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NEWS AT RANDOM

Federal

More than 21,000 new residential buildings were started in Switzerland in the first half of 1961, according to figures recently released by Federal Housing authorities. This represents an increase of 15 per cent over the similar period in 1960. The new buildings consist primarily of flats. More than sixty per cent of these are one- to three-room flats.

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After having collected the necessary 62,000 signatures, the committee for the banning of atomic arms has sent a petition to the Federal Council to abolish all such armaments.

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Interpol is intensifying its search for the thief who quietly walked out of Basle's Kunstmuseum recently with a 200,000 francs Cranach picture of Jean-Frédéric de Saxe, lifted from its frame in the public gallery. The search for the portrait-snatcher was ordered immediately after a night security guard found the picture's empty frame.

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During a private visit to Switzerland, Austrian Foreign Minister Mr. Kreisky met President Wahlen.

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Swiss motorists are urged to drive carefully in country and wooded areas during the months of October and November. This is the season when wild animals are most frequently seen on the roads and also the months in which the largest number of collisions are reported between cars and animals. Last year the Touring Club of Switzerland announced they paid out more than 100,000 francs from their insurance funds for damages caused in 610 incidents of car hitting wild game.

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Cantonal

Some time ago a Valaisan art collector had trouble in bringing back into Switzerland a collection of oriental paintings, owing to their lewd nature, after having lent them to a foreign exhibitor. Now a Zurich publisher has seen all copies of his publication of "Jou Pu Tuan", a translation of a seventeenth-century Chinese novel, destroyed for the very same reason.

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The Department of Public Health for the Canton of Aargau is reportedly concerned over the increase in tuberculosis among foreigners entering the canton for employ-

ment. Officials stated that 16.8% of the 33,000 foreign workers medically examined were found to have the disease.

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Mr. Laurenz Ulrich, a herdsman from Muotathal, has just completed his 77th year in the Alps. Now 81 years of age, Mr. Ulrich first started as a shepherd when he was four.

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Zurich is to be the first city in Europe to have its traffic directed by policewomen — from chairs. Twenty-four policewomen will take up duty in March next year and will be perched above the city's heaviest traffic points, in glass-walled control towers where they will press buttons bills will go by 10% after 1st January 1962.

* * *

About one-and-a-half years after Pierre Jaccoud appeared in the court of assizes in Geneva, another sensational trial has opened there. Richard and Josette Bauer are accused of having murdered Mrs. Bauer's father, Mr. Leo Geisser, on the night of 8th November, 1957.

* * *

It is going to be a sick, sick New Year for patients in Zurich's cantonal hospitals, homes and institutions. Their bills will go up by 10% after 1st January 1962.

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The dean of the watchmakers in the Neuchâtel mountains, Mr. Otto Schild, died recently at the age of 88.

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A six-year-old Aargau boy was shot dead by his playmates recently. Three youngsters were rummaging about in the basement of an apartment house in Brugg when they discovered a revolver in an old trunk. Hans Schaffer and his friends became intrigued and searched farther. When they found cartridges in the trunk one of the children managed to load the gun. It discharged accidentally, wounding young Schaffer in the head. The boy's mother rushed him to hospital, but he died soon afterwards.

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Mr. Franz Patzen has just resigned as Lord Mayor of Berthoud. The job is at present only a part-time one but the city's authorities want to make it a full-time job. However, before nominating a successor to Mr. Patzen, this decision must be confirmed by public vote.

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To gauge the detailed results to come, cantonal statisticians of Zurich, the most heavily populated canton, have just completed a test census. It shows that the number of foreigners living and working in the Canton of Zurich increased by more than 140% in the last ten years. This almost doubles the percentage fraction the foreigners represent in the canton's population, which, over the same period, increased by only 14%. The test census figures — with those of the 1950 census parenthesised — were: Swiss 828,000 (725,413); foreigners 124,000 (51,589).

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

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