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LETTER FROM SWITZERLAND.

Some Aspects of the Swiss Chemical Industry.

Among Switzerland's export industries, chemicals occupy a prominent position. During these last few months, sales abroad of chemical products have amounted to 15-20% of the total exports of the country; in 1951/52, they reached a value of 715 million Swiss francs, divided up among the different sectors as follows:

	Millions of Swiss francs
Pharmaceutical products ...	296
Essences and synthetic flavouring	36
Dyestuffs	240
Intermediary chemical products (including insecticides, plastics)	123
Greases, oils and miscellaneous ...	20

The prominent position enjoyed by the Swiss chemical industry in the national economy as on the world chemical market is the result of steady development and continual hard work in the fields of science, technique and business organization.

Almost totally lacking in raw materials of its own, the Swiss chemical industry has endeavoured, right from the start, to produce high quality articles which alone could hold their own against international competition. That is why the laboratories of the various concerns as well as the universities have devoted themselves to scientific research in a manner that is both thorough and systematic: hundreds of qualified chemists study fields that are already known and explore new ones. Only articles that have stood up to rigorous tests and mark a real step forward are put on the market. Factories use the most modern methods, greatly aided by the efficient assistance of the machine industry and skilled manpower. The greatest care is taken in the application of the products; teams of experts and technicians are at the disposal of industrial clients, while complete scientific particulars are placed at the disposal of the doctors and hospitals using the pharmaceutical products, in order to ensure their most efficient use.

The oldest branch of the export chemical industry is that of synthetic dyestuffs. Thousands of products, among them hundreds of patented specialities, are used in the textile, paper, leather and plastics industries as well as in many others. Swiss industry has also contributed considerably to the great progress observed during the last few years in the field of synthetic resins and plastics; this is also true in the field of synthetic insecticides: the world-famous DDT is a Swiss invention.

The pharmaceutical industry has also succeeded in making an enviable reputation for itself during the half century that has passed since it first started. Alongside the products forming the basic stock of the pharmaceutical chemist, it is mainly the work done in the fields of hormones, vitamins, alkaloids, glucosides and chemico-therapeutical products (including anti-tubercular agents) that has contributed to its development. Pharmaceutical products must be of extremely high quality, since only the best is good enough where the health and even the life of man are at stake. To the pharmaceutical field let us add that of dietetic products, many of which are also well known throughout the world.

The industry of essences and synthetic flavouring, using highly specialised processes, produces a whole range of odoriferous and flavouring materials which are used in perfumery, the foodstuffs industry, soap-making, etc. These are not, as is often thought, finished and luxury products but the basic materials of the above-mentioned industries for which they constitute the essential ingredients in the subsequent processes of manufacture.

To these branches, which dispose of their products mainly on the world market, must be added a number of others which export to a lesser degree; those manufacturing bases, acids, salts, lacquers, explosives, etc. This completes the picture of a vast field which is characterised not only by the diversity but also by the quality of its products.

ZURICH'S AIRPORT OPENED AT KLOTEN.

The official opening took place on Saturday and Sunday, August 29 and 30 — the first being the official guest day and the second being devoted to the enjoyment of the very interested general public. But the airport and its terminal building have been in full use since April this year and the first runway was placed in service as long ago as June, 1948. This was the 6,230-ft. East-West run. The main instrument runway (16/34, 8,520 ft.) was brought into use in November of the same year. There is a third runway (02/20, 5,100 ft.) and the E-W runway also has a "crash strip" beside it.

At the opening ceremony there were some 450 official guests and the function was followed by a banquet in the airport's restaurants. In the afternoon the guests were shown over the various buildings and many were also flown over the Alps. An airport ball in the evening concluded the celebrations.

On Sunday, the popular day, the main feature was an "international air meeting" to which a number of foreign operators brought representative examples of their latest transport aircraft. B.E.A., for instance, brought in a Viscount 701 and B.O.A.C. flew in the Comet 1, with Avon engines, which is at present being used by the Corporation for technical development flying.

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