

The swiss hosiery and knitwear industry and its foreign trade

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The Swiss Hosiery and Knitwear Industry

and its foreign trade

Mr. Dr. W. Staehelin, secretary of the *Swiss Association of Hosiery and Knitwear Manufacturers* in Zurich, recently published a well-documented article, from which we have taken the following information, which will certainly be of great interest to our readers.

The Swiss hosiery and knitwear industry is watching with great interest the development of the plans for European integration, weighing up the advantages and disadvantages that such a scheme might have for it. Generally speaking, the circles most concerned consider that the European common market constitutes a threat to Swiss industry for, although creating a large free trade area, it will raise ever greater barriers against the countries not participating in the scheme, of which Switzerland is one. On the other hand, they feel that the free trade area would probably open up new markets to Swiss industry and in particular to hosiery and knitwear. This last supposition is based on the fact that the figures for the sales of knitted articles still vary greatly from one country to another, which leads one to suppose that competition has not everywhere been given the same freedom to act as a market stimulant. This assertion is borne out by the following figures drawn up by the national associations of this industry and representing the *sales of hosiery and knitwear in the different countries per head of the population, calculated in dollars* :

1. Finland 10.84	7. Great Britain 9.13
2. <i>Switzerland</i> 10.56	8. France 8.99
3. Norway 10.04	9. Germany 8.67
4. Sweden 9.67	10. Holland 8.24
5. Denmark 9.63	11. Belgium 7.98
6. Italy (no figures)	12. Austria 5.66

Switzerland is thus second in this category and has even overtaken the Scandinavian countries, where knitted articles are naturally in great demand owing to the climate.

Admittedly the hard winters of the last few years have not been without their effect on the present boom in the Swiss hosiery and knitwear industry, but the biggest contributing factor is certainly the very appreciable progress that has been made in the field of fashion. A lowering of the customs barriers would therefore tend to even out the chances of the Swiss hosiery and knitwear factories and those of their competitors on foreign markets by granting Swiss producers similar terms to those enjoyed by foreign manufacturers in Switzerland; in fact, customs duty levied on knitted articles on entry into Switzerland is as low as 5 to 8 % at the moment.

It is interesting to compare the figures for imports and exports of hosiery and knitwear in the different countries of western Europe. The table below shows that Switzerland possesses the greatest total movement, being placed fourth and second for the value of imports and exports

respectively per head of the population (expressed in dollars) :

<i>Imports of hosiery and knitwear per head of the population in \$</i>	<i>Exports of hosiery and knitwear per head of the population in \$</i>
1. Norway 3.09	1. Belgium 2.36
2. Sweden 2.44	2. <i>Switzerland</i> 2.00
3. Holland 2.33	3. Austria 1.45
4. <i>Switzerland</i> 2.32	4. Great Britain 1.26
5. Denmark 1.21	5. Denmark 1.08
6. Belgium 1.03	6. Holland 1.05
7. Finland 0.48	7. Germany 0.56
8. Germany 0.29	8. Italy 0.41
9. Austria 0.25	9. France 0.35
10. Great Britain 0.18	10. Sweden 0.14
11. France 0.05	11. Norway 0.12
12. Italy —	12. Finland 0.01

Switzerland's position with regard to imports shows clearly that in spite of its comparatively highly developed production, this country still places no obstacles in the way of the entry of the products of other countries. The table also shows that a general reduction in customs tariffs would probably lead to changes of position as certain countries which are placed high with regard to exports come near the bottom of the list with regard to imports, as a result of their unmistakably protectionist tariffs.

The average figures for output per worker, given in the table below (also in dollars) clearly, show how vital exports are to Switzerland.

