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SWISS EVENTS

PAROLED PRISONER IN STAKE OUT

A Swiss farmer paroled over Easter for good behaviour was hiding out in woods near his home at Les Rangiers armed with a rifle and bayonet claiming he was wrongly convicted of killing a gendarme.

The farmer, Francis Oriet, 57, was serving a 10-year sentence for the killing in 1971. He was allowed to leave prison for the Easter holiday because of previous good conduct but had failed to return.

A spokesman said police were under orders to avoid any incidents and not to attempt to arrest the farmer.

A 37-year-old gendarme was shot dead when he accompanied a court judge to the Oriet farm with a debt seizure order in 1971.

At his trial Oriet admitted firing a rifle but claimed that the fatal shot did not come from his weapon.

With normal remission Oriet would have been due for release from prison in the autumn of 1977.

INDEX OF PRICES IN SWITZERLAND AT THE END OF FEBRUARY 1976

	Wholesale price 1963 = 100	Difference in relation to	Retail price End of Sept. 1966 = 100	Difference in relation to
End of February 1976	146.4		165.8	
End of January 1976	146.1	+ 0.2%	165.9	- 0.1%
End of February 1975	152.2	- 3.8%	160.9	+ 3.0%

SWISS FOREIGN TRADE IN FEBRUARY 1976

Period	Imports	Switzerland's Balance of Trade		Value of exports as a % of the value of imports
		(In million Sw. francs)	Balance	
1975 February	3,001.6	2,682.5	- 319.1	89.4
1976 January	2,582.5	2,461.7	- 120.8	95.3
1976 February	2,768.9	2,802.4	+ 33.5	101.2
1975 Jan.-Feb.	6,091.7	5,203.1	- 888.6	85.4
1976 Jan.-Feb.	5,351.4	5,264.0	+ 87.4	98.4

SNIFFER FINDS DRUGS

A sniffer dog in Vallorbe seemed to have developed an odd interest in snail shells, a whole truck and trailer load of them.

Curious customs officers at this border crossing point investigated and found 185 kilos (220 pounds) of hashish hidden among the shells, police said.

The truck and trailer, bearing Turkish number plates, was leaving Switzerland with its cargo of empty snail shells from Greece and Turkey for packing plants in France.

The driver and his mate, both Turks, were taken to Lausanne for questioning.

Police officer on arms charge

Three people, including a local police officer, have been arrested in Neuchâtel on charges of arms trafficking.

Police said the arrested officer had an armourer's licence and sold weapons which had apparently found their way abroad. The arrested men were not named, but the police said they all lived in Neuchâtel.

An investigating magistrate said in a statement that the charges involved a large number of revolvers, pistols, machine guns, rifles and ammunition.

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PREFABRICATION ADAPTED TO INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

After several years of study and research, a firm in Geneva has perfected a prefabrication scheme for constructing homes and other buildings, which offers the advantage of making it possible, for every order of a certain size, to manufacture a type of house planned strictly according to the requirements of the location, climate and degree of comfort.

The units of which the house is made are large in size but easily handled owing to their comparatively light weight; they require few connections and eliminate the danger of cracks. In addition, they guarantee a very high degree of thermal insulation. Owing to the type of materials used in manufacture, the interior finish is extremely good and requires no subsequent work of maintenance, painting, etc. Externally, the house can be made to look very modern or given a rough-cast finish, so as to fit in well with its particular setting.

The prefabricated elements comprise walls with outside and interior finishes, generously planned thermal insulation for extremes of climate, all bearing and stiffening units. The fittings and window frames are chosen from among the best available and the best suited to the climate and local conditions. The electrical installation is entirely built-in and the air-conditioning adjustable for each room separately.

The sanitary installations too are fully prefabricated using high quality

equipment easily replaced in case of breakage. All connections are provided for outside the building. When the number of houses is small, the units are despatched direct from the Swiss factory. In the case of large-scale housing schemes, a prefabrication plant can be set up in the vicinity of the building site and the main elements manufactured on the spot, which helps to reduce costs.

For large-scale projects, the Swiss firm is also ready to consider the possibility not only of using local manpower but also of training it and thus, under certain conditions, making possible the execution of other work by the government or promoters. The firm also accepts orders for school or industrial buildings.

