

# Federal President Wetter on the economic aims of Switzerland

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our compatriots who are living abroad in favourable circumstances and who have already so often proved their generosity towards our country, will gladly seize the opportunity offered to them to prove their attachment to their native country through a voluntary gift. This appeal is addressed to them. The Federal Council is thanking them in anticipation.

The Swiss Consulate at Wellington will be glad to give any further information on the subject, as for instance the question of remittance authorities, regarding which, of course, the competent New Zealand authorities would have to be approached officially.

Berne, the 30th January, 1941.

Federal Department of Finance and  
Customs.      W e t t e r.

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FEDERAL PRESIDENT WETTER  
ON THE ECONOMIC AIMS OF SWITZERLAND.

(Memorable speech delivered by the President of our  
Confederation at the opening of the 25th Industries  
Fair at Basle.)

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When now and again I previously came to Basle, alone and unobserved, I often paid a visit to an old, still and quiet place. This place which is sought after by strangers with Baedekers in hand is but seldom visited by Swiss generally, because they think that they have no time for such things and therefore it is unknown to them. This place is the spot whereupon the Cathedral stands.

That tall proud Cathedral with its two slender towers, the Basle Minister, built of red sandstone as are some other Cathedrals along the upper Rhine, beautiful already by its colour which lends its warmth and quietitude and exalted through its noble architecture. And then the space in front of it. There are in Basle even more elegant spaces, and there are in other towns even more showy groups of buildings; but this modest receding before this proud place of worship, this unassuming, harmonic simplicity, have always made a deep impression upon me and have enobled this modest place in my eyes.

And that view upon the quiet, powerful river Rhine, which changes now more blueish, now more greenish and then loses itself in the distance as a shining ribbon. And across and above it on the horizon the dark hills. These impressions, together with the old University and the celebrated collection of paintings embodied for me always the old, sedate aristocratic Basle, the Basle of bygone days, the humanistic Basle of the good old times. Since then, Museum and University have been housed in new palaces which are the pride of the present day Basle and which bear witness that even modern times know how to appreciate highly spiritual things. The Cathedral, however, on its lofty eminence above the Rhine has remained, it can be neither replaced nor surpassed by any modern building.

From this high point of observation casting your eye down stream, another picture presents itself, a picture of the modern times: high chimneys, long factory buildings, the home of the chemical industry, this highly qualified export industry, which has carried the name of Basle all over the world: the new industrial Basle.

Basle's position as an important European place for Trade and Commerce is due to the natural development of the town. For centuries it was an important junction first of roads, then of railways. When later, with the strong and systematic extension of the European waterways the problem presented itself to Switzerland of joining the great shipping lines and thereby getting into direct communication with the sea, Basle took a

grip on itself, and with great perseverance solved and accomplished the navigation on the Rhine in spite of all the difficulties which stood in its way.

Then again was it but natural, that the thought of an Industries Fair in Basle took root and by the perseverance so characteristic of the old Balois became a reality. Prejudice and considerable resistance had to be surmounted, for certain misgivings were well understood. But the idea was formed and was accomplished with precision and energy.

Twenty-five years of Industries Fair represents unlimited initiative, perseverance and devotion on the part of the organisers, it means a great deal of good will and consideration on the part of the Authorities of Basle and requires faith, constancy and judgment but also thankful recognition from the exhibitors. In the same manner I wish to express the good wishes and thanks of the Federal Council to all those who have assisted in the advancement and development of the Swiss Industries Fair which today is celebrating its 25th anniversary. I also bring these greetings to all of you who have come here to commemorate the festive day of labour.

The stately halls present to us an excellent picture of the industry of the Swiss. Nobody would believe that this represents the national economy of a country which is poor in raw materials. We have no textile fibres, yet we have a highly developed Textile Industry and an equivalent Trade. In all its branches: linen, cotton, wool and silk, we can confidently go side by side with those countries which by nature and transport facilities are in a more favourable position than ourselves. No, undoubtedly in many cases we are in front. Metals and coal we also miss; yet the Swiss Metal and Machine Industry and Engineering are in many fields on the top. And similar are the conditions in other branches of our economic system as in the Chemical Industry and in the Watch Industry. Where is the explanation of this phenomenon?

