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News from the Trade

An industrial centenary

The Lorze spinning mills at Baar, which are well known to readers of « Textiles Suisses », this year celebrated the hundredth anniversary of their foundation. Today this firm employs some 500 men and women and has more than 50 000 spindles working to full capacity.

A quincentenary

The town of St. Gall joined the alliance of confederate states in 1454. It is thus five hundred years since it became part of what was later to become the Swiss Confederation. This important textile centre in western Switzerland celebrated this great landmark in its history at the end of August in a manner worthy of the occasion.

Swiss textile economy

We have received the annual reports of various trade and economic groups of the textile industry, which enable us to examine the evolution of the situation during 1953 and even at the beginning of 1954. The few details given below, which have been taken from them, will certainly be of interest to readers of « Textiles Suisses ».

In the report of the *Swiss Association of Yarn Merchants and Fabric Exporters*, we came across this general appreciation of the situation: « The year 1953 was a very successful one for the Swiss cotton industry, particularly from the quantitative point of view. Orders and deliveries reached record figures. The articles in greatest demand were the seasonal ones and the specialties, the situation being a little less favourable for the ordinary quality articles. During the year, stocks were greatly reduced. The restrictions that had been imposed on production the previous year were lifted and delivery times quickly became considerably longer. The number of workers employed increased slightly ».

According to the report of the *Swiss Union of Embroidery Exporters*, the demand for embroidery continued to increase in almost all countries, so that the value of exports rose from 90 to 99 million Swiss francs. The 100 million mark would certainly have been passed if the industry had more machines at its disposal. The reasons for this success are the great favour embroidery has enjoyed in recent fashions and the progress made in the liberalisation of trade in Europe.

By following the trends of fashion, creating new designs and using new types of fabrics, the Swiss embroidery industry has succeeded in maintaining its advance on foreign competitors in spite of the fact that they work under much more favourable conditions of production. Competition has resulted in a lowering of the average price per kilo from 92 to 89 francs. As there has been a simultaneous increase in production costs, it will be realised that the favourable situation in the embroidery industry is also due to the great increase

in the volume of trade. Exports have reached very high figures, particularly in Europe, where Germany absorbed 11 million francs' worth of embroidery as opposed to 7.5 million in 1953. Exports to Italy, Great Britain, Sweden, Belgium and Norway have increased by 10 to 25 %, while those to France have fallen off slightly, and those to Spain heavily. There has been an increase in exports to South Africa, Australia, Aden, the Straits Settlements and Burma, offset by a decrease in those to the United States and Central and South America. Demand on the home market has been good and sales amounted to some 10 million Swiss francs. In spite of difficulties in the form of restrictions still imposed on certain markets, the prospects for the present year are good.

In the wool textile industry, the year 1953 was also a good one, showing an increase in exports in almost all fields.

The annual report of the *Swiss Association of the Wool Textile Industry* tells us that Swiss wool textile products are exported to some 50 different countries on five continents. Member countries of the European Payments Union absorbed almost 80 % of Switzerland's exports, the best customer being Western Germany (more than half of Switzerland's exports) followed by the United States, Italy, Sweden, France, etc.

Total exports of the Swiss silk and rayon industry in 1953 increased in value by 12 %. According to the figures of the *Zurich Association of the Silk Industry*, more than 70 % of the total output of Swiss silk fabrics has been exported. Exports of silk fabrics increased by 23 % in 1953. This increase was mainly due to the Asiatic silk fabrics finished in Switzerland, but Swiss woven fabrics have also played their part, particularly colour woven tie and dress silks.

Elsewhere (see p. 75) details are given of the exports of the clothing industries. We shall limit ourselves here to quoting the figures for the first half of 1954, given out during the recent general meeting of the *Exporters Association of the Swiss Clothing Industry*.

In spite of a falling off of nearly 40 % in exports of stockings and socks, the record figure for Swiss exports of ready-to-wear clothing and hosiery in the first half of 1953 was exceeded by more than a million Swiss francs during the corresponding period this year. The millinery industry has also had its share in this favourable evolution. Many countries overseas have increased their purchases of ready-to-wear clothing from Switzerland during the period under consideration, particularly Venezuela and Australia, and to a lesser extent Egypt, Tunisia, South Africa, Rhodesia, the Belgian Congo, Iraq, the Lebanon and even Indochina. In Europe, Germany is Switzerland's best customer and has increased still further its lead over Belgium and Sweden. Among the important European customers of Swiss ready-to-wear clothing, mention should also be made of the Netherlands, Great Britain, Denmark, Italy and France.