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The proposal of the "Maritime Suisse" is made under the pre-supposition that the Swiss Mercantile Fleet will continue to exist after this war is over. Experience after the last world-war gives rise to the opinion that the shortage of shipping tonnage immediately after the present conflict will be even more acute than it is now. The proposition also contains details regarding the financing of such a scheme with the help of the Swiss Government, and it is maintained that such a procedure would enable the cost to be reduced to 700 frs. per ton.

This raises the whole question of whether the present Swiss Mercantile Fleet should be regarded as a purely temporary arrangement, or whether, after the war, Switzerland should join the sea-faring nations regardless of the fact that we have no outlet to the sea. The "Maritime Suisse" inclines to the latter view but points out that it will be necessary to build special types of ships for the transport of grain and fuel only.

#### SWISS-GERMAN TRADE TALKS FAIL.

According to the "Associated Press" the negotiations which have been going on for several months between Switzerland and Germany, for the drawing up of a new Trade Agreement, have come to an end without any result.

#### SUNDRY NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

In the course of lectures on political science delivered in Solothurn, the President of the Federal Council, spoke on the cultural policy of the Federal Council. He pointed out that the basis of Swiss culture was the free Swiss. Great importance therefore attached to the Council's policy of respecting the rights, the honour and freedom of the individual. The second pillar of Swiss culture was the Swiss family. Equal importance devolved upon local government. In no other country was the autonomy of the community developed to such an extent as in Switzerland. The main task of the Council was not to unify the spiritual life of the country but to defend and foster its cultural riches. Wherever necessary cultural activities led by private initiative or local authorities should be aided by the Federal Council. The quadrilingual Confederation had never yet experienced a divergency over the language question; this was a proof of the unifying quality of the Swiss spirit. The President referred to the peaceful co-operation between Church and State and the cultural importance of the Church. "Peace between Church and State and between the various creeds must under all circumstances be maintained."

When the whole story about the "unchaining" of war prisoners will be told we shall realise that the Swiss diplomatic representatives in the two capitals concerned have scored a notable victory.

The Council of the Association of the Swiss towns (Schweizerischer Staedteverband) dealt with prices and wages at its meeting on 24th November. Professor Boehler of the Swiss Technical Academy in Zurich attended the session. The Council strongly advocated relative stabilisation of prices, maximum co-ordination of the actual income between industry and agriculture, in particular a regulation of the problem of peasants with small holdings, and further development of social welfare and especially of public health services. The following information was given on this year's vegetable crop. According to preliminary estimates, this year's potato harvest amounts to 125,000 wagons of ten tons each, as against 81,000 wagons in 1938. This rich harvest has to be stored in various parts of the country, so as to permit a speedy distribution whenever the need should arise. The production of vegetables before the war amounted to about 23,000 wagons, while approximately 6,000 wagons of vegetables were imported. This year's vegetable harvest is estimated at about 50,000 to 60,000 wagons. The area under vegetable cultivation has been nearly doubled since 1940.