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COMMERCIAL NEWS

Swiss State revenue in 1955.

Budgeted at 1,600 million francs, the fiscal receipts of the Swiss Confederation for 1955 have exceeded these estimates by more than 230 million francs. This improvement, amounting to more than 16 per cent, prolongs the uninterrupted series of surplus budgets which the Federal State has been enjoying since the end of the war. This favourable situation has incited the Swiss Government to grant certain fiscal relief.

A new Swiss Index.

The necessity for index figures in regard to economic matters is justified by the role played by information, nowadays. Up to the present, the monthly index figures for wholesale and retail prices were the only ones, which, in Switzerland, gave information, in a very general way, on the evolution of prices for goods.

The Swiss Bank Corporation now proposes to fill in this void by preparing an index figure which reflects the general evolution in the prices of some of the most representative products figuring among the merchandise imported into Switzerland. The Basis for this index figure is constituted by the arithmetical averages of the prices of twenty products, selected from among the four following categories: agricultural produce and groceries, textiles, metals and divers products. At the end of 1955, the total index figure for raw materials in Switzerland came to 132.9 as against 100, at the end of 1949.

Swiss Industries Fair at Basle.

The 39th Swiss Industries Fair at Basle, in 1955, realised 600,000 francs in net profits, this being 20% more than in 1954. The number of exhibitors and that of visitors to the Fair, exceeded all the figures for the previous years. Plans are being made already for extensions, in preparation for the next Fair, which will take place from the 14th to the 24th of April, 1956.

Swissair prepares the future.

Swissair, the Swiss National Air Navigation Company, recently inaugurated its new Instruction

Centre for its personnel, at Zurich-Kloten. Built in accordance with the most up-to-date methods of technique, this edifice contains lecture-halls, collections of models, premises for exercises and an apparatus for simulated flying, which comprises the complete fittings of a modern long distance aircraft.

Although it has not yet received the four new four-engine aircraft of the DC7c type, Swissair has already decided to order two long-distance flying machines of the DC8 type, which are the first jet planes to be used for commercial flying. The total purchase price for these two machines, including the indispensable spare parts, amounts to seventy million francs. Delivery is expected to take place in 1960.

There is one telephone for every four inhabitants in Switzerland.

In 1955, the number of telephone subscribers increased by 50,000, and reached the total of 795,000. The number of telephones in use has increased by 73,000 and now totals more than 1.2 million. The proportion for the whole of Switzerland is therefore very high, as now there exists a telephone subscription in respect of every six inhabitants. It should also be mentioned that there are more than 8,000 public call-boxes and telephone stations in Switzerland.

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Motorisation and State revenue in Switzerland.

Motor vehicles and motor fuel imported into Switzerland are subject to relatively high Customs duties. In 1955, Switzerland, who does not herself manufacture motor cars, imported more than 57,000 motor vehicles which, together with the duty levied on petrol, brought in nearly 250 million francs to the Public Treasury. We have here an increase of one-fifth, in comparison with the previous year. The yield from these Customs duties, half of which goes to the Cantons, is intended primarily for the upkeep and the improvement of the road network in Switzerland.

Important social measure in Swiss industry.

Desirous of supplementing the obligatory old age insurance, which is in force throughout Switzerland, the important Schaffhouse firm of Georges Fischer S.A., has just founded, as from the 1st of January, 1956, its own private Pension Fund. Every worker will be able to benefit from this Fund, by contributing two per cent of his wage to it, as from the age of twenty. In this way, he will be entitled to an insurance covering old age, disablement and allowances for widows and orphans.

The Board of Administration and the Management of the firm have decided to pay an initial capital of ten million francs into this new Fund, and, in so far as this will be economically feasible, an annual contribution fixed at more than a million francs. All the men workers who are at least 65 years old and all women workers of 60 and over will be entitled to a pension.

Swiss exports of cheese, in 1955.

Cheese is certainly the product of the Swiss food industry which is the best known abroad. Exports of this article, in 1955, attained 110 million francs, a figure which corresponds with those for the preceding years. Three-fourths of these exports were represented by big round, flat cheeses, known as "hard" cheeses, of the Emmenthal or Gruyère variety, and one-quarter, by process cheeses, which are also greatly appreciated in the most distant of countries.

Swiss watch exports in 1955.

