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COMMERCIAL NEWS

Swiss Foreign Trade in 1954

With a total of nearly eleven thousand million francs, Swiss foreign trade in 1954 attained a record figure. As regards imports the figures for the last year have never been surpassed in regard to quantity, and only once, in 1951, in regard to value. As for exports, the figures are the highest registered up to now.

The total value of imports increased by 10 per cent since the previous year, and that of exports by 2 per cent. Thus, the Swiss trade balance is once more unfavourable, to the amount of 320 million francs, whereas for the preceding year, it was, quite exceptionally, favourable to the tune of 94 million francs. In so far as imports are concerned, the increase is partially noticeable in respect of raw materials, amounting as it does to 15 per cent, and in that of manufactured products, where it has gone up by 12 per cent. On the other hand, imports of food-stuffs, beverages and fodder have remained practically stationary.

In regard to exports, the increase is due essentially to the machine industry, to that specializing in instruments and apparatus, and, especially, to the chemical industry. There is practically no change to be observed in regard to exports of foodstuffs, whilst those of cheeses and of condensed milk show a slight increase, and exports of chocolate have declined. Taken as a whole, exports of textiles are going down. This tendency is particularly marked in respect of cotton threads and of natural silk and rayon fabrics, whilst, on the other hand, certain branches as for instance those manufacturing embroideries and silk ribbons show a distinct advance.

During the year under review, Western Germany was Switzerland's chief supplier, and at the same time, her best customer. She was followed, in respect

of both imports and exports, by the United States. France came third, in the ranks of suppliers, before Italy and Great Britain. On the other hand, France only occupied the fourth place among Switzerland's customers and was preceded by Italy.

Growth of Swiss Towns.

Between the census taken in 1941 and that taken in 1950, Switzerland's population increased by 450,000 inhabitants, i.e. by a little less than 11 per cent. The rate of increase varies considerably from one town to another. Whereas at Chiasso it has not exceeded 2.1 per cent, it has attained 67.3 per cent at Riehen, which, so to speak, forms part of the suburbs of Basle. In the big towns, this increase is, in general, above the average, exceeding it by 1.7% in Berne, by 2.5% in Basle, by 4.7% in Lausanne, by 5.2% in Zurich and by 6.2% in Geneva. These figures do not, however, take into account the increase in the neighbouring Communes, which is often a multiple of that in the town itself.

Argentine at 36th Comptoir Suisse.

Every year, foreign official participations in the Comptoir Suisse of Lausanne arouse an ever growing interest, due to the steadily increasing sphere of influence of the Lausanne Fair and to the opportunities which it offers for the development of economic and cultural relations between two countries. Following upon Brazil and India, this year it is the Argentine's turn to occupy the Pavilion of Honour at the Lausanne Fair, from the 10th to the 25th of September, 1955.

New Type of Motor-Bus.

The firm of Adolf Saurer, S.A., of Arbon (Switzerland) has just perfected a new type of articulated motor-bus, which will be called upon to render very useful services and will be run for public transport in the city of Zurich. It was necessary to find a means of assuring traffic during peak hours, and this with the maximum of efficiency and of rapidity. The public transport services of Zurich, therefore, directed their quest towards a vehicle, not requiring rails, which offered a maximum of capacity for transport and which, at the same time, made it possible to reduce to a practicable extent the number of personnel required for its running. It was thus that they arrived at the idea of a motor-bus composed of two articulated parts, linked up by means of flexible gangway bellows, in this way providing a large single space in the interior of the bus. This vehicle is supported by three axles, of which the first and the last are mobile, thus making it possible for the motor-bus to carry out very sharp turns. Its holding capacity is of 180 seats.

This new motor-bus has been the subject of research carried over a number of years, in an effort to make it perfectly adapted to topographical conditions in Switzerland. Equipped, as it is, with a Diesel engine of 240 hp, it is capable of being adapted easily to the traffic in big cities, in spite of the 25 tons which represent its load, when complete.

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