

Letter from Switzerland

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LETTER FROM SWITZERLAND.**Switzerland and Nuclear Energy**

At the end of last year, the Swiss Parliament voted a "law governing atomic energy and protection against radiation", which completes Swiss legislation in this field. Thus, in spite of the newness and complexity of these problems, the Swiss government has succeeded, in a comparatively short time, in laying down the legal basis for the production and use of this new source of energy.

However, Switzerland had not waited for this law before taking an active part in nuclear work on an international level. The establishment of CERN (European Organisation for Nuclear Research) in Geneva is eloquent proof of this. The Confederation has also joined the European Agency for Nuclear Energy set up by OEEC. It takes part therefore in Eurochemic at Moll, in Belgium, and in the construction as well as the running of experimental reactors at Halden (Norway) and in Great Britain. Finally, Switzerland belongs to the International Agency of Atomic Energy in Vienna. Let us also mention the bilateral agreements concluded with several countries or at present in the course of preparation.

Meanwhile the country's economic circles, in permanent contact with the government, have prepared themselves for the advent of the new atomic era. A group of industrialists under the name of *Réacteur S.A.* have set up a research and experimental centre possessing two reactors. They have also formed two consortiums with a view to the construction of experimental reactors of entirely Swiss manufacture. Other projects are under study.

Switzerland has therefore already done great work in the atomic field. She is primarily interested in it because of her own needs. At present, the Swiss

economy consumes 78,000 million kWh of gross energy per year — three-quarters of this amount coming from abroad, representing an increase of 33,000 million units in the short space of ten years. This energy is accounted for as follows: 45% by liquid fuels, 23% by coal, 22% by electricity, 7% by wood and peat and, finally, 3% by gas. With regard to electricity, the country produces 99% of its requirements from its own numerous hydraulic resources. When, fifteen years from now, all the likely possibilities have been made full use of, the total output of hydro-electric energy will amount to 34,000 million kWh. Any needs beyond this ceiling — and consumption is increasing by 4 to 5% each year — will have to be supplied by thermal power stations, and use will certainly be made of fissile materials.

In order to satisfy home demand, the Swiss machinery industry will be required to manufacture the plant for the nuclear power stations within the country. But working as it does chiefly for export, it will naturally also look for outlets for its new products to other countries, especially as numerous countries now being developed cannot possibly think of constructing big hydro-electric installations, which require complicated and expensive substructures and a vast transport set-up which they do not possess as yet. Better than any other source of power, nuclear energy will make it possible to develop those parts of the world that are not yet fully equipped and are still difficult to reach. At present exporting some 60% of its steam boilers and electrical appliances, and as much as 75% of its steam turbines, Swiss industry is getting ready to supply the production goods and complete plant that will be required for nuclear power stations during the next few decades.

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At this point it should be made clear that the production of nuclear energy is governed by very strict conditions concerning quality and the new technical questions it raises. However Swiss industry is quite used to solving a wide range of difficult problems of manufacture; the standard of training of its specialists and its traditions of good workmanship have always been its strong point; finally, as atomic constructions do not involve mass-production in any way, the part played by manpower is greater than that played by raw materials. All the reasons that have encouraged Swiss industries to develop the manufacture of turbines, generators, alternators, etc., still apply to-day in the nuclear field, which enters into their traditional line of activity.

SP OSEC — January 1960.

CRONACA NOSTRANA.

L'annata economica 1959 presenta per il *Canton Ticino* un bilancio, per molti aspetti, positivo. L'agricoltura anzitutto non ha conosciuto particolari avversità climatiche nella produzione vegetale e neppure epizootie che, di tempo in tempo, colpiscono il patrimonio zootecnico cantonale con conseguenze nefaste soprattutto quando queste si verificano durante la stagione d'alpeggiatura. Ne consegue che la stagione ha dato risultati più che soddisfacenti nel campo delle coltivazioni, raggiungendo punte eccezionali nel settore vinicolo. Qui basti dire che la vendemmia 1959 ha registrato, nella sola produzione del vino, un reddito primario e che, per la prima volta, nella storia cantonale, ha raggiunto i 10 milioni di franchi corrispondenti ad un reddito medio per viticoltore di Fr 763, contro i Fr 542 del 1958 ed i Fr 310 del 1957. Buoni pure i risultati d'alpeggiatura, mentre piuttosto fermo il commercio del bestiame dove, d'anno in anno, le già rinomate fiere ed i mercati periodici venno perdendo d'importanza. Parallelamente al miglioramento quantitativo e qualitativo della produzione agricola è continuata, a ritmo sostenuto, l'azione in favore delle miglioni fondiarie, sotto forma di bonifiche, raggruppamenti di terreni e costruzioni di strade che consentono di avvalorare aree di terreno anche in zone fuori mano in modo da poter compensare, almeno parzialmente, le sempre più vaste superfici che vengono sottratte all'agricoltura dallo sviluppo edilizio che alla periferia dei centri urbani e nelle stesse località di campagna ha raggiunto proporzioni imponenti. Nel settore delle costruzioni è continuata a ritmo intenso, la costruzione di nuovi alloggi, favorita anche da alcuni fra i più lungimiranti Comuni del Cantone che offrono, a chi costruisce, allettanti condizioni. Nel settore commerciale infine è stata vieppiù sentita l'azione dei grandi complessi commerciali che restringono il campo riservato al commercio indigeno. E' da rilevare poi che il commercio al minuto risente della concorrenza indiretta dei mercati italiani delle zone contigue (Como, Varese, Luino, Cannobbio) largamente frequentate dai ticinesi. Nel settore della produzione delle paste alimentari in particolare, si assiste al preoccupante fenomeno dell'invasione del prodotto italiano, che per le particolari condizioni in cui è fabbricato, è in grado di battere largamente quello indigeno. Senza un congruo inasprimento delle tariffe doganali, questa nostra industria, che ebbe già notevole sviluppo ed importanza, è destinata a contrarsi vieppiù ed a scomparire.