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COMMERCIAL NEWS

A big Swiss centrifugal blower for Belgium.

A former delivery having given satisfaction, an important Belgian metallurgical firm has just given an order for a set of blowers to a machine-making plant at Oerlikon, near Zurich. This machine is intended to supply air to a blast furnace which will be one of the largest on the Continent. The blowers, also, with their capacity of providing 160,000 cubic meters of air per hour, under an atmospheric pressure of 3.5, will be one of the largest plants of this kind which has been built up to now.

The Swiss Watchmaking Industry's new publicity campaign in the United States.

The Information Bureau of the Swiss Watchmaking Industry, in New York, has organised a publicity campaign in the United States on the occasion of the 106th anniversary of the signing of a Treaty of Friendship and Commerce between that country and Switzerland. The aim of this campaign is to demonstrate the necessity for Switzerland to be able to sell her watches in the United States if she wishes to be able to pay for her imports of American goods. In this connection we would like to recall the fact that in 1956 Switzerland imported from the United States aircraft to the value of 36.3 million dollars, machinery to the value of 26.5 million dollars and chemical products to the value of 34 million dollars.

An important Swiss concentrated soup factory celebrates its 50th anniversary.

The Swiss factory producing the well-known Knorr soups and other food products has just celebrated the 50th anniversary of its establishment in Switzerland. This firm, which had to increase its premises fourfold after the end of the Second World War, now employs 1,100 persons. Its products are exported to some seventy countries throughout the world. A detail which is not without savour: this factory buys approximately three million kilos of salt per year!

The latest Swiss documentary films.

The "Swiss foundation for the promotion of cultural and documentary films" recently made a number of honorary awards to certain Swiss documentary films of outstanding cultural interest. These films include two on the life and keeping of bees, one about rhythmic music according to the conceptions of Professor Dalcroze, the famous musician and teacher, and films dealing with radio, hotel keeping, navigation on the Rhine, road safety and the handling of electrical agricultural implements.

The Swiss footwear industry.

During the first six months of this year Swiss footwear manufacturers increased their exports. Nevertheless, the increase in this respect was smaller than in that of imports. Indeed, Switzerland imported more than 650,000 pairs of leather footwear as against approximately 423,000 pairs during the corresponding period in 1956 and 270,000 pairs during the first half of 1955.

Sales of Swiss Knitted Goods.

If one is to believe the international statistics of

hosiery manufacturers, Switzerland is a country in which knitted garments are very much appreciated. According to this document Switzerland comes second, in the list of European countries, in respect of the amount of money spent for the purchase of knitted wear, calculated per head of her inhabitants, with 10.56 dollars, following Finland but preceding the three Scandinavian countries, where knitted garments are greatly in demand for climatic reasons. The success enjoyed by knitted goods in Switzerland is perhaps partly due to the meteorological conditions that have prevailed during the last few years, but also certainly to the progress achieved in regard to fashion by the Swiss manufacturers of knitted goods. Another table in these international statistics informs us that Switzerland figures in the penultimate rank, in respect of the sum produced by sales of hosiery goods, calculated per capita of the workers employed in their production. This means that if the highly skilled Swiss worker's output does not come to such a high amount of money, although he works in as rational a way as is possible, this is because the Swiss do not go in for mass production but specialise in making very individualistic articles, great attention being paid to good work.

Technical training in the Swiss Embroidery Industry.

Swiss embroidery, although mostly machine-made, requires highly skilled workers, whether it be for the creation of models, the operation of the machines, or all the finishing processes. In order to train the necessary staff the embroidery manufacturers of St. Gall and its environs established a special training school some twenty-five years ago. The premises where the training takes place having become too small for their purpose, the Board of the School of Embroidery of Eastern Switzerland has had a new school built with the aid of the cotton and embroidery trade associations, the public authorities and various industrial undertakings, particularly embroidery manufacturers and makers of textile machinery. This new building was inaugurated to celebrate in a fitting manner the first twenty-five years of the existence of the Embroidery School. It is interesting to note that the school in St. Gall is the only one of its kind in Switzerland and that, furthermore, only two such schools exist in the world.

