

Swiss wonder if their boom will last

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cacies as well as cheeses, found their way to the housewives' baskets, and would be very welcome at the present time. Why the Government does not see to it that high-grade groceries as well as wines are imported, one does not know.

LEMBO TICINESE.

Notte di Natale. Notte Santa. Sulla terra, uscita sanguinante dalla tremenda prova, scende la benedizione divina. Tutta l'accarezza, lievemente. Perdonandole i terribili errori. Promettendole aiuto. Additandole quale via seguire, per la pace futura . . .

In cielo brillano tutte le stelle. In tutte le case brillano i lumi. Siano case umili, siano case sontuose. Le vie delle città sono animate da vita insolita. Le stradine dei paesi montani, portano, sulla neve recentemente caduta, orme fresche. In un tripudio di luci e canti si celebra la nascita del Redentore. Nelle cattedrali come nelle chiesette. Le mistiche note si fondono, si elevano, fanno meditare, involontariamente, anche gli increduli.

I solenni rintocchi delle campane chiamano alla preghiera e sul nostro animo scende una dolce mestizia che commuove, facendoci del bene! Rendendoci migliori, tanta potenza hanno queste campane nostre!

. . . Suon di chiesa, suon di chiostro, suon di Culla, suon di Mamma, di casa . . .

Per i nostri emigranti lontani dalla madre patria, la radio della Svizzera Italiana, ha avuto un pensiero gentile. Li ha raggiunti, sulle onde sonore, durante il mese di dicembre, la sera, con il suono delle diverse campane ticinesi, ben comprendendo che nulla, forse, poteva recare loro maggior piacere, come il sentire il suono della "loro" chiesetta natia. Nostalgicamente avranno vissuto, sentendole, gli anni loro primi, sarà sorto in loro il ricordo stringente del dolce passato, della casa avita . . .

Questo il saluto che sergò, sincero, dal Ticino, per i suoi figli lontani, che mai dimenticò, per i quali tanto tremò e pregò durante i tremendi anni di guerra. E attraverso lo "Swiss Observer" desidero io farmi interprete di tutti i ticinesi in patria e porgere, in modo specialmente cordiale, un augurio e un saluto ai "ticinesi-inglesi" . . .

Noi, che qui siamo ora diventati "inglesi-ticinesi" — dopo l'affluenza dei soldati americani in congedo, che ci visitarono continuamente per oltre un anno, e che fecero conoscere, un po' almeno, le caratteristiche loro, e invogliarono tutti allo studio della lingua inglese . . . tanto che si nota, nel Ticino, quasi una inglesemania! giovani e anziani, commercianti, professionisti, impiegati, dedicano con passione ore serali ai diversi corsi d'inglese, sorti come funghi! Fui non poco meravigliata, un giorno di mercato, sentire una modesta contadina, che mai varcò il Gottardo, rispondere in inglese alle richieste, fatte in francese, da una giovane miss! Nei negozi, accanto alle diciture nelle tre lingue nazionali sempre spicca la dicitura in perfetto inglese. Negli alberghi, sulle liste delle vivande, fanno misteriosa pompa piatti inglesi . . .

Fratellanza di lingua . . . fratellanza di popoli. Fosse questo un buon auspicio per una futura sereno e ricco di promesse. Come il suono delle campane!

Elena Ghiringhelli Lunghi.

SWISS WONDER IF THEIR BOOM WILL LAST.

(*"New York Herald Tribune," 15th Dec. 1946.*)

The industries of Switzerland are booming along to-day at such a pace that the more conservative Swiss can't believe it is healthy. They say the boom can't last. They talk of "over-industrialization," and "over-employment." They say that because of the collapse of German industry, enterprising Swiss industrialists have leaped into fields which aren't natural to the nation's economy, and are producing all kinds of goods which some day will be produced as they used to be, better and more cheaply elsewhere.

Whether the croakings of these Cassandras are true or not, there is no doubt that Switzerland's factories are enjoying to-day one of the most prosperous periods in their history. Export is easy. The whole world, it seems, is clamouring for the goods which Switzerland is making — textiles, fine precision tools, watches, Diesel engines and chemicals — and the Swiss manufacturing plant unharmed through two wars, is pouring them out. Production is limited only by a growing shortage of labour, limitations on available coal, and some difficulty in getting deliveries of raw materials abroad which the Swiss would like to buy, but can't, though they have plenty of money.

In point of monetary value, Swiss exports to-day are at an all-time high. Industrial employment is at 94 per cent. of its 1929 level. So great is Switzerland's need of workers that she has granted 45,000 immigration permits this year — 90 per cent. to Italians — who are taking the place of the Swiss in the farms, on the roads, in the mines and forests, while the Swiss themselves set free from these war-time tasks, go flocking into the better paying factories.

