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COMMERCIAL NEWS

A Swiss electric power station in a cavern.

Switzerland is pursuing without intermission the development of her hydro-electric forces, whilst awaiting their replacement by nuclear energy. Very often, however, the hilly nature of the ground renders these achievements very difficult. For instance, an electric plant is to be set up at Veytaux, not far from the famous Castle of Chillon, on the banks of Lake Lemán, which will be lodged entirely in a cavern. The cavern is to be excavated in the mountain and will be about 328 feet in length, 75.5 feet in width and 65.5 feet in height.

Building of an oil-refinery in the Rhone Plain.

The Swiss company entrusted with the construction and the running of an oil-refinery in the Rhone Plain, in Switzerland, is to be founded in Lausanne. This company, which will bear the name of "Raffinerie du Rhône S.A.", is connected with the Italian company "Oleodotti Internazionali SPA", which will undertake the construction and the operation of a pipeline between Genoa and Switzerland. Each of the two companies will participate, to the extent of one-third, in the capital of the other company. The establishment of the Swiss company is the first step towards the realisation of the vast project for bringing raw

petroleum to Switzerland, by means of a pipe-line passing under the Great Saint Bernard, in order that it may be refined in the French-speaking region.

A French and a Swiss watchmaking firm collaborate.

The Swiss watchmaking industry, in order to overcome the decline in business which made itself apparent last year, is now engaged in a big effort towards rationalisation, both on a general plane and in every firm belonging to this branch of industry. This effort is not directed solely towards production, but also refers to distribution, which constitutes a very important factor in view of the fact that more than 95 per cent of the watches manufactured in Switzerland are sold abroad. An interesting initiative taken by the "Universal Watches Ltd.", in Geneva, recently entrusted the agency for its products intended for France and Belgium to the "Société anonyme LIP", one of the big French watchmaking firms.

This agreement makes the first stage of a collaboration between European manufacturers, in accordance with the desires expressed during the conversations which started last year, in Geneva, between the representatives of the French, German, British and Swiss watchmaking industries.

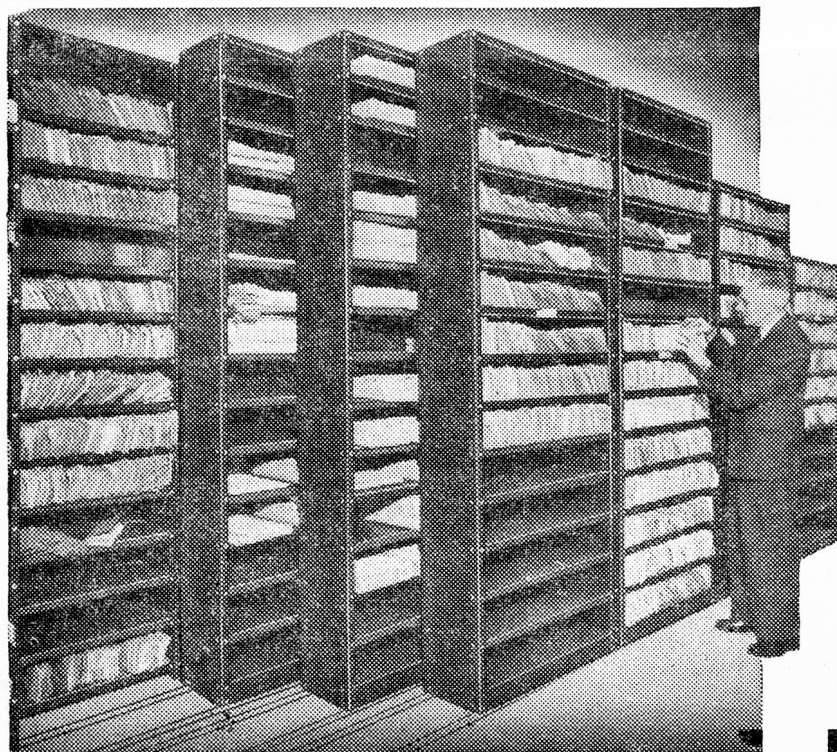


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New record at the Geneva-Cointrin Airport.

The inter-Continental airport of Geneva-Cointrin continues to develop. In 1958 the number of passengers registered was 729,888 — nearly 50,000 more than in 1957. The highest frequency was recorded on 14th September 1958, and was in respect of 3,850 passengers. The runways are being extended in order to meet the requirements of inter-Continental traffic by means of big jet planes, which is to start in 1960.

Ambitious plans in Zurich.

An organising committee has been founded in Zurich with the aim of erecting a 540-foot tower, near the centre of the town and on the bank of the Lake, which is to serve as a public attraction and a belvedere. The plans have been drawn up by an engineer, Mr. Dunkel, who is a Professor at the Federal School of Technology, and who, prior to fixing his choice, spent a long time prospecting the Zurich territory — from aboard a helicopter. The tower will be formed by three parallel pillars, made of a light metal, forming at the base a triangle of 70 feet on each side, and joined together by means of panoramic terraces. A restaurant capable of accommodating 200 persons is to be installed in the tower, at a height of 305 feet. The lifts will be placed in a tube, set up in the centre of the tower. The whole project is to be carried out by private initiative.

Swiss speed-reducer for an American Oil-Tanker.

The Maag Gear-Wheel Co. Ltd., in Zurich, is now finishing the construction of a big speed-reducer intended for a tanker of 32,000 tons, now in a ship-building yard in the United States. This machine, of respectable dimensions, will operate under pressure in an oil-bath, and will be capable of transmitting a maximum power of 8,700 h.p. by lowering to 105 revolutions per minute on the propeller-shaft the speed of the engine, which is 4,000 r.p.m.

New articulated vehicle.

A Swiss firm manufacturing tractors has studied and perfected a vehicle which can be used for all types of ground and which possesses a really unique performance. The new system that has been adopted consists in having recourse to three axle-trees, and this makes it possible for the vehicle to be articulated vertically in its centre. Thus, each of the halves of the vehicle can, at will, gain support from the other by means of a hydraulic device, which when operated by the driver raises or lowers the front or the back of the machine. Should it be faced by an obstacle — a wall, for instance — the front part of the vehicle is raised until it can rest on the top of the obstacle, after which it clears it by means of its front traction, in the same way as do all the other "all-grounds" machines. This exceptional flexibility also makes it possible for the vehicle to adhere to the ground with all its wheels, even when the ground is very uneven. This utility machine, which, in many cases, is superior to caterpillar tractors, can also travel easily in a liquid element, in view of the fact that the engine can be raised above the water level. Rivers, therefore, do not constitute any obstacle to it.



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