

# A foreign minister praises the Swiss franc

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who were working in the same plants. More than 150,000 workers and employees enjoy the benefits of this Convention which has also rendered appreciable services to the country.

#### **FIFTY WAGONS ORDERED IN SWITZERLAND BY THE MEXICAN RAILWAYS**

It has just been learnt that the Mexican Railways have signed an important contract, amounting in value to three million two hundred thousand dollars, with a Swiss firm. This contract provides for the delivery by the said firm of fifth postal wagons. Deliveries are to start in February, 1958. This business deal is the only one to have been concluded this year by the Mexican Railways, with any European country.

#### **SWISS CHOCOLATE APPRECIATED ALL OVER THE WORLD**

In 1956, the production of chocolate in Switzerland attained a record figure. It amounted to more than thirty-five million kilos of chocolate in tablet form, thus exceeding by more than sixty thousand kilos, the record figure achieved in 1915, and never equalled since then. From 1955 to 1956 the production of Swiss chocolate increased by 20 per cent. The consumption of chocolate per head of the population is higher in Switzerland than in any other country, coming even before Great Britain and Belgium. As for exports, these also show a satisfactory development. Thus, in 1956, exports amounted in weight to almost 6.5 million kilos, and in value to 35.5 million Swiss francs; there was an increase of more than ten million francs, in comparison with 1955. Last year, Switzerland exported her chocolate to some ninety different countries.

#### **A FOREIGN MINISTER PRAISES THE SWISS FRANC**

Recently, during a public speech at Loerrach, the Finance Minister of the German Federal Republic spoke in praise of the Swiss franc. He had already drawn attention to the stability of Swiss currency, in 1949. Today, eight years later, the purchasing power of the Swiss franc has only declined by eight per cent, whereas that of the dollar has gone down by fourteen per cent, during the same lapse of time.

#### **SWITZERLAND'S COMPARATIVE FREEDOM FROM LABOUR TROUBLES**

Ever since Switzerland's metallurgical and machinery industries find the so-called "Labour Peace" agreement some twenty years ago, collective labour contracts have been increasing considerably in number. By the end of last year more than 1500 of them had been drawn up governing the working conditions of over one million workers

and office staff. This great increase in the number of labour contracts has been followed by a corresponding decrease in the number of strikes and each other labour disputes. Between 1927 and 1936 there were on an average 32 strikes each year, representing a loss of more than 90,000 working days. These figures have fallen off considerably, as is shown by the fact that last year work was stopped on only five occasions, with a total loss of 1400 working days.

#### **A NEW PLANT IN SWITZERLAND FOR THE CHEMICAL TRANSFORMATION AND USE OF SAW-DUST AND OTHER TIMBER WASTE**

A joint-stock company has been established in Fribourg, for the purpose of setting up and running a plant for the chemical transformation of saw-dust, and also, of other timber waste, which comes from the Swiss firms engaged in the timber trade. At present, the only plant of this kind in Switzerland is that of Domat-Ems, in the Grisons.

#### **NIGERIAN STUDENTS STAND A PERIOD OF PRACTICAL STUDY IN SWITZERLAND**

A certain number of coloured students from Nigeria are staying at present in Switzerland. These are young men and girls who are studying in Great Britain and to whom the "Swiss Aid to extra-European countries" has offered the possibility of a visit to Switzerland, in order to enable them to get into touch, in the practice of their speciality, with European life. The friendly relations which are thus being established with the future intellectual elite of a country which will be independent in two years' time, cannot but prove to be favourable to future relations between Switzerland and Nigeria.

#### **RADIO-ACTIVITY IN SWITZERLAND**

Radio-activity has increased in Switzerland, both in the air and in the waters; this is what we learn from the first Report of the Commission set up by the Government to go into this matter. For the moment, however, the increase in question is not such as to give rise to any anxiety. On the other hand, the radio-activity to be found in the precipitations has recently attained dimensions which can no longer be considered as being inoffensive, especially in those regions of the country where the only drinking water available to man and beast is that obtained from the rains, by means of devices which collect it into cisterns. This water might prove harmful if it was drunk over a long period. Research work is going to be started with the object of discovering a means to ward off this danger. The Commission is now going to devote its studies to finding out the degree of radio-activity which exists in the soil and in milk.