Production per worker in dollars

1. France 6957.60	7. Great Britain 4560.70
2. Finland 6234.15	8. Germany 3936.30
3. Sweden 6227.55	9. Belgium 3835.50
4. Italy 5935.75	10. Holland 3780.70
5. Norway 5431.80	11. <i>Switzerland</i> 3714.35
6. Denmark 5103.45	12. Austria 2919.95

With all due reserve, it is obvious from these figures that the countries with big production plants and specialising in the medium and cheaper ranges have a higher figure of output per worker than those with more complex manufacturing programmes. The unfavourable position of Swiss hosiery and knitwear in the above table in no way implies that its manufacturing plant is out of date. It is in fact generally recognised that Switzerland produces a different type of article to that commonly produced in other European countries, that it concentrates above all on the « high fashion » article and that except for one or two rare exceptions it does not go in for mass-production. Even if customs duties were lowered, the Swiss

knitwear and hosiery industry could only maintain its position by continuing to produce better quality articles.

The problem of rationalising and increasing the output of this industry does not arise in Switzerland in the same way as in other European countries because Swiss production concentrates mainly on the better qualities. Swiss manufacturers therefore look rather to the training of specialised staff to maintain their advance in this field ;

with this aim in mind they recently founded a vocational training school for instructing their future personnel. In the light of all these considerations, concludes the author of the article in question, Swiss industry may consider the plan for a free trade area with comparative optimism ; true salvation however does not lie in the creation of a European bureaucracy, but rather in a levelling of customs tariffs.

Knitwear on the runway

As we have mentioned elsewhere, the Swiss knitwear industry is up against very keen competition, not only abroad but also on the home market ; consequently it is obliged to go in more and more for the production of high quality articles, always in keeping with the latest fashion trends. In order to show that this statement is no idle boast, the *Swiss Association of Hosiery and Knitwear Manufacturers* organised a fashion show this September in the very modern and cosmopolitan setting of Kloten

airport (Zurich), in collaboration with a dozen airline companies from all over the world. The clothes were modelled by air hostesses belonging to the different companies taking part, and the presentation included the following « tableaux » : Air travel — Town — Afternoon — Departure for Winter Sports Holiday — After-ski wear — Dinner — Cocktails and dancing. We are reproducing here some of the models presented at this original fashion event.



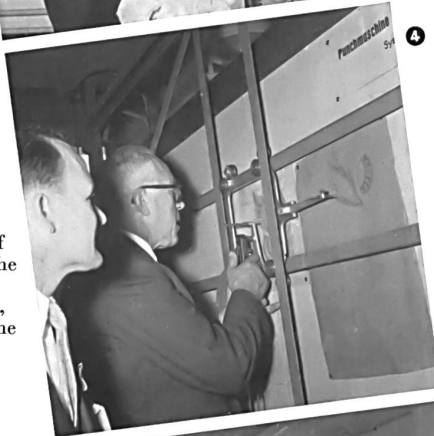
Quelques modèles de bonneterie suisse présentés récemment à Kloten.
Some of Swiss knitted garments recently shown at Kloten.
Algunos modelos de calcetería suiza presentados últimamente en Kloten.
Einige Modelle der schweizerischen Stickereiindustrie, die kürzlich in Kloten vorgeführt wurden.

Photos Tenca





The embroidery school's new premises.

