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What America is buying in the Berlin Consular District

Bericht

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Regest:

In diesem Bericht werden die Probleme der Handelsbeziehungen zwischen Deutschland und den Vereinigten Staaten angesichts der Doppelkrise von Inflation und der französisch-belgischen Besetzung des Ruhrgebiets seit dem Januar 1923 deutlich. Auch wenn die Hyperinflation tatsächlich bereits im Sommer 1922 begonnen hatte, sollte die Lage in den folgenden Monaten angesichts von französischen Ausfuhrkontrollen in dem von ihnen besetzten Gebieten und einer sich weiter verschärfenden inflationären Dynamik sogar noch deutlich dramatischer werden. Insofern dokumentiert die hier präsentierte Quelle gewissermaßen eine Zwischenstation auf dem Weg in das "Chaos" seit dem Frühjahr des Jahres 1923, als die fortschreitende Geldentwertung das gesamte öffentliche Leben in Deutschland zu bestimmen anfang.

Subject: What America is Buying in the Berlin Consular District

Vice Consul Charles L. Turrill

Berlin, Germany

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Approved: William Coffin

American Consul General

A survey of recent statistics of exports to the United States from the Berlin Consular District, which comprises the Prussian Province of Brandenburg and the frontier district of West Prussia-Posen, shows a varied assortment of merchandise. In the belief that the details may be of interest to many American importers, the principal items, in the[2] order of their value importance, are given here.

Toys come first followed by dolls; paper and manufactures of paper; chinaware and porcelain, decorated and undecorated; artificial flowers; vacuum bottles; cigarette holders and other manufactures of galalithe; linens, embroidered and not embroidered; beaded goods; glassware; electrical apparatus; scientific, dental and surgical instruments; books and printed matter; leather goods; soap; articles of apparel for women and children; antique goods; hosiery; feathers; pencils; baskets; manufactures of wood; phonographs and phonograph records; manufactures of rubber; cutlery; and cameras.

To this list must be added varying quantities of dyes, chemicals and machinery, representing for the most part assembled shipments for Berlin is not in the center of these industries.

Obstacles in the Business Path,

Immediate prospects for any increase in the export business from this point are not bright. It is to be expected too that raw material necessary for manufacturing will become scarce on account of the recent action of the French in the Ruhr district and because of a shortage of coal. There is a great uncertainty even now as to quantities and

length of time required by the factories to make deliveries. Present orders are usually placed to be delivered not later than a specified date beyond which a brief period of grace is allowed to the manufacturer,[3] unless it be expressly specified that no such allowance will be considered. There is occasionally some difficulty in obtaining the required export licenses. These should be secured within twenty-four hours but two weeks often elapse before this formality is satisfied.

The new United States tariff seems to have had comparatively little effect on the larger exporting firms.¹ The difficulties in Germany today are caused by continuous changing in the rate of exchange, a fact which should not be overlooked by American importers. For this reason manufacturers often find themselves unable to quote fixed prices, each successive depreciation of the mark bringing an immediate rise in cost of labor and materials. Some American firms which sent sums of marks to German manufacturers or exporters some months ago, and received the goods in due course thereafter, have complained because they were forced to accept a smaller quantity of goods than originally ordered. But the value of the mark has more than doubled during the current month and German export firms which have contracted to deliver goods for dollars, and have these goods now ready for shipment, find that they are liable to heavy losses, where the goods were bought from the manufacturers in marks. It should be remembered that German retailers in the case of many articles are obliged to forward the money to the manufacturers with their orders and accept the goods at the[4] prices prevailing on the day of delivery. In spite of this uncertainty as to prices or actual costs to the purchaser, it is claimed that German manufacturers of some lines, particularly small wares, are now overwhelmed with orders both from home and abroad sufficient to keep them busy for several months.

1 Gemeint ist hier der Fordney-McCumber-Tarif aus dem Jahr 1922, der die US-amerikanischen Einfuhrzölle insbesondere auf Industriewaren deutlich erhöhte. *Hayford/Pasurka, Tariff-Acts.*