

Zeitschrift:	The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK
Herausgeber:	Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom
Band:	- (1957)
Heft:	1302
Rubrik:	Commercial news

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COMMERCIAL NEWS

Swiss machines for Belgium.

A firm of machine manufacturers at Oerlikon-Zurich has furnished the bellows used at the Belgian "Centre d'études pour les applications de l'énergie nucléaire" at Mol, near Brussels. The plant consists of four groups of radial bellows, run by electricity, which together supply 140 cubic metres of air per second and are used for the aspiration of the cooling air from the experimental atomic reactor. These machines are characterised by their high efficiency and their resistance to fouling and to the jerks experienced when in motion.

The Swiss Bureau for a Trade Mark.

It was twenty-five years ago that the "Swiss Bureau for a Trade Mark" was established in Berne. It was this office which first introduced and made known, as a result of its activities during a quarter of a century, the mark of the cross-bow. William Tell's weapon, devoted to pacific aims, now designates those products which may be considered as being of Swiss origin, in accordance with certain specified criteria. Today the Bureau of the Swiss Trade Mark has a membership of 15,000 firms employing more than 200,000 persons.

1,800,000 cycles in Switzerland.

In spite of its mountainous terrain Switzerland possesses a great number of cyclists. According to statistics established by the Association of Manufacturers and Dealers in Bicycles there are 1,800,000 cycles in Switzerland, which means that there are four bicycles for every nine inhabitants.

The biggest cable-lift in Switzerland.

The biggest cable-lift in Switzerland was put into service recently. This is the one which carries passengers from the resort of Arosa to the top of the Weisshorn. The journey is carried out in two sections, the distance covered being more than three kilometres and the difference in altitude amounting to 886 metres. This new means of transport, which possesses the most modern security devices, has cabins capable of carrying 60 persons over the lower section and seventy-five persons over the upper section. The telpher in question can provide transportation for 600 persons per hour.

100,000 passengers during one single month!

In June this year the Swiss Air Line Company "Swissair" carried more than 100,000 passengers during one single month. It was in 1948 that the figure of 100,000 passengers carried during one year was recorded for the first time.

A Swiss watch proves its worth.

The World Press kept the public well informed regarding the voyage across the Atlantic by the replica of the famous ship "Mayflower", which in 1620 carried the Pilgrim Fathers from Plymouth to America, where they formed the first English settlement. On the other hand far less was heard about an extremely interesting experiment which was made on

this occasion and which confirmed, once more, the high quality achieved by Swiss industry in the production of articles of precision. An automatic watch was fixed to the rudder of "The Mayflower II". In spite of the fact that there was a rough sea during most of the crossing, the watch never stopped during the fifty-one days of the voyage, and never ceased from showing the exact time. Moreover, not the least humidity could be found inside the watch. It may be of interest to know that this same watch had already proved its worth a year ago, when a Swiss expedition climbed Everest and Lhotse. There also the results obtained were a great credit to Swiss watchmaking.

The Swiss imports of coal.

Last year Swiss imports of coal amounted to more than 3.3 million tons, that is to say, half a million tons more than in the preceding year. Owing to the penury of electric power from which Europe in general is suffering at the present time, the price of coal has gone up considerably. It was in fact 21 per cent higher than in 1955. Switzerland's chief supplier in coal was the German Federal Republic, which furnished about one-half of the coal imported. This country was followed, in order of importance as coal suppliers, by France, the United States, the Saar, Holland and Belgium. We would like to mention the fact that Swiss imports of coal from the United States

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were ten times as heavy in 1956 as they were in 1955, a fact which goes to show how difficult it was to obtain sufficient supplies of fuel last year.

The 50,000th motor-car assembled in Switzerland.

This recently left the important assembly plant which was established in Biel twenty-one years ago. During the celebrations which took place in honour of this event the General Manager of the plant spoke about the considerable development which had occurred during the twenty-one years of its existence. Since 1939 the workshops have doubled, whilst the number of people employed is now three times as great as it was in that year. As to the plant's capacity of production, it has increased sevenfold as a result of the putting up of new premises.

Construction of a new dam.

A little more than thirty years ago the inauguration took place, in one of the valleys of the Canton of Valais at an altitude of 2,360 metres, of the Grande Dixence dam, which is eighty-seven metres in height and capable of retaining fifty million cubic metres of water. As a result of the considerable development which has taken place in the consumption of electric power in Switzerland, a gigantic work has been going on for the last ten years for the construction of a new dam, which will make it possible to have a reservoir of 400 million cubic metres, and to concentrate all the waters of the Valaisan Alps that are not being utilised elsewhere. It is estimated that this work will be finished in 1962, when the dam will attain a height of 284 metres. At the present time it is 182 metres high, and quite recently it was possible to fill in this first part of the dam, as a result of which the hydro-electric plant of the Grande Dixence, which up to now has been unproductive, will henceforth be able to furnish Swiss economy with an appreciable additional supply of electricity.

A community of interests for nuclear energy.

At the beginning of 1956 various personalities from the French-speaking part of Switzerland, among them being industrialists and representatives of Study Committees, decided to constitute a community of interests for the study of the production and the utilisation of nuclear energy. This community has already found in the various private and public circles with which it has got into touch such a warm welcome that it can now plan for the construction of a small nuclear

station whilst waiting for the possibility of realising other projects. It is with this aim in view that a company, "Energie Nucléaire SA", has just been founded in Lausanne. Its task will be to create a "pilot" nuclear plant, the construction and operation of which will make it possible to engage in useful experiments. In consequence of the support on which it may rely, this new company will no doubt develop very rapidly. It will collaborate, on a national plane, in the co-ordination of those efforts which are now being made in this country for the practical utilisation of nuclear energy. This co-ordination should make it possible for Switzerland to play the part to which she can lay claim, in this domain also, on the international plane.

The Swiss foreign trade.

A new record has been attained by Swiss foreign trade in respect of the first half of this year. Thus, imports have increased by nearly 23 per cent in comparison with the corresponding period in 1956, whilst exports have gone up by approximately 12 per cent. As for the trade balance, it shows a deficit of one thousand million francs, which is practically the same unfavourable figure as was recorded for last year. The increase in imports is due chiefly to heavier purchases of cereals, rendered necessary by last year's poor harvests. Imports of fuel, both solid and liquid, of raw materials for the metallurgical industry, and of raw cotton, all show a considerable increase. As regards exports, the principal increases were in respect of the products of the machine industries, of chemical and pharmaceutical products, of aniline dyes, and of textiles, footwear and foodstuffs.

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