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COMMERCIAL NEWS

Final Report about the 37th Swiss Industries Fair in Basle.

The success about the 37th Swiss Industries Fair in Basle, which took place from 11th to 21st April, and in which 2,228 exhibitors took part, exceeded all expectations in most lines of business. The total number of visitors to the Fair, some 700,000, was about 20,000 more than in the previous year, and in the course of the Fair opinions were expressed indicating that further developments in the economic situation are awaited with confidence.

For this reason the general demand was good and business generally satisfactory, considerable interest being shown in the various novelties exhibited.

The wide range of goods displayed by Swiss export industries, amongst which the watch industry, the textile industry, the machinery industry, the electrotechnical and precision tool industries made a particularly fine show, did not fail to exercise its usual attraction on foreign visitors, of whom some 13,000 from 64 different countries were received at the Foreign Visitors Office. However, it is known from experience that the total number of foreign visitors was considerably higher, because only about 50% of all foreign visitors register at the Foreign Visitors Office.

Large new buildings are now going to be constructed for next year's Fair, and that will mean that the area available for exhibition purposes will be increased from about 1,000,000 square feet to something like 1,250,000 square feet.

In view of the very considerable extensions being made to the Fair premises the 38th Swiss Industries Fair will take place somewhat later than usual, from 8th to 18th May 1954.

Swiss Participation in International Trade Fairs.

Over 300 Swiss firms are participating in the international Industries Fair in Milan, Italy. The Swiss Office for the Development of Trade has organized an official Swiss pavillion where most of Switzerland's important export industries are represented. At the same time, Switzerland is represented at the Industries Fair in Lyon, France, by some 60 firms with individual exhibits.

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Favourable Trade Balance during the First Quarter of 1953.

In March, 1953, Swiss imports amounted to 425 Million francs, 25 millions less than in March, 1952. During the same period, Switzerland's exports increased from 413 Million francs to 470 million. Switzerland's external trade thus shows again an active balance of 42 million francs. The total export surplus for the first three months of 1953 amounts to 59 million francs.

A new International Organization.

At the end of March, the OEEC formally recognized as a non-governmental organization the recently established European organization for handicrafts and small business. Because small business had no formal representation before, it could not regularly participate in OEEC work. The new European office represents five million firms in fourteen European countries. The organization has its headquarters in Berne and maintains a liaison office at the OEEC in Paris.

No change in Switzerland's Price Level.

At the end of March, 1953, the Swiss cost of living index was at 169.3 points (August 1939 = 100). The

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slight decrease noticed since the end of February was caused by a seasonal decline in the price of certain foodstuffs. The wholesale price index remained the same as it was in the previous month.

The Rôle of Insurance in Switzerland.

Total outlays of the Swiss population for insurance purposes reached the amount of 2,403 million francs in 1951. This sum represents about 12% of the national income, estimated at 20 billion francs. In other words, the average Swiss spends each year the income of one and a half months or 44 days on insurance.

War Damage, Business Claims (Payment).

When the Chancellor of the Exchequer presented his Budget proposals for 1953/54 to the House of Commons on April 14th, he declared that the Government had decided to authorize the payment this year of all outstanding claims in respect of war damage to business chattels under Part II of the War Damage Act, 1943. According to explanations given by the President of the Board of Trade it is proposed to pay the claims with accrued interest less tax, on October 1st, 1953.

Trade between Switzerland and Czechoslovakia.

A Swiss and a Czechoslovak delegation met in Prague between April 15th and April 25th to discuss questions concerning the exchange of goods between the two countries for the period from April 1st, 1953, to the end of March 1954. An agreed minute was

signed. The Swiss import quotas had to be adapted to the existing Czechoslovak export possibilities whilst the structure of Swiss exports to Czechoslovakia remains broadly speaking the same as during the period 1952/53.

WHY DO THE ENGLISH NOT READ MORE SWISS LITERATURE?

This is the theme of the next N.S.H. lecture to be held at the Swiss Club "Schweizerbund" on Thursday, May 21st. It will be given by Prof. L. W. Forster of the University of London. Having spent some years in Switzerland, part of which as lecturer at the University of Basle, Prof. Forster has an intimate knowledge of Swiss literature and the few existing translations of some of our masterpieces. Prof. Forster, by the way, has very personal ties with our country. His wife is a daughter of Dr. Billeter of Basle and he speaks the dialect of that town as well as a native, at least so far as a "Zürcher" can judge. It is to be hoped that all Swiss with some literary interest will make a special effort not to miss this lecture and subsequent discussion.

H.E.

FETE SUISSE.

A full report of the "Fête Suisse" celebrations which took place on Thursday, May, 7th, 1953, at Central Hall, Westminster, will appear in our issue of May 29th, 1953.

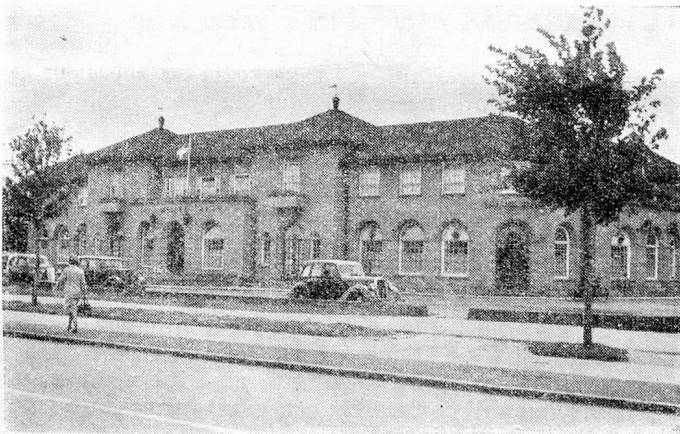
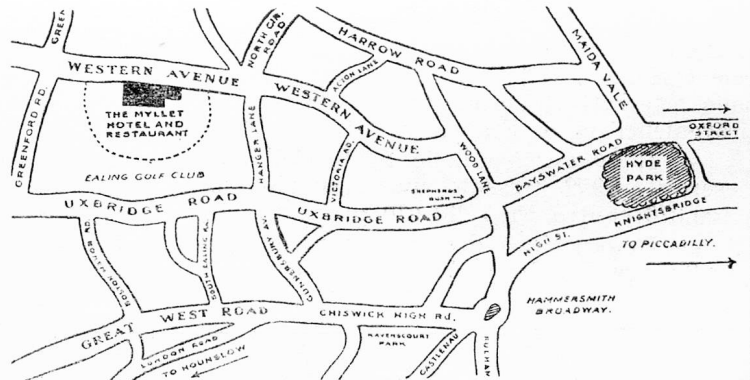
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