

News

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News

The dreadful catastrophe of Skoplje, still in very one's minds, robbed the Swiss textile industry of one of its leading personalities: Mr. Edouard Heberlein, member of the board of directors and vice-president of the big firm of Heberlein & Co. Ltd. of Wattwil, who perished with his wife in the ruins of the Hotel Macedonia, while on their way to Greece on holiday. Born in 1909, the deceased — with a view to his future activity in the family concern — had taken the chemical engineering course at the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, which he rounded off by obtaining his doctorate at the Sorbonne. After a period spent gaining practical experience in a Wattwil firm, he worked for Heberlein Patent Corporation in New York until just before the war. On his return to Switzerland, he worked in various departments of the family firm, finally becoming a member of the board of directors in 1958. He was at the same time on the board of directors of Heberlein Holding Co. Ltd. and Gummiwerke Richterswil Ltd. as well as various other firms and organizations, in particular the Office for the Promotion of the Swiss Cotton and Embroidery Industries in St. Gall, the Textile Vocational Training School at Wattwil and the St. Gall Chamber of Commerce.

However, in spite of his great ability, Edouard Heberlein never sought the limelight. He was a modest, retiring man, happiest when with his family, in the company of friends, playing some musical instrument or enjoying the beauties of nature. We had the privilege of knowing him, appreciating his affability, and benefiting

Edouard
Heberlein †

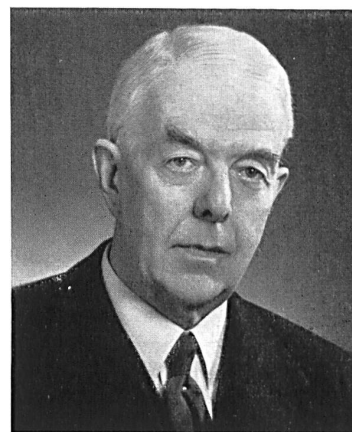


from his wholehearted and loyal cooperation on more than one occasion and in particular on the editorial board of «Textiles Suisses» of which he was a member. To his two daughters who narrowly escaped the terrible fate of their parents, to his son and family, to his collaborators and the firm of Heberlein & Co. Ltd. in general, we extend here our deepest sympathy for the tragic loss they have suffered.

The Editors

We regret to have to announce the sudden death, at the age of 73, of Mr. Hans R. Naef, who devoted 54 years of his life to the service of Silk Mills Naef Brothers Ltd., Zurich, whose president and managing-director he eventually became. In addition to his invaluable activity in the big silk mills, the deceased devoted a great part of his time, his professional ability and his human qualities to various professional and commercial organizations. Thus, from 1919 to 1941, he was a member of the Committee of the Swiss Silk Manufacturers Association, of which he was chairman from 1928 to 1936, and for over 30 years a member of the Committee of the Zurich Chamber of Commerce; he was also a member of the Board of Directors of the Silk Conditioning Centre in Zurich, which he presided over from 1947 on, and represented the silk industry on the committee of the Central Union of Swiss Employers' Associations. The head of a big Zurich silk firm, with a lively and enlightened mind, he maintained excellent relations with all the firm's employees and workers both at home and abroad.

Hans R. Naef †



To the family of the deceased as well as to Silk Mills Naef Brothers Ltd., we wish to extend our deepest sympathy.

The Editors

Swiss exports of silk ribbons

The Swiss silk ribbon industry exports about two-thirds of its production. In 1962, EEC countries accounted for 19 % of Swiss ribbon exports, EFTA countries for 28 % and other markets for the remaining 53 %. Despite discrimination by the two European economic blocs, exports to European countries increased. Heading the list of non-European markets for Swiss ribbons is the United States with 32 % of the total exports. American clients call almost exclusively for high-grade and highly

fashionable ribbon items, particularly velvet ribbon. They appreciate especially the superior quality of the Swiss commodity and the wide range of the collections. As a result of these high standards the ribbon export figures for 1962 were the highest in ten years in spite of the intense competition and various other difficulties.

The above details are taken from an article written by Mr. A. Burckhart, President of the Swiss Association of Silk Ribbon Manufacturers, and published in No. 24 of the

« Revue Suisse des Rubans de Soie ». This number for the autumn/winter season 1963/1964 contains a great many photographs of creations by Swiss ready-to-wear knitting and lingerie manufacturers as well as milliners,

in which lavish use has been made of ribbons. This clever publicity for an attractive branch of the Swiss textile industry is at the same time an invaluable source of ideas and suggestions for all fields of women's clothing.

