

**Zeitschrift:** The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK

**Herausgeber:** Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

**Band:** - (1941)

**Heft:** 988

**Artikel:** Federal president wetter on the economic aims of Switzerland

**Autor:** J.J.S.

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-687238>

#### **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:** 06.01.2026

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

## FEDERAL PRESIDENT WETTER ON THE ECONOMIC AIMS OF SWITZERLAND.

(On April 25th Basle celebrated the 25th anniversary of the opening of the Swiss Industries Fair. The President of the Confederation delivered a memorable oration and we are giving the following extract from the report published in the "Basler Nachrichten.")

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 Minster, built of red sandstone as are some other Cathedrals along the upper Rhine, beautiful already by its colour which lends it warmth and quietude 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 enabled 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 un-

derstood. 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 goodwill 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 to-day 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, to-day. 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 dispondency 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 oversea.

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 com-

parison 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 to-day's festive day of labour.

Basle commemorates to-day its jubilee. It coincides with the federal jubilee year: 650 years of Swiss Confederation. As we enter to-day 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.

J. J. S.

#### SCHWEIZERISCHES BUNDESFEIER-KOMITEE Zürich, anfangs Februar 1941.

##### An die Schweizervereine im Ausland.

Sehr geehrter Herr Präsident!

Liebe Landsleute!

Seit Jahren gelangt unser Komitee regelmässig um diese Zeit an die Miteidgenossen im Ausland, um sie zur Mitwirkung an der kommenden Bundesfeier-Aktion einzuladen. Dieser Appell hat immer ein gutes Echo gefunden.

Das haben die Erfahrungen des vergangenen Jahres wiederum bewiesen; an die 1,338,000 Franken, die als Reinertrag unserer Bundesfeier-Sammlung "für unsere Soldaten" abgeliefert werden können, haben unsere Landsleute jenseits der Grenzpfähle namhaft beigesteuert; 6,158 Franken als Gegenwerte von Abzeichen und 12,000 Franken an Spenden sind uns von dorther bis jetzt zugekommen. Wir anerkennen das um so mehr, als viele Schweizerkolonien direkt vom Kriege betroffen, und auch alle andern wirtschaftlich mehr oder weniger stark in Mitleidenschaft gezogen worden sind. Zahlreiche Sendungen von Abzeichen haben auch, wie wir nachträglich erfahren mussten, infolge der Kriegswirren ihren Bestimmungsort gar nicht oder nicht rechtzeitig erreicht.

Für diese Unterstützung, die uns auch im vergangenen Jahr wieder in so reichem Masse von den Schweizern im Ausland zuteil geworden ist, sprechen wir Ihnen allen auch an dieser Stelle unsren besten Dank aus. Dank werden Ihnen auch alle jene Soldaten und ihre Familien wissen, die von dieser Sammlung profitieren. Die kommende Bundesfeier-Aktion steht im Zeichen der Gedenkfeier an die vor 650 Jahren erfolgte Gründung unserer Schweizerischen Eidgen-