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First International Congress of Man-made Textiles

Paris 1954

May 31st to June 3rd

These fibres, which at the beginning of the century started off the present terrific development of textiles, belong to two categories : 1. the so-called "artificial" fibres, composed of materials already existing in nature and rendered suitable for spinning by chemical transformation (fibres with a cellulose base formerly called "artificial silk", i. e. viscose rayon, acetate rayon and copper rayon, and

wool gave birth to staple fibre ; in addition, rayon has been improved considerably from the point of view of uniformity, fineness and strength, which also makes possible its use for industrial purposes.

Then came the fibre made by purely chemical synthesis. Its remarkable development is due to its possibilities of adaptation to modern needs. Its is destined to play an increasingly important role in supplying the world with textiles.

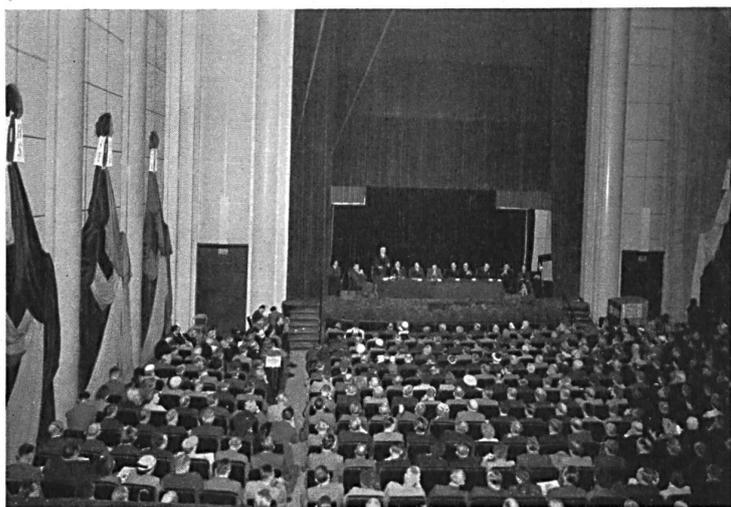
Let us mention in passing that in 1953 Swiss industry produced 22,000 tons of artificial and synthetic fibres and employed some 5,000 men and women. This production is remarkable above all for its quality. In the construction of weaving looms, Switzerland has made great progress by adapting to the new fibres the looms for weaving natural fibres.

Like the producers of natural fibres who meet at international congresses, manufacturers of man-made textiles decided to meet for the first time in Paris in order to exchange their ideas on the position of their young industry in the world economy, its importance in the social field, its working methods and its possibilities of development. This first congress was held in Paris, the home of the International Rayon and Synthetic Fibres Committee ; it is pleasing too to note that this event is in a way a tribute to France, the home of the first pioneer of artificial silk, the Count of Chardonnet, who, in 1884, launched the fibre which met with such success.

* * *

The congress was held in the huge halls of the Marcelin-Berthelot Centre, which had been specially arranged and decorated by a Parisian artist, M. Saint-Martin, who used man-made fabrics of French origin for this purpose. The halls were equipped with ear-phones making it possible to hear the simultaneous translation of the speeches in English, French and German.

The congress, attended by more than 3,000 people representing 33 countries, was opened by M. de Precigout, President of the International Rayon and Synthetic Fibres Committee, after an address of welcome delivered by M. Louvel, Minister of Trade. The president paid tribute to the work of M. Bizot, Chairman of the General Commissariat of the congress, and reminded those present that the theme of the congress was expressed in the words "Textiles of the



The big amphitheatre in the Marcelin-Berthelot Centre during the opening meeting (Lecture by Professor Staudinger).

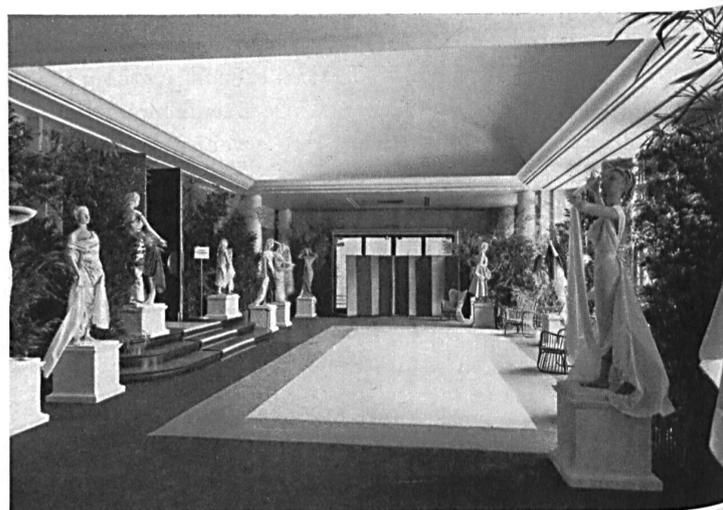
fibres with a protein, animal or vegetable base), and 2. so-called "synthetic" or man-made fibres obtained by chemical synthesis from organic products extracted from coal, hydrocarbons or other organic products (nylon, perlon, grilon, orlon, terylene, etc.).

