gradually became transformed into a highly industrialised community. The advent of steam power and modern machinery led to the establishment of industrial undertakings whose development has never ceased to keep pace with both technical improvements and the growth of the population. The latter, from 1½ million in 1800 had increased to 2¼ million in 1850 and reached 4¼ million in 1941. Of these, about 2 millions are engaged in some kind of professional activity. Incidentally, the Swiss residing abroad were, in 1939, estimated at ½ million of which 100,000 in the Americas.

The conception of Switzerland as a nation of Hotel-keepers has as little foundation as Napoleon's gibe that the English were a nation of shop keepers. In point of fact no more than 5% of the working population, two thirds women, are engaged in the Hotel Industry.

The high standard of living achieved could not have been maintained without the expansion of foreign trade. No longer did Switzerland find it necessary to send out her young manhood into foreign service. Instead of mercenaries, she exported machinery, watches, chemicals, textiles, electrical appliances and alimentary preparations. The excellent quality of Swiss products became known throughout the world and established for them a supremacy they still hold. A further source of wealth was found in the invisible exports, banking, transport and the tourist trade.

How from small beginnings the Swiss industry rose to a position of world-wide pre-eminence, makes fascinating reading. Its development is all the more re-

markable as most of the raw materials and fuel had to be imported at considerable cost and from great distances, a handicap which weighed heavily on Swiss productivity in times of war.

The secret of this success lies largely in the training and in the intelligence of the Swiss worker and the untiring search for improvements in manufacturing methods. Progress is the keynote of Swiss Industry for, as the first Mr. Sulzer said "To sit still is to retrograde". However perfect the machine, it is the human factor that predominates.

When on the occasion of their Jubilee, the firm of Brown Boveri invited a party of American engineers to visit their works, the visitors were greatly impressed, not so much by the up-to-date machinery as by the fact that almost every worker was able to understand the most complicated blue prints and if need be to produce one of his own, a display of individual skill unknown to American methods of mass production.

What of the future? Will Switzerland emerge from the upheaval of war, a happy, prosperous nation, able to maintain the high standard and the supremacy in the industrial field she has attained? The answer is found in her determination to achieve yet further progress and to exert all her energies and skill to this end. Moreover she is fortunate in the possession of an invaluable asset, her rising generation, which constitutes a guarantee for the future. Well educated, enthusiastic and dependable, these young people will carry on the traditions on which the Swiss genius is founded. All the State planning and social services, however wisely conceived, are not by themselves sufficient; it is the moral qualities that count most.

On this hopeful note ends a well-written and excellently produced review which every Swiss ought to read. Copies, free of charge, can be obtained by application to the Secretariat des Suisses à l'Etranger, N.S.H. 36 Bundesgasse, Bern.

J.J.F.S. 14th June, 1946.

JOURNEE DES SUISES DE L'ETRANGER, 1946.

This year's "Journée des Suisses de l'étranger" will take place in Berne, on August 23rd - 25th.

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