Wages are up, and are being felt in manufacturing costs. But the cost of living, which has advanced about 53 per cent. since 1938, has not yet struck the Swiss worker so grievously that his unions are making trouble. There have been a few strikes, or threats of strikes, this year in the textile and clothing industries, where there is radical union leadership with political as well as economic objectives. But Switzerland, on the whole, has enjoyed industrial peace.

Just now the Swiss National Bank and the Federal government are engaged in putting the brakes on the export boom — although very gently. A fair share of that trade abroad has been done through trade agree-

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ments in which the Swiss gave liberal credits to their foreign purchasers. Since 1945, this nation has lent money to France, Great Britain, Belgium, Holland, Czechoslovakia and Poland. Switzerland is occupying the unique position of scoring payments in gold. The Swiss have all the gold they want. They have all the dollars they want and all the pounds they want.

What Switzerland wants is to be paid in goods. Just now this country is having trouble devising a satisfactory way to trade with Sweden and the Argentine, because the Swedes and the Argentines want to pay them in money. The Swiss don't want the money. They want steel, machinery and wheat. Of course, they want to be paid for their exports, but until some of the countries to which they have sold goods can pay for them by goods in return, the Swiss are beginning to feel that they had better build up their stocks for domestic consumption, which are not as large as they would like to have them, and thus bring down the cost of living at home.

To the newcomer in Switzerland, signs of prosperity are everywhere. The retail stores of this capital are literally loaded with consumer goods which are hard to find anywhere else in Europe, except in Belgium, where they cost a great deal more. Gasoline rationing, still cramping motorists in France, was abandoned here last March 1st.

There is plenty of tobacco, and food, and lodgings in the best hotels cost less than they would in New York. This gives a false picture of the condition of the people as a whole. Coal for house-hold use is still tightly rationed, and not considered sufficient by the Swiss. To foster increased domestic coal production, the government forces the manufacturers to use one ton of Swiss produced coal for every four brought in from abroad, and Switzerland is moving fast to make up in electrical production what is lacking in coal resources.

Construction of six new electric power plants has been started since the end of the war, to add almost 250,000 kilowatt hours to the nation's supply. Because of enlargements of the old stations, the Swiss were producing 2,138 million-kilowatt hours in the second quarter of 1946, as compared to 1,849 million in the same period of 1945.

It is only by rigid price controls, strict rationing of major foods, and subsidies to agricultural producers that the Swiss government has kept down the cost of living. All the Swiss are getting enough to eat, but they are not getting what they did before the war, and have one of the smallest bread rations in Europe, 225 grams per day, plus 500 grams of pasta a month.

They can point out to you here that Switzerland is to-day only being allotted 55 per cent. of her pre-war

supplies of sugar, whereas the United States has 83 per cent., Great Britain 80 per cent. France 69 per cent., and even the UNRRA countries 59 per cent. Switzerland also is only receiving about 53 per cent. of her pre-war supplies of edible fats and oils, whereas the United States has 95 per cent. and Great Britain 80. But the Swiss are making up for these deficiencies with plenty of vegetables, fruits and eggs, which are pretty scarce elsewhere in Europe. Their potato crop this year was only 80 per cent. of last year's, but they still produce a large export crop of seed potatoes for France.

Government price controls on industrial products are being maintained firmly despite the grumblings of manufacturers who assert they are working at a loss for the domestic market. Agricultural producers, however, have been more successful in their pressure on the government, and on October 1st obtained small increases in their subsidies for production of milk, butter and cheese so the price to the consumer might remain the same.

Taxes, apparently, are going down, though the government's national budget is far out of balance. There never has been a Federal income tax, as such, in Switzerland's tax structure, although a series of emergency income taxes have been adopted for short periods since the middle 1930's. The latest was the war profits tax, to support the mobilization of the Swiss Army through the war years.

Beginning next year, there is to be a new "defense tax" levied on earned incomes and business profits, ranging from 8 to 25 per cent. on incomes above 25,000 Swiss francs, or about \$6,000 a year. The final so-called war profits tax, collectible next year on 1946 incomes has been lowered.

Although the general mood of the country, with its industrial boom in full swing, is said to be one of confidence for the immediate future, the Swiss National Chamber of Commerce has warned the nation's business that "the pre-requisites of our favourable economic situation cannot be regarded as lasting." The pessimists point to the continued national budgetary deficit. Parliament is now debating the budget of 1947, and it is generally conceded it will not be balanced by probably 100,000,000 francs. The pessimists also point out that Switzerland's government has rolled up an indebtedness of 3,000 francs per capital of the nation.

The pessimist predict that an industrial recession may be expected within the next six months. But the optimists see no reason why industrial output should not go on booming for several years for the re-building of Europe, with Switzerland's factories in a far more favourable position than those of most European competitors.

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