

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 11 (1945-1946)
Heft: 10

Artikel: Swiss intensify efforts for World Trade at Basle fair
Autor: [s.n.]
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-942841>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 21.02.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

by the different governments of the world and goes to prove that a neutral state can render great service to humanity in times of international conflict.

From the very outbreak of war, Switzerland's acceptance to represent foreign interests in belligerent countries called for the creation of a special organization in order to carry out this work. In Berne, the Swiss Federal capital, a new department called the Foreign Interests Section of the Federal Political Department was constituted. In Berne, 153 officials were employed in this department, while over 1,000 civil servants were at work in different foreign capitals. Special departments were created at the Swiss Legations in London, Berlin, Rome, Washington, Vichy and Buenos Aires; in Berne, over 40,000 cases were filed. Statistics will help to understand more clearly how actively this wartime diplomatic service carried on its work; in 1943, for instance, the correspondence for this Department alone amounted to 150,000 memos and letters and 17,000 cables, most of the latter being in cipher. By the end of 1944, foreign powers had paid Switzerland no less than 236 million Swiss francs to cover costs of administration and to pay for the repatriation and welfare of their nationals; 186 millions of this large sum was spent on assistance given to foreign citizens.

Switzerland's task as a Protective Power covered a very wide field of activity. Apart from diplomatic and consular work of a general nature, Switzerland had to watch over the application of the Geneva Conventions and of all agreements passed in favor of the Jews. The protection of officials (exchange of diplomatic missions), of foreign nationals, of foreign Government and private property, were all tasks which fell to the Foreign Interests Department and sometimes proved no easy ones to fulfil. Switzerland's help in consular work was particularly valuable, as it included legal assistance, the establishment of protective passports, the legalization of thousands of documents and intervention in all matters bearing upon civilian law.

The organization of repatriation and exchanges was another heavy task. Finally, Switzerland's activity as a Protective Power in relation to the application of the Geneva Conventions was very far-reaching. But one of the greatest tasks of all was the inspection of Prisoner of War camps.

As the number of prisoners increased, so the number of inspectors attached to the different Legations of Switzerland had to be increased. In 1944, the inspectors of the Swiss Legation in Germany made 42 tours and visited about 150 camps, military hospitals and prisoners, as well as most of the 1900 Labor Camps annexed to the Base Camps for Anglo-Saxon prisoners. The repatriation and exchange of the seriously wounded was also organized and carried out under Swiss supervision.

The treatment undergone by the Jews wherever the Nazi regime held sway aroused indignation in the United Kingdom and the United States, Switzerland, therefore, acting in her capacity of Protective Power for these two States was called upon to intervene most actively in this matter.

This very brief survey of Switzerland's work during the war will show how important a part a neutral country can play in wartime and how it can help the belligerent nations. The fact that there has been a Protective Power has made it possible for international relations to be maintained and, however limited they may have been, this in itself proved invaluable from every point of view.

* * * * *

SWISS INTENSIFY EFFORTS FOR WORLD TRADE AT BASLE FAIR.

Official figures published immediately after the Basle fair which closed last week show that the number of buyers attracted to Switzerland far exceeded all expectations. Buyers came from twentyfour European and thirtytwo overseas countries, a Wireless to The New York Times May 19 from Berne reveals.

Altogether 4,270 foreign buyers recorded their special wants but the total number of Swiss business men at the fair was substantially greater. The total number of fair entry tickets sold numbered 425,605, against 360,624 a year ago.

Only after the fair closed, however, was the explanation of this extraordinary attendance understood. Expecting continuously increasing competition from the United States and Britain, above all in products such as machine tools and electrical apparatus, all leading Swiss firms were on hand to revive the close pre-war personal contacts with foreign buyers, the object being to secure orders large enough to guarantee full employment despite Switzerland's high price level and the impossibility of reducing costs by mass production.

* * * * *

HYDRO-ELECTRIC POWER IN SWITZERLAND.

Lausanne. - The total output of electric energy in Switzerland was 9655 million kW/h over the 1944/45 period as compared with 8583 million kW/h in 1943.

The remarkable increase in the electric power output in Switzerland in the last few years must be attributed to several causes. This country is, it must be remembered, the land of "white coal"; hydraulic power is, in fact, its only natural resource. Owing to the difficulty in obtaining coal supplies, this resource has been exploited to the full; great new power stations have been built, harnessing mountain torrents, rivers and streams.

Last summer the rise in output was checked by the interruption of the export of energy to Germany and the percentage of exported energy as compared with the total output fell to 9.2%, as against 13% in the previous year, 22% in 1938/39 and 24% in 1935/1936.

Switzerland's consumption of electric power has risen from 7,432 to 8,771 million kW/h, representing the energy of 230,000 tons of imported coal. Over the 1944/45 period only 160,000 tons of coal reached Switzerland, and it will therefore be easily understood how important this modern source of energy is to this little country. The Swiss Federal Railways are entirely electrified and last year consumed 15 million kW/h more than in 1943. A slight fall in consumption for industrial purposes was noted.

* * * * *

SOCIAL WELFARE AND INDUSTRY IN SWITZERLAND.

Lausanne. - Thanks to the emergency powers conferred upon it since the outbreak of the war, the Swiss Government has the power to enforce the enactment of trade conventions passed between labor syndicates and employers. In the course of the last five years, arrangements of this kind have been widely adopted. The Swiss Federal Council has issued 51 decrees giving force of law to certain agreements of this kind having a national or regional scope. The compulsory application of 64 orders passed by cantonal authorities has also been decreed and 58 of these enactments were still in force at the end of September 1945.

The object of most of these conventions are higher living allocations, family subsidies, paid holidays for workers, the length of working hours, and so on. Switzerland is making a great effort to ensure good working conditions in trade and industry and so to raise the standard of national well-being.

* * * * *

INCREASED SWISS SHOE PRODUCTION.

Swiss shoe production increased to 7,500,000 pairs during 1945 from 6,850,000 pairs during 1944. The output fell short of the 1940 production, however, of 11,000,000 pairs.

Present leather imports are considered insufficient to meet the demands of the domestic footwear industry, according to the Swiss press.