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SNIPPETS

SWITZERLAND IN COMIC FORM. A young extraterrestrial travels through Switzerland to rescue the future: the story is told by "Presence Switzerland" comics with the aim of raising awareness of Switzerland among young people abroad. The work, published in thirteen languages, is distributed by our embassies to all Swiss schools abroad.

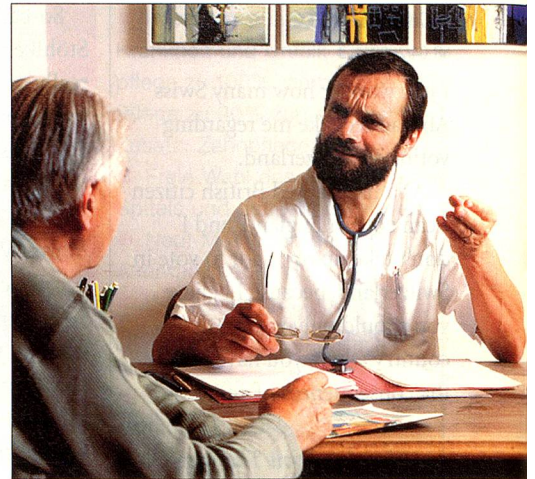
2008 OLYMPIC GAMES. The project for the new Olympic stadium for the 2008 games in Peking is designed by Zurich architects Heinz Moser and Roger Nussbaumer.

DEPOPULATED ALPINE REGIONS. Over the past seven years 46,000 jobs were lost in alpine regions. Of the 54 recognised alpine regions, 28 are experiencing a sharp drop in population numbers. According to the Swiss Group for Alpine Regions the authorities

are partly responsible for this situation: Between 1995 and 2000, cuts in spending on alpine regions resulted in a loss of 13,000 jobs, while another 20,000 were lost due to the restructuring of former state organisations.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED. After five and a half years the special fund for victims of the holocaust has completed its work. Established in 1997 following the debate on Switzerland's role in World War II, the fund was financed by banks, the Swiss National Bank and other Swiss enterprises and has paid out a total of CHF 300 million to over 300,000 survivors of Nazi atrocities.

100 MILLION DOLLARS: This is the amount lost by Zurich Financial Services on its shareholdings and bonds in WorldCom, the bankrupt US enterprise.



UNWELCOME MORATORIUM. To keep healthcare costs under control the Federal Council has decided that for the next three years no permits are to be issued to young physicians to open practices. The decision has caused uproar among medical students and assistant doctors, who believe the government should liberalise prescription drug prices and lift the health insurance accreditation obligation.

FAITES VOS JEUX! After a 125-year ban, Swiss gambling casinos are once more permitted to operate without restrictions. The locations approved by the Federal Council for casinos are Baden, Basle, Berne, Lucerne, Lugano, Montreux and St. Gall. Fourteen other localities have to make do with a "Kursaal" where only specific games are permitted. Switzerland is among the European leaders in terms of gambling casinos per capita.

ABBEY CLOSURE. Due to lack of new recruits and the increasing age of monks, the Swiss-German Assembly of Delegates of the Capucine Order has decided to close its abbeys in Stans (Nidwalden) and Solothurn. The Solothurn abbey was founded in 1588, and the Stans abbey in 1582. Both were among the oldest abbeys north of the Alps.

LYNX UNWELCOME. A St. Gall citizens' organisation has submitted a petition objecting to the proposal to return the lynx to eastern Switzerland. The petitioners call on the canton to withdraw from the government-initiated project due to fears that the wild cat would decimate game stocks and present a threat to cattle.

No champagne!



Albert Banderet, the mayor of Champagne, is not amused. Out with "Champagne" from the Vaud!

Residents of the community of Champagne in the canton of Vaud have submitted a claim to the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg to have a clause in the Swiss-EU bilateral accords deleted. The clause in question forbids the use of the designation of origin „Vin de Champagne“ on their local

wines. The French government requested this ban on designation of origin as a condition for ratifying the agreements. Paris claims that the name could be confused with the genuine champagne produced in France.