The first group began to be developed during the first twenty years of the century and the second in the thirties ; at the present moment, the production of these fibres reaches astronomical figures. They come second after cotton and before wool in the figures for world production and consumption of textiles. From less than 1,000 metric tons at the beginning of the century, production has risen to approximately two million metric tons, representing 19 % of the whole of the world's textile production. From 1900 to 1951 the part played by cotton has fallen from 81 % to 70 %, and that of wool from 19 % to 11 %.

Development of the world production of natural and man-made fibres

Year	1900		1914		1939		1951	
	T.	%	T.	%	T.	%	T.	%
In 1,000's of metric tons								
Silk	17	0.5	22	0.3	61	0.7	20	0.2
Wool	732	18.6	782	12.5	1118	13.8	1109	10.9
Cotton	3170	80.9	5443	87.0	5937	73.0	7150	70.1
Artificial fibres	1	—	9	0.2	1018	12.5	1916	18.8
	3920	100.0	6256	100.0	8134	100.0	10195	100.0

The production of artificial fibres has undergone extraordinary changes during these years of evolution. The idea of using them not only in continuous filaments but also in fibres like cotton and



The decorated lounge of the Marcelin-Berthelot Centre.

future", and that its aim — which has become a necessity — was to bring about an exchange of ideas between the producers of man-made textiles and their users. Then M. Hermann Staudinger, Professor at the University of Fribourg-en-Brigau, Nobel prizewinner for chemistry in 1953, made an excellent speech on macromolecular chemistry and artificial and synthetic fibres.

In addition to the four public lectures given by personalities of international fame, several working committees were organised, divided into two sections, one economic, the other technological. The meetings and discussions made it possible to express opinions which will doubtless lead to great progress.

The problems under discussion, which can only be solved with the good will and understanding of all those concerned, covered all aspects of the question, from the initial stages of manufacture to the final use. In fact, the relative novelty of these fibres has meant that it has not yet been possible to explore fully their possibilities of use and improvement. By mixing different man-made fibres it is possible to combine their qualities and when added to natural fibres they can also increase the wearing qualities of the latter. They will make it possible to meet the world textile requirements — which are increasing more rapidly (as a result of the

increase in the population of the world) than it is possible to increase the production of natural fibres.

The personalities who presented reports or who presided over meetings came from Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Holland, Italy, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States.

In addition to the meetings, a certain number of receptions and galas were held, and we are pleased to call attention to the great success and the perfect organisation of all these events.

Switzerland was officially represented at the congress by Minister Hotz, Head of the Trade Division of the Federal Department of Public Economy; M. de Salis, Switzerland's Minister in Paris, also honoured several meetings with his presence.

Professor A. Bosshardt, Head of the Swiss Institute for the Study of International Economic Relations at the School of Higher Economic and Administrative Studies at St. Gall, was a member of the Scientific Patronage Committee, as were M. E. Honegger, Professor at the Federal Technical Institute in Zurich and Professor A. Engeler, Head of the Federal Laboratory for Testing Materials and the Research Institute, St. Gall, each of whom had the honour of presiding over a session of a working committee in the technological section.

NOTES AND NEWS

A Fine Anniversary

Mr. *Eduard Heberlein* recently celebrated his 80th birthday. Fifty years ago, Mr. Heberlein, who is still very active, together with a cousin, took over the dye-works founded by his grandfather in 1835. Today he is chairman of the board of directors of this firm, which has been transformed into a limited company. We are happy

to be able to extend here our congratulations and best wishes for the continued health of the head of the great finishing concern of Heberlein & Co. Ltd. at Wattwil, which is so well known to our readers.

Switzerland at the Milan Fair

Once again, Switzerland participated on a large scale at the 32nd Milan Fair this year (from April 12th to 28th). Some 300 Swiss firms from all branches were represented in the different sections of the Fair, and Switzerland also had an official section in the International Pavilion, in which some thirty institutions and associations as well as several individual exhibitors took part.

Here we see some Swiss personalities in this official section, in front of the display of embroideries and fine fabrics of St. Gall: from right to left, Minister Jean Hotz, Head of the Trade Division of the Federal Department of Public Economy, Madame E. Primault, Mr. E. Primault, President of the Swiss Watchmaking Chamber and of the Swiss Office for the Development of Trade, and Mr. A. J. Staehelin, Director of the Zurich branch of the Swiss Office for the Development of Trade.

For some twenty years now, *Minister Jean Hotz* has headed the Trade Division in Berne, of which he was previously assistant director. He has therefore played a decisive role in Swiss commercial policy in the particularly difficult war and post-war years and has won the gratitude not only of the Swiss economy in general but of the Swiss textile industry in particular.



We wish here, on the occasion of his retirement, to extend to him the thanks and good wishes of our periodical, in which he has always taken such great interest and which he has continually supported in his capacity as a member of the Board of Directors of the Swiss Office for the Development of Trade.

T. S.

OBITUARY. — We regret to announce the death this spring at the age of 71 of *Mr. J. G. Nef*, an important manufacturer and exporter of embroidery and fine fabrics, and head of the firm of *J. Nef & Co. at Herisau*, which is numbered among the faithful friends and supporters of our periodical. We wish to express here our heartfelt sympathy to the family and collaborators of the deceased.

T. S.