

May Day celebrations

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MAY DAY CELEBRATIONS

Reports of May Day Celebrations have reached the "Swiss Observer" from many parts of Switzerland. It was mainly the workers and Socialists who took part in processions and demonstrations, in the Valais, in the Jura, in many towns of Berne, Zurich, Vaud and of Eastern Switzerland — everywhere in warm spring sunshine. The solidarity of the workers, education of the masses, suitable housing for the foreign workers, cost of living, social security and world peace were subjects covered by various speakers. At Reinach (BL) former Federal Councillor Prof. Dr. Max Weber referred to the social conditions of fifty years ago, the crisis of the thirties and the progress achieved since. In Lausanne the procession of some thousand people carried a number of placards, one of them with the striking slogan "It is better to be active today than radioactive tomorrow". Bands and Groups of cyclists, flag bearers, gymnasts and singers took part in various processions, also a number of foreign workers employed in Switzerland. In Schaffhausen the procession was 2,000 strong and contained no fewer than five brass bands. In Bienne as many as 5,000 participated in the cortège and speeches were made in three of our national languages.

On a large scale were held the celebrations in Basle, Zurich and Berne. Not only a procession but also an assembly at the Volkshaus, where a youth organisation produced a play, took place in Basle. In Zurich, the May Day demonstrations had a special accent through an un-

usual strike by the association of plaster workers and a Spanish contingent who protested against the execution of Grimaud.

Finally, in Berne, it was the Socialist Federal Councillor Tschudi who was the official speaker on the First of May. He said that the fact that a member of the Federal Government was speaking at the workers' festival was a symbol of the workers' solidarity with the Swiss Confederation. He referred to the co-operation which was desirable amongst the workers of Europe in a real European integration. At the same time he confirmed that the workers of Switzerland were equally determined to defend the independence of their country and to continue to uphold Swiss political neutrality. He touched on a number of problems confronting Switzerland today, social security, economic boom, questions affecting the care of youth on one hand, the welfare of the old people on the other. Nearly 800,000 old men and women were drawing old-age insurance benefits, a great blessing indeed, though there was some urgent need to improve pensions as in some cases there was still hardship. The same applied to sickness insurance, the Federal Councillor stated. He concluded that it should be the aim of the powers that be, to use the means which resulted from the present affluence for the general well-being, above all for the realisation of the ideal of social justice.

(Based on A.T.S. reports.)

EMIGRATION FROM SWITZERLAND

The "Bundesamt für Industrie, Gewerbe und Arbeit (BIGA)", the Federal Office for Industry, Trade and Labour, has issued a report that during 1962 the number of Swiss desiring to emigrate has again declined. In the previous year 3,074 persons had applied, and in 1962 this figure had declined to 2,442. The wish to settle abroad, especially in overseas countries where political and economic conditions are often unstable, is no longer very strong amongst the Swiss.

During 1962 159,381 Swiss were registered with Embassies, Legations and Consulates abroad, plus 108,247 dual nationals. Compared with 1961 the number of Swiss abroad has gone down by 1,393, whereas dual nationals have increased by 3,946.

According to the figures available the largest Swiss Colony abroad is that of France at a total of 91,223, even bigger than that of the whole of the American continent with 61,966 Swiss registered. In West Germany there are over 29,000 and in Italy, incidentally the best-organised Colony, 17,806 compatriots. All of Asia accounts for 5,039 registrations, of which the highest are 774 in Israel and 651 in India. In Africa 13,914 Swiss and dual-nationals live, of whom 3,447 are in South Africa. 20,789 Swiss reside in the U.S.A., 12,662 in Canada and 10,195 in Argentina. Australia has a Swiss population of 4,605 and New Zealand and Oceania 1,200. These figures are, of course, not complete, as they represent only registered Swiss. We know from Great Britain, where the figure is put at 13,326 (8,786 Swiss and 4,540 dual nationals), that it does not include a great many young Swiss who find it unnecessary to register with the Swiss Consulates.

There has also been an increase in the number of Swiss who have returned to Switzerland after many years' residence abroad. Help had to be extended to many of them

to facilitate their adjustment to Swiss life. Sometimes considerable difficulties are encountered due to lack of funds, advanced age or general estrangement. The Solidarity Fund of the Swiss Abroad is playing an important part in this, and it is a matter of wisdom and common sense to join this Fund when the going is good. Once political upheavals have started it may be too late and the danger of losing one's livelihood due to political strife and economic pressure in the country of one's residence may soon become a reality, as many of our compatriots have experienced in recent years. As the administration of the Solidarity Fund in Berne reports, a total of Fr.1,242,500 have already been paid out to 129 members of the Fund.

(A.T.S. and Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad, Berne.)

SWISS COMMISSION FOR THE EXCHANGE OF STAGIAIRES

The Confederation has made so-called stagiaire agreements with several countries. The first were already arrived at in 1935, with France, Belgium and Holland. On the basis of these treaties thousands of foreigners have been employed in Switzerland and just as many Swiss have gone abroad without any regard to labour market conditions in the eleven countries.

In 1962 permits were issued to 509 young foreigners to work in Switzerland on a student-trainee basis. 810 Swiss worked on the same basis in other countries for the same period. Last year this figure was 1,020.

The latest annual report puts the total figure as high as 11,000 Swiss who have taken advantage of these agreements since the beginning. Exchanges are arranged with the help of several Swiss organisations which belong to the Commission.

The Swiss Farmers' Union and the Employment Agency of the Swiss Mercantile Society have arranged the largest number of stagiaire permits. It is interesting to note that a large number of Swiss have been placed in agriculture in Sweden and Denmark.

[A.T.S.]