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ASSURANCE ON OIL GIVEN BY THE GOVERNMENT

The Swiss Government has assured its people that it will not permit them to become too dependent on any single source of oil.

The statement served to quiet fears expressed in some quarters that the Soviet Union could become a major indirect supplier of Switzerland's oil needs.

The fears stem from the fact that Switzerland will be drawing crude oil from a pipeline project that has as its chief architect Enrico Mattei, president of Italy's big oil combine, E.N.I. (the national petroleum agency).

Signor Mattei's purchases of Soviet oil have often been attacked as serving Soviet interests to the detriment of the West.

The E.N.I. pipeline will start from Pegli, the Italian oil port near Genoa, and cross eastern Switzerland to reach refineries in West Germany. The three Swiss cantons involved reserved the right to use the pipeline themselves when they granted the right of transit.

A branch of the same pipeline will cross the Alps through the St. Bernard road tunnel, now under construction between Italy and Switzerland, to supply a refinery at Collombey in the south-western canton of Valais.

This refinery, now in the first stage of construction, will be Switzerland's first. It is expected to be completed in early 1963.

The Swiss Government indicated in its statement that it did not think that the pipelines and refinery would make Switzerland dependent on one source of supply.

Having no oil of its own, neutral Switzerland wants to prevent being cut off from all supply sources in time of war. Most of Switzerland's imports of petroleum arrive by way of the Rhine River.

The Government conceded that the situation could be difficult if the Collombey refinery were to get all its 2,000,000 tons of crude oil from one source and sell all its output to the Swiss market. Under such conditions, the Government said, "the single source in question would have such a share of our market that a sudden cut-off in shipments would cause supply difficulties."

The three cantons — Ticino, St. Gallen and Grisons — had specified in granting the right of transit that they would be under no obligation to accept any particular supplier for the oil brought in through the pipeline.

But the statement said that "if, contrary to all expectations, the situation should develop in a way that would make our oil supply depend on a single source, the Government would take the necessary measures."



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NEWS AT

Federal

For the second time, Mr. Paul Chaudet, of Vaud, has been elected President of the Confederation, this time for 1962.

A vine-grower from Lavaux, Mr. Chaudet is by the number of years he has spent in the assembly dean of the Federal Council, and has also been in charge of the military department since 1955. Mr. Jean Bourgnicht, of Fribourg, has been elected Vice-President of the Federal Council, and he will succeed Mr. Chaudet as President of the Confederation next year.

* * *

Mr. Walter Bringolf, of Schaffhausen, president of the Swiss Socialist Party, and Mr. Ernst Vaterlaus, of Thurgau, a member of the Radical Party, have been elected president of the National Council and president of the States Council respectively. The vice-presidents are Mr. André Guinand, Radical, of Geneva, and Mr. Frederic Fauquex, Liberal, of Rixensacker.

* * *

The directors of the Touring Club of Switzerland have announced that they will fight against the establishing of speed limits on the new Swiss super highways now under construction. Their opinion was formed after studying traffic conditions and regulations in other countries, where, they claim, the tendency to place speed limits on auto-routes is disappearing.

* * *

Backed by an official agreement, a consortium of Swiss banks has just granted a loan through the Central Bank of Chile amounting to twenty million Swiss francs to take effect immediately.

* * *

Italian industrial officials expressed concern recently over the "suspended" talks between Swiss and Italian officials regarding regulations for social insurance and immigration regulations for Italian workers employed in Switzerland. For the present, neither Swiss nor Italian officials are willing to predict when talks might begin again. And no marked changes in the employment of Italian workers in Switzerland have been noted.

* * *

Last november, the biggest fruit depot in Switzerland was inaugurated at Sion. It is a very up-to-date depot capable of holding 300 wagons of fruit. When it is completely finished, it will hold some 550 wagons, i.e., over 5,000 tons of fruit. It will consequently be of the greatest economic importance for the big fruit-growing region of the Valais.

