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Swiss textile exports shine

THE YEAR 1979 was a satisfactory one on the whole for the Swiss textile industry, even though the home market stagnated. Orders from abroad increased, in particular for weaving and spinning mills.

Output in most sectors was higher than in 1978. Exports of textiles, clothing and footwear amounted to Sfr. 3,208 million, an increase of 7.5 per cent compared with the figure for the previous year. Similarly imports increased by 13 per cent and totalled Sfr. 4,693 million.

The part played by this industry in Switzerland's overall trade with other countries increased from 7.1 per cent to 7.3 per cent for exports (third in order of importance) and dropped from 9.8 per cent to 9.6 per cent for imports (sixth).

The main imports by a long way were clothing and underwear with Sfr. 2.2 million — 47 per cent of the total. Among exports, fabrics came first with Sfr. 872.5 million (27.2 per cent of the total), followed by yarns with Sfr. 759.8 million (23.7 per cent).

More than 83 per cent of all exports were accounted for by Europe. Switzerland's three main clients were West Germany, Austria and Great Britain, with Sfr. 947.7, Sfr. 379.5 and Sfr. 297.6 million respectively.

Signing

THE Swiss firm Usine Rasta SA has signed a contract worth Sfr. 10 million with V/O Prommashimport in Moscow. It has been commissioned to equip a new umbrella factory with an annual output of about one million units.

This new umbrella factory, the second largest in the USSR, will be ready to start production in 1982.

Travelling

WITH a view to treating people suffering from eye diseases who live in remote districts far from hospitals, a Swiss firm has designed a mobile eye clinic. Looking somewhat like a big container, it can be supplied as a truck, a semi-trailer or a cross-country trailer.

Power for this mobile unit is provided by an electro-solar generator mounted on the roof. Any excess power is stored and redistributed whenever atmospheric conditions require.

The clinic has two air-conditioned rooms. The largest is for examinations and treatment, and the smaller serves as a waiting room or office. In addition it has a refrigerator, hot and cold water, and a small sterilizer for the instruments.

The functional, modular furniture, as well as the equipment in the consulting room, is easily adapted to the needs of different users. This mobile clinic is equipped with the most modern opthamological installations, for both examinations and treatment.

It is provided in particular with an installation for prescribing glasses, as well as a bed for carrying out minor operations.

Glowing

A SWISS firm has invented a new luminous paint, based on the principle of photoluminescence and afterglow, for painting objects that need to be visible in the dark.

Called Jal-Safelight, it captures either natural or artificial light by absorbing the short-wave rays, such as the ultra-violets, and giving back the long-wave rays, in this way creating a luminous source.

An exposure of 15 to 30 seconds to any form of lighting, like car headlamps, is enough to make the paint visible.

The light intensity is strong at first and then gradually fades to disappear after about 90 minutes. The length of the effect depends on the proper application of the product on the undercoat.

Slightly rough and easy to put on, the paint comes in only one colour, pastel green. The pigment is not radioactive.

Changing

JACQUES Turrettini of Société Genevoise d'Instruments de Physique, Geneva, chairman of Sogenique (Service) Ltd and Société Genevoise Ltd, the Newport Pagnell engineering companies, has announced changes to the British board of directors.

David Webster has been appointed managing director of the board and will be chief executive of Société Genevoise Ltd.

The technical director, Reg Hood, will be chief executive of Sogenique (Service) Ltd.

The former company secretary, Ron Simmonds, has been appointed financial director and continues to be responsible for the financial management of both companies.

Increasing

DURING 1979 the mail order sector in Switzerland recorded a total turnover of Sfr. 830 million — an increase of 5.5 per cent over the previous year.

Its share of the market amounted to 1.7 per cent of the total retail trade, and turnover per head of the population worked out at an average of Sfr. 131.45. In other European countries the part played by mail order sales represents 0.7 per cent in Belgium and Italy, 1 per cent in Finland, 2.2 per cent in France, 5 per cent in Germany and 5.3 per cent in Great Britain.

Mixing

CADBURY Ltd have awarded a contract to Buhler-Miag (England) Ltd for the supply, installation and commissioning of a new chocolate mixing plant for their factory in Somerdale. The contract includes a Buhler batch mixer, weighing equipment and steel belt conveyor.