A new trend in textile production

As readers will remember, at the end of 1961 the Industrial Company for Schappe at Basle took over Schappe Spinning Mills Ltd. of Lyons, France. The main task facing the management of the new group, known as Schappe Ltd., with its head offices in Geneva, was the administrative and technical organization of the merger. It was a matter of standardizing production, recasting the whole administrative set-up and creating the required international distribution network. As a result of the measures taken, the turnover obtained in 1962 by the new Schappe group represented a considerable improvement over the total of the figures previously recorded by the two incorporated companies working independently. Thus, for example, the group's total output represented an increase of 11 %, having risen from 5,024 tons of yarns in 1961 to 5,566 tons in 1962.

In his report to the recent general meeting of Schappe Ltd., the President of the Board of Directors described the broad outline of a development which, in its general character, goes far beyond the interests of a single concern. Feeling that it would be of interest to a great many readers of this periodical, we are reproducing below a summary of the main points of Mr. L. de Planta's speech.

In order to draw up a carefully planned, long term manufacturing programme, it is necessary above all to take into consideration the probable evolution of the market and the future situation of the European textile industry in the world. Now the textile industry today is undergoing a rapidly increasing change of structure. While the textile industry will undoubtedly be able to maintain its present position in western Europe, it must however be expected to assume a form differing totally from its traditional structure. Such a development, which is absolutely logical and inevitable, is comparable to the similar evolution taking place in other branches of industry. The underlying causes of this phenomenon are first of all the large proportion of work involved in a type of production that is on the whole comparatively simple from the technical point of view and second, the partial replacement of natural textile fibres by chemical fibres. Naturally, these two factors also tend to interact on each other, but to what precise degree it is difficult to ascertain.

The first will lead to the gradual displacement of the simple classical textile production from countries with a high wage level and a shortage of manpower towards regions with low wages and an overabundance of workers, a trend that has already been noted elsewhere. In Western Europe, the movement might be slowed down by measures of state control (customs duties, import restrictions), but it cannot be prevented from taking place in the long run. On the other hand, the types of production that require a certain degree of technical knowhow will be able to continue in Western Europe provided manufacturers are prepared to make the sacrifices required for scientific research and technical development.

The direct intervention of chemistry in the textile industry will have much more decisive consequences because it will inevitably result in certain fields in a

revolution in the manufacturing processes. The main influence of chemistry on the structure of the textile industry is not the replacement of natural fibres by synthetic fibres but the new manufacturing processes made possible by the new materials. As long as the textile industry worked only with natural fibres, technical innovations were limited in general to an improvement in the various operations of production. Artificial fibres too hitherto followed the traditional pattern of production. Today, however, the results achieved tend to shorten the classical production processes and to render certain intermediate stages superfluous. Thus, for example, the progress made in «texturisation» has led to a radical simplification of the spinning process.

This structural modification will be carried out by stages and the Swiss textile industry will have an opportunity of adapting itself to this evolution. It will however be necessary to reconsider the whole problem from scratch and carry out a certain amount of regrouping. The European textile concerns of the future will, in principle, have to be organized with a view to mass-production even when specialising in the manufacture of high quality products and using new processes, the optimum size of the concerns having to be determined separately in each given case. This mass-production is necessary in order to enable manufacturers to produce textile products at competitive prices. In fact, if the high cost of technical development and research is taken into consideration, it will only be possible to supply high quality products at reasonable prices if large quantities are involved. In the European textile industry too, this development will lead to vertical or horizontal concentrations, in the form of big firms, trusts or cartels, on the precise nature of which the national and supranational legislations will exercise a decisive influence, while they will have absolutely no effect on the concentration itself, corresponding as it does to an economic necessity.

It is in the light of the general trend outlined above that Schappe Ltd. has drawn up its long-term programme, which allows first of all for the development of a high output of spun products in a number of definite styles and, second, for the introduction of new manufacturing processes.

The results of the new company's first trading year prove that the programme outlined above was a wise one. In spite of increased competition on textile markets and the difficulties in the way of commercial policy, it was possible for Schappe Ltd. to increase its sales and output in 1962 in all manufacturing countries; the first months of the current year have also given promising results.

To close, we wish to mention some outstanding products made with Schappe Ltd.'s yarns: first of all the spun nylon shirtings sold under the trade name «Pratica», the fashionable fabrics for women's clothing in «Lascara» and «Shetty» staple fibre, fabrics for the same purpose in mixtures of polyester fibres, acrylic yarns for knitting, sewing thread in polyester, and textured yarns for knitwear, bearing the trade marks «Crimplene» and «Schapira».