

Economic news

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Economic News

† Paul Metzger

At the end of November, we learned with great regret of the death of Mr. Paul Metzger at the age of 62 after a long and painful illness. The deceased was the head of Gustave Metzger Co. Ltd., the lingerie and collar factory founded by his father. Alongside his father and his brothers, he had helped towards the growth and development of the family concern, which from its modest craft beginnings has developed into a big modern factory, one of the leading men's shirting firms in Switzerland, which also enjoys a fine reputation abroad. From a visit to the United States some forty years ago, which considerably widened his commercial horizons, he brought back a number of ideas that were to prove invaluable. To begin with, he specialised in the creation of sports clothing which became very well known under the trade mark Protector. The deceased's outstanding professional ability soon came to the notice of commercial circles and he was invited to become a member of many professional associations, for which he worked untiringly, no effort and no task being too much for him. Thus, for example, he was for many years on the committee of the Swiss Association of Lingerie and Ready-to-Wear Manufacturers and the Exporters Association of Swiss Clothing Manufacturers, whose president he was for a considerable period of time, as well as on the committee of the Swiss Industries Fair in Basle. His death therefore represents a considerable loss for all those either closely or remotely connected with him. To his family and the firm of which he was the head, "Textiles Suisses" here presents its most sincere sympathy.

Wholesale Trade in Swiss Cotton Fabrics

In Switzerland the cotton mills very seldom handle the exportation of their products themselves. This side of the business has been taken over by a number of firms which have gradually grown into a well organized group. These fabric exporters constitute a very important link in the economic life of the Swiss cotton industry. In fact they represent the dynamic element imparting momentum to the fabric mills and finishing establishments and in so doing provide employment for several thousands of workers and office staff.

The exporter maintains a wide network of agents throughout the world and at the same time employs travelling salesmen who continually visit the clientele so as to be able to report on the conditions prevailing in the various markets and the wishes of buyers. The exporter is thus in a position to decide on his requirements and the orders he will have to give the mills for the weaving, printing and finishing of fabrics according to his own ideas. But in order to be able to meet any demand, he must constantly keep on hand a certain stock of goods. As a result of this activity, the Swiss producers concerned, i.e. the weaving mills and textile finishing establishments are each able to specialize in the manufacture or finishing of certain particular articles, with a consequent

improvement in quality. The advantage of this concentration of orders in the hands of a limited number of exporters also makes it possible to keep prices within competitive margins, although Swiss cotton fabrics are far from being massproduced articles but tend rather to be high quality goods designed to answer the most exacting individual tastes. The quantities supplied by each manufacturer are comparatively small, so the fabrics keep their fashionable, exclusive character, particularly as the designs, colours and finishes are specially planned with this end in view. Finally, it should be remembered that during the last few years the annual exports of Swiss cotton fabrics oscillated in value between 160 and 170 million S.Fr. (U.S. \$ 37.3 to 39.6 million).

The Swiss Knitwear and Hosiery Industry

The systematic efforts of Swiss firms in the knitwear and hosiery industry to keep their production up to date have resulted in this industry's index of employment remaining very high and its products continuing to be in very great demand both at home and abroad. Thus exports increased by about 10 % in 1960 to reach the figure of S.Fr. 54.9 million (US \$ 12.9 million). However it should not be forgotten that imports of knitted goods and hosiery into Switzerland also increased during the year in question to total S.Fr. 94.6 million (US \$ 22 million); the percentage increase in imports was however only half that of exports.

In spite of the favourable position of Switzerland's knitwear and hosiery industry on the world market due to its efforts to raise the quality of its specialized production still higher, it should not be forgotten that the lowering of customs tariffs within the Common Market constitutes a serious handicap for Swiss hosiery and knitwear, which is unable to find any compensation in the Free Trade Area countries. European Economic Community countries are in fact the Swiss knitwear and hosiery industry's best customers, as well as its biggest suppliers. That is why, in spite of the satisfactory results of the first half of 1961, both at home and abroad, and the signs seeming to show that this favourable situation is likely to last, it would be unwise to be too optimistic regarding the trade prospects with EEC countries.

As in other branches, the problem of manpower is a thorny one for Swiss hosiery and knitwear manufacturers. Between 1959 and 1960, the number of hours of overtime authorized rose from 263,156 to 338,018 although, for the same period, the figure for manpower rose from 11,220 to 12,115. The last figure includes over 42 % of foreigners.

