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SWITZERLAND'S FOREIGN TRADE

AND TEXTILES IN 1956

In 1956, Switzerland's economic situation remained favourable, which resulted in a further increase in her foreign trade, as may be seen from the following figures:

	1954	1955	1956
	In millions of Swiss francs		
Total imports	5,591.6	6,401.2	7,597.0
Total exports	5,271.6	5,622.2	6,203.5

The increase in incomes, the considerable volume of investments and the building up of stocks noted towards the end of the year contributed greatly to the increase in imports which amounted to nearly 1,200 million Swiss francs, i.e. 18.7% more than the figure for the previous year.

Even if the increase in *exports* for the same period (+ 581.3 million) was less marked than that of imports, it none the less broke all previous records.

The above figures show that the *deficit in the balance of trade* became even more marked. The adverse balance increased by 80%, amounting to 1,393.5 million Swiss francs, a figure that has only been exceeded twice before, in 1947 and 1948, when important stocks were being built up. The percentage of the value of imports covered by exports fell from 87.8% in 1955 to 81.7%. The relation between the value of exports and that of imports is not however below normal, but is more or less within the limits of the post-war average and exceeds the average coefficient of the last five-year period before the war by 13%.

All three main categories of goods played their part in the increase of *imports*, but particularly *manufactured products*.

In *exports* too, *manufactured products* contributed most to the increase, in spite of only a very slight increase in volume.

Below we the export values of the principal textile products for the past three years.

	1954	1955	1956
	in millions of Swiss francs		
Cotton yarns	48.6	55.9	69.3
Cotton fabrics	172.1	170.9	178.2
Embroideries	112.5	118.5	120.7
Schappe	8.5	9.3	11.6
Yarns of artificial fibres	78.6	100.8	101.6
Silk and rayon fabrics	97.3	98.6	90.5
Silk and rayon ribbons	12.2	11.9	11.8
Woollen yarns	26.0	28.1	39.6
Woollen fabrics	32.4	36.2	40.0
Hosiery and knitwear	40.5	40.6	46.2
Ready-to-wear clothing	54.5	58.7	64.0

	1954	1955	1956
	in millions of Swiss francs		
Millinery braids	35.2	33.4	34.1
Footwear	34.1	37.0	43.7

As can be seen, all the textile branches played their part in the increase in exports in 1956 except fabrics of silk, rayon and synthetic fibres and, to a lesser degree, ribbons of the same materials. It should be pointed out in this connection that the silk industry (including artificial and synthetic fibres) has continued to feel the pressure exerted on prices. Sales abroad have met with even greater difficulties, not only in South American countries but also in Europe, owing to the rise in customs tariffs, increased foreign competition and the recent establishment of textile industries in the former importing countries. This raising of artificial barriers is all the more to be regretted as Switzerland has always adhered to her tradition of quality production, never seeking to eliminate the competition of other countries by protectionist tariffs in sectors where she could not normally compete (mass-production, for example) and as she makes a point of practising an open-door policy, which should encourage other countries to do likewise.

In this connection it is worthwhile examining a little more closely Switzerland's imports of textile products, which amounted to almost 814 million francs in 1956. Below we are giving details concerning the principal items with figures for the most important suppliers (in millions of Swiss francs in each case).

Wool 283.7: Worsted tops 62 (France 31.5, Uruguay 17.2); Fabrics 39 (Great Britain 12, Italy 9.5, Western Germany 6.3, France 4.5); Carpets 36.6 (Iran 12, Belgium-Luxembourg Union 8); Dyed washed wool 31.5 (Belgium-Luxembourg Union 5.5, Uruguay 4.4, Australia 4.2, France 3.3); Raw wool 28 (Australia 13, Cape Colony 9, Argentina 3).

Cotton 238: Raw cotton 165 (Egypt 45, United States 38, Peru 37, Mexico 22); Printed fabrics 9.8 (Western Germany 3.7, France 1.7); Velvets 9.6 (Italy 4.5, Western Germany 3).

Clothing 130: Men's and boys' clothing 20 (Italy 6.5, Great Britain 5, Western Germany 4.3); Woollen garments for women and girls 18 (the Netherlands 6.3, Western Germany 4.9, Great Britain 3.9, France 1.4); Stockings in artificial and synthetic fibres, filaments 14 (United States 7, Austria 1.7, Western Germany 1.4, Italy 1.2, France 1).

Silk 116.3: Raw silk 22 (China 12, Japan 9); Fabrics in artificial and synthetic fibres, filaments 13.2 (United States 9.5, Western Germany 1.7); Fabrics in silk or schappe 12 (China 7, Italy 1.8, Japan 1.4, France 1.38).