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BUSINESS IN SWITZERLAND

Swiss Achievement in the Field of Nuclear Technology

Two big Swiss engineering firms, the Charmilles and the Sécheron Works, both of Geneva, have just presented an interesting joint achievement in the field of nuclear technology. The machine in question is designed to load and unload nuclear fuel from the "Dragon" reactor built in Great Britain by OECD with the financial and technical participation of member countries. The manufacture of the different parts of the reactor and its accessories had been entrusted to the industries of countries belonging to OECD. Consequently this order was able to be awarded to SECA, a single company formed by the two Geneva firms, for the purpose of benefiting from their combined means of research, testing and manufacture for the production of equipment for nuclear plant. (OSEC.)

Swiss Part in the Equipping of Indian Power Station

The Charmilles Engineering Works in Geneva was recently awarded a big order for hydro-electric equipment for the second stage in the construction of the Koyna hydro-electric plant in the State of Maharashtra (India). The plant to be supplied consisted of 4 Pelton vertical turbines, developing 112,000 h.p. each under a head of 1,680 feet. The turbines are regulated by a set of extremely sensitive instruments designed and produced by the engineering firm itself. Once completed, the Koyna power station will be the most powerful hydro-electric plant in India. (OSEC.)

Swiss Fancy Leather Goods and Travel Articles

The Swiss fancy leather goods and travel article industry used to cater mainly for the home market, but during the last few years it has begun to go in for export, too. In order to meet the varied needs of its clientele, it produces articles of all kinds, from the smallest wallet to the biggest cabin trunk. Employing only skilled workers, it works mainly with fine leathers of home or foreign origin, plastics, fabrics, fibres, synthetic panels, etc., for the manufacture of articles meeting all the latest requirements of fashion in regard to both line and colour. The success met with by these exports both in Europe and overseas has encouraged Swiss manufacturers in this branch to take greater interest in foreign markets. In order to attract the foreign buyers who visit Switzerland outside the periods when the collections are normally shown, the Swiss Association of Manufacturers of Travel Articles and Fancy Leather Goods in Zurich has organized a permanent exhibition in that town, open all the year round, and only a few minutes from the station and air terminal. (OSEC.)

Switzerland on Display in Nigeria

Switzerland is officially represented at the first International Fair in Lagos, which was recently opened by Mr. Azikiwe, Governor-General of Nigeria, accompanied by Mr. A. Balewa, Prime Minister, and Mr. Dipcharima, Minister of Economic Affairs. Some 3,000 exhibitors, representing 41 countries, 16 of them African, are taking part in this Fair, which covers an area of over 2½ million square feet. The Swiss Section was organised by the Swiss Office for the Development of Trade; 30 big firms are exhibiting there as well as Swissair and the Zurich and Lausanne Institutes of Technology. By taking part in the 1962 Lagos Fair, Switzerland wanted not only to display

her export products but especially to show visitors the possibilities she can offer in the way of education and technical co-operation. (OSEC.)

Switzerland's Assistance in Technical Development

The Zurich-based Swiss Foundation for Technical Aid recently signed an agreement with the government of Northern Nigeria, under the terms of which the Swiss organisation will provide the Nigerian authorities with two instructors in the fields of electromechanics and electrical plant for a period of three years, and possibly a third instructor at a later date. In addition, the Foundation supplies all the workshop equipment, i.e. the machinery, tools and equipment required for demonstration purposes. The Swiss Foundation's aid for this three-year period in the way of equipment, instructors' salaries, travelling expenses, transport costs, insurance, etc., is expected to amount to between 550,000 and 600,000 Swiss francs; the first reports from the Swiss experts, who began their work on 1st September, are encouraging. (OSEC.)

Success of a Swiss Loom

The big engineering works of Sulzer Bros. in Winterthur recently celebrated the production of their 5,000th weaving machine. This figure was reached in ten years only, which represents a comparatively short period of time for a machine of this type and price. It is interesting to note that the Sulzer loom is constructed according to a revolutionary design, the traditional shuttle — for several thousands of years an indispensable accessory of all looms — being done away with for the first time. Without any great advertising build-up, this system gained a place for itself in the textile industry, mainly owing to the quality of the finished loom and the work it does, together with favourable economic aspects. If there is practically no difference between the first and the five-thousandth model of these machines, it is because the first models produced in 1953 had a good twenty-five years of study and practical experimentation behind them. The five thousand looms built to date have been sent to over 28 countries in different parts of the world. The total output of all these looms put together amounts to little short of a million yards of fabric per day. (OSEC.)

