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OVERALL PICTURE OF SWITZERLAND'S TEXTILE AND CLOTHING INDUSTRIES

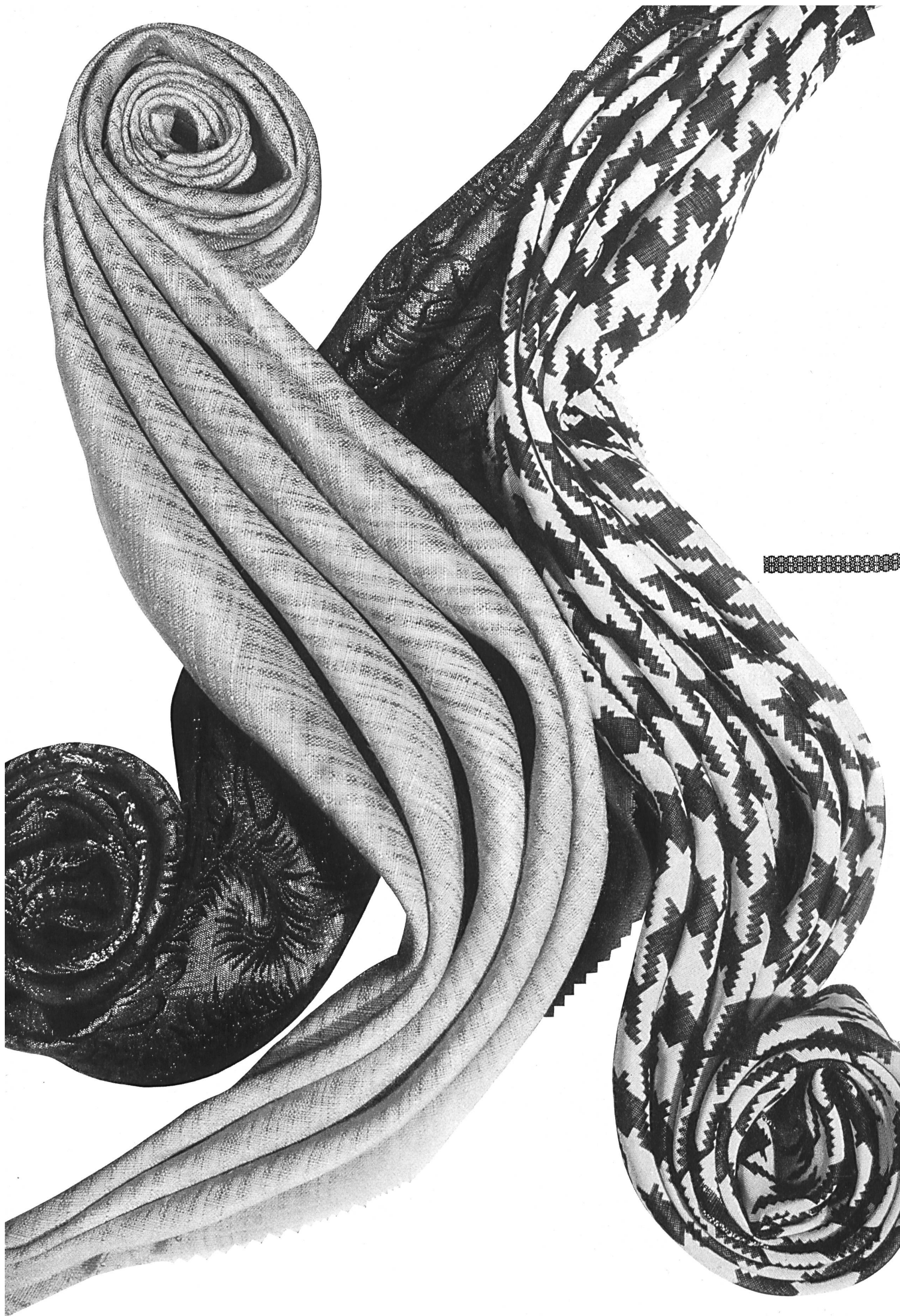
THE SILK INDUSTRY

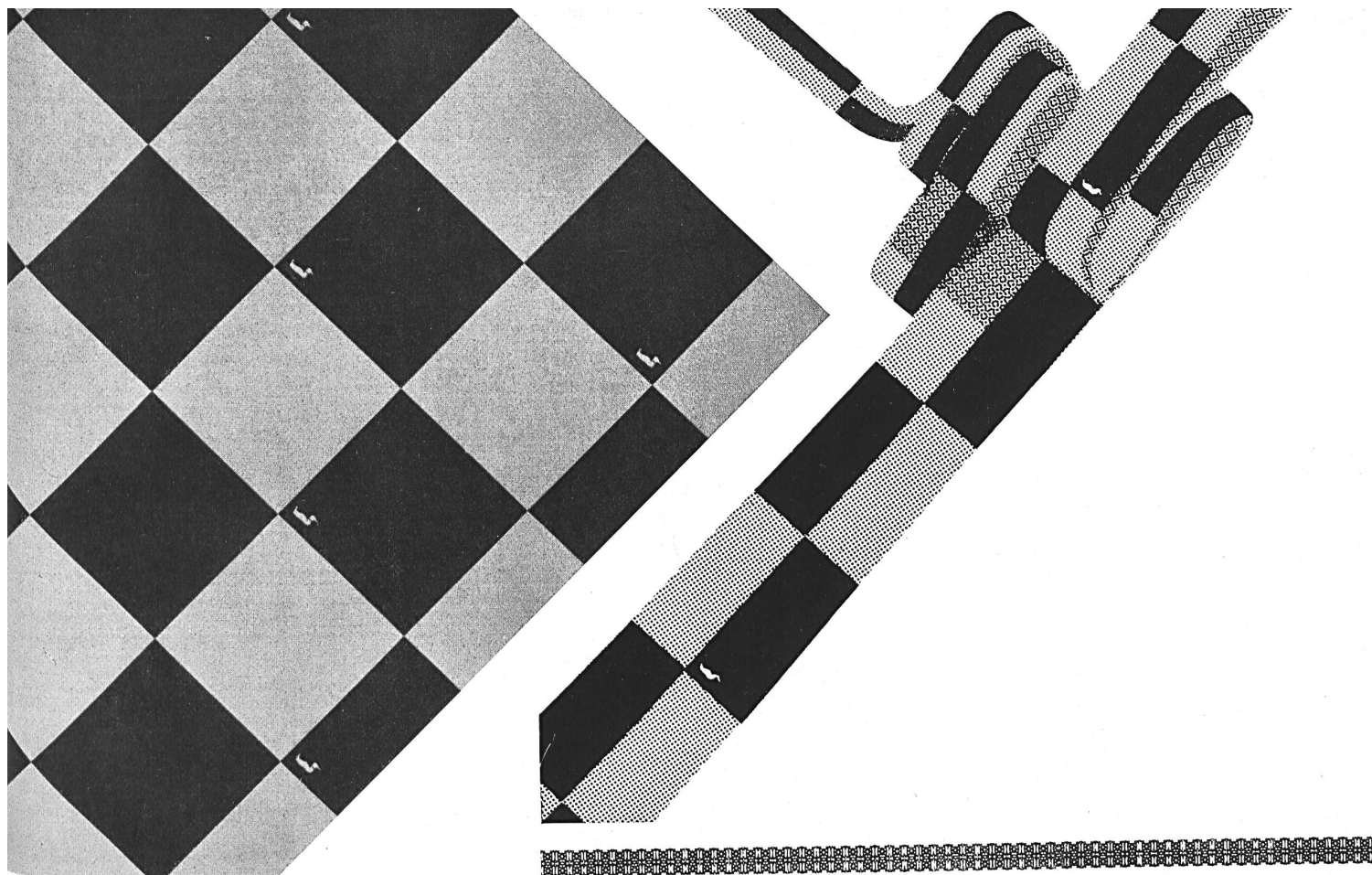
In 1963, the 111 industrial and commercial concerns affiliated with the Zurich Association of the Silk Industry exported 429 million Swiss francs' worth of fibres, yarns, twist yarns, fabrics, squares and ribbons. This sum represents 39 % of the total exports of textiles; only five years ago the figure was just 30 %.

If this encouraging result is examined more closely, it will be noticed first of all that it corresponds to a new advance in the chemical fibres industry. Nevertheless the part played by silk and rayon fabrics in the total exports of fabrics has risen from 34 % to 43 % since 1959. It is interesting to examine the proportion of the various raw materials used in the silk weaving industry: rayon 38 %, staple fibre 22 %, cotton, wool and mixtures 13 %, synthetic fibres 17 %, and silk 9 %. To the layman, the figure for natural silk may appear small but — on the contrary — it will impress specialists and those familiar with the present situation; they know in fact that in other countries with a silk industry, the part played by natural silk is counted in fractions of a per cent only.

Furthermore, in value exports of silk fabrics come first with S. F. 41.0 million, followed by nylon fabrics (39.4 million). The silks involved here are all novelty silks, which enjoy a worldwide reputation under the name of « soieries de Zurich » or « Swiss Silks », thanks to the position they have won in Parisian haute couture collections and the part they play in better ready-to-wear collections throughout Europe and America. In this connection, it is interesting to note that a certain quantity of Swiss silks finds its way abroad through the exports of silk dresses of the Swiss ready-to-wear clothing industry. Nor must we forget Swiss tie silks, which for a very long time now have been a speciality of Zurich silk factories, as also silk squares and scarves, whose original designs and extremely fine prints are of a very high standard. At a time when the standard of living is going up rapidly almost everywhere, silk ties and scarves make good export articles.







