

# May day in Switzerland

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Colonel Georg Reichlin as new Chief of Staff of Training with rank of Brigadier.

National Councillor Otto Bienz, Berne, as new *Oberfeld-kommissar* in succession to Hans Scheurer.

Kaspar Haug, Aeschi, as Chief of Personnel with the Federal Military Department.

#### Press

Dr. Hermann Voegeli, teacher at the Zug Cantonal School, as new Editor of "Der Schweizer Alpen Club" in succession to Dr. h.c. Max Oechslin.

Pfr. Gerhard Rytz, Geneva, as new Editor of the religious youth periodical "Kontakt".

#### Various

Prof. D. F. A. Lutz, Zurich, Delegate and Secretary of the *Schweizerisches Institut für Auslandsforschung*, in succession to Dr. A. Hunold.

Dr. U. Braun, as new Central Secretary of the Foundation "Für das Alter".

Walter Foerderer, architect in Basle, as teacher at the Art Academy of Karlsruhe.

Dr. Sc. Techn. Werner Schoch, Basle, Manager of the Agricultural Research Institute Liebefeld-Berne.

National Councillor Josef Leu, Lucerne, President of the Catholic Farmers' Federation.

Ing. Agr. Emil Straub, Zurich, President of the "Paten-schaft für bedrängte Gemeinden" in succession to Dr. Paul Cattani who, with his wife, has worked in the organisation for twenty-five years.

Walter Rentsch, Zurich, President of the "Schweiz. Buerofachverband".

[A.T.S.]

### MAY DAY IN SWITZERLAND

During the last decade of the nineteenth century, May Day demonstrations started. In those days, there was a belligerent industrial proletariat which fought with justification for better conditions. It used to be an opportunity for making demands during the bitter years of recession in the mid-thirties, and the demonstrators in those days came of their free will without being organised or instigated.

In an article in the "Basler Nachrichten" on 7th May, Editor and National Councillor Peter Dürrenmatt deplores as anachronism the fact that one has not been successful in turning May Day into a real "Tag der Arbeit" and that one still tenaciously clings to the fictitious idea that on 1st May one has to demonstrate *pro* social progress and *antidiscrimination* against the industrial worker. Yet, this year again, practically without exception, the demands made concern the whole nation and every social strata, and the subjects chosen are in fact an essential part of Swiss State Policy.

As May Day fell on a Sunday, some of the demonstrations took place already on the previous day. Mostly favoured by excellent weather, the public came out either to march in or to watch the processions. In the Valais, fewer people took part than usual. In Sion, about 100 workers walked in procession to the sound of the Savièse tambourines. At Brigue, for the first time in twenty years, the Free Trade Unions of the Upper Valais organised a meeting. In the *Suisse Romande* processions were held everywhere as usual. In Lausanne, the Communists had their own celebration a day early. At Porrentruy, the youth of the Jury used their second *Fête de la Jeunesse Jurassienne* to demand freedom and self-determination for the Jura.

At Grenchen, workers arranged a torch-light procession, and at Olten, the new Town Hall was inaugurated,

a fine building in the centre of the town. The cost of 10.3 million francs covered administrative offices a "Ratsaal" for the Commune Parliament, exhibition rooms, flats, a post office and a subterranean garage.

The Basle May Day demonstrations had marked international character with deputations from neighbouring Baden and Alsace, a contingent of North-German carpenters in their quaint and distinctive garb, as well as strong groups of the foreign working population. One of the main speakers on the Market Square where 7,000 people had gathered, was a member of the German Bundestag, Dr. A. Moeller. For a change, the workers from the other Half-Canton of Baselland combined with their urban colleagues.

1,300 people walked in procession in Schaffhausen where National Councillor H. Leuenberger, Trade Union Federation Chief, gave the main address. In St. Gall, some 2,000 people listened to Federal Councillor Tschudi who gave a survey of Swiss Home Policy, putting town and country planning first.

In Chur, for the first time, the organisers refrained from marching in procession, but gave an afternoon concert instead. In the evening, Gerhard Hauptmann's "Fuhrmann Henschel" was performed to a full Municipal Theatre. In Lucerne, an historic pageant "Woher-Wohin" by Peter Hunkeler formed the centre of the celebration.

In Zurich, strong foreign participation was registered, and there were speeches in Italian and Spanish. The Berne demonstrations were under the influence of the cantonal elections and some 6-8,000 spectators and demonstrators gathered on the Bundesplatz.

Whilst many speakers stressed in self-congratulatory manner the social progress that the workers had achieved, they also asked for cheaper housing and improved old-age pensions, a stop to the increased rise of the cost of living and the devaluation of the franc. The vote for women was asked for at several meetings. Some of the posters carried by the marchers wanted "Peace in Vietnam", "Self Determination for Cyprus", "Freedom for the Spanish People". Obviously, the workers from Spain and Italy gave the May Day celebrations a different meaning to that of their Swiss colleagues. Most of the demands, however, concerned the whole nation. Some of the problems which could legitimately have been made a real May Day issue were left out: the kind of poverty in the large towns, which, says Mr. Dürrenmatt, is less of a material than of a spiritual-moral kind, the tough conditions in some of the agricultural districts where nothing much has been felt of the economic boom and where the social standard is low, the existing inequalities in education and training between those available to youth in industrial centres and isolated mountain districts.

Mr. Dürrenmatt muses that the efforts to turn the 1st of May into a Day of Peace or of Labour would fail because of the doubtful character these terms had been given by the military demonstrations in the Communist countries and the pre-war efforts by the Nazi propagandists.

Mr. Dürrenmatt maintains that it will be difficult to make May Day into a genuine "Tag der Arbeit" as it would give it more importance than our National Day which we still celebrate as a working day. Thus, this anachronism, the writer concludes, will continue which, is no disaster provided one avoids slandering other Helvetic anachronisms.

(Apart from the above-mentioned article by courtesy of the "Basler Nachrichten", news was received from A.T.S.)