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ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL ITEMS FROM OSEC

Ghana and Chile: Guests of Honour at the 51st Comptoir Suisse

The 51st Comptoir Suisse, which is being held from September 12-27th in the Beaulieu exhibition palace in Lausanne, will be showing interesting novelties in the range of its traditional exhibits covering agriculture, industry and crafts. The Swiss canton of Solothurn, official host at this autumn fair and the most industrialised canton in relation to its population, will be presenting a display of its products and an audio-visual show on the most modern lines. This important trade function in Lausanne will be further highlighted by the presence of two foreign guests of honour. Ghana's pavilion will show a young African sovereign state embarking on a modern economic expansion whilst maintaining its ancient traditions, while the Chilean pavilion is presenting a wide survey of the country's economic resources with its many facets.

A Giant Congress in Switzerland in 1973

The directors of the Rotary Club International have entrusted the Lausanne branch with the organisation of the World Rotary Congress which is to take place in 1973. This function will be the biggest congregation ever held at the Lake of Geneva. From all over the world 12,500 persons will be taking part; they will be accommodated in 220 hotels throughout the region, and their session will be held in various halls linked by an internal TV network with wide-screen projection.

Switzerland Presents the House of the Future

At the recent European Festival of Recreation in Geneva, visitors were able to inspect the prototype of a futuristic house which is soon to be produced in series in Switzerland. Shaped like an egg, this house is entirely of plastic, giving it the advantage of lightness, strength, easy upkeep, etc. Its envelope, consisting of two layers of polyester separated by foam plastic, provides perfect insulation. Adaptable to all climates, it is thus equally suitable as a weekend home in the mountains or at the sea. Moreover its shape guarantees perfect stability, allowing it to be sited in any topography: rocks, forest, slopes and even on water. This house, with three plexiglass-glazed bays, provides a perfect panoramic view and has 50 m² living space. It is supplied with complete interior furnishings in polyester making allowance for all the demands of modern comfort: living room, bedrooms, fully equipped kitchen, bathroom,

ample cupboard space and an under-floor heating and air conditioning plant. Presently intended as second homes or guest bungalows, later on it will be possible to stack these houses one above the other by means of steel fittings, forming towers. It is no exaggeration to say that this Swiss concept opens new perspectives for building techniques and living habits at the beginning of the plastics age.

Camera of Entirely New Conception

A Swiss firm specialising in the production of cameras for professional photographers has just perfected a big-picture camera conceived on entirely new principles. Already the outside appearance of this instrument betrays the numerous internal changes characterising it. Among the improvements effected, in particular there are the elements controlled by self-locking micrometer mechanisms. Furthermore this camera, designated SINAR-p, is equipped with a patented device for equalising the sharpness, so that it is no longer necessary to reframe the subject and focus it again unless dictated by the optics. The innovations embodied in this photographer's camera have the effect of greatly simplifying all the control operations, which can be effected with more precision and better control of the operating parameters. Despite the originality of the design, the accessory connections are the same as those on the classical SINAR camera, ensuring the interchangeability of practically all the elements in the production programme of this Swiss firm. Without exaggeration it may be said that these novel conception will give birth to a new generation of cameras for professional photographers.

A New Swiss Mixing Tap

After six years of research a Swiss has perfected a mixing valve which won him a silver medal at the last Inventors' Salon in Brussels. It is a system halfway between the simple control with two hand-grips and thermostatic control, which is more complicated and expensive. Of ordinary appearance, this tap has a small lever which is adjusted horizontally to obtain the desired temperature. Inside the body of the tap the lever acts on a piston which has two sets of slots—one for the passage of hot water, the other for cold; by masking a larger or smaller number of these slots the mixing proportions are determined. The actual hand-grip of the tap regulates the flow of water by varying the height of the slots, but not their number. This small fitting, easy to handle and

embodying high precision, has the further advantage of having a cost price four times less than that of a thermostatic mixer.