* * *

Switzerland recently signed a trade treaty with Tunisia agreeing to give technical and scientific assistance as well as protection and encouragement to capital investment in this North African republic.

* * *

Cantonal

Five hundred Christmas parcels, sent from Bienne and Neuchâtel to addresses in Zurich and other parts of East Switzerland, went up in flames at Zurich's main station just before Christmas. The parcels had been loaded aboard a Post Office wagon attached to an express train from Lausanne. It arrived in Zurich with the wagon trailing smoke. It is thought that the heating system in the wagon, unmanned after Bienne, became overheated.

RANDOM

A party organized for the young members of the building trade union in Geneva ended in riots and confusion last December. No less than 160 chairs were broken during the disturbance.

At the last International Exhibition of Medals, held in Rome last year, the Institute of Numismatology at the University of Oslo purchased a medal by Swiss artist Roger Huguenin, well-known painter, engraver and medallist, from La Chaux-de-Fonds. The work is a very fine piece dedicated to Fridtjof Nansen.

A 29-year-old Swiss engineer, training at Chur, in the Canton of Graubunden, for the World Parachute Jumping Championship, fell to his death recently when his parachute failed to open.

In Luzern a committee has been set by the Union of the Graphic Arts to oppose trade with Communist Russia and her satellites.

The 32nd Geneva International Motor Show will take place from 15th to 25th March. On 15th October 1961 the final date for the receipt of registrations, the exhibitors' demands already exceeded the available space.

Professor Dr. Fritz Borgnis, of the Federal Technical High School in Zurich, became a Fellow of the American

Association of Radio Engineers last week-end. The honour "goes only to those who have made an extraordinary contribution in the field of radio science or neighbouring subjects".

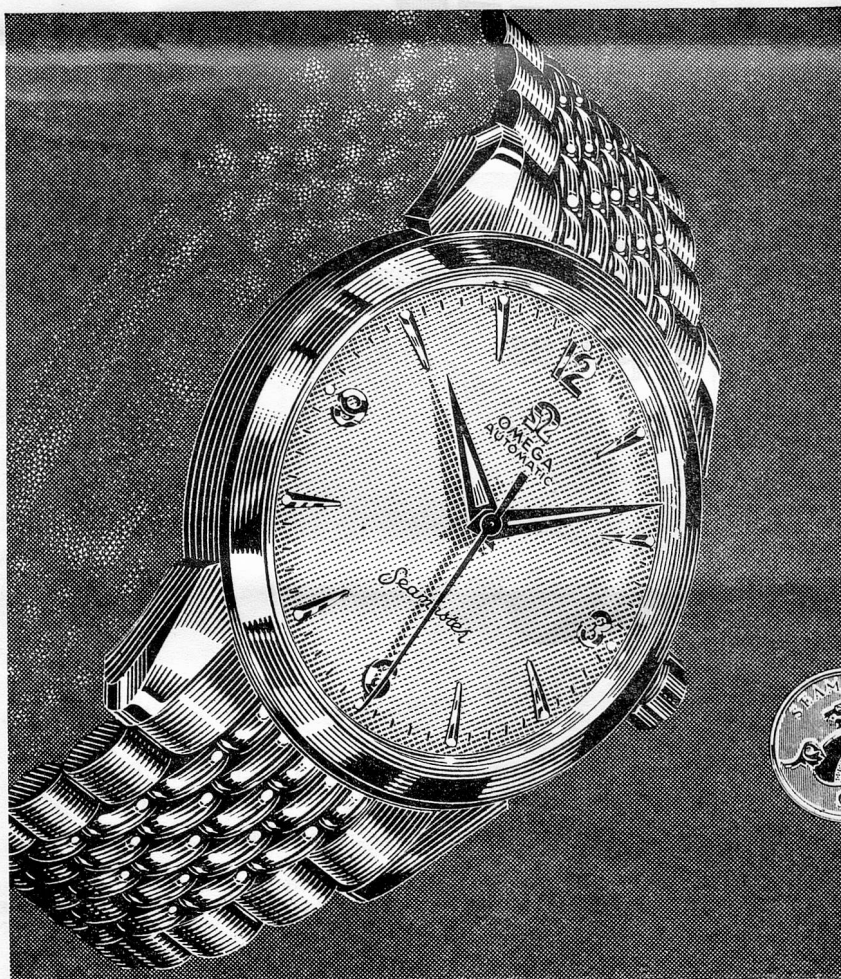
Artist Henri Robert, famous for his countryside and flowers paintings, has died in Lausanne, at the age of 80.

