



SURVEY OF CURRENT BUSINESS WEEKLY SUPPLEMENT



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
BUREAU OF FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC COMMERCE

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SUMMARY OF BUSINESS TRENDS

FOR the first month since the start of the European war, there was a marked expansion of export trade in December unconnected with usual seasonal movements. The magnitude of the rise over November, 25 percent, no doubt overstates the underlying improvement as some shipments were delayed from November to December because of the changes in the neutrality law. The average for the fourth quarter of 1939, however, which was 27 percent higher than the third quarter and 22 percent above a year ago, shows an expansion of exports apart from the seasonal and indicates a definite increase arising from the war. Aggregate exports of United States merchandise in December were valued at \$358,000,000, a gain of \$71,000,000 from the November figure and \$90,000,000 above the December 1938 results. Though sharp increases in shipments of cotton and aircraft occurred last month there was a rather general expansion in the movement of goods abroad; the larger exports in these two classifications accounted for only half of the total increase from November. Shipments of raw cotton, partly influenced by special circumstances related to credits, purchases in anticipation of lower export subsidies, and rising world prices rose \$12,500,000 to \$42,500,000. This is a figure but moderately below the high

October total. There were larger shipments of cotton to such diverse markets as Spain, Italy, and China.

Trade with the United Kingdom and France included larger shipments of a variety of goods, such as metals, petroleum products and metal-working machinery but these were of minor importance compared with the spurt in shipments of aircraft to France. Aircraft exports jumped to a total of \$29,000,000 for all countries, more than double those in any other month of record. In November exports of aircraft had responded only slowly to the lifting of the export restrictions that were effective in September and October and consequently the exceptional December total included planes that otherwise would have moved abroad at an earlier date.

Exports to Canada, the only major decline in December, were lower than in November largely because of a lighter movement of coal and crude petroleum. Shipments to the Latin American markets were valued at \$75,400,000, an increase of \$7,600,000 from November and almost double the total value in December 1938. For the fourth quarter of 1939 exports to these markets totaled \$208,000,000 as compared with \$142,000,000 in the third quarter and with \$141,000,000 a year earlier.

SELECTED BUSINESS INDICATORS