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The Swiss Watchmaking Industry in 1956.

During the course of 1956 the applications received for permits to start, to enlarge and to transform watchmaking factories amounted to 558 as against 469 in 1955; an affirmative answer was received by 420 as against 225 in 1955. Last year only thirty-nine firms, giving employment to 128 persons, stopped working. In 1956 exports of the Swiss watchmaking industry attained a value of nearly 1,235,000,000 Swiss francs, i.e. about 20 per cent of the total value of the Swiss exports. Unemployment has been practically nil and the penury of labour continuing to make itself felt, especially in the watchmaking regions, some manufacturers have achieved a certain amount of success by opening up new factories in the less industrialised regions of Switzerland.

The Swiss Wool Textile Organisation celebrates its 75th anniversary.

The Swiss Wool Textile Organisation having been founded in 1882, it has just celebrated the 75th anniversary of its establishment. The wool textile industry in Switzerland is represented by some ninety firms, which employ 10,000 people. Most of these firms are affiliated with the Organization: they represent all the different stages of manufacture, principally spinning, weaving, the manufacture of carpets and of felt. This interesting branch of industry, which is engaged in a lively competitive struggle on the Swiss market with foreign firms, has nevertheless succeeded in gaining a firm footing abroad as a result of the high quality of its products, mostly spun threads and woven goods, and in penetrating in countries which for a long time past have been renowned for their production of woollen goods.

Opening of a new dam in Switzerland.

The famous Mauvoisin dam in the Swiss Alps is now nearing completion. An average of a thousand workers have devoted more than twenty million hours of work to its construction. As for the volume of concrete which has been poured into it since building started, this attained more than 1,250,000 cubic metres towards the middle of this year. Thus, it proved possible to proceed with the partial accumulation of water in the reservoir last spring, and to lay in a reserve of water representing the production of 85 million kwh. for use during the coming winter months.

The power stations of Fionnay and of Riddes, which depend on this dam, are now finished and part of their plant is already working. They have, thus, been able to make a useful contribution to the country's supply of electric power.

Electronics in the Swiss PTT.

The Swiss Administration of Posts, Telegraph and Telephones is having recourse more and more to the use of electronic meters. These are already being used for telephone call charges and for the control of payments. Moreover, the system of perforated cards has been introduced into the postal-cheque service. This system tends to spread still more, and at the present time it already controls 10 per cent of all the payments made to the PTT, which intends to make a considerable use of this new system.

The first tubelar turbine built in Switzerland.

In Switzerland, there are still to be found a few small so-called "family" hydro-electric plants, a

vestige of that era when electricity first made its appearance in this country. One of these has just celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its creation, which in no way means that it is out-of-date. In point of fact, the first tubelar turbine built in Switzerland has just been put into service there. This is quite a new type of machine, which has been built by a firm in Zurich. The tubelar turbine, which is suitable for the utilisation of a flow of water possessing a relatively feeble volume, has the advantage of being placed in the natural axis of the water's flow, thus eliminating losses of pressure. In this turbine the generator of electricity as well as all the accessory parts of the machine are enclosed within a crank-case, in the form of a torpedo, placed axially in the centre of the conduit for the flow of water. This arrangement of the machine makes it possible to set up plants which do not exceed the level of the banks of the water-courses, a characteristic which offers a great many advantages.

Portugal places an order with Swiss industry.

The Portuguese Company which is engaged in harnessing the waters of the Douro, which runs along the Hispano-Portuguese frontier, has decided to build a new electric plant, underground, at Miranda. This plant is intended to possess a total power of 240,000 h.p. The Portuguese firm has just given an order for Francis turbines, alternators and the accessory apparatus to three important Swiss firms, belonging to the metallurgical and machine-making branch of industry.

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