Continued Government control of the Swiss watch industry was endorsed by a two-to-one majority of the voters. Only the Canton of Lucerne and the small half-canton of Appenzell Ausser-Rhoden produced slim margins against the proposal of the Federal Council. The major watch-making cantons were overwhelmingly in favour.

The oldest inhabitant of Flawil, Mrs. Herzo-Frueh, died recently in her 103rd year. Mrs. Herzo-Frueh lived with her daughter, aged 80, and was still taking part in local social affairs.

The owner of three leading hotels in Zermatt is building another one for his employees. The new hotel, a three-storey building which will be completed this month at a cost of approximately 800,000 francs, will house 70 employees.

An explanatory exhibition of recent events in Berlin has recently opened in Berne. The visitor can see a display of about forty photographs telling the story of the wall of shame and the tragic life of the Berlin people.



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On the 27th and 28th January, future Swiss Alpine ski racing champions will rendezvous at sunny Zuoz, in the Engadine, for the Junior Ski Championships. Because of the large number of events, most of which have to be held in January, the Swiss 30-kilometre championship unavoidably clashes with the junior meeting. This new Championship will be held at Charmey/Broc, in Canton Fribourg, a district where snow is usually guaranteed.

Film star Elizabeth Taylor and her husband have just purchased a chalet in Gstaad's fashionable Oberbort district. The chalet, originally built for a Texan oil magnate, was resold by him to the architect. The architect, in turn, has sold it to Elizabeth Taylor for a price said to be more than a million francs. However, it is being asked whether Elizabeth Taylor and her husband will face any difficulties as home buyers in Switzerland, due to the recent tightening up of the Swiss laws governing the sale of property to foreigners. The law emphasizing that buyers must be permanent residents in Switzerland was enacted last summer, prompted by the large number of sales to outsiders in the Ticino.

Following a technician's error in a chemical factory in Schweizerhalle, the river Rhine at Basle became red. The quick intervention of the Basle river police has now, however, stopped all danger of pollution.

Zurich Mayor Emil Landolt was in Ried, Austria, recently to attend the official dedication of three large apartment houses that have been specially built for

refugees from Eastern Europe who have been living for the last 15 years in "temporary" refugee barracks in Austria. The building of the houses was largely financed by contributions from the people of Zurich. The project began when Swiss journalist Barbara Schnyder, wife of federal Councillor Heinrich Schnyder, visiting Austria in 1959, viewed the refugees' temporary headquarters and returned to Zurich describing their poor living conditions and urging that something be done to help them.

A strange woman died recently in Basle. Dressed very poorly, she used often to be seen begging in the streets for food. When the police called at her home, they discovered that she was in possession of two savings books with 10,000 fr. in each, and another 40,000 fr. in banknotes was found hidden in an old shoe-box!

Georges Olivet, Swiss Red Cross official in Katanga, was killed near Elizabethville. He had been missing since 13th December. Mr. Olivet, who was 34, had been in the Belgian Congo for five years. When he disappeared, he was on his way to U.N. headquarters to ask for a short cease-fire in the fighting so that civilians in the northern sections of Elizabethville could cross the U.N. lines and reach safety.

A former pupil of the Conservatoire of Lausanne, Mme Marianne Galley-Schuler, recently gave three piano recitals in Lima (Peru), where she was given a tremendous welcome.

(Most of the above items were received from the A.T.S. News Service)

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