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# TECHNICAL ITEMS

## SWITZERLAND'S NUCLEAR INDUSTRY

The Swiss Association for Atomic Energy points out that in spite of a national market that for a long time remained non-existent, in spite too of the keen international competition and an unfavourable monetary situation, several Swiss firms have succeeded, thanks to the quality of their products, in establishing themselves on the world market for equipment for nuclear power stations. In 1973, as in previous years, Swiss industry received many orders from almost all countries with projects for nuclear power stations. Brown Boveri, with a long tradition of specialisation in the electrical sector, has taken part in several European schemes and has, in addition, received its first orders for gas removal systems. It has also continued its efforts to gain a firm footing on the American market where, at the beginning of 1974, it achieved a decisive new success with an order for turbines from the Tennessee Valley Authority valued at 660 million francs. Sulzer, for its part, is the company that possesses one of the widest ranges of products in the field of components and systems for the nuclear industry. In particular it manufactures reactor vessels, safety housings, primary circuits, pressurizers, internal parts of reactors, valves, pumps, and ventilating plant, etc. Apart from its success in Europe, this firm was officially approved in 1973 as a supplier of components for American power stations by the American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME), which sets the standards in the USA. Apart from Sulzer, only six other foreign companies have so far been officially recognised as suppliers in the United States. Georg Fischer has gained a leading position on the international market of cast steels for nuclear power stations. Several other Swiss firms have joined the leaders among European firms in their specialised fields: the Charmilles Engineering Works (Geneva) for fuel exchange and handling equipment, Chemap (Männedorf) for filtering equipment, Theodor Christ (Aesch) for water processing and ion exchange systems and Metrohm (Herisau) for appliances for the measurement of the boron concentration in pressurised water reactors. K. Rütschi (Brugg) has exported a whole series of special pumps for the nuclear industry, not only to many European countries but also overseas. Swiss engineering offices specialising in the nuclear sector, at the head of which come Electro-Watt and Motor-Columbus, worked on plans for the national schemes for nuclear power stations in 1973 and also received a large number of orders from abroad.

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## SWISS INVESTMENTS IN 1973

It is estimated that about 37.8 billion francs was spent on private and public investments (building, equipment, stocks) in Switzerland in 1973. In other words the total expenditure on investments represented about 29% of Switzerland's gross national product. An equally high investment rate had already been averaged between 1960–1970. Consequently, Switzerland is among the most active countries in the field of investments. With regard to the future, the prospective studies work group, headed by Professor F. Kneschaurek, considers that the part played by investments in the gross national product will settle down in the long run to about 25%, a rate corresponding to the average over the last twenty years.

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## THE SWISS CHEMICAL INDUSTRY EXPLORES THE RICHES OF THE SEA

The Basle Chemical firm, Hoffmann-La Roche, recently inaugurated a research centre in Sydney (Australia). This new centre houses the laboratories required for a new branch of science: "marine pharmacology". Here a team of scientists will study the biological specimens (plants and animals) collected in the ocean from the Great Barrier Reef, in order to examine what use could be made of them in the pharmaceutical industry. While it has been known for some time now that nine-tenths of the plants and animals on this earth live under water, it is only recently, thanks to the latest improvements in diving techniques, that the exploration of these resources and the examination of their chemical characteristics have begun. In these underwater investigations, great care is taken to limit the number of samples taken so as not to disturb the ecological balance of the sea. Only the quantity of animals and plants needed to carry out these biological and chemical examinations is taken. If one of the substances shows signs of being of interest to medicine, attempts are made to synthesise it chemically, particularly in the laboratories in Basle; this makes it possible to reproduce the useful active chemical elements without destroying the aquatic fauna and flora. Begun even before the new premises of the research centre in Sydney were opened, the first research projects carried out by the institute have already produced a number of interesting results. It has been possible to isolate many antibacterial substances contained in seaweeds. The poison of certain sea-snails has proved capable of providing a substance for local anaesthetics. The toxins found in certain organisms might be used to increase the resistance of the cardiac muscle. Finally, the research workers have also isolated a number of substances which it is thought might one day prove useful in the fight against cancer.

## FOOLPROOF PROTECTION AGAINST ELECTROCUTION

With electrical power requirements continually growing, short circuits in high tension networks are becoming increasingly numerous and accidents due to careless manipulations more and more frequent. It is extremely important therefore to cut down the risks of accident by using suitable safety devices. A firm at Wollerau (Schwyz–Switzerland) has produced a high voltage tester of entirely new design; built according to all the latest techniques, this appliance rules out any faulty manoeuvre on the operator's part. Its simplicity of operation and very great accuracy are guarantees against any risks of error in manipulation or interpretation of the readings. The tester, which is fitted with a self-testing device, is available for any voltage required; the detecting head is mounted on a single insulated rod. A luminous optical signal, visible from far even under unfavourable conditions, indicates very clearly whether the conductor is live or not. In addition, this new device has the advantage of possessing an automatic on/off switch, ensuring long battery life and maximum use. Light but sturdy, this tester complies with all Swiss and foreign standards.

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## ALUMINIUM CONTAINERS FOR JUMBO-JETS

When the first Boeing 747s were put into service, nobody expected any technical difficulties involving the containers stored in the baggage compartments. From the very first year of service however, the cost of repairing the containers damaged by very rough handling exceeded a million dollars. This experience made the Swiss group Alusuisse decide to develop a very strong aluminium container satisfying the demands and conditions governing international air traffic. In addition, the design of the containers was planned specially with a view to quick and simplified repairs. As a result of exhaustive tests within the KSSU group (KLM, SAS, SWISSAIR, UTA), Swissair selected the Alusuisse container from among seven possible competitors. The first batch was put into service at the end of 1972. At the end of the year 1973, repair costs averaged about 70 dollars per container, as opposed to 300 dollars for certain other models. Following the example of Swissair, the Airbus Industries, BEA, TAP and VIASA lines have also opted for the Alusuisse model. Today over 1,000 of these containers have been ordered by these companies, while other clients are now trying them out.