An industrial and commercial merger in the textile industry

During a recent extraordinary general meeting, the shareholders of the Industrial Company for Schappe in Basle agreed to a motion of the Board of Directors proposing a

modification of the system of shares and the conversion of the company into a mixed holding company under the new name of "Schappe Ltd." with its registered office in Geneva. This merger will make it possible to exchange part of the shares for those of the Schappe Spinning Mill Co. Ltd. in Lyons.

In the course of time, great changes have occurred in the manufacturing programmes of these two companies, which today go in mainly for the spinning of artificial and especially synthetic fibres. The merger that has just been made will give the new company more weight in its dealings with synthetic fibre suppliers, with regard to manufacture. It will also strengthen its position with yarn users and greatly facilitate the carrying out of a world-wide sales programme and scheme for technical and commercial advice. The administrative side of the group will have two centres, one in Basle, the other in Lyons, controlling the numerous factories that the two companies at present own in Switzerland, France, Germany, Great Britain and the United States. The merger will also make possible a more rational organisation of the manufacturing processes, especially within the framework of European integration. The new company will possess 230,000 spindles, 143,000 of them in Common Market countries and 87,000 in the Free Trade Area, and will consume approximately 7,000 tons of synthetic fibres annually.

Euro-Mode Colours for 1962-63

At the 4th Euro-Mode congress, held in Vienna and attended by members of 13 national organisations, the experts examined 94 colours before adopting the following: "Carnéole", a medium red brown shade, for women's footwear and accessories; the same shade was also chosen for men's shoes; "Cuivre", a luminous light brown with a touch of copper, for women's shoes and accessories. The colours recommended are: "Bolero", a light red tinged with blue, for women's shoes and accessories; "Médoc", a deep purplish burgundy red, for men's shoes. The "trend colour" is grey, recommended without restriction as to shade.

FELISOL International

Colour being one of the delights of life and at the same time one of the main attractions of the textile world, the consumer is entitled to expect the colours of the garments or fabrics he buys to be 100 % fast and not to fade the first time they are washed or exposed to the sun or rain. But just as all that glitters is not gold, so all that is coloured is not necessarily of lasting brilliance. Consequently manufacturers of dyestuffs for textiles were rapidly compelled to attempt to produce dyes resistant to light, washing, bad weather, perspiration, sea-water, etc. For obviously a textile dyed in a fast colour has greater value than an article that is doomed to fade rapidly. In order to help the general public to distinguish between fast and unfast colours in the textile trade, a number of dyestuffs manufacturers and textile producers joined forces to create the FELISOL Association with a view to publicising a mark of fastness to be applied only

to absolutely "fast" textiles, thus enabling consumers to give them their preference. This organisation continually endeavours to raise the standard of colour fastness by means of scientific research and at the same time to improve the use of colours on textiles. The FELISOL Association publishes a twice-yearly review called *FELISOL International*, No. 2 of which we have before us as we write. This publication is brought out in six languages for the convenience of readers in all the national organisations of the Association in the Argentine, Austria, Belgium, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands and Switzerland. The main topic of the present number is the series of fastness tests carried out at Vauvert in the south of France. A number of illustrations in colour give a good idea of the textile insulation plant. Other articles give invaluable suggestions to all textile branches, from the production stage to retail sales.

Second World Congress of Synthetic Fibre Manufacturers

The Second World Congress of the International Association of Synthetic Fibre Manufacturers will take place in London from May 1st to 4th, 1962. 21 countries are represented among the members of this association, which was founded in 1950.

It is interesting to note that today's output of synthetic fibres accounts for 22 % of the total production of all textile fibres in the world. By comparison with the pre-war period the percentage has doubled.

A new synthetic fibre

Du Pont of Nemours International Ltd. of Geneva has just launched a new synthetic fibre, "Lycra", manufactured by the parent firm in the United States; it is a new elastic synthetic fibre whose use will be controlled and guaranteed by the issue of a special label. It has already been submitted to practical tests by various branches in the knitwear and corsetry industries, in particular the well-known Swiss swimsuit manufacturers Pius Wieler Sons at Kreuzlingen.

Charme

In its attractive little red case and reseda cloth or leather binding, the *Charme* pocket diary, the diary for the smart woman, recently made its eighteenth annual appearance. For 1962, it is "salons" that have been selected as the main theme, and that have been so wittily covered by a number of women writers, while Hans Aeschbach, the well-known painter, has illustrated it most attractively in water colours, which recapture for us all the atmosphere of the French Restoration period and the Second Empire. The diary proper with its indispensable pages for addresses and telephone numbers, etc. is attractively illustrated with pen and ink drawings.

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