The meager soil of our homeland was not sufficient in the long run to feed the existing population. Service in Foreign armies in the Middle Ages and then later emigration were the consequences. Then when in other countries Industries began to grow they were transplanted into our valleys by enterprising and commercially minded men. Also cantonal authorities in many instances have deserved well in furthering these enterprises. But the want of raw materials and the long distances of transport had to be taken into consideration. Therefore only the very best possible workmanship could show success. Only if we delivered equal quality, no it had to be better quality, could Industry develop. Only in this way and after a long grappling with this problem by able merchants, technologists as well as conscientious workmen, our Industries developed to such an extent that we even surpassed the standards we set ourselves.

The fight for industrial existence is a piece of Swiss cultural history. Yet every thing considered, even if this development now and again showed drawbacks, it was necessary and beneficial for the country and the people. But with increasing production grew the difficulties of disposal. The relatively close neighbourhood was no longer sufficient, more distant fields had to be conquered. And again it was the merchant pioneers who overcame these obstacles and opened up overseas markets in every part of the world.

In the struggle and fight with adversity of economic competition Swiss Industry grew up and got strong. There could never be any relaxation, neither can there be any now, today. If one wishes to maintain one's position, an ever increasing demand on quality has to be satisfied, which was and still is only possible by a good and general national education, by exemplary commercial and technical training right up to the highest classes at school. This is part of our Swiss economic strength, a force which inspires us with confidence even for the gloomy future.

How many a crisis Swiss economy had to overcome! Economic upheavals, political difficulties, martial catastrophes in Foreign markets interrupted the quiet development and often



raised doubts about the future. But over and over again these difficulties were mastered. That fact again gives us courage and confidence in the present grave circumstances. Discouragement or despondency must not be allowed, neither on political nor economic grounds.

It is true that the tendency of economic restrictions which existed already before the war has caused great worries and our hopes were always directed towards greater economic fields for our markets. The liberal commercial policy under which Switzerland so pleasingly developed was gradually abandoned. High customs walls, sharp restrictions and increasing payment difficulties prevented free exchange of commodities. The bi-lateral clearing contracts reduced open communications as these were based on the equalisation of payment balances between two countries. This fact represented to a country which was adapted for a world economy a threatening crippling of its exports. We have worked for an improvement of those conditions, but with no great success. For a long time we have hoped that this improvement should be found in a return to the old liberal commercial policy. This however may prove to be a dream which might cause a rude awakening.

If therefore we wish to reach our goal, we must look for other remedies. A closer economic co-operation in Europe is the best way to do this. And as the necessity for this is felt everywhere it could perhaps be the most obvious expedient. In which manner this co-operation is to take place, based on the independence of the state, will be a problem of post-war time. We are ready to assist in this work.

But to achieve this economic co-operation reforms in the payment arrangements become a necessity. The clearing system which unfortunately will remain with us in some form or other for a long time yet must be improved in such a manner as to be able to overcome a purely bi-lateral clearing. Therein could perhaps be found a certain compensation for the one-time free trade. But co-operation in Europe alone cannot be sufficient for us, we are adapted for a world economy and we cannot bear to be cut off from the sea and from overseas, without falling back economically and culturally. Therefore, besides a greater, better and freer co-operation in Europe, our interest, our hopes and our endeavours are also towards the establishment of World trade and economic relations of Switzerland with overseas.

This is our economic program, this our economic adaptation, and it must remain our program to come.

