

AUSTRIA AND SWITZERLAND

Suggestive Similarities and Contrasts

BY

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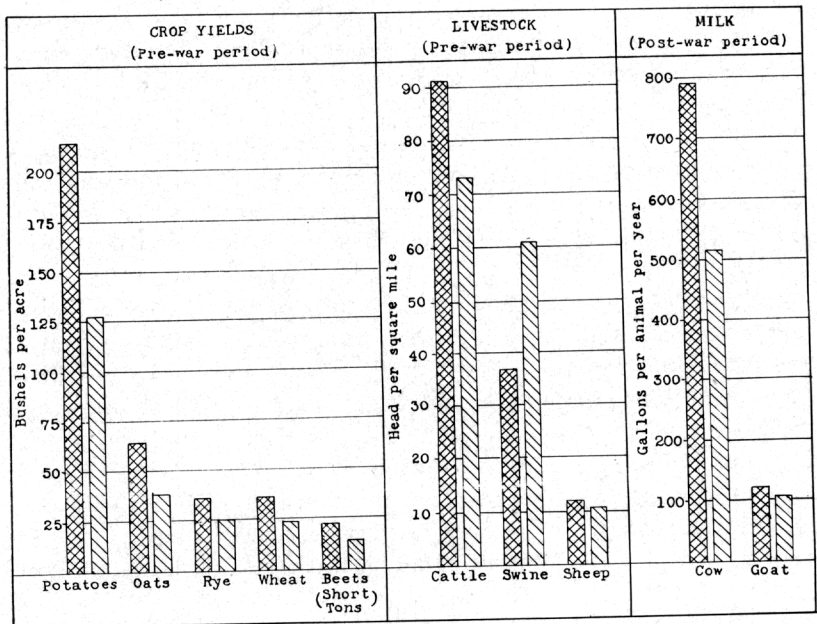
The Austrian Republic inherited about one-fourth of the area and about the same proportion of the population of Austria-Hungary, but the lands are the poorest of the Dual Empire, a jumble of mountains with a low productivity, and the population is most unfortunately distributed. One-third of the people are crowded into Vienna, a city which had grown up as the political, commercial, and industrial capital of a vast empire. Dismemberment of the old monarchy and the sudden disruption of the old economic ties, with commercial isolation made more complete by the creation of tariff barriers by the bordering succession states, had tragic consequences for the new republic, particularly for Vienna.

Many have seriously questioned whether or not with its meager endowment, Austria could exist as an independent state. Despairing of its future as a separate nation, its population voted to join with Germany, with the exception of Vorarlburg, its westernmost province, which asked for union with Switzerland. Neither plan materialized and the bankrupt state remained from 1922 to 1926 a ward of the League of Nations. Given at that time most of its economic freedom, it has slowly and painfully progressed toward setting its house in order. Yet it is heavily in debt, and its very existence has been repeatedly threatened by revolutionary discontents.

Can Austria maintain separate national existence? Considerable light may be thrown on the problem by an examination of the experience of Switzerland, a country whose natural endowments are remarkably similar to those of Austria. Both republics are mountain-girt lands, lying astride the Alps, rich in scenery but poor in tillable land, having an abundance of waterpower and labor but with scant raw materials and coal. Both are inland countries and lack the stimulus of cheap ocean shipping or fish resources. Yet they lie athwart great transcontinental thoroughfares which provide exceptionally efficient rail service. Both are close to the Mediterranean, yet their trade is chiefly northward *via* the Rhine or the Elbe. The populations of both are dominantly Teu-

tonic—vigorous, virile, and aggressive peoples. Austria has the advantage of a smaller density of population and an ethnic homogeneity, although with a strong infusion of Slavic blood.

With this natural setting Switzerland has turned her attention to manufacturing and ranks first among all countries in the proportion of her population engaged in industry. She has specialized in highly finished goods requiring much skill and handwork but little raw material. Her products bear the stamp of quality rather than cheapness. General agriculture is necessarily restricted in amount but is highly productive in the fertile valleys where cultivation is possible. The country ranks second only to Belgium among all nations in the pro-



Graphic comparison of production by Switzerland (*double cross-hatching*) and Austria (*single cross-hatching*).

ductivity of its cultivated land. However, the mountainous terrain has emphasized dairying, in which Switzerland occupies high rank, the average yield of milk per cow being second only to that of Holland. Dairy products, particularly cheese since it is less perishable, play a large part in the local diet as well as in the foreign trade. A second supplementary source of income lies in the tourist industry, and the Swiss have with their customary thoroughness and efficiency made the entertainment of the visitor at once a fine art and a lucrative business. The

average per capita investment in hotels in Switzerland is almost \$200, and tourists normally leave upwards of \$80,000,000 in the country annually.

All in all, the natural resources of Austria are, if anything, better than those of Switzerland. While the latter has considerably more potential waterpower, the former has some coal and considerable lignite. Austria has a somewhat larger proportion of arable land, considerably more forest in proportion to the total area—and a large deposit of excellent iron ore. The scenic attraction of the Swiss Alps is undoubtedly greater than that of the Austrian portion of those mountains; yet Switzerland has no Vienna.

However, the great contrast appears in the progress made in the two countries in exploiting their resources. Thus, in waterpower, Switzerland has developed 75% of her total supply, Austria less than 20%. Switzerland's yield per acre of staple crops in the pre-war period ran from 40% to 90% higher than those of Austria. In the animal industries, so well adapted to mountainous regions, Switzerland was far ahead in cattle, about the same in sheep, but far behind in swine. More significant even than numbers is the grade of animals raised. Swiss cows yield, on the average per year over a ton of milk more per head of cattle than cows in Austria. Switzerland in 1925 sold abroad dairy products to a value of \$4,500,000. Post-war Austria has been far from supplying even her own needs for meat and dairy goods. In pre-war days she produced almost one-half of her meat, one-third of her butter, and one-half of her eggs consumed. In 1928, her milk output had risen to the point of making her essentially self-sufficing. As indicative of the possibilities, the Austrian government, after a survey in 1924, estimated that there is fodder and forage enough within the country to support an increase of 65% in cattle and 40% in swine.

As for her scenic attractions, Austria has done but little to capitalize them. Nature carved the lowest and most convenient trans-alpine route across Austria, while the Swiss were compelled to bore huge tunnels in order to cross to the south; yet today the Simplon and St. Gothard are known the world over while the Brenner is scarcely heard of. Austria is one of the most mountainous countries of Europe, yet her attractions are practically unknown and inaccessible to the tourist.

Switzerland's adjustment has been achieved through long years of experimentation. Her success has been neither easy nor swift. That her accomplishment is real, the support of a dense population with high living standards is ample testimony. Austria, with resources averaging as good as those of her neighbor, should seemingly be able to do as well.

She may profit much by studying Switzerland's record and so avoid many costly mistakes.

The crux of the Austrian problem is Vienna. Without the vast political, commercial, and industrial services which that city performed, there must be a marked change in the character and activities of the capital. A reduction of the population of the city to the size fitted to the needs of the new state, would seem to be imperative. There must be a shift of population to the rural districts. This readjustment is one which is naturally resisted by large numbers of people. As a matter of fact, the population of Vienna has decreased from 1910 to 1928 by less than 10%. Though slow and costly, the change seems bound to come; and, given time, there is no reason why Austria should not, with but slight variations, duplicate Switzerland's record.