

Remembrance of the invasion of Czechoslovakia

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PILATUS PORTERS FOR VIETNAM?

The Federal Council has ordered an immediate ban on exports of Pilatus Porter planes manufactured by the Stans-based Bührle subsidiary Pilatus-Flugzeugwerke AG and an inquiry into use of the machines in Southeast Asia.

This follows allegations by a Zurich newspaper that civilian-type single-engined turbo-porter planes are being operated on behalf of the US Army in the Vietnam area. The paper states its belief that the operating firm, Continental Air Services, has flown "more or less regularly" over the Laotian border into North Vietnam to supply US-South Vietnamese espionage and sabotage groups.

Both Continental Air and Pilatus have denied that the planes have been run in connection with the Vietnam war, Pilatus contending that all sales have been carried out according to government regulations.

Civilian planes may be exported to any part of the world from Switzerland as long as it is not apparent that they could potentially be used for military or paramilitary purposes."

REMEMBRANCE OF THE INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Demonstrations have been organised in remembrance of the invasion on August the 21st, 1968, in most of the major cities of Switzerland.

In Bern, the official commemoration was organised by left-wing movements of the Canton and by the students of the University. 3000 students walked through the streets of the old town carrying torches and assembled at Munsterplatz, where Prof. Walter Hofer delivered a commemorative speech. Later, 500 youth demonstrated in front of the Soviet Embassy. It was cordoned-off by a strong contingent of police and all scuffles were avoided.

In Basle, a procession of 2000 Czech exiles and sympathisers carried the "mortal remains" of Messrs. Kossygin and Breschnev from Munsterplatz to the St. Jakobs memorial, where they laid a wreath. At the demand of the democratic party, a minute's silence was observed at noon sharp, and the whole of the city's traffic was brought to a standstill.

In Zurich, a mass was celebrated on the 20th August in the Herz-Jesu Kirche in commemoration of the Czech invasion. At noon on the 21st, the church-bells of the town were tolled and in the evening, about a thousand people assembled at Burkliplatz to hear a commemorative speech from the journalist Ulrich Käge.

In Lucern, thousands of people followed a torchlight-procession organised by the town's left-wing youth movements to the town-hall, where a minute's silence was observed and the Czechoslovak National Anthem played.

HOW THE CZECHS ARE INTEGRATED IN SWITZERLAND

A radio programme was devoted to the Czechs established in Switzerland. It showed that the refugees were, in the main, happy to be in their new home. Two of the interviewed people actually said that, when they spoke of "home", they meant their new home, Switzerland. A film director interviewed could not understand why his neighbours were interested in how late at night his lights were on and when and how long he was going out with his wife. On the other hand, he respected Switzerland's involvement in the numerous welfare organisations sponsored by the U.N. A Czech student found that his fellow students were politically more educated than his colleagues back home. Swiss students were very interested in political matters, he said, the trouble being that this interest was purely theoretical. He complained that his colleagues' minds were far from action. In Prague, on the other hand, students were spending less time in discussing politics but more in direct action. Another student hinted at communist infiltration in Switzerland and said that the Swiss authorities should not take this problem too lightly.

A Swiss official interviewed on this aspect of immigration from the Iron Curtain said that he had no evidence of communist agents infiltrating among the refugees and molesting them in any way. Another Czech interviewed confirmed him on this point.

The Czechs are a reserved, thrifty and hard working people and are pleasing to the Swiss. Industrialists and personnel managers interviewed were many to praise the good-will and efforts of the refugees in overcoming the difficulties with which they were faced in learning the local language and training for their new jobs.

There were no problems in industry and in other sectors of trade and commerce in finding jobs for the immigrants. There were some difficulties in the hospitals because the immigrants in this field were mostly specialists who had held responsible positions. There has therefore been some friction with the Swiss personnel in places and an interviewed woman doctor said that the various departments of Swiss hospitals were nothing like what she expected. Here the interviewer pointed out to his listeners that Czech refugees were all very reluctant to criticize the Swiss and Switzerland.

The director of the Federal Department of Justice and Police, Dr. Schuerch, said that 10,400 refugees had now received political asylum. In granting political asylum, the Swiss authorities had not considered the political affiliation of the applicants; only their records. In fact, the few who had been refused political asylum were judged

civically undesirable by the immigration officials.

There had been a few material hitches in accommodating this new population, in particular, many refugees were given dwellings for which the rent was disproportionate to their income. To help these people, the Confederation had spent about nine million francs. The refugees had a special resident's permit and were not considered, as long as they accomplished the necessary formalities, as having the same status as foreign workers in Switzerland. Dr. Schuerch said that there was no actual "limit" to the number of Czechs Switzerland was ready to receive. If a renewed outflow of refugees from Czechoslovakia should occur, the country would once again make the necessary arrangements to receive them.

A SEMI-WITTED WHO PLAYED WITH MILLIONS

The Criminal Court of Basle was faced with the case of a woman, found to be feeble-minded by one of the two psychiatrists called to examine her, who had handled stock transactions of 71 million francs and concluded banking business worth 31 millions.

The accused had been responsible for a bankruptcy involving losses of 7.5 millions in 1962. That the case had been left standing for so long was due to the negligence of the public prosecutor, condemned since, who had let the matter rest. The woman had previously been condemned to two and a half years of forced labour for a bankruptcy connected with embezzlement involving 240,000 francs, following which her second husband committed suicide. She remarried with the director of a small private bank. It failed, and this was not least due to its connection with the accused.

Since 1959, she had dealt in over 150 securities, buying for about 71 million francs and selling for 68 millions worth. She had never kept a book in all these dealings. Most of the embezzlement had been committed by unscrupulous speculators who had acted in her name without having the right to do so.

SWISS CONTRIBUTION TO THE MEKONG PROJECT

The Federal Council has voted two million francs, within the framework of Switzerland's technical co-operation with developing countries, for the agricultural projects of Chiang Rai in Thailand and Battambang in Cambodia. Considerable irrigation works have been carried through in the Mekong Basin for years. The four river states (Laos, Cambodia, Thailand and Vietnam) have decided to exploit the Mekong river economically with the assistance of other European countries. The river has a great hydro-electric potential and offers vast possibilities for irrigation.