A Swiss Kitchen Gadget

A Swiss inventor has thought up an ingenious little gadget which should save housewives a lot of trouble. It consists of a boiling indicator with a probe and an alarm drum. The probe is immersed in the pan, and the housewife can leave the kitchen without having to fear the pan boiling over and maybe putting out the gas, unpleasant burning smells or hotplates to be cleaned. The alarm is given before boiling starts, and is only silenced when the probe is taken out.

Emosson: Latest in the Line of Major Hydro-electric Schemes

The Emosson hydro-electric scheme, a joint Franco-Swiss project, will be completed in 1973 after six years of construction. For the time being it will then constitute a halt in the exploitation of hydro-electric power resources in Switzerland. The scheme will enable a useful volume of 225 million m³ of water to be accumulated annually, giving in two successive drops of some 1400 m a mean output of 634.1 GWh. Tunnels totalling 47 km in length are involved; the arch dam is 180 m high and contains 1.1 million m³ of concrete. It is estimated that the scheme will cost 520 million S.Fr. (US \$121m). Hydro-electric schemes are justified even in the atomic age, for they enable the peak energy demands to be covered. In the early 1980s it is even expected that the construction of nuclear power stations will have to be supplemented by extensions to existing hydro schemes and the construction of pumped storage schemes in order to satisfy the demand peaks.

Merger in the Swiss Foodstuffs Industry

An important regrouping recently took place in the Swiss foodstuffs industry. Suchard Holding S.A. has taken over the Tobler chocolate works and is now to be known as Interfood S.A. This amalgamation comes at the end of long debates regarding the advantages of a co-ordination of activities in certain fields. Both concerns came to realise that a fruitful collaboration could be achieved only within the framework of a close economic union. Through this marriage Interfood S.A. becomes a major force in the chocolate world. With annual sales estimated at 800 million francs (US \$186 million) it will be in a strong position to launch new developments and, in particular, to intensify the efforts that it is resolved to make in order to diversify its products on a large scale.

Signature of a Soviet-Swiss Watchmaking Agreement

After lengthy negotiations the Swiss Chamber of Horology and the State Committee of the Council of

Ministers of the URSS for science and technology have signed an agreement covering scientific, technical and economic collaboration. This agreement, negotiated by a delegation of the Swiss Chamber of Horology between July 1968 and April 1970 consists of a framework agreement expressing the will of the signatories to implement, by means of a mixed commission instituted for this purpose, due measures for widening and deepening their relations in the following areas: scientific and technical collaboration to enable the two industries to co-operate in accordance with a programme to be drawn up by the mixed commission; juridical-economic collaboration in connection with the questions relating to the protection of industrial property and to the common struggle against the abuse of brands and indications of origin; economic collaboration with the aim of encouraging the development of mutual trade. The agreement thus rests on three pillars forming a structure of reciprocal and balanced undertakings.

Switzerland's Industrial Pattern: Small and Medium Firms Predominate

According to the latest industrial statistics, 70.7% of Swiss industrial enterprises employ fewer than 50 persons. Firms with personnel ranging from 50 to 99 account for 14.4%, while those with 100 to 499 persons amount to 13%. Concerns employing 500 persons or more represent only 1.8% of the total. Taken all round, small and medium-sized firms account for 98.2% of all industrial and craft enterprises in Switzerland. Moreover in no branch is the proportion of small enterprises less than 50%. But if the comparison is made on the basis of the personnel employed instead of the number of firms in the different categories, the importance of the big firms emerges in a different light. In fact 30.3% of the total industrial labour force is employed with firms with more than 500 employees. The small enterprises employ 34.2% and the medium-sized firms 35.5%. Thus from either point of view these two categories are seen to represent the mainstay of the Swiss economy.

Swiss TV Publicity: more than 12,000 Spots in 1969

During 1969 Swiss TV broadcasted 12,866 commercials, with a total duration of 348,000 seconds, making nearly 10 hours. Ordered by 427 firms, 1,286 films were made for 624 products. Each one was shown at least ten times. 65% of these spots were viewed all over Switzerland. Most of them ran for 20 or 30 seconds, but there were 246 spots lasting one minute. The charge for a one-minute commercial broadcast throughout the country will be 9,500 francs (US \$2,209) in 1971. The products for which the greatest use is made of TV advertising are foodstuffs (24%), deter-

gents (15%), furniture and household appliances (15%), cosmetics (14%), and soft drinks (10%).