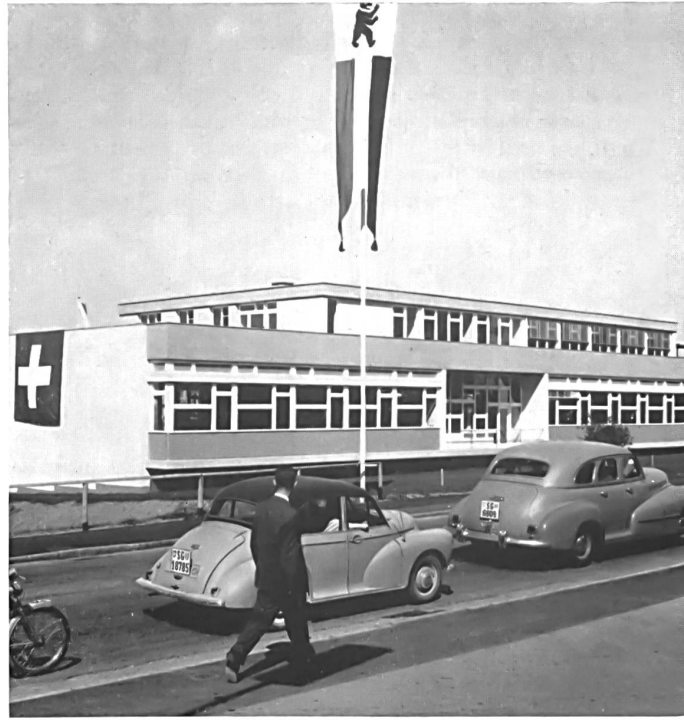


1 Presentation of the key of the school to Mr. Victor Widmer, chairman of the Foundation council.

2 The Federal Councillor Mr. Th. Holenstein, head of the Department of Public Economy (right), in conversation with Mr. V. Widmer (Union Ltd., St. Gall).

3 The guests visiting the school.

4
5



The embroiderers' secret

To tell the truth, it is no longer a secret. The success of Swiss embroidery lies in Switzerland's economic structure and the nature of her production, and can be summed up as follows : no high quality production without skilled labour. What could be simpler ? But it is not really quite as simple as it seems. Admittedly, in eastern Switzerland we have textiles in our blood, but this in itself is not enough.

A quarter of a century ago, the Swiss embroidery industry was faced with a severe crisis. In order to overcome the threatening situation, those responsible for the various hand and machine embroidery schools in the embroidery producing districts decided to join forces. Their first achievement was the foundation of the «Vocational Training School for Embroidery in Eastern Switzerland» at St. Gall. It needed great optimism at that point to have faith in the future of embroidery, but the perseverance of the St. Gall manufacturers was nevertheless rewarded by their ultimate success. Their school, which trains the highly skilled workers so indispensable to their industry, rendered great services and prospered, to such an extent that the premises in the industrial museum in which it was housed soon became too small and it became imperative to have a new building. This is where their solidarity—which is another secret of the success of the St. Gall manufacturers—played its part, so that with the help of the trade associations involved, the cantons and the Confederation, as well as numerous firms and private individuals, it was possible to build the new school on a sound financial basis. The new building was opened on the occasion of the 25th anniversary celebrations of the institution itself, on a beautifully sunny day (the same sun that shone on the St. Gall Horse Show) before a large crowd of eminent figures from the industry, representatives of the trade associations, the local authorities and the press. The Swiss government was represented by the Federal Councillor Mr. Th. Holenstein, head of the Department of Public Economy, himself a native of St. Gall and consequently doubly interested in the ceremony.

Photos Comet

Sunny St. Gall

It almost seems as if the people of St. Gall have come to some agreement with the gods presiding over the weather or do they enjoy the special protection of their patron saint? Whatever the case may be, one is invariably delighted — no matter how rainy it has been previously — to find the most brilliant sunshine gracing the traditional festivities of St. Gall. Under the pretext of an international horse show and race meeting, everything is laid on for the delight and entertainment of the riders and visitors, including members of the press, while manufacturers from Eastern Switzerland present couture and ready-to-wear models made of their loveliest embroideries and fine cottons. The fashion shows take place not only in between competitions, in the unique setting of the green hills surrounding the racecourse, but also at the big gala ball organised by the Race Club.