The forms may change, but the goal remains. But I would not do justice to our production if I should not remember at this moment Switzerland's agriculture. This point, however, is generally and more fully dealt with in the autumn at Lausanne. For agriculture the same is to be said as for trade and industry. To judge fairly the accomplishments of our farming one must have travelled abroad and seen for one's self how primitive the cultivation and how much smaller the actual results are in some countries compared with ours, even where conditions for agriculture are immensely better than those prevailing here. This comparison forces us to a greater respect for the labour which is required to achieve these results. Quality work again also in this province.

William Tell once told his boy "If one descends from our heights and goes still lower down and follows the rivers one comes to a great open country where the corn grows in wide, lovely fertile plains and the whole country appears like a garden." Tell meant a foreign country, to-day the boy Tell can find the fertile plains which look like a garden in his own country. It is Swiss soil, Helvetic territory. For that we have to thank our agriculture and the Swiss farmer. He deserves equally with the commercial man, the technician and the workman the highest recognition. And to-day doubly so, for to-day we have to get out of our soil as much as we possibly can.

For these reasons the whole of our economy can show itself with pride. The Swiss is a sober, zealous, willing and intelligent worker. He does not consider work a curse, but a blessing. This

we will gratefully remember at the anniversary of the Industries Fair, at today's festive day of labour.

Basle commemorates today its jubilee. It coincides with the federal jubilee year: 650 years of Swiss Confederation. As we enter today with fresh energy into the second quarter of a century of Basle's Industries Fair, so we Swiss look back with thanksgiving on the past of the State and with confidence and firm trust into the future of our country and our people, for our faith in victory of good over evil is firm and our will for self-assertion is unshaken. Now and for ever.

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#### SWISS NEWS SUMMARY.

The Federal Council have decided to raise a loan of Frs. 300'000'000 for the consolidation of floating debts and in payment of two Government loans recently fallen due. The loan is to be divided into two parts: (a) Bonds at 3% interest to be reimbursed after 10 years. (b) Treasury bills at 3% to be reimbursed after 6 years. Both loans were issued at 100%.

The Federal War Food Office announces that in spite of the precarious position of imports and the lack of fodder, rations for June are to remain unchanged, except for butter, which is to be decreased by 50 grammes, thus reducing the ration from 300 grammes to 250 grammes. An extra sugar ration of 3 kg per person is to be allowed, however, for preserving. This extra ration must be kept exclusively for this purpose.

The Department for Public Economy has decided - on the basis of the Federal Decree of October 17th, 1939 concerning the distribution of food - to introduce two meatless days a week, namely on Wednesdays and Fridays.

A further decree has been issued from the Swiss War Food Office, causing all available arable land - meadows and garden plots included - to be planted with potatoes.

At a recent meeting in Berne, members of the Commission for War Economy stated that the extension of the agricultural programme was a success.

The Heads of the Corporations of Swiss Towns have decided to support the measures to be taken against the uncontrolled rise in prices of foodstuffs. A low price level in favour of the poorer classes is to be maintained.

May Day was celebrated by the socialist parties and trade unions all over Switzerland. Zurich and Berne saw the traditional public processions, whereas in Basle a meeting took place in the "Volkshaus". In Geneva the manifestations were limited to group meetings as public demonstrations were not allowed. Everywhere the day passed without incident.

With the beginning of summer-time, the General decided in accordance with a decision of the Federal Council, that blackout should start one hour later as from May 5th, i.e. instead of at 10 p.m. as up to now; it will begin at 11 p.m. and continue until 5 a.m. as hitherto.

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#### 1st. of AUGUST CELEBRATIONS.

No reports are yet available from the various centres where the anniversaries have been celebrated, excepting from Auckland. The respective news will be published in the next issue.

AUCKLAND: A representative gathering of Swiss compatriots celebrated the 650th anniversary of Switzerland's Independence at the Club-rooms of the Overseas League, Queen's Arcade, Auckland, on Friday evening, August 1st.

Fiftyfive members and friends were present, a fine tribute of the community's loyalty towards our homeland, considering the small number of Swiss residing in and around Auckland. A high spirit of goodwill and friendship prevailed and everyone expressed great pleasure at meeting each other under such happy