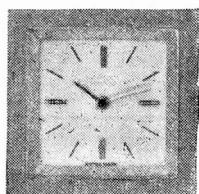
Transport Problems of Heavy Industry

The general public has little idea of the magnitude of the problems raised by the transport of the big parts manufactured by the Swiss engineering industry. Recently, for example, a big engineering works at Oerlikon, near Zurich, had to arrange for the stator of a 157,000 kVA generator, the biggest ever built by the firm, to be transported to the Netherlands. When provided with all the accessories needed for the journey by rail, this mammoth piece of engineering measuring over 13 feet in diameter totalled the impressive weight of 150 metric tons, and had to be carried by a special wagon 130 feet long resting on 36 wheels, spread over 6 bogies. As the dimensions of this consignment greatly exceeded the maximum allowed on the line over which it would have to travel, a light full-scale mock-up had to be made and despatched by the same route beforehand in order to see whether the real thing would pass everywhere. After this precaution had been taken, the actual transport could take place according to a special timetable and at a maximum speed of

20 miles an hour on Swiss territory. This was one of the biggest items ever to be manufactured by the Swiss engineering industry. (OSEC.)

Chile Places Big Orders with Swiss Engineering Firm

The Buhler Bros. Engineering Works at Uzwil, well known for their manufacture of flour-milling machinery and plant for the unloading of ships, recently received a number of big orders from Chile, in particular for the supply of the whole plant for three cereal mills and three concentrated fodder factories, as well as an unloading plant for ships. The latter, intended for a milling company at Antofagasta, is to be designed to handle 150 metric tons per hour. (OSEC.)



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AN ECHO FROM PRE-CHRISTMAS BASLE

On the last two Wednesdays before Christmas the shops of Basle were open in the evening. No motor traffic was allowed in the centre of the town between 6 and 9.30 p.m. There was a very special Christmas atmosphere and shopping was done more leisurely than in day-time. Tall Christmas trees were everywhere. On the market square a band played Christmas tunes. Under the arches of the Town Hall hot sausages and rolls were sold in aid of the youth centre at the Sommerkasino. Students collected for needy children in the Swiss mountain regions. Religious groups took the opportunity to remind the passers-by of what Christmas really meant. Outside the Stadtkasino the traditional three Kings, beautifully got up, collected for handicapped children. By the first Wednesday evening their collecting bowl contained 1,652 Swiss francs and a number of foreign coins, including Finnish crowns.

A sale of candles was started a few years ago all over Switzerland in aid of the Hungarian refugees. The students of Basle University have since been organising this Christmas sale in aid of refugees in general, this time also for refugees from Angola and Tibet. All the many thousands of candles were decorated, and several schools helped in this work. The Grisons Cantonal School, for instance, offered to decorate 600 candles, and a team of hardworking students painted, engraved and packed the remaining 4,000 in four days. They also worked out the sale plan and coped with correspondence. Then the candles were sold in the streets of central Basle during three days in mid-December.

Some other Christmas items from Basle as reported in the "Basler Nachrichten" concern celebrations of a special kind. The Basle Welfare Society, helped by firms, trusts and individuals, organised a party for the deaf at which young people who cannot hear performed a moving mime.

Some 250 sailors of several nations assembled for the annual "Schifferweihnacht" at the St. Matthäus Gemeindehaus. The German Consul-General, the Dutch Consul and clergy of the Protestant and Roman-Catholic denominations attended. There was music, there was a nativity play, there were addresses, presents and refreshments, but above all there was friendliness and warmth. Afterwards the participants hurried back through the cold night to their boats, which were stationed in the various parts of the harbour from the Auhafen down to Weil a/Rhein.

Three hundred old and lonely people were invited to the by now well-known "Kundenweihnacht" which has been arranged every year since the end of the last century by the Young Men's Christian Association of Klein-Basel. The two big Basle papers, "Basler Nachrichten" and "Nationalzeitung", make a collection every year to ensure the success of this celebration. Many a lonely and distressed person found friendliness and food for body and soul.

The Basle section of the Swiss Tourist Club has been in the habit of giving presents to various public services on Christmas Eve, such as customs officials or railway barrier guards. This year it was the members of the ambulance service who were surprised by a special gift.

Finally, a Christmas Vigil was reported from the Hoernli Cemetery, where a large crowd gathered around a huge Christmas tree in the cold of Christmas Eve for a service of remembrance.

(By courtesy, "Basler Nachrichten",
13th December 1962.)