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The fine development of the Swiss wool trades

There are about 730 million sheep in the world. Australia alone has a flock of 115 million and produces annually 500,000 tons of raw wool.

Switzerland breeds some 180,000 head of sheep and her annual raw wool production is only 340 tons. Nevertheless, from the earliest times, that is to say, ever since wool has been woven in this country on an industrial scale, the Swiss wool industry made a place for itself on world markets and expanded, despite the many difficulties it had to face. Today, although dependent on foreign supplies, Switzerland can meet practically all the demand on the domestic market.

The Swiss wool trades owe it to themselves to draw the attention of the buying public to their characteristic features. They are now conducting in Switzerland an extensive, but discreet campaign of propaganda thanks to which your reporter, together with other journalists, was given the opportunity of visiting one of the leading mills in the country.

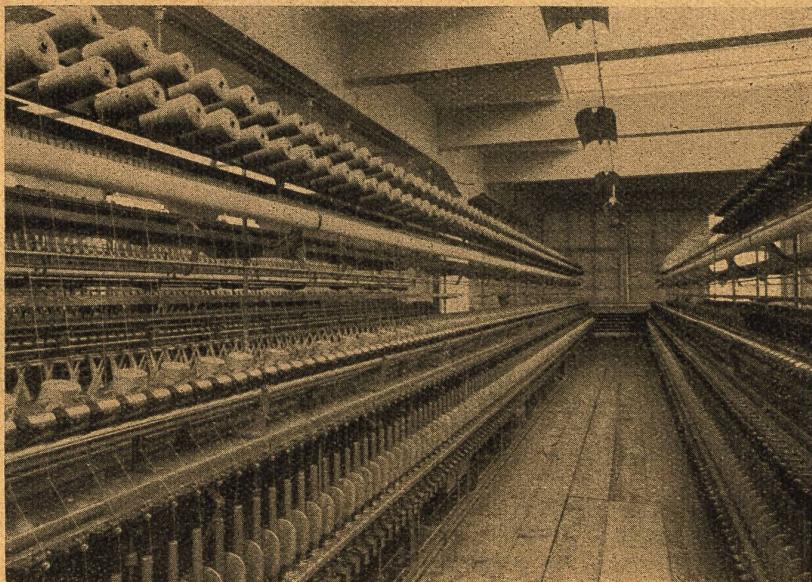
We were led on what may be termed the «Wool Journey», through halls replete with intricate machinery and alive with the swift movements of operatives whose conscientious artisanship is not to be questioned. We watched the wool, at first but a buoyant though dirty small flake, be gradually transformed into slivers, yarns and, lastly, into worsted and carded fabrics of all shades and types. However, readers of «Swiss Textiles» know these operations all too well and we need hardly dwell long on the subject. Our intention is rather to define the structure and significance of the Swiss wool industry. Not centralized, but scattered throughout the national territory, it incorporates some twenty spinning and twisting mills producing plain and twisted yarns for the weaving, knitting and haberdashery trades. Forty carded wool fabric and cloth mills produce materials for ladies and men's apparel and for woollen blankets. Carded wool mills employ only the yarns supplied by the spinning mills and dye works and, in turn, their piece goods are treated at finishing and printing factories. Lastly, a certain number of firms produce woollen goods not used in the clothing trades: felts and felt cloths.

Several of the products of this industry as a whole are very popular abroad; Swiss worsted yarns especially are famed for their excellent quality. Before World War II, Great Britain was one of Switzerland's major customers for fine woollen goods. In recent months, export figures have again expanded considerably the greatest volume of trade going to Western Germany. Carded yarns are equally in demand. Knitting yarns are also highly developed and exports in this branch average about one-third of Switzerland's total wool exports.

Swiss woollen fabrics enjoy a sound reputation. Even in Great Britain, famed as it is for its woollens, Swiss materials are in demand. At moment of writing, the major importer countries are the United States and Western Germany. The total sales of worsteds and cloths for the years 1947 and 1948 averaged over 120 million francs.

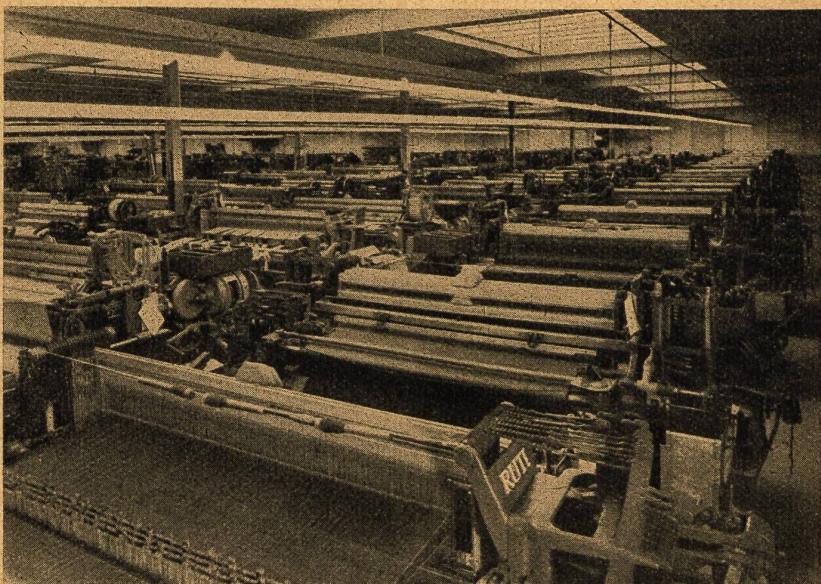
We cannot close this brief survey without a word of congratulation to the Swiss Wool Trades Association in Zurich for the intelligent drive they are now making, or without thanking the Swiss Association of Woollen Cloth Manufacturers for the most efficiently organized visit of a mill mentioned above. We also wish to say that, in view of the vigilant care taken in this industry to train professionally the young people destined to become its future technicians and business-men, the Swiss wool trades may look forward to a secure future.

G.



Une salle de retordage.
A twisting room.

Una sala de torcedura.
Arbeitssaal in einer Zwirnerei.



Une salle de tissage.
A weaving room.

Una sala de tisaje.
Arbeitssaal in einer Weberei.