

The Effects of the Economic Crisis in the Bavarian Forest (1932)

Abstract

This 1932 newsreel clip highlighted the dire economic circumstances in the sparsely populated Bavarian Forest, a region that depended almost entirely on timber, quarrying, and glass manufacturing for its livelihood. When the Great Depression hit Germany after the 1929 Wall Street crash, this rural stretch felt its impact with particular intensity. In Zwiesel, a hub of glass production, for instance, the unemployment had soared to a staggering 75 percent by 1932, and in the nearby town of Viechtach, 350 children depended on publicly provided meals. The region's location along the Czech border compounded its economic woes, and the clip feared that these communities might "succumb to foreign influences" from the newly founded Republic of Czechoslovakia immediately to the east. Until 1918, goods and people had moved much more freely across the border, thanks to the close relationship between Germany and Austria-Hungary, to which the Czech lands then belonged. After the hardening of the national border in 1918, trade and migration slowed dramatically in the region, and this newsreel clearly urged greater financial support for the Bavarian Forest for nationalist reasons as well as economic ones.

Source

Speaker: The area of the Bavarian Forest is suffering particularly badly from the economic crisis. The state has not given the Bavarian Eastern March adequate consideration with regard to road and railroad construction. The area is in danger of falling prey to foreign influences. The main industries here are forestry, stone quarrying, and glass production.

Glassworks owner: We used to employ 300 people in our glassworks, but now only just under a sixth of that number are working.

Speaker: Economic crisis, borderland hardship and natural disasters have increased unemployment in Zwiesel in the Bavarian Forest to such an extent that 75% of the population are unemployed. The only transportation company, the private Regentalbahn train service, has seen a 50% drop in ridership due to the shutdown of the timber and stone industry, and is thus facing severe economic difficulties. In the town of Viechtach, 350 children need to be provided with a free daily meal.

Source: *Deuligton-Woche* No. 7 (clip), February 1932. Bundesarchiv Filmarchiv, Filmwerk ID: 626167.
<https://digitaler-lesesaal.bundesarchiv.de/video/626167/665580>

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