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News

A long, long Ribbon

Let us unwind the long, long ribbon of time back to the year 1778! In this year, Franz Ulrich Bally came to Switzerland from Germany to work as a mason on the construction of a new ribbon factory at Aarau. Soon he began to sell ribbons. Subsequently, his sons took over the ribbon factory, which had meanwhile been transferred to Schönenwerd, under the name of «The Sons of Franz Ulrich Bally». This was in 1814, one hundred and fifty years ago. The firm grew rapidly, exporting large quantities of ribbons to the different German principalities, the Near East and as far away as India. It employed between 500 and 1,000 men and women doing piece-work in their own homes. In 1840, the firm took up the manufacture of elastic ribbons and fabrics. In 1851, seven Bally sons shared the firm, which was divided into three branches: a silk ribbon factory in Germany; an elastic ribbon factory, «Bally & Co.», which was later to become the famous Bally Footwear Co.; and the «Bally Bros.» ribbon factory with which we are concerned here. It is therefore a long ribbon of years that has to be unwound to disclose the history of this go-ahead concern, which last year celebrated the passing of a century and a half since its foundation. Converted, in 1915, into a family limited liability company known as Bally Bros. Co. Ltd., this firm produces 44 million yards annually of different types of ribbon: woven labels, zip-fastener ribbons, ribbons for haberdashery, industrial ribbons of all kinds, in cotton, rayon, linen, synthetic fibres, etc.

Colour trends for 1966

The increased importance of colour as an element of fashion has had a considerable influence on the preparatory work of the textile industry. Consequently the colour trends worked out by experts on fashion committees simplify the work of manufacturers by allowing them to plan their colours ahead of time according to the international fashion trends. In Switzerland, it is the Swiss Textile Council (to which are affiliated the chemical industry, the spinning mills, the twisting works, weaving mills and finishing concerns as well as the knitwear factories) that makes out the colour cards used in the textile industry at all stages from production to retail sales.

The colour cards for the spring/summer 1966 (1 card: wool, and 1 card: cotton, silk, synthetics) have just been completed and will be available from May on, at a cost of S.Fr. 25.— for the two, from the Secretariat of the Swiss Textile Council, Eigerstrasse 55, 3000 Berne 23.

An Inauguration in the Men's Ready-to-Wear Industry

Obrecht & Sons Co. Ltd., the oldest menswear factory in Switzerland, was founded in 1849. Today it specializes in the manufacture of smart suits for men, sold under the

trademark «Favorit». Having been completely destroyed by fire at the end of 1962, the old factory has been replaced by a brand new, entirely up-to-date one at Balsthal.

At the end of February, Obrecht & Sons Co. Ltd. invited the press to visit its new plant and premises, which have been in operation for several months now. After their tour of the new works, the journalists and other guests were able during lunch to watch a fashion parade of models made by the firm and five foreign manufacturers, also belonging to the Euro-Guild of Men's Fashions, a European organization comprising 13 manufacturers from 13 countries desirous of exchanging experiences in the field of men's wear. (See illustrations p. 129.)

Success of Swiss Textiles Abroad

At the 15th MITAM in Milan, the collection of novelties by Filtex Co. Ltd. in St. Gall won the much coveted «Targa d'Oro». The points awarded by the jury for the fabrics, designs, colours and technical execution came to a particularly high total.

St. Gall Embroidery Sets up a Branch in South Africa

We hear from Johannesburg that an embroidery factory was recently started up in South Africa. This new factory, set up at Alberton near Johannesburg, is a branch of the well-known St. Gall firm of Bischoff Textiles Co. Ltd. It is intended mainly to produce embroideries for the South African market but it is also possible that it might consider going in for exports later. One of the main reasons for the setting up of this new branch was the present shortage of manpower in Switzerland. In South Africa on the other hand, there are sufficient workers, on the lookout for interesting work even though they have received no training. For the last few months the new factory has been working in two shifts in the very modern premises built specially for it. The factory mainly embroiders fabrics provided by the clientele, in order to avoid the delays that would be involved by sending them to Switzerland to be embroidered. It is therefore a new market that has been opened up in South Africa. The parent firm, moreover, is still very interested in exporting embroidery to South Africa from Switzerland and has every interest in favouring such exports and not offering competition for them.

An Agreement between M.T.I. and MITAM

Until now, MITAM (Mercato Internazionale del Tessile per l'Abbigliamento, Milan) and M.T.I. (International Textile Market, Paris), two trade fairs open only to trade buyers, each held a showing regularly every summer in Milan and Paris respectively.

In order to meet the wishes of visitors and exhibitors and to take into consideration the evolution of the European Economic Community, these two organizations decided to hold their summer sessions in alternate years so as not to conflict with each other. Consequently, the next MITAM will be held in Milan in 1965 (from Wednesday 9th to Saturday 12th June), while no M.T.I. will be held this year but will take place in Paris in 1966, when it will be MITAM's turn not to be held. The winter fairs, which are organized only by MITAM, are of course unaffected by the agreement to alternate.

