

Business in Switzerland

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BUSINESS IN SWITZERLAND

New Research Centre for Swiss Industry

Paillard Ltd., which is the largest industrial concern in the French part of Switzerland, has just inaugurated the new premises for its Research Department, at Yverdon, in the presence of a number of prominent figures of industry and education. Paillard, a well-known firm employing nearly 4,000 workers and office staff, has made a name for itself throughout the world for its typewriters, cameras and projection equipment. The new research centre, consisting of four storeys and a basement, employs some 240 people in its engineering and drawing offices, experimental physics laboratories — including a sound-proof chamber for testing sounds — optical laboratories equipped in particular with an electronic calculating machine, and its chemical laboratory as well as the huge production and assembly workshops, a veritable factory in which some forty highly skilled mechanics are occupied in the construction of prototypes. By building this modern research centre, Paillard Ltd. has shown that it intends to remain in the forefront of progress, in order to maintain its position on the markets of the world in the face of ever keener international competition.

The Average Swiss Receives Record Mail

According to the figures issued by the International Bureau of the Universal Postal Union in Berne, Switzerland comes first among European countries for the number of letters received per head of the population, with 118.5 letters, ahead of Great Britain (112.1) and Sweden (88.7), the lowest figures being recorded in Italy (37.5) and Finland (29.6). With regard to the amount of printed matter received annually per head of the population, Switzerland with 127 deliveries comes second after Belgium (192) and ahead of the Netherlands (93), with Norway (21) and Finland (16.6) bringing up the rear.

A new Game of Skill from Switzerland

As its name suggests, "Goalmate" is an ingenious combination of chess and football! It is not, of course, played on a pitch, but with a squared board on which each of two players controls eleven pieces positioned on the squares like a football team. Some of the rules are derived from football while others — governing the movements of the pieces and the method of scoring — come from chess. Each type of piece is, in fact, moved in a particular way as in chess, goals being scored by checkmating the opposing goalkeeper. "Goalmate" is therefore a game of skill needing intelligence and thought, but not allowing such elaborate combination as chess. The idea is to play it "for fun" rather than as a profound "art". In short, "Goalmate" is neither an easier or more difficult version of chess nor a substitute for it, but an enjoyable pastime for quick-witted people. Devised by an Englishman resident in Switzerland, where it is manufactured, the game calls for a sporting spirit and the ability to plan ahead, quick thinking, boldness and caution. As such, it will undoubtedly prove a great success everywhere.

A Merger in the Swiss Watchmaking Industry

Four Swiss watchmaking factories have joined forces to create a new concern employing over 760 workers and capable of turning out 600,000 watches per year. The new firm, known as United Swiss Watchmaking Factories Ltd., in Bienne, will have a share capital of 4,500,000 Swiss francs. This merger is the fruit of three years' preparation. For practical reasons, each of the sectors

(purchases, manufacture, technical research and sales) will be centralized in one of the four factories; the individual brand names will be kept, but it will be possible to reduce the number of types considerably without adversely affecting the diversity of the overall production. Manufacture will be rationalized, distribution better co-ordinated, and overheads decreased. In addition, this merger will help provide a partial solution to the problem of the shortage of managerial staff and skilled labour. Thus, it can be seen that one of the most traditional of Swiss industries has successfully used modern methods to meet the new situations created by the growth of international competition, the evolution of markets and the creation of economic blocs.

The Industrial Effort of the Valais

The countries in the process of development are not the only ones to be faced with certain problems in which the position of industry is influenced by demographic factors and vice versa. An example is the canton of the Valais, where the population is unable to depend entirely for its livelihood on the products of a very mountainous region consisting mainly of small-holdings but which would be unsuitable for big industrial concentrations. Attention should, therefore, be called to the efforts and achievements of the Economic and Social Research Society of the Valais, which is endeavouring in different parts of the canton to create possibilities of work capable of providing a livelihood for small numbers of workers without raising any problems with regard to the concentration and displacement of the population. Recently, this society undertook to acquire sites for the setting-up of twelve big poultry farms providing employment for a hundred people in all; the investment involved is estimated at approximately 12 million S.Frs. In addition, four watch factories either have been opened up or are about to be started in three different districts, while in three other localities a concern for mass-producing doors and windows for the Swiss market, an art ceramics works and a branch of a foreign firm manufacturing menthol have also recently been set up.

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