With regard to the Horse Show itself, the participants included a large number of civilian and military teams from half a dozen countries, consisting of numerous well-known horsemen and horsewomen, among them Mr. Jonquères d'Oriola, holder of a World Championship and winner of an Olympic gold medal; mention should also be made of the traditional military tattoo and the no less traditional and picturesque parade of horse-drawn vehicles. Great interest is taken in these annual horse shows by the whole population of St. Gall and particularly by textile circles, members of which regularly take part each year, as for example Major Mettler, the popular head of the firm of the same name, who is always well to the fore! From the fashion point of view, the creations presented at the ball and on the course were particularly beautiful this year. Finally, it goes without saying that the festivities were once again a great success, excellently organised by the Race Club and the Office for the Promotion of the Swiss Cotton and Embroidery Industry of St. Gall.



Prix des Banques saint-galloises, les vainqueurs.

Premier: M. Jonquères d'Oriola (France).

The winners of the « St. Gall Bankers' Prize » receiving their award.

First: Mr. Jonquères d'Oriola (France).

Distribución de las recompensas a los vencedores del Premio de los bancos sangalenses.

Primer premio: Sr. Jonquères d'Oriola (Francia).

Preis der St. Galler Banken: Siegerehrung.

Erster: M. Jonquères d'Oriola (Frankreich).

Photos Comet



Quelques modèles réalisés en cotons fins et broderies de Saint-Gall et présentés à l'occasion des Journées hippiques.

Some models made of St. Gall fine cotton fabrics and embroideries shown on the occasion of the Horse Show.

Algunos modelos confeccionados con algodones finos y bordados de San Galo, presentados con motivo del Concurso Hípico.

Einige Modelle aus St. Galler-Baumwoll-Feingeweben und -Stickereien, die anlässlich der Pferdesporttage vorgeführt wurden.



METTLER & Cie S. A., SAINT-GALL

«Crêpe Favorite», crêpe de coton très mode avec envers satin, infroissable.
 «Crêpe Favorite», very fashionable cotton crepe with satin back, crease resisting.
 «Crêpe Favorite», crespón de algodón muy de moda con reverso de satén, inarrugable.
 «Crêpe Favorite», sehr modischer Baumwollkrepp mit Satin Rückseite, knitterfrei.

Modèle: Marty & Co., Zurich

METTLER & Cie S. A., SAINT-GALL

«Chiffon Casella», chiffon de coton très léger avec belle impression robe ; article très en vogue.
 «Chiffon Casella», fashionable very light cotton chiffon with beautiful printed design for dresses.
 «Chiffon Casella», chifon de algodón muy ligero con hermosa estampación para vestido ; artículo de gran moda.
 «Chiffon Casella», sehr leichter Baumwollchiffon mit schönem Druckmuster im Kleiderstil ; sehr nachgefragter Artikel.

Modèle: Marty & Co., Zurich





FORSTER WILLI & Co., SAINT-GALL

Dentelle avec applications de fleurs brodées.
 Lace with appliquéd embroidered flowers.
 Encaje con aplicaciones de flores bordadas.
 Spitze mit aufgesetzten bestickten Blumen.

Modèle : Macola S. A., Zurich

STOFFEL & Co., SAINT-GALL

Mousseline fantaisie à rayures blanches et carreaux en teintes pastel, avec effets de tissage originaux.

Fancy muslin with white stripes and checks in pastel shades with original weave effects.

Muselina de fantasía con listas blancas y cuadros de tonos pastel con originales efectos de tisaje.

Fantasie-Musselin mit weissen Streifen und pastellfarbenen Carreaux in reizvollen Bindungseffekten.