Swiss Colorama

Swiss Colorama was presented to the textile and fashion press for the first time in Zurich last February. This is a group composed of the Swiss Textile Council, the Swiss Leather Council, the Union of Swiss Tanneries, the Swiss Association for the Promotion of Women's Hats and «Pro Bas Suisse» (an association for the promotion of Swiss stockings). Thanks to the cooperation between these different organizations as well as its international affiliation (the Swiss Textile Council operates as a liaison centre for the International Commission for Studying Colour), Swiss Colorama aims to establish cooperation in regard to the choice of fashionable colours, thus simplifying the work of manufacturers, reducing the risk of being unable to sell unmatchable goods and simplifying retail sales for the benefit of the customer.

We would remind readers that the Swiss Fashion Council was founded two years ago, while the Swiss Leather Council was created in 1960, and also that it is as a result of the latter's initiative that «Modeurop» — a centre for coordinating leather fashions in Western Europe — was set up. The Pro Bas Suisse organization belongs to the International Committee for the Elegance of Stockings (twice a year the latter chooses a «Eurocolor» shade to which is added the colour selected by the Swiss experts).

The Swiss Colorama reception, which ended with a luncheon, gave members of the trade press an opportunity to obtain information about the work and aims of this new organization and to see the colours laid down for the spring/summer season 1965. The new colours were displayed in very attractive arrangements of fabrics and accessories and were first of all commented on, from the stage, by Mr. Milo Legnazzi (Berne), the master-mind responsible for the whole organization, during a fashion parade of pinned together models, which showed all the possibilities of using and combining the colours.

Future Prospects of the Swiss Textile Industry

Below we summarize a number of interesting points taken from an article by Dr. Hans R. Leuenberger, Head of the St. Gall Chamber of Commerce, recently published under the above title in the «Employers' Associations Journal» (Zurich).

Textiles — like foodstuffs — serve to meet the basic needs of mankind, which means that in all young countries, industrialization begins with the textile sector. Throughout the world therefore, the textile industry continues to develop, and factories in the developing countries are creating new and ever growing competition in this field for the production of the industrial countries. Consequently, in spite of the continual increase in the population of the world, this branch sometimes comes up against difficulties in the way of marketing. In this connection, the International Cotton Association in Zurich has calculated that during the last ten years the cotton industries of the developing countries have increased by 50 %, while in the industrial countries they have decreased by 30 %.

The Swiss textile and clothing industries, too, have experienced the effect of this trend, but not to such a marked degree as in other countries, because the Swiss textile industry concentrates mainly on the production of special articles rather than on the mass-production of current qualities which represents the biggest competition on the part of the developing countries. As the Swiss textile industry has become more and more specialized during the last few years, it is fortunately not so exposed as that of other countries to competition from the deve-

loping countries and excessive mass-production. In addition, during the last few years the chemical fibre industry has contributed greatly to increasing the specialization of the Swiss textile industry and considerably widened its scope, providing it with possibilities that it could no longer do without. Now in order to produce chemical fibres, an industry requires not only a highly specialized technical staff but large investments in machinery and manufacturing processes. In this field the industrial countries still have a big lead over the developing countries. But in the classical textile fields, an industry which specializes in high novelty articles such as embroideries, fashionable fabrics, knitwear and ready-to-wear garments — as is the case in Switzerland — has no reason to be pessimistic. Swiss industry is not stagnating by any means; on the contrary, it is always on the lookout for new creations and new processes and, in this field too, technical development and volume of capital are continually increasing, thus making it more difficult for the developing countries to compete. The brilliant export results of the last few years show that the Swiss textile industry is on the right track.

The Swiss textile and clothing industry was exposed some time ago to the competition of certain Far Eastern and Iron Curtain countries practising dumping prices, a form of competition to which Switzerland is all the more vulnerable as she has an extremely liberal customs policy. Meanwhile, dumping imports have fallen off considerably, partly as a result of protective measures the Swiss government was forced to introduce. The growth of Japanese industrialization and the consequent increase in Japanese purchasing power have resulted in Japan's becoming an importer of Swiss embroideries and novelty fabrics; the same phenomenon could moreover be expected to occur with the developing countries, whose purchasing power increases proportionally to their growth in industrialization, which in turn leads to an increase in trade.

The textile industry, particularly when it concentrates on specialities subject to changing tastes in fashion, is susceptible to crises, not only those dependent on the economic situation but also those due to a sweeping change in fashion. It is difficult to make forecasts in this field, but in the light of the experience of the past twenty years it may nevertheless be assumed that we are in a period of continuous organic development. Undoubtedly the Swiss textile industry will experience other vicissitudes. Textiles are in fact durable consumer goods, which means that their use can be extended and their replacement put off till later, in case of a deterioration in the situation. Big variations in the prices of natural raw textile fibres can also affect the market. Nevertheless, the Swiss textile industry today rests on a wide enough base for it no longer to fear a catastrophe, like the one that occurred during the slump of the thirties.

The Sign of the Beaver

At Biberist are situated the biggest paper mills in Switzerland. A century ago, in February 1865 to be exact, the first reels of paper left the factory, which employed at the time some 200 men and women and two machines. The annual output was in the neighbourhood of 1,000 tons. At the present day, after a century's growth and development, the number of employees has risen to 1,200, while the annual output has increased to 60,000 tons. Thanks to rationalization and automation, it has been possible to increase production considerably during the last 20 years, without any corresponding increase in personnel. Biberist paper, whose watermark is a beaver, the animal after which the village is named (in German, «Biber» means beaver), is the one on which the periodical «Textiles Suisses» is printed.