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Why did Swiss share in German market drop?

A GLANCE at Swiss foreign trade statistics shows that the Federal Republic of Germany is by far Switzerland's most important export country.

In 1983, about one-fifth of Switzerland's total tangible exports of Sfr 10.7 billion went to our northern neighbour.

Taking Swiss exports as a percentage of total West German imports, we find that they slipped from 3.9 per cent in 1978 to 3.5 per cent in 1983. For 1983, this market share loss of 0.4 percentage point represented lost orders worth something like Sfr 1.2 billion.

To put the figure in perspective,

Switzerland's 1983 exports to Japan totalled Sfr 1.5 bn.

Does this drop in Switzerland's market share in Germany mean that Swiss exporters are no longer a match for competitors in price terms?

Changes in a country's ability to compete on price in the German market can be evaluated by investigating the "real" exchange rates in relation to the German mark.

France was the only country to enjoy improved price competitiveness as compared to German producers in the 1978-1983 period. Exporters from all other countries saw their ability to compete on price with domestic German producers deteriorate.

Of course there were substantial differences in the extent to which price competitiveness declined. Switzerland and Japan did not fare too badly. The real exchange rates of both the Swiss franc and the yen in relation to the mark fell by only about 1.5 per cent since 1978.

The comparison of Japan and Switzerland is interesting. Though both countries became sig-

nificantly more competitive in price terms, their German export records moved in diametrically opposite directions.

Japan expanded its market share by just under 30 per cent between 1978 and 1983, while Switzerland was suffering a 10 per cent loss in relative market share.

It can be concluded from these results that the losses of Swiss exporters on the German import market between 1978 and 1983 cannot be explained by a decline in price competitiveness.

True, the Swiss franc did gain in value in comparison with most of the competing countries, but Swiss exporters enjoyed a price advantage nonetheless because of the relatively minor increase in export prices.

A factor that probably contributed significantly to Switzerland's loss of market share was the fact that the structure of West Germany's imports shifted slightly in favour of consumer goods and away from the capital goods that are more important to Switzerland.

However, Japan's success would also seem to indicate that,

in addition to the altered demand structure, other factors unrelated to price contributed to Switzerland's relatively poor performance.

Courtesy Swiss Bank Corporation

Happy Interhome

ZURICH/BASED Interhome - which specialises in self-catering holiday accommodation - celebrated its 20th anniversary last year with record turnover and profits.

Turnover rose five per cent to reach Sfr 133 million, and profits increased 30 per cent to Sfr 430 million.

Total overnight bookings at Interhome properties rose to five million, a six per cent increase which reflects the strength of the trend towards self-catering accommodation.

The organisation has 16,000 apartments and bungalows, plus some 400 hotels in 10 European countries.

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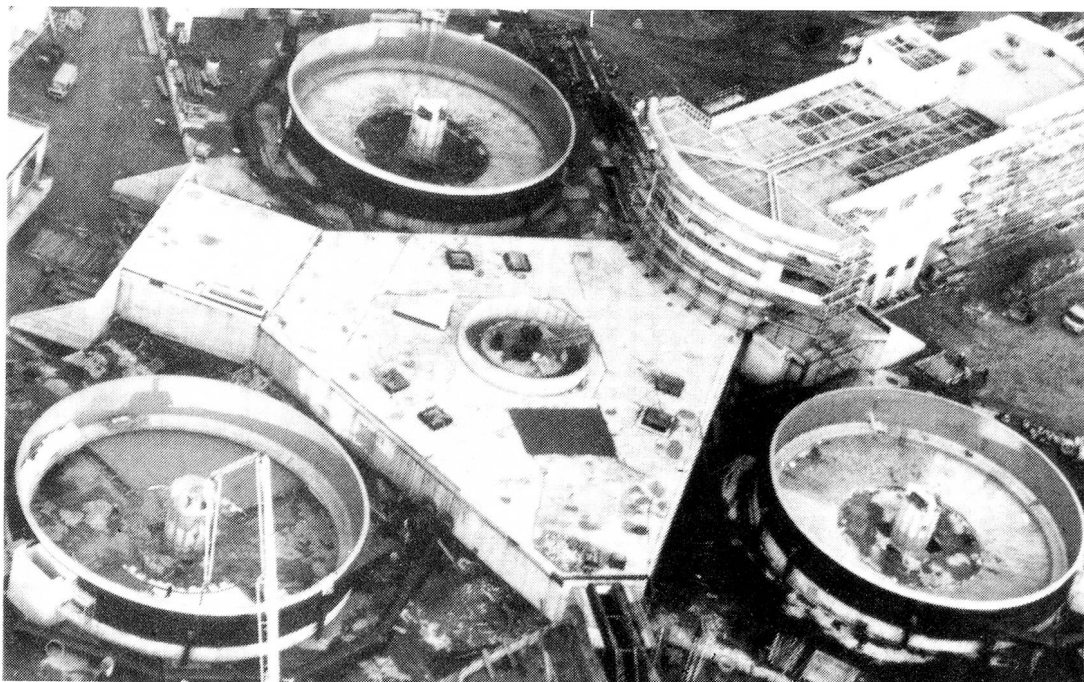
is France, which provides 30 per cent of total revenue, followed by Germany (16.7 per cent), Switzerland (14.8 per cent), Holland (11.3 per cent), Belgium (10.4 per cent) and the UK (5.1 per cent).

Although Italy, Austria and Spain take only a minor share of less than four per cent each within the group's revenue, the highest growth rates were attained in these countries – 84.5 per cent in Italy, 69.5 per cent in Spain and 34.5 per cent in Austria.

On the light side

A PRACTICAL and simple safety armband that reflects light and glows in the dark has been developed by Jalite Corporation of Lausanne, manufacturers of photoluminescent safety products.

Also highly visible in the daytime and at dusk, the new orange



darkness.

This exclusive feature of luminescence, a company spokesman explained, adds considerably to security.

Ideal for school-children, cyclists, joggers, traffic controllers, firemen, elderly pedestrians, etc, the armband is non-toxic, non-radioactive, and contains neither phosphorus nor lead.

One size fits all arms.

Record year

THE Swiss Mövenpick hotel and restaurant group last year achieved its best result since its formation in 1948.

Chairman Ueli Prager reported to shareholders that total turnover rose by more than ten per cent to Sfr 625 million and the consolidated cash flow by 13.5 per cent to Sfr 29.5 million.

Plans for the near future include a start on building hotels in the Swiss locations of Lausanne and Egerkingen.

Sulzer's contract

SULZER Bros (UK) has been awarded a £400,000 contract by ICI Pharmaceuticals Division for refurbishment of laboratory services at Alderley Park, Alderley Edge, Cheshire.

The work consists of three parts. Provision of a computer-controlled ventilation system in

● Sulzer has completed the main structural work on Europe's biggest phosphate elimination plant at Berlin-Tegel

the Fermentation area; provision of nitrogen, deionized water, steam and chilled water services; and provision of a computer-controlled variable volume system

This follows the successful completion of a similar but smaller project last October.



coloured Jalite armband glows at night after momentary exposure to light.

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