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COMMERCIAL NEWS

A Swiss industry building a power plant for Australia.

The Australian Minister for National Development has announced the decision taken by his Government to entrust the "Ateliers des Charmilles, S.A.", in Geneva, with the job of constructing the turbines intended for the third plant of the project for the hydro-electric exploitation of the Snowy Mountains. The Genevèse firm will build four powerful vertical Francis turbines, of 110,000 h.p. each, which function under a maximum fall of 310 yards. The turbines, together with their speed regulators, will be entirely constructed in Geneva. The equipment will comprise, in addition, four spherical sluices, which are two yards in diameter. This order is a success which honours Swiss industry, as well as the firm concerned, the technique of which has prevailed in spite of very strong competition on the part of five other countries, namely, Great Britain, Germany, France, Italy and Canada.

A new institute for business management in Switzerland.

At the instigation of commercial and industrial circles the Institute for the management of firms, attached to the Commercial University of St. Gall, has now added to its activities an "office for commercial research work". The task of this new office will consist in doing research work on a scientific basis in respect of practical problems relating to market possibilities and to the management of commercial undertakings, with a view to increasing productivity in Swiss trade.

An International Exhibition on water purification in Switzerland.

An International Exhibition relating to the purification of water and of used water is to take place at Basle, in the buildings of the Swiss Industries Fair, from 25th January to 2nd February, 1958. The aim of this Exhibition is to show the representatives of the public services and of the industries, as well as the public in general, what has already been achieved and what can still be done in the field of water purification. It is a well-known fact that the industrial development and the growth of the population in urban centres is rendering ever more difficult the problems connected with the purification of polluted waters and of the supply of drinking water.

The fiscal receipts of the Swiss Confederation for the first three quarters of 1957.

The fiscal receipts of the Swiss Confederation for the first nine months of this year amount approximately to 1,500 million Swiss francs (USA \$349,650,000), that is to say 142 millions (USA \$33,100,000) less than for the same period last year. This decline, however,

is only partly the result of a substantial decrease in taxation; it is due principally to a technical particularly in the levying of the tax for national defence. Indeed, most of the items from which revenue is derived, such as Customs duties, the taxation of tobacco and beer, the turnover tax and the tax on so-called "luxury" articles, etc., show an increased return.

Swiss National Bank Reserve.

At the beginning of November the gold reserve of the Swiss National Bank amounted to 7,369 million Swiss francs (U.S.A. \$1,717,000,000), whilst the reserve in foreign exchange stock totalled 535 millions (U.S.A. \$124,700,000). The value of bank-notes in circulation at that time attained the figure of a little more than 5,500 million Swiss francs (U.S.A. \$1,282,000,000).

An impressive casting at Winterthur (Switzerland).

At the end of October the big Swiss metallurgical plant of Sulzer Brothers Ltd., at Winterthur, proceeded to cast the largest block of cast steel which has ever been achieved in Switzerland. The job was carried out in respect of the lower part of the casing of a steam turbine which had been ordered by the electro-technical firm of Brown Boveri S.A., of Baden, for a Dutch electric power generating plant of 175,000 kilowatts. The net weight of this piece of steel, when it is finished, will amount to 80,000 kilos. It required the contribution of the entire capacity of the foundry in order to carry out this enormous job.

Switzerland now included in the European super-network for the transport of electrical energy.

For some time past technical necessities have caused the adoption of higher tensions than were required formerly for the long distance transmission of electric energy. In view of the fact that several European countries have already adopted a tension of 400 kilo-volts, Switzerland is now obliged to carry out certain adaptations in order to be able to achieve a connection with the European super-network. For this reason the hydro-electric plants on the Upper Rhine have given an order to the firm of Brown Boveri S.A., of Baden (Switzerland), for two groups of twin-transformers of 400,000 kilo-volt-amperes each, for the production of the power which will be furnished by the electric power generating plants that are now being built at Inner-Ferrera, Baerenburg and Sils, and which will be able to produce 1,300 million kilowatt-hours per year. The Baden firm was chosen for this job because it had already built similar transformers for foreign companies in Sweden, France and Germany, in order to enable them to connect up with the super-network.

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Suez Canal company in Switzerland.

The Egyptian Administration of the Suez Canal has decided to open a permanent office in Switzerland, at Zurich. This office will deal with such matters as business relations with navigation companies, the preparation of work on the canal, purchasing contracts and public relations in general.

The new Students at the Federal Polytechnical School at Zürich.

The number of new students registered at the beginning of the Winter Term at the Federal Polytechnical School in Zürich is over nine hundred, that is to say two hundred more than at the same time last year. Of these students 146 are Hungarians. An increase is to be observed more particularly in the number of students who have put their names down for the faculties dealing with mechanics, electro-technique, sylviculture, mathematics and physics.

Switzerland lowers its Customs tariffs on bananas.

Bananas now play an important part in actual alimentation and cannot any longer be considered as a non-essential product. For this reason the Swiss Government has now made definite the provisional reduction in the rate of Customs duties on bananas, which was introduced on 31st May last. This measure had been taken on account of the fact that the fruit crop in Switzerland was damaged by the frost last Spring. The duty now levied on bananas amounts therefore to approximately 12.5 Swiss francs (U.S.A. \$2.90) per hundredweight.

Soup in a Museum.

Organised on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of a big Swiss factory specialising in the manufacture of soups, a very original exhibition is to be opened shortly in the Museum of Arts and Crafts in Zürich. It will be

devoted to soup in the history of civilisation. There will be a great many interesting documents and objects shown which illustrate the part which soup has played — and still plays — in nourishing human beings.

A reduction in the price of flour and bread in Switzerland.

At a time when the prices of most articles have a tendency to go up, more and more, it is very satisfactory to be able to announce a decrease in the price of an essential food. Taking into account the evolution of prices for foreign wheat, the Federal Department of Public Economy has reduced the price for white and semi-white flour. This measure makes it possible for the price of a one-kilo loaf of semi-white bread to be reduced by two centimes (USA \$0.0046).

An increase in exports of the Swiss watchmaking Industry.

Exports of Swiss watches during the first three quarters of this year went up in value to almost 910 million Swiss francs (USA \$21,212,000). They have thus increased by nearly 10 per cent in comparison with the figures for the same period of 1956. The fact that the increase in the value of the exported articles was greater than that of the number of watches sent abroad shows that the average price of the watches has risen. We would add that the share of the watch-making industry in Switzerland's total exports amounted to 18.5 per cent for the first nine months of this year.

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