The contract was finalised after extensive study to ensure that the plant is built with the minimum production shut-down period.

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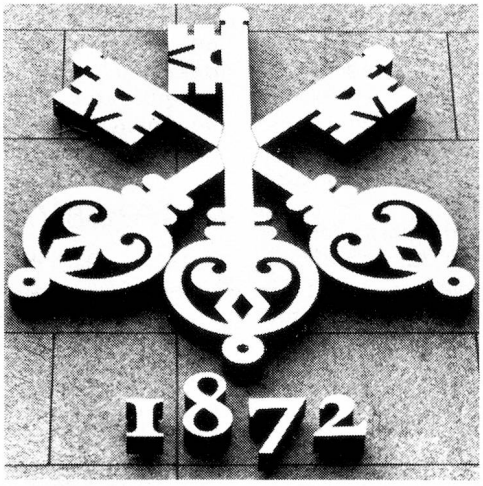

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Total assets (end 1979): Sfr. 69,181 million. Customers' deposits: Sfr. 37,927 million. Capital and reserves: Sfr. 3,926 million. Advances to customers: Sfr. 31,892 million. Net profit: Sfr. 258 million. Number of staff: 12,600.

Britannia and the three Baers

ONCE upon a time there were three Baers.

They were Swiss Baers, which explains their idea of spelling; their names were Hans and Peter and Nicolas, and they all lived happily together in a private bank.

In the bank there were pots and pots of honey, which they looked after. Sometimes, as now, the Baers were bulls, but basically they were Baerish.

Now across the water lived a poor little girl, who had once been a rich little girl, but the rats had got at her honey, and this made the Baers very sad.

So Hans and Peter and Nicholas set out to see the little girl, whose name was Britannia, and asked her to picnics and offered to look after her honey, because they thought she might still have quite a lot tucked away that the rats hadn't found yet.

The picnic season opens today, as the Baers and their team set out around Britain explaining the virtues of putting money under Swiss management.

To Birmingham they will go, to Leeds, Manchester, Edinburgh; later to Norwich, Bournemouth, perhaps Bristol. They will ask the professional advisers — lawyers and accountants; some of their clients; stockbrokers, perhaps —to hear about the newly-launched Baer International Investment Service.

The first investment decision, they will say, is to get the currency right. After a decade which began with ten Swiss francs to the pound (now there are less than four) few would argue.

Britons will be advised to keep half their investments in sterling, but only on the Baer principle that everyone should have that much in his own currency, where he can reach it quickly and easily.

The rest the Baers would now invest through dollars, German marks, Swiss francs and Dutch florins. They are buying bonds, convinced that we have seen the bottom of the market and that a sizeable recovery is under way.

Convertible bonds, in particular, offer bargains and a spread of risk — for instance, bonds raised in marks by Japanese companies, giving conversion rights into their shares and thus into yen.

But the Baer approach is, in the exact sense, conservative. Says Nicolas Baer: "It seems to us more important not to lose any money than to make a lot... I guarantee we won't double your money in a year, and we won't half it".

The new service is handled in London by Julius Baer International (now duly a 'recognised bank' in the Bank of England's eyes) on strict lines laid down by the Zurich parent bank, Julius Baer, where they already manage 'several' thousand million dollars — getting on for £1,500 million, perhaps.

For Britons, the catch is that you need £100,000 to join in — the sort of minimum investment the merchant banks ask for.

In Zurich you can play for more affordable stakes — about one-eighth as much. Bank Julius Baer has a string of managed funds; their bond fund, Baerbond, came top of the Euromoney league table on its five-year record. These funds, not being registered in Britain, cannot be marketed here, but that need not stop you buying them.

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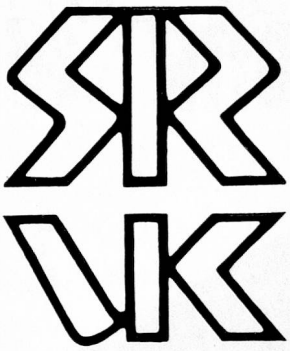

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