Rieter Celebrates its 175th Anniversary

A Swiss textile machinery works—Rieter of Winterthur—recently celebrated the 175th anniversary of its foundation. To mark this occasion it has issued a splendid Jubilee Booklet conceived and produced on the most modern lines, as proof that despite its venerable age the company remains forward-looking. The reader can trace the development of Rieter since its establishment in 1795 as a cotton trading house to the present day, when it ranks as one of the country's most important mechanical engineering works

employing 3,500 people and achieving annual sales of 170 million francs (US \$39.5 million). It is shown how the Rieter management solved the problems with which they were confronted, in particular the choice between a policy of specialisation and diversified production. Conscious of their advantage in the form of a sound experience of cotton spinning, they gradually gave up the manufacture of hydraulic machinery and railway equipment in order to concentrate solely on textile machinery. At present 90% of their output is exported. Besides a network of agents covering 70 countries, Rieter has affiliated companies in Italy, the USA, India and Argentina.

THE AMERICA CUP AND THE ANTICS OF BARON BICH

An American commentator has said that the chief merit of Baron Marcel Bich, the tyrannical and capricious sponsor of the French team challenging for the America Cup, was to have erased all the ritual boredom from this competition. Baron Bich, sole owner of the "Bic" ball-point pen company and a multi-millionaire, was stung by the obsession of being the first French challenger to the America Cup. Five years ago, he knew nothing about yachting and was not remotely interested in this discipline. But, bitten by the bug, he has since spent some two million pounds, bought a series of most expensive racing yachts, hired the best naval architects, all in preparation for the America Cup challenge. Some of his prototypes were built at Eggar's shipyard in St. Aubin, on lake Neuchâtel. But the cream, the pride of a long Bich family of boats and the sleekest 12 metre in Europe was the "France". She was shipped over to America, together with a complete staff of 50 yachtsmen, technicians, divers, carpenters and sailmakers seven weeks before the race. This was assured to give plenty of time for the French team to practice and adjust their boat to the nearest micron.

The stake was a victory over the Australian challenger to the America Cup, "Gretel II", skippered by world-renowned yachtsman, Jim Hardy. The man tapped to skipper the "France" was no less famous, he was Louis Noverraz, Swiss 5.5 metre champion and Olympic medalist. His position was, however, not completely secure. Baron Bich had spent 5 years preparing for the race but had not really managed to make up his mind on which skipper to appoint. Poppie Delfour, French yachting champion was another standing possibility. The Baron's indecision among his yachtsmen. A new element lead, in fact, to many ruffled feelings

of this year's America Cup was that, for the first time, there were two challengers—the Australians and the French—to compete for the right of struggling with the American team. This innovation was entirely due to Baron Bich.

Noverraz was at the helm at the start of the first race. "France" was well in the lead for most of the race but, after turning round the last buoy and facing the wind, Noverraz committed a tactical mistake in misjudging the changing direction of the wind and was overtaken by "Gretel II", who had a lighter jib and won by two minutes. Baron Bich fired his skipper, the first such case in 119 years, and not only that—but he also readjusted his boat and changed the crew.

Poppie Delfour skippered at the second race. It was a valiant effort, but "Gretel II" won by 90 seconds. Baron Bich called on Noverraz again to skipper the third race. It was lost by 2½ seconds. Completely out of his bearings, the Baron decided to skipper the "France" himself for the fourth race. "France" was readjusted again during the night before the race under the light of projectors.

The last race went askew from the beginning. Bich was already a minute behind the Australians at the starting line, at the first buoy he had lost 4 minutes! Then the two boats met with fog. There was no competent navigator among the French team and the "France" turned in circles in the mist to lose by a ludicrous 40 minutes.

The Baron then held a press conference in which he raved against the alleged breaking of the rules by the Australians and the organisers and claimed that his honour had been flouted. But if Bic pens continue to sell as nicely as they have done so far, we can expect him back at the next America Cup. Whether Louis Noverraz will be there too is another question.