PEOPLE

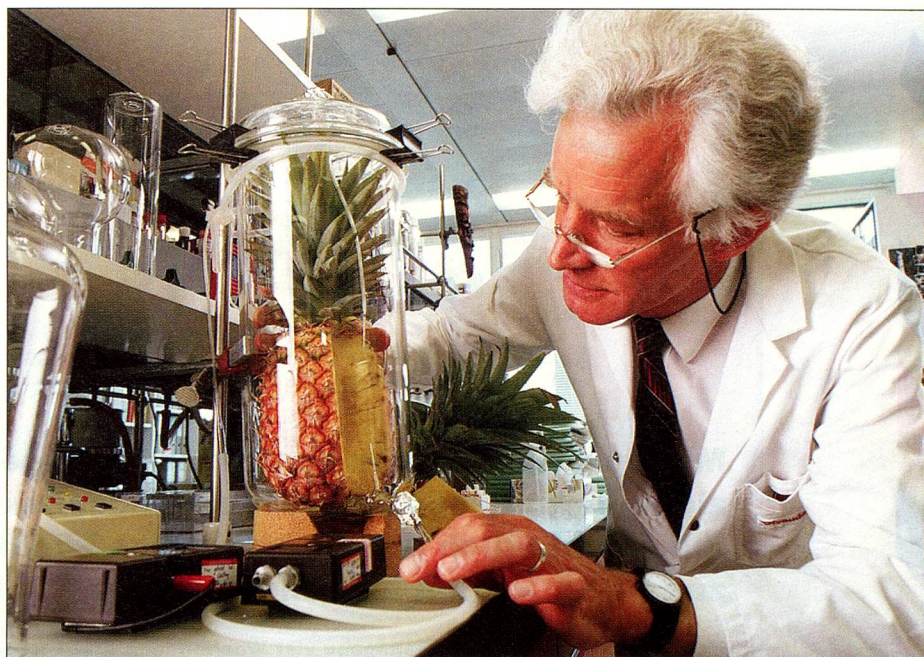
Father Giovanni Pozzi, one of the greatest Italianists of our age, has died in Lugano at the age of 79. Born in Locarno, the Capucine monk studied Italian literature at the University of Fribourg between 1960 and 1988. Besides critical works on mediaeval humanistic and baroque literature, he also published theological studies and critiques on art history.

André Bucher won the silver medal over 800 metres at this year's European Athletics Championships in Germany. Last year he became world champion over this distance.

Jacques Piccard is 80 years old. With his "mesoscaphé", one of the first underwater tourist boats in the world, he was one of the protagonists of the 1964 National Exhibition in Lausanne. Born in Brussels, Jacques Piccard studied economics and graduated from Geneva's Institut des hautes études internationales. In the early 1950s he turned to oceanography. On 23 January 1960 Piccard dived to a depth of 10916 meters in his bathyscaphe "Triest": a record that remains unbeaten to this day.


Falling star. Due to the stock exchange crash, financier **Martin Ebner** has had to sell off his four holding companies to the Cantonal Bank of Zurich. In an effort to save his empire from bankruptcy, he has even hawked the family jewels. 

50 years of research



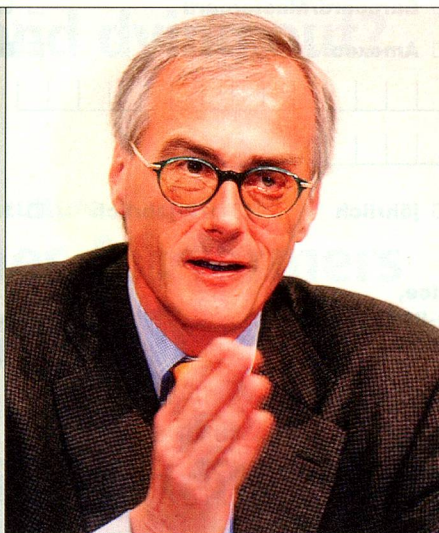
Switzerland must hold onto its competitiveness as a centre of science.

Founded in 1952 to bring cohesion to the all-too fragmented funding of research and stop the brain-drain of high-calibre scientists, the Swiss National Science Foundation is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year. After half a century in existence, the Foundation can take positive stock: basic research in Switzerland is now regarded as among the best in the world. Yet Swiss science is under threat: research scientists are demanding more funds to compete effectively and on an equal footing with

countries like the USA. According to the Swiss National Science Foundation, the competitiveness of Swiss science is suffering from a stagnation in public credit. For this reason the Foundation is asking the government to inject an additional CHF 1.25 billion during the 2004–2007 legislature period. The government is being petitioned to set aside a total budget of CHF 2.713 billion over the next four years: CHF 1.247 billion more than the CHF 1466 billion earmarked for 2000 to 2003. 

Apology

Thomas Ringier published an apology to Thomas Borer in the "SonntagsBlick" after cosmetician Djamila Rowe had admitted receiving cash in exchange for her falsified account of an affair with the former Swiss ambassador to Berlin. The Ringier group paid the Borer a tidy sum in compensation, while the editor-in-chief of the Sunday paper resigned along with the Berlin correspondent who wrote the incriminating article.



Point of View

"The stock exchange crash is good. It's the only way Switzerland will rediscover its virtues. The Swiss are basically industrious. Too many people in this country wanted to get rich quick without working."

Nicolas G. Hayek, quoted in the "Blick" dated 9 August 2002

Text: Pablo Crivelli
Photos: Keystone, Patrick Lüthy.

Translated from the German