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COMMERCIAL NEWS

A Swiss television experiment.

Swiss television attempted and succeeded, recently, in the carrying out of a very interesting experiment, by televising a short scene at the Weissfluhjoch, at an altitude of 8,740 feet. Nine technicians set up 600 lbs. of equipment on the top, at a temperature of about four degrees Fahrenheit, in order to re-transmit a panoramic view taken of that region. One of the reporters, with a microphone in his hands, allowed himself to be buried in the snow, so that the televiwers could watch the way in which the famous avalanche dogs, specially trained for this purpose, perform their work. This was the first time that an experiment of this kind was carried out at such an altitude. The reception of this transmission was excellent.

Development of motorization in Switzerland.

There is now one motor vehicle per every nine inhabitants in Switzerland. At the end of September, 1955, the number of motor vehicles registered in Switzerland amounted to 544,000 machines. The increase in the number of these vehicles, during the last few years, has been very rapid, amounting to nearly 15 per cent annually. Motor cars represent 50 per cent of the total, motor-cycles, motor-scooters and bicycles provided with a motor, cover two-fifths of the amount. The Canton of Geneva, with one motor vehicle for every fourth or fifth inhabitant, is the one with the most vehicles per head in Switzerland.

Swiss cost of living in December.

Compared with the preceding month, the index figure for wholesale prices had increased by 0.1 per cent, at the end of December. On the other hand, the index figures for retail prices remained stationary, standing at 173.6. In comparison with the end of 1954, cost of living has only increased very slightly.

Difficulties in regard to the export of Swiss watches.

Whilst the American protectionist circles would appear to be preparing a new offensive, the first victims of which being the Swiss watchmaking exports, Franco-Swiss watchmaking relations find themselves in a situation which is characterised by the coming into force of the new French Customs

Tariff, which doubles the duties levied on watch imports. And yet, in both these countries many personalities are opposed to the new restrictive measures and, indeed, are even in favour of cutting out the restrictions in force. It is of interest to mention the statement made by the biggest French industrialist in the watchmaking trade, who protested against the new customs tariffs. He pointed out that watch production in both countries is complementary and that the future should bring a gradual breaking down of quotas and a reduction in customs duties. No modern industry can possibly live within the shelter of artificial barriers, but owes it to itself to face competition loyally, by rationalising and improving the quality of its production.

Swiss foreign trade in December, 1955.

Swiss imports during December last attained 630 million francs, whereas exports reached 550 millions. In comparison with December, 1954, Swiss foreign trade has increased considerably, imports going up by more than 17 per cent and exports attaining a level, which had never been reached previously.

The same remarks apply to Swiss foreign trade for the whole of 1955, the total figure for which exceeded twelve thousand million francs, with 6.4 thousand millions for imports and 5.6 thousand million for exports. All these figures represent absolute

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records and bear witness to the economic prosperity which Switzerland has enjoyed during the year under review.

Two jubilees in Swiss industry.

It was the end of 1930 that the firm of Forma Vitrum, A.G., which specialises in the manufacture of ampoules and of glassware for the pharmaceutical industry, was founded in Saint Gall. This business undertaking which started off with a staff of only six, now employs more than 250 persons. It produces more than ninety million ampoules and glasses each year.

At Locarno, it was the watchmaking firm of Sindaco S.A., which was able to celebrate the 25th anniversary of its foundation. This firm also started in a very modest manner by making cheap alarm clock and Roskopf watches. However, it developed very rapidly, so that, at the present time it employs 150 workers and produces 40,000 watches and anchor movements per year.

Graphical Exhibition in Lausanne, in June, 1957.

An international exhibition of the graphical industries is to be held in Lausanne, from the 1st to the 16th of June, 1957. Under the title of "Graphic 57", it will group together 200 exhibitors both Swiss and foreign. This representative manifestation of the graphical and stationery branches of industry will be under the patronage, *inter alia*, of the International Federation of Newspaper Publishers.

The Swiss Labour Market in December.

The situation on the Swiss Labour Market was once more characterised by an important demand for labour in December, 1955, and by some very slight seasonal unemployment. The total number of fully unemployed, who have registered for jobs at the Labour Offices, amounts to 3,300, thus being considerably lower than the figure for December, 1954. The decline in unemployment which has occurred since the previous year, affects all the trade groups, but more especially the building trade.

150th anniversary of the Simplon route.

This year, both Switzerland and Italy are celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the putting into service of the Simplon Tunnel, which still remains the longest in the world, being twenty kilometres in length. Another memorable date, which we must

not omit to mention, is that of the opening of the Simplon route, a hundred and fifty years ago. The building of this Alpine road, the initiative for which belongs to Napoleon Bonaparte, lasted for five years. Sixty kilometres in length, this road connects Switzerland with Italy, passing over the Simplon Pass, at an altitude of 2,000 metres. This important artery has developed in a very satisfactory manner, more than 100,000 cars crossing this pass every year. A regular postal service has existed for a great number of years and the railways have facilitated the liaison during the winter months, by means of a service of transhipment, very useful for motorists.

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