

It happened in the Canton of Ticino

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IT HAPPENED IN THE CANTON OF TICINO

Our Italian-speaking compatriots are somewhat favoured in as much as they get local news in every issue. The usual cantonal news report would, therefore, not be necessary. On the other hand, many of our readers, a number of English friends among them, are interested in what happens in the Southern part of Switzerland, without knowing the language. It is mainly for their benefit that we give today's report.

Statistics for the Canton of Ticino, based on the census in 1960, reveal that the number of inhabitants increased from 117,759 in 1850 to 195,566 in 1960. This is a rise of 11.7% for the decade 1950-1960. The largest increase happened at Ghirone (Blenio) whose inhabitants grew from 70 to 340 in the ten years, an increase of 385.7%. Some communes, however, show a drop in the number of residents, Rasa (Locarno) which had 38 fourteen years ago and only 19 in 1960.

According to origin, 70% are Ticinesi, 11.4% other Swiss. Among the 18.6% foreigners, Italians dominate with 88.4%, followed by Germans with 5.9%, 1% Austrians and 1.3 non-Europeans.

In January, a report was published by a professor of the University of Economics in St. Gall, which maintained that in spite of the progress made since the war, the national income of the Canton was only 2.8% of that of the whole of the country. The standard of living is apparently still 20% below average. The Ticinese's income was lower than other people's; he was below the average Zurichers by Fr.5,300.— and average Baslers by Fr.8,000.—. Productivity in the Ticino was 23% lower than the Swiss average in 1962. Wages and salaries, too, were between 10 and 20% below the Swiss average.

Tourism accounts for 330 million francs in the Canton's revenue which varies between 800 and 900 million francs. The number of tourists visiting the Ticino grew from 137,297 in 1935 to 266,750 in 1962. An International Symposium took place in Lugano last August whose theme was "Tourism and Church". There has been a large increase in camping which is not altogether desirable. The commune authorities of Locarno decided in October to close all camping sites on their territory.

Road construction is making good progress. Much discussion has been going on in connection with the road tunnel through the Gotthard and the tunnel scheme Toedi-Greina, which should link Eastern Switzerland with the Ticino. The large viaduct of Melide is completed, and road and traffic improvements to the tune of 19½ million francs are planned, one of these concerns the Piazza Grande in Locarno. The airfield of Magadino is to be enlarged, and automatic signalling on the Centovalli railway and bus services out of Locarno are further improvements. The Blenio hydro-electric power stations are working, and large afforestation schemes have been started, especially of chestnut trees. Agricultural improvements include the reduction of goat keeping.

There will be a new cantonal prison at Cadro near Lugano (6.5 million franc project) and there is a new District Court for the Leventina.

On 1st January, the new health insurance came into force, compulsory for anyone earning less than Fr.13,000.— p.a., voluntary for others.

There is an acute shortage of teachers, and married women teachers are wanted more and more. A cantonal grammar school is planned for Lugano-Viganello at a cost

of two million francs. Adult education has made great strides, and Fr.750,000.— have been earmarked for scholarships and grants for 1963/4.

The Villa Ciani in Lugano became an art institute three years ago. The first pupils in various arts and crafts left last May to take up positions in Swiss and foreign undertakings. Also last May, the first exhibition of Italian books was held in Locarno, again with considerable success. A competition was held for the best project of a new congress building in Lugano. The famous Palazzo Pollini at Mendrisio is to be restored. Its future was in jeopardy, but the local authorities intervened and saved the mansion from demolition.

As in former years, the music festival of Ascona was a great success. So is the eighth international "black and white" exhibition opened in Lugano on 26th March. For the first time, all five Continents are represented, and drawings and etchings from all parts of the world are exhibited. The big prize of the town of Lugano was awarded to the Englishman David Hockney for his engraving "The Diploma". The British Ambassador in Switzerland, Sir Paul Francis Grey, received the award in the artist's place.

On 2nd March, the "Locarno Concerts" started. They include chamber and church music and recitals, and they will last until early July. Music of a different type was heard as Ascona last summer when the international jazz meeting took place. Twenty-six jazz groups from nine countries, including U.S.A. and South Africa, competed.

Early in March, the Ticino section of the Europunion organised a meeting in honour of the winner of the 1963 Europe Prize, Mr. Salvador de Madariaga. He gave an address on "Europe today and tomorrow".

On account of the mild weather, the carnival festivities in February were crowned with special success. In Lugano, 6,000 portions of rice and mushrooms were distributed at the "Risottate", the most typical of all Ticinese carnival events.

A number of smugglers were discovered at various times, the biggest haul was the fur loot discovered by the Police at a boarding house in Lugano — nearly all of Fr.300,000.— worth of skins stolen in Geneva; and it all started when the frontier guard at Chiasso became suspicious of two men.

Finally, an unusual piece of news: ten thousand bottles of champagne which had been in a bonded warehouse for longer than the required time and would normally have been destroyed, were presented to hospitals and institutions in the Ticino at the end of the year. Note: Permission was granted by the owner, and it was ascertained first that the contents were still in excellent condition!

(News by courtesy of Agence Télégraphique Suisse.)

FOUNDATIONS OF SWISS FOREIGN POLICY

The Editor regrets that, owing to lack of space, Prof. R. L. Bindschedler's article will be concluded in the next issue.