The past year was favourable to the exports of the Swiss watch-making industry, and this in spite of the restrictive measures introduced by some of Switzerland's customers. Watch exports once more exceeded one thousand million francs, rising by almost forty millions, in comparison with 1954, without, however, reaching the record figure for 1953. The United States remain our best customers for Swiss watches, in spite of a marked decline in imports. This deficit, however, has been compensated by an increase in the sales of Swiss watches on other markets, in Europe, and by the opening up of new market possibilities in Asia and in the Near East.

Swissair traffic in December, 1955.

During the month of December, 1955, "Swissair", the National Company for Air Navigation, carried 36,000 passengers on all its air-lines, this figure being an increase of 10 per cent as compared with the previous year; the amount of freight carried showed an increase of 26 per cent and that of air mail, 18 per cent.

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PETITES CHOSES QUI FONT PLAISIR.

Les grands transports par hélicoptères dans les montagnes suisses font figure d'oeuvre de pionniers à l'échelle européenne. C'est ainsi que l'Héliswiss a transporté en 480 vols 206 personnes et 120 tonnes de matériel sur un chantier situé à 2,000 m. d'altitude dans les Alpes glaronnaises.

Le plus vaste parc automobile souterrain d'Europe est en voie d'achèvement à Berne. Cette construction de 2 étages, située sous la Waisenhausplatz, pourra abriter 300 autos.

Le barrage de la Grande Dixence en Valais sera le plus haut du monde. Il aura un volume de plus 5 millions de m³ de béton et une hauteur de presque 300 m. Il faudra 17 ans pour l'achever.

Le premier téléphérique sud-américain de construction suisse vient d'être mis en exploitation à Bogota (Colombie). Il conduit au Montserrat, à 3,180 m. au-dessus de la mer. Il a été construit en 2 ans et demi par 3 maisons suisses spécialisées.

90,000 envois ont été remis aux organisateurs d'un concours de photographies aux Etats-Unis. Les "Fillettes tziganes" du photographe suisse Otto Dättwyler ont valu le 3e prix à leur auteur. Deux autres participants suisses ont été récompensés par des prix en espèces.

L'Académie suédoise des sciences avait à repourvoir le siège laissé vacant par Albert Einstein. Elle a désigné comme membre étranger le professeur Wolfgang Pauli, de l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Zurich.

Le timbre Pro Juventute de 5 ct. de la dernière série, à l'effigie de Jérémias Gotthelf, a battu tous les records de vente. C'est le premier timbre Pro Juventute qui dépasse les 8 millions, avec 8,888,000 exemplaires.

Genève est riche d'une curiosité de plus. L'horloge florale montée par un groupe d'horlogers genevois, à proximité du pont du Mont-Blanc, propage la renommée mondiale du travail suisse de précision dans le domaine de l'industrie horlogère et dans celui de la fabrication des appareils électriques. L'aiguille des heures mesure 2,20 m. et pèse 6,2 kg., celle des minutes 2,80 m. et 8,6 kg., enfin l'aiguille des secondes pèse 3 kg.

Deux fabriques de machines mondialement connues, de Winterthur et Oerlikon, ont construit une

nouvelle installation pour la production de l' "eau lourde". On espère ainsi pouvoir rendre notre pays indépendant de l'étranger en ce qui concerne l'utilisation de l'énergie atomique.

La première piscine thermale à ciel ouvert de Suisse vient d'être terminée à Zurzach dans le temps record d'un peu plus de deux mois. Même par les plus grands froids, la température de l'eau est de 36°. L'air environnant est tempéré par la chaleur se dégageant de l'eau. De plus des réflecteurs à rayons infra-rouges ont été installés, qui forment un toit chauffant au-dessus de la piscine.

Les producteurs suisses de boissons se sont entendus pour renoncer à placer des panneaux publicitaires à proximité de monuments historiques ou de paysages pittoresques.

Les prestations sociales librement consenties par les employeurs suisses s'élèvent actuellement à plus d'un milliard de francs, soit environ 5 fois ce qu'elles étaient avant la guerre.

Le savant bâlois Johannes Hürzeler a entrepris des recherches sur les primates. Ses constatations et conclusions sont d'une importance capitale dans la question de la destinée humaine. Les travaux du Dr. Hürzeler ont eu un grand retentissement dans les milieux scientifiques et l'ont porté au premier rang de ses confrères.

Dans le courant de cette année, la fabrique de porcelaine de Langenthal fêtera son demi-siècle d'existence.

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