SOLAR GENERATORS FOR SUPPLYING PLEASURE BOATS WITH POWER

For supplying power for navigation lights and equipment, and possibly even a portable television or a record player, pleasure boats, especially yachts, are usually equipped with an accumulator. Although berths in some ports possess electrical power points for recharging accumulators, as a general rule the latter have to be taken out of the boat for recharging. Boat owners can now save themselves this chore by installing a solar generator produced by a firm at La Chaux-de-Fonds.

These solar generators convert the sun's rays directly into electricity and are supplied in two versions, for recharging

either 6 or 12 V accumulators; they are available in a range of powers extending from 1.5 to 14 watts. If higher powers are required, it is possible to connect several generators in parallel. The solar generators developed by this Swiss firm are also extremely useful on motorboats, for keeping the accumulators charged, particularly when the engine is left unused for long periods.

IRANIANS INVESTIGATED

Swiss authorities are investigating the activities of Iranian secret agents in Switzerland.

The Government was replying to a Parliamentary question by Socialist Deputy Jean Ziegler, who alleged that two networks of Iranian security agents were based in Switzerland.

Mr Ziegler added that Iranian exiles and Swiss organisations campaigning against police activities in Iran were harassed and subjected to close surveillance by the agents.

The Swiss Federal Government replied that the Attorney-General had opened an investigation some time ago to determine whether Iranian agents operating in Switzerland had broken the law.

Mr Ziegler put his question in Parliament after several articles appeared in Swiss newspapers. One, by Mrs. Marie-Louise Dumuid of the Swiss Committee for the Defence of Iranian Political Prisoners, alleged that an Iranian agent living in Switzerland stole confidential documents from her home.

CONVENTION REVIEW

Experts from more than 150 countries began talks recently to modernise and supplement the 1949 Geneva Conventions on Warfare and ensure humane treatment for war victims.

The opening session of the eight-week conference heard a plea for quick completion of two protocols to add to and update the four conventions.

The negotiations will deal with several politically sensitive issues to draw up moral codes of conduct for international civil wars, including guerrilla wars.

Conference President Pierre Graber, the Swiss Foreign Minister, told delegates: "We must not disappoint our people's hopes. We must establish the texts to show that the world community is fully aware of its responsibility to the victims of wars."

The conference is the third and final one in a series begun two years ago, sponsored by the Geneva-based International Red Cross Committee (ICRC) with United Nations support.

EXPLOSION:

An explosion in a dentists' laboratory in Bienné caused several million francs worth of damage and injured two people, one seriously.

The blast was thought to have been caused by a gas leak, police said.

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EXTENSIONS TO THE ZURICH ART GALLERY

The Zürich Art Gallery (Kunsthaus) built in 1910 and one of Switzerland's biggest art museums, has been extended to provide even more space. In the new premises on four levels, natural light is used to give an even greater effect of light and airy space. There are no fixed dividing walls and in these premises, which are also accessible from the existing building, the visitor is in vivid contact with the exhibits.

The Museum concentrates on Swiss painting: Füssli (a favourite of our Ambassador), Böcklin, Hodler and Alberto Giacometti are artists well represented. Changes have also been made in the opening times which are now: Monday 2 p.m. to 5 p.m., Tuesday to Friday 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. and Saturday and Sunday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

CAVES: A TOURIST ATTRACTION IN SWITZERLAND

In Switzerland there are a number of cave systems open to the public from Easter until October. The biggest subterranean lake in Europe, discovered in 1943, is at St-Léonard (between Sion and Sierre) and it is navigable by rowing boat. St-Maurice is well known for its fairy grotto. Discovered in 1863, it is a stalactite cavern with a lake and a waterfall that plunges 160 feet into the depths. Since 1974 the grotto of Vallorbe has been open to the public. A 250-foot tunnel leads to the Cairn Gallery with illuminated stalagmites, stalactites, lime-

stone formations and pillars. The two grottoes in the Ajoie, Milandre and Réclère are also worth a visit

The St. Beatus caves at Interlaken are a labyrinth-like limestone cavern system with enormous chambers, gorges and subterranean waterfalls. There is also a tableau showing a prehistoric settlement. At Baar, near Zug, a big attraction for visitors are the limestone caverns of the "Höllgrotten" within vast deposits of tuff. Among the biggest and most interesting in the world is the subterranean cavern system, which has been explored over several decades, of the Höllloch caves