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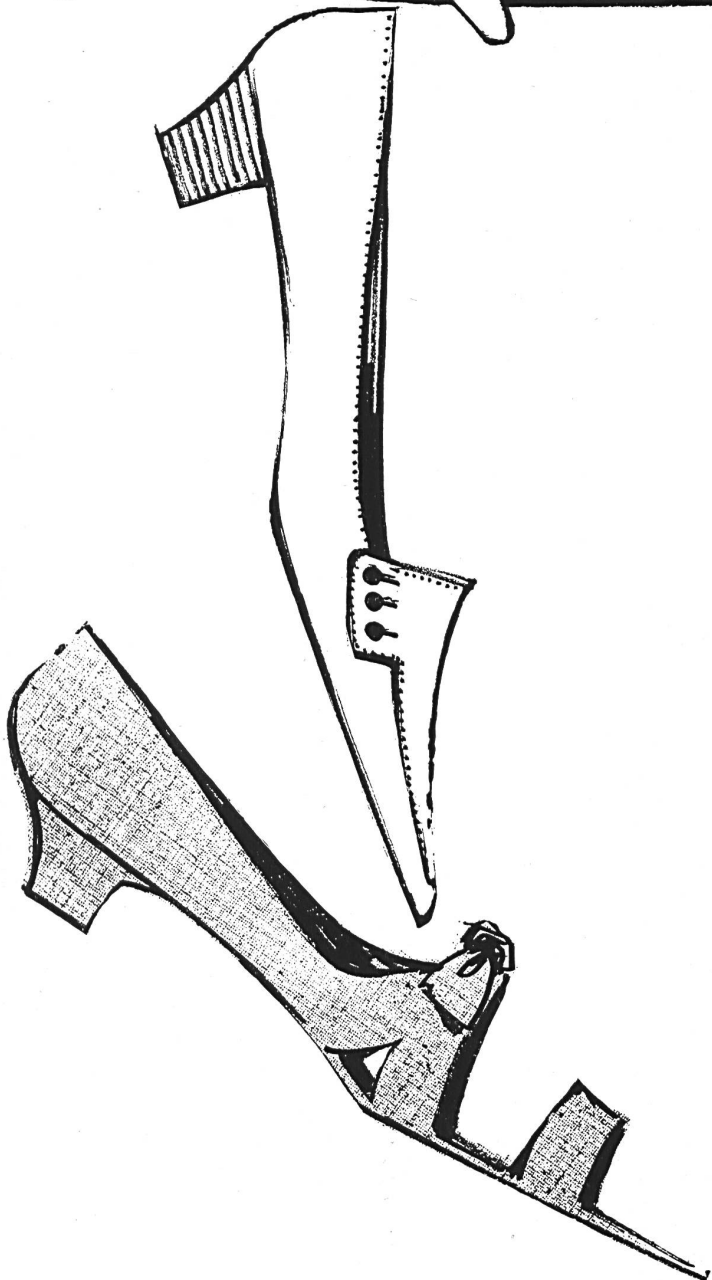
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FOOTWEAR



Some decades ago, the « fashionable » shoe was an individual creation made by a craftsman and consequently accessible only to a limited class of society. Since then, an unparalleled evolution has spread the idea of fashion to all circles of the population and footwear is now, as a consequence, expected to satisfy entirely new demands. This change has subjected the industrial production of shoes to requirements that are all the more exacting in view of the fact that of all industrially produced consumer goods, the shoe is the article that requires the greatest amount of work done by man—as opposed to machines. The Swiss footwear industry, whose products rightly enjoy an excellent reputation not only in Switzerland but also in the fashion centres of the world, has been able to overcome these increased difficulties to a remarkable extent. By using the most highly developed methods of work, modern raw materials and especially increasingly softer leathers, a highly skilled labour force performs a job of a very high standard of quality, which has led to success on the international level.

The influence of fashion has naturally made international competition on the footwear market still keener. It is all the more remarkable therefore to note that last year almost a quarter of Switzerland's total output of women's shoes was exported. In spite of customs discriminations, almost half of Swiss exports of shoes (49 %) is bought by Common Market countries, i.e. above all by Western Germany (27 %) and France (13 %) followed by EFTA countries (29 %) in which the main buyers are Great Britain (9 %) and the Scandinavian countries (17 %). Exports are also very high to the United States (18 %), that country being the biggest buyer of Switzerland's very high quality ski-boots.