

Bilateral agreements : spur trade revival in Switzerland

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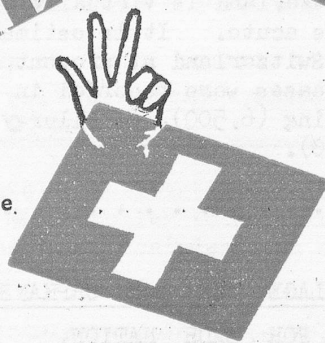
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BILATERAL AGREEMENTS

SPUR TRADE REVIVAL IN SWITZERLAND.

It was hoped in Switzerland that in 1946 a degree of freedom would return to international markets and that multilateral trade agreements could be reached. When it became evident that this would not be realised immediately due to widely divergent economic trends in foreign nations, the Swiss concentrated on bilateral agreements. These pacts have contributed enormously to the sturdy upward trend of Switzerland's international trade.

In addition to commercial treaties concluded between the Swiss Federal Government and other countries, foreign trade is being stimulated by substantial Swiss credits. The Alpine democracy, today a busy beehive in the heart of Europe, is also concentrating on improving its enviable rail service, as well as air connections to and from its three leading international airports at Geneva, Zurich and Basle.

For 1946, Swiss trade figures show a £53,000,000 surplus of imports over exports - the highest on record since 1933. Import figures reached the exceptionally high level of £241,000,000 as compared with £87,000,000 the previous year and £113,000,000 in 1938. Exports totalled £184,000,000 compared to £104,000,000 in 1945. Last year's exports were double in value, but 20% less in volume than 1938 exports. The swing in one year from a substantial export surplus to an excess of imports was unusually rapid. But it should be remembered that Switzerland, in normal times, always imports in far greater quantities than she exports. Main imports now are raw materials and consumer goods.

Swiss industry is in a particularly favourable position. There is a heavy demand in both home and foreign markets, and the Swiss have found it necessary to create new industries to replace many former sources of supply - especially Germany. The Federal Government has placed credits of about £56,000,000 in favour of foreign nations, and the government's fiscal policy encourages investment of profits and private capital in new factories and plants.

Switzerland's machine industry exports more than doubled in the past year, and watch exports are at the 1938 level. Activities in the textile, chemical and pharmaceutical industries are also extensive. Agricultural experts place the value of the 1946 harvest at approximately £9,000,000, an increase of 6.4% over 1945.

Unemployment in Switzerland is virtually non-existent, and the demand for skilled labour is acute. It is estimated that there are over 480,000 factory workers in Switzerland at present, or 45,000 more than in 1945. Greatest labor increases were recorded in 1946 by the machine industry (10,000), watchmaking (6,500), metallurgy (3,100), textiles (3,100) and chemicals (3,000).

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SWISS VILLAGE FOR WAR ORPHANS.

HOMES FOR EACH NATION.

(From our Geneva Correspondent).

Since 1941 the "Secours aux enfants" branch of the Swiss Red Cross, strongly backed by private initiative, has welcomed nearly 300,000 sick and underfed children from war-stricken countries. The children have been mostly French, but Dutch, Greek, Yugoslav, Italian, Polish, Belgian, British, Hungarian and Austrian children have also benefited from free medical attendance, good food, and a healthy climate.

About one-third of the children were the guests of the Red Cross in special camps and hostels; the others were welcomed by Swiss families, with whom they stayed for three months. This useful and charitable action did not stop with the end of the war. It is being continued, though on a smaller scale, in other ways, and generally by private initiative. Swiss doctors, for instance, have raised some £3,000 among themselves, and have invited for a three months' stay with families of Swiss medical men 100 children, sons and daughters of some of the 600 British doctors who died or were killed during the war.

An interesting feature of this help for the children is the Pestalozzi Village - named after the Swiss educationist of the last century. It was built last year near Trogen, in the hills of Canton Appenzell, and is really a "children's village" welcoming war orphans of every nationality. Priority is given to those whose health is unsound. Its peculiarity is that children of the same country live in the same house under the care of a couple of teachers of their own country. They are thus educated in their own language and according to their national customs and standards. Apart from general education courses, every child is undergoing some training in an art or craft he or she has chosen. The aim is to make of these orphans useful men and women, who, once back in their own fatherland, may play a valuable part in its rehabilitation.

This experiment seems to be successful, and the Pestalozzi Village organization's object is to set up other villages of the same type in Switzerland, and to foster their creation in other countries.

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SWISS NATIONAL EXHIBITION

of

NYON PORCELAIN.

Of the two porcelain manufactures to be found in Switzerland specimens of Nyon are the most sought after and the most valuable. But so few people really know it well, and in one's mind it is so often associated with an eternal decoration of a garland of flowers. But this is quite an error. Between 1781-1813 the manufacturers invented so many wonderful designs, constantly renewed, that today all collectors and museums can proudly produce some curiosity or rare specimen.

The object of this national exhibition is to show the public the