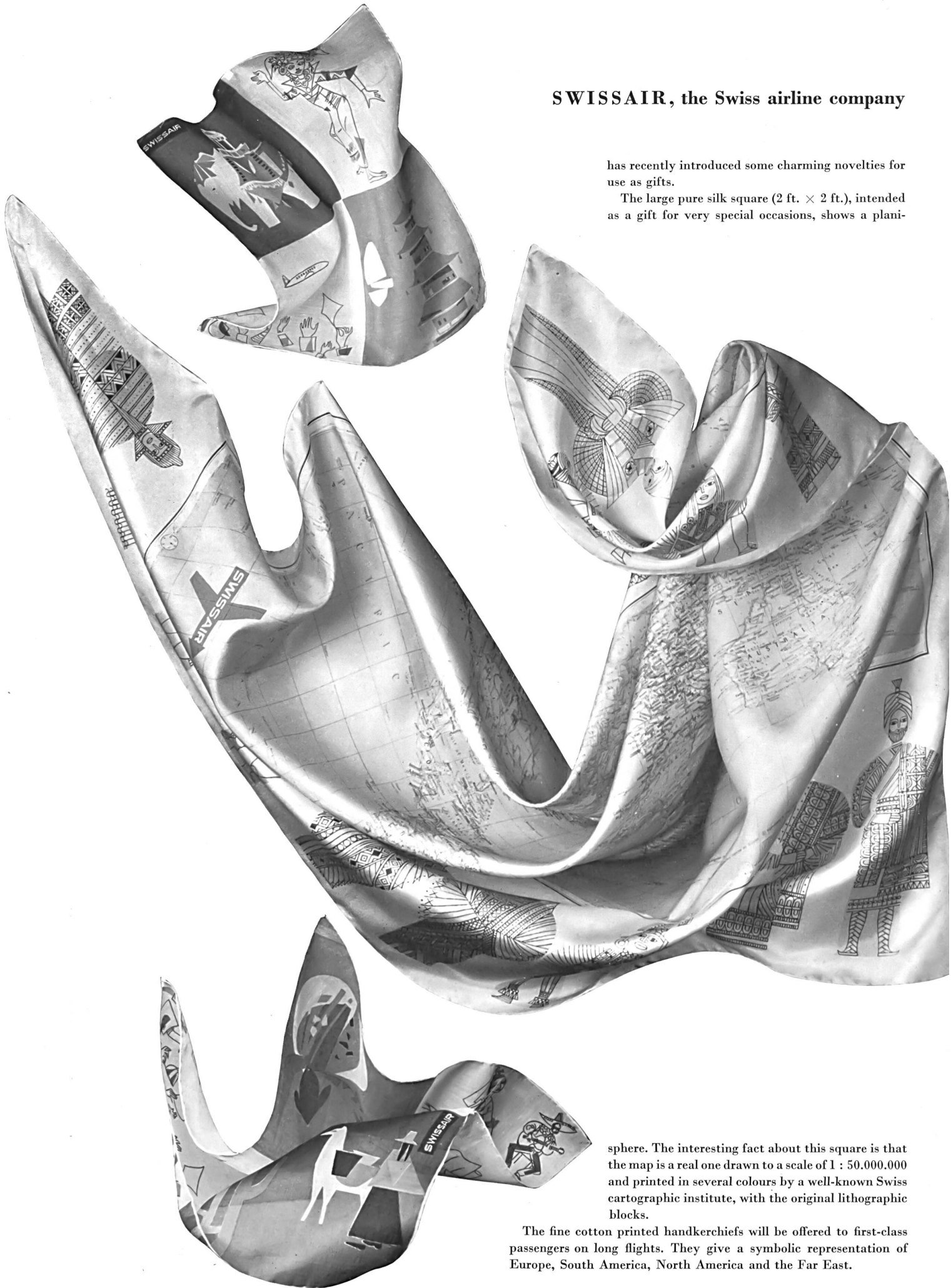
Modèle : Kriemler-Schoch, Saint-Gall



SWISSAIR, the Swiss airline company

has recently introduced some charming novelties for use as gifts.

The large pure silk square (2 ft. × 2 ft.), intended as a gift for very special occasions, shows a plani-



sphere. The interesting fact about this square is that the map is a real one drawn to a scale of 1 : 50.000.000 and printed in several colours by a well-known Swiss cartographic institute, with the original lithographic blocks.

The fine cotton printed handkerchiefs will be offered to first-class passengers on long flights. They give a symbolic representation of Europe, South America, North America and the Far East.

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