The techniques of weaving and finishing (dyeing, printing, dressing, etc.), which always make use of the very latest methods, the experience acquired over the centuries with regard to exports, and the creative work of fabric designers — all of which factors have helped to produce top-quality natural silk specialities highly appreciated on the market — also benefit articles in chemical fibres of all kinds.

The superficial observer might tend to include all rayon or synthetic fabrics under the heading of mass-produced articles. And yet more and more rayon, staple fibre, nylon fabrics, etc. are despatched all over the world to bear witness to the versatility of Swiss silk mills and the diversity of their products; these factories have established the reputation of the Swiss novelty fabrics which are exported throughout the world but are not yet properly known everywhere among the general public. Yet another positive element to the credit of this branch is its cooperation with other sectors of the textile industry such as, for instance, the manufacture of elastic synthetic yarns and embroidery, whose success in the field of fashion often goes hand in hand with that of silks.

The term « Swiss silks » enjoys an excellent international standing. Perhaps today it should be given a new definition: owing to the progress of chemical fibres, it is no longer so much a question of the transformation of natural silk — the only activity for centuries — as above all a symbol of the great development in textile technique and a sense of fashion which for countless seasons and in spite of many crises, have always succeeded in asserting themselves.

In this way Swiss silk production, situated mainly in and around Zurich, offers during this year of the National Exhibition, the picture of a strong national industry, capable, with its economic, technical and artistic tradition, of coping successfully with the pressure of competition at home and abroad and of taking an active part — in keeping with the pioneering role it has always played — in the intense economic development of the near future.