### SWISS MACHINE FOR A GERMAN FIRM

A big plant supplied by the Bülach engineering works (Zurich-Switzerland) – specialising in the manufacture of machinery and plant for the processing of paper, cardboard, plastic film and aluminium foil – was recently put into operation in a German firm. This machine is designed above all for coating aluminium foil, paper-aluminium foil plywork, as well as paper and cardboard with PVC dispersions and solvent based lacquers. The plant has an application head with an air jet and a coating group with three rollers, which can be used in turn. The equipment has been designed with a view to the subsequent incorporation of a dry gluing station and an additional peeling machine. The air jet, recuperation tank and counterblower roller group can be removed on rollers whenever they are not required. The infra-red drying hood is also moved sideways by means of a servo-motor. Thanks to their pneumatic opening system, the drying hoods allow ease of access to the driving rollers in the drying tunnel. Each hood is provided with its own individual temperature checking device. The machine also possesses a special pumping station with a tank with 3 tubes for PVC dispersions. The effective width of this machine is 1,250 mm and the speed reached 200 metres a minute. The 6-metre long drying tunnel is heated by a thermal liquid.

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### WATCHMAKING AGREEMENT BETWEEN NORTH KOREA AND SWISS INDUSTRY

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has placed an order with Swiss industry for machinery and various equipment for the manufacture of watches. The contract recently signed in Korea by a Geneva engineering firm is for a value of 34 million Swiss francs; it comprises the delivery of production equipment, the provision of technical knowhow and the complete fitting out of the factory. The output of the Korean factory (400,000 watches a year) will be marketed solely within the country. The cost of the contract also includes the financing of this industrial operation for a period of three years after the delivery of the equipment, which is scheduled for 1975. This is the first transaction of this size that Swiss industry has signed with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea; it coincides with the establishment of commercial relations between the two countries. In 1973, North Korea imported 20,000 Swiss watches and movements, worth 2.6 million francs; Korea thus came 61st in the Swiss watchmaking industry's markets.

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# NEWS FROM THE COLONY

### FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Thursday, 20th February, 7 p.m. – Swiss Hostel for Girls, 11 Belsize Grove, NW3 – NOUVELLE SOCIETE HELVETIQUE FILM SHOW. All Swiss and their friends welcome.

LONDON SWISS PHILATELIC SOCIETY: Wednesday, 29th January, Members Night. Friday, 28th February, Annual Dinner at the Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, W1. Wednesday, 26th March, Film Show at Swiss House.

SWISS CLUB MANCHESTER: **Thursday, 30th January, 1975, Raclette Party at the Cottons Hotel, near Knutsford.**

CITY SWISS CLUB: Tuesday, 11th February, 6.30 p.m. for 7 p.m. at the Orchid Suite, Dorchester Hotel. Dinner with Guest Speaker Dr. Albert Weitnauer, Swiss Ambassador, will speak on the subject connected with Switzerland. Details to be published in Club invitation.

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY: Dinner and Dance, Dorchester Hotel, Saturday, 1st February, 1975. 6.30 for 7 p.m.

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# Swiss Churches

**SERVICES EN FRANCAIS: à l'Eglise Suisse, 79 Endell Street, W.C.2, tous les dimanches a 11h15 et 19h00.**

PASTEUR: Michel Languillat, 8 Park View Road, London, N.3. Tele: 01–346 5281.

**SWISS CATHOLIC MISSION: John Southworth Centre, 48 Great Peter Street, London, SW1P 2HA.**
**Sundays: Holy Mass at 6.30 p.m. with sermon in German, in the Club hall, ground floor.**
**(2nd floor at the same time, Protestant service in German).**

**RESIDENCE OF CHAPLAIN: Bossard, Swiss Catholic Mission, 48 Great Peter Street, (2nd floor), London SW1P 2HA. Telephone: 01–222 2895.**

**SERVICES IN GERMAN: at Eglise Suisse, 79, Endell Street, W.C.2, every Sunday at 9.45 a.m. Sunday school takes place on the first and the third Sunday in the month for children of all age groups. Children assemble in the church with their parents who attend the normal Service. Liturgical Service takes place every second Sunday in the month. Services also at John Southworth Centre, 48 Gt. Peter Street, S.W.1 every Sunday at 6.30 p.m.**

**MINISTERS: Pfr. U. Stefan, 1, Womersley Road, N.8. Tel: 01–340 9740.**

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WANTED: Stamp collections, especially Switzerland, France and Great Britain. Offers to E. M. Huber, 10 Linton Lawns, Golf Links Road, Ferndown, Dorset.

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## A New EDITOR for
## The Swiss Observer

The Advisory Council of "The Swiss Observer" regrets to announce that the Editor wishes to resign shortly. This interesting position is therefore offered to any man or woman, Swiss or other national thoroughly familiar with Switzerland, who is interested in Swiss problems, political and economic life, education and culture and anything which occurs in Switzerland.

Knowledge of German and/or French and the ability to write in English are essential. Close co-operation with Swiss organisations in London and the U.K. and some administrative work are part of the job.

*For further information please contact . . . . Oscar F. Boehringer, 55 Woodstock Road, London NW11 8QD.*