

What is the area of Switzerland?

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the second half of this year than the same period of last year. Goods traffic follows the general trend of the situation and exceeds the tonnage for 1953 by 6.8 per cent.

Switzerland's foreign trade remains very active. During the first half of the year imports increased by one-tenth as compared with 1953, thus once more causing an adverse balance of trade which last year, exceptionally, was a favourable one. Exports have continued at a more or less the same high figure as 1953. But there have been appreciable changes in the relative importance of markets and in the nature of these exports. Swiss exports to the United States, for example, have dropped 30 per cent. compared with the first half of 1953. This drop is compensated for by the increased exports to other countries, particularly Germany. Exports of watches have fallen off by 7.8 per cent., but this loss is offset by the exports of other branches of the metal industry and by those of the chemical and pharmaceutical industries.

In conclusion, it may be asserted that although a few fields of Swiss economy are meeting with difficulties, that it is hoped are only temporary, the prospect for Swiss industry as a whole is quite satisfactory. Of course it has to face increased competition, both at home and abroad. Prices, delivery dates, terms of payment and credit and the quality of products play an increasingly important role in the struggle for markets. But Switzerland has always demanded liberal principles in the matter of trade, and is not afraid of such struggle.

WHAT IS THE AREA OF SWITZERLAND?

During the last thirty years, Switzerland has shrunk—by some 1740 acres to be precise. This strange and unexpected phenomenon is due above all to certain adjustments made in the frontier with Italy and to the correction of errors discovered in previous surveys. Leaving out of consideration the parts of the country where the frontier is still not exactly defined, on the Lake of Geneva and the Lake of Constance, Swiss sovereignty at present extends over a territory of an area of 15,880 sq. miles. If, for the two lakes in question, we take the same area as that recorded during the 1923 surveys, the total area of the country amounts to 16,080 sq. miles.

The booklet issued by the Federal Statistics Bureau on the area of Switzerland in 1952 gives complete details concerning the size of Switzerland, its cantons and communes, the area of its forests and of its productive and unproductive land. The total area of the productive land amounts to 3,155,367 hectares (1 hectare equals 2.47 acres), of which 980,654 are covered with forests, bushes and undergrowth.

However, of the productive land remaining once the wooded area has been deducted, 750,000 to

850,000 hectares are situated at an altitude where it is difficult to gain access to them and where the productivity of the soil is so small that they can only be used as pasture land, if at all. No less than 45.62 per cent. of the total area of the country is at an altitude of 4000 feet or over.

Leaving aside this part of the country to consider only areas with a normal productivity, it must be agreed that Switzerland is one of the most densely populated countries in Europe.

Aluminium Industry in Switzerland

The Societe anonyme pour l'industrie de l'aluminium, recently opened the doors of its plant at Chippis to the Press of French-speaking Switzerland, thus making it possible for its representatives to become familiar with this important undertaking, which was established at the end of the last century.

It was in 1892, as a matter of fact, that the first laboratory for aluminium was created at Neuhausen, near Schaffhausen. Fifteen years later, the new company erected a big factory at Chippis, provided with its own hydro-electric plants.

Today, the plant at Chippis employs nearly 2000 workmen and employees. It produces raw aluminium, various kinds of alloys, and semi-manufactured products such as sheet-iron, iron bands, circular plates, sections, tubes, and aluminium powder which is used both for painting purposes and for pyrotechnics, and also aluminium paper.

At the present time, the Societe anonyme pour l'industrie de l'aluminium constitutes a holding company, which comprises no less than 44 companies, of which fourteen are in Switzerland and thirty abroad. It is in a position to carry out all the processes of fabrication, beginning with the extraction of bauxite and ending with semi-manufactured products. The raw metal is produced in four plants, both Swiss and foreign, to the amount of 100,000 tons of aluminium per year.

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