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COMMERCIAL NEWS

Franco-Swiss economic negotiations.

The Franco-Swiss economic negotiations which began last week have already been interrupted. Their aim was the renewal of the Economic Agreement which terminated on the 30th September. At the present time, Swiss exports to France are subject to considerable restrictions and the Swiss negotiators had hoped to be able to obtain some improvements in regard to certain points. The French negotiators, however, declared that they were not competent to grant any such improvements. They stated that they must refer this matter to their Government. In view of the fact that the Minister of Finance and of Economy, Mr. Edgar Faure, is in Washington, at present, and the Prime Minister, Mr. Pierre Mendès-Frère, is in London, some time will elapse, in all probability, before any decision can be taken, and Switzerland and France will once more be without a Commercial Treaty.

The biggest steam generating unit in the world.

One of the biggest electrical undertakings in the United States, the Philadelphia Electric Company, is going to equip its thermal station in the Delaware Valley with a gigantic mono-tubular boiler, built in the United States on a Swiss licence. This will be the biggest steam generating unit known up to the present. It will set going a group of turbo alternators of 275,000 kilowatts, this also being a record.

The boiler in question will be furnished by the Combustion Engineering Inc., of New York, which, last year, acquired the rights to build under licence, in the United States, steam generating plants belonging to the Sulzer System. The firm had first proceeded to make a thorough study of the evolution of European technique in the matter of the utilisation of high pressures and temperatures, more particularly in the domain of boilers with forced circulation.

We would like to add that the Steam generator in question will be 42 meters in height, that it will require more than 240 km. of tubes and that it will consume some 85 truck loads of coal each day.

Swiss Technique in Japan.

Recently, a Swiss firm undertook to set up entirely a factory for the manufacture of acetate silk, in Japan, in collaboration with an important German firm. The necessary machinery will be supplied partly by Germany and partly by Switzerland. Switzerland's share amounts in value to several million francs. As far as we are aware, this is the most important order given, since the end of the war, by Japan to a Swiss firm.

Training for commercial purposes in Switzerland.

As a result of a recent inquiry, it would appear that there are 15,000 commercial apprentices in Switzerland. All these apprentices attend schools which have been created for them, a few decades ago, by the Swiss Society of Merchants. The funds required to maintain these schools are provided by the Confederation, by the Cantons, by the Communes and by those taking part in them, themselves, each group being responsible for about one quarter of the costs.

Appointment of Director for European Organisation for Nuclear Research.

The Council of the European Organisation for Nuclear Research held its first session last week, when Professor Félix Bloch, a Swiss scientist who was the Nobel prizewinner for physics, in 1952 and who, up to the present, was Professor of physics at the Stanford University in California, was appointed as Director of the Organisation.

Looking for Oil on the Swiss Plateau.

Borings which have been taking place, in the Canton of Lucerne, have shown the existence of oil in the Swiss sub-soil. Thus, the affirmations made by geologists have once more been confirmed.

The boring undertaken at Altishofen attained a depth of 2,090 metres at the beginning of October. At this depth, the residues of the boring emitted a strong smell of petroleum. A more thorough examination revealed that small drops of petroleum were oozing out of the tiny crevasses to be found in the limestone. This petroleum is now being examined, after which an attempt at extraction will be made, for the purpose of finding out as to whether or not the exploitation of this oil field would be economically viable. We would add that this attempt, which is the 4th of its kind in Switzerland, was rendered possible by Swiss initiative and Swiss capital.

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