

Commercial news

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COMMERCIAL NEWS

Trade negotiations.

Economic talks took place recently in Berne between representatives of the Swiss and Egyptian Governments. The purpose of the meeting was to facilitate the placing of Egyptian Government's orders in Switzerland and to make possible the supply of capital goods to the Egyptian industry at a fixed rate of exchange. These arrangements, which do not affect current payments, will contribute to the expansion of exchanges between the two countries.

The trade and payments arrangements between Switzerland and Norway were prolonged for a year on 20th August, and will now be valid until 30th June, 1955. The lists of commodities have been adapted to the present state of liberalisation of the two countries.

New Swiss Gold Coins.

Under the new coinage law, which came into force in the spring of 1953, the old Swiss gold 10, 20 and 100 franc pieces will be replaced by 25 and 50 franc pieces. These new coins will shortly be minted. To this end the Federal Finance and Customs Department opened a design competition among a restricted number of Swiss artists. When the designs came up before the selection board, however, none was found good enough, and the competition had to be re-opened. The first drawings that failed to secure the award were given all the same the benefit of a public exhibition in one of the rooms of the House of Parliament in Berne.

Foreign Farm Trainees in Switzerland.

Every year since the end of the war the Swiss Farmers' Union has arranged for young foreign farmers, of both sexes, to stay as trainees for 6 to 12 months in Swiss agricultural undertakings. Last spring 242 young people from different European and Asiatic countries came to Switzerland under this scheme.

Hydro-Electric Scheme in Val Bregaglia.

The Town of Zurich obtained in 1952 from the communes of Val Bregaglia, Graubünden, the right to harness the hydraulic power of the valley. Work will begin early next year.

The first stage provides for the construction of a dam at Albigna Alp and of a power house at Löbbia. In the second stage, besides further damming near Löbbia, another power house will be built at Castasegna, near the Italian frontier. The two stations will together produce some 440 million kwh. It is estimated that the whole scheme, including the laying of a high-tension cable to Zurich, will cost about 200m. francs.

Switzerland consolidates her credit on E.P.U.

The Swiss Government has concluded a series of agreements with the countries which are debtors of the European Payments Union, and it now asks the Chambers to ratify them. It is a well known fact that Switzerland is an important creditor of the E.P.U. The agreements which she has just signed have allowed her to consolidate this credit and to provide for its partial reimbursement. At the same time, these agree-

ments form the necessary bases for covering future surpluses.

Switzerland possessed a primordial interest in the maintenance of the Union, but this would not have proved possible without the agreements which have taken place between the creditors and the debtors. Thus, Switzerland was able to renew her participation in this institution, for another year, without the Swiss authorities being obliged to open up new credits.

Development of the Swiss hat-making industry.

Although the existing 20 concerns belonging to the Swiss hat-making industry are of a definitely artisanal character and only provide employment for no more than 1,000 persons, this branch of trade, nevertheless, continues to develop. Its exports have tripled since 1950 and, in 1953, they attained almost 3 million francs.

This Swiss industry only exports high quality hats and owes its success, essentially, to the finished work characterising its products. It finds its inspiration in Paris, whose models it adapts in such a way as to bring them within the reach of a more widespread range of customers. Owing to the difference in the seasons of the Northern and of the Southern hemispheres, it has been able to assure regular work for itself, all the year round. Sweden ranks first among the customers of the Swiss hat-making industry, fol-

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lowed by the United States of America and then by the Union of South Africa.

New progress in the founding technique.

A moulding-machine for foundries, which has been perfected by a Swiss undertaking, was shown recently at a specialised exhibition in the United States, where it aroused great interest. The exhibit in question is a twin moulding machine, created by the Kallnach Machine Manufactory and Foundry Works. It is already being used in the big Swiss foundries, as well as in several foreign countries, where it is proving to be a great success.

This machine, which is automatic, makes it possible for one operator to accomplish the work of 2 or 3 men, by producing the 2 parts of a sand mould, at the same time. In order to make this operation possible, the machine, which weighs hundreds of kilos, turn over completely. Then, steel pincers delicately pick up the mould and place it on the conveyor belt.

This new machine brings with it revolutionary progress into the founding technique.

Improving the quality of Swiss milk.

Great efforts are being made, at the present time, to improve still further the quality of the Swiss milk. In this connection it is interesting to learn that there exist various categories of milk, the 2 principal ones being the milk used for the manufacture of cheese and milk for human consumption. In Switzerland, where the quality of the cheese plays a primary part, endeavours have been chiefly directed up to the present, towards the breeding of cattle whose milk would be best for the manufacture of the Emmenthal or Gruyère

cheeses. As a result, the Swiss milk used for cheese is the very best known, and no other country has succeeded in surpassing its quality.

As for the milk intended for consumption, the situation is somewhat different. Nevertheless, studies recently undertaken in this respect show that, on the whole, Swiss milk possesses all the qualities required of a good milk for drinking purposes. The number of bacteria per centimetre cube is inferior to that to be found in most other countries. It is only the United States which have achieved better results in this particular domain.

Favre and the Gotthard Tunnel.

It was seventy-five years ago, this summer, that the death occurred of Louis Favre, who was the chief artisan of the excavation of the Gotthard and who directed the construction of the railway of the same name. Unfortunately, he was not able to witness the completion of this work as he died suddenly on the construction job, at the age of fifty-three. Favre had spent the greater part of his career abroad, where he had acquired a very great reputation in regard to the building of railroads. His boldness and his dynamism had made him a pioneer in this particular domain.

Television in Switzerland.

Television is now gradually spreading its network, throughout Switzerland. On the 2nd August, work was started on the setting up of a transmitting station at Dôle, in the Jura vaudois, at an altitude of 1,520 metres, the transmitter being constituted by a tower, thirty-six metres high.

The Bernese Government has also, for its part,

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just granted an authorisation for the construction of a similar transmitter on the Bantiger mountain which is close to Berne. Work is to be started without delay and it is anticipated that both the tower and the house for the transmitter will be ready to receive the technical installations at the beginning of October.

Oil boring in Switzerland.

Traces of oil have been discovered in various regions of the Plain and also in the Swiss Jura mountains, but up to the present the borings which have taken place have not given any satisfactory results. They have been started again, however, at Altishofen, in the Canton of Lucerne, where it is intended to drill to a depth of more than 2,000 metres.

Imports of liquid fuel in Switzerland.

During the first six months of this year, Switzerland has imported 180,000 tons of benzine, which represents an increase of more than 10 per cent, as compared with last year. This increase is easily explained by the constant development in mechanisation, which is taking place in Switzerland.

American Ambassador visits cheese-making factories.

In response to an invitation received from the Swiss Union of Commerce in Cheese, Miss France Willis, the Ambassador of the United States, in Berne, recently visited several Swiss Cheese-dairies, the Warehouses of a cheese exporter and a factory for the production of carton cheeses. Miss Willis was accompanied by the Secretary in charge of economic affairs, at the American Embassy. The American diplomats were struck by the decentralisation of cheese-making, which exists in Switzerland, and which enables the cheese-makers to use absolutely fresh milk, thus giving to the Swiss cheeses their high quality and the special taste which is characteristic of the regions from which they come.

CIBA's 70th anniversary.

This year, the important CIBA company, belonging to the Swiss chemical industry, is celebrating its 70th anniversary. These 70 years of existence have been a period of continuous expansion for this firm. Right from the beginning, and contrary to what happens in most of the other undertakings belonging to this branch of industry, the CIBA devoted itself to specialising in aniline dyes, which had just been discovered. In accordance with the traditions of Swiss

industry, the principle it adopted was always to start with relatively simple raw materials, in order to end with complicated and divers finished products, requiring a great deal of work, research and capital. Later on, the CIBA also devoted itself to the manufacture of pharmaceutical products which, to-day, have taken on an importance in the plant which is practically equal to that of the dyes. It would seem probable that, in the future, the pharmaceutical products will triumph over the other manufactures.

Ever since its foundation, the CIBA has exported the greater part of its production, the Swiss market absorbing only from 5 to 15 per cent of the total output. Faced with the obstacles brought to international trade, the firm found itself obliged to create affiliated companies in a great number of countries, scattered over the globe. At the present time, the CIBA is at the head of a very extended network of undertakings. The part played by this company in scientific research is becoming more and more important, and it has also contributed towards an efficacious struggle against a great many maladies.

Imports of motor vehicles into Switzerland.

Imports of motor vehicles into Switzerland during the first 6 months of 1954 have attained a new record, exceeding as they do 160 million francs and 27,600 machines. The increase amounts to 12 per cent, as compared with the corresponding period in 1953, and to 32 per cent as compared with that of 1952. It is particularly striking in respect of small and medium cars. Germany heads the rank of our suppliers, by sending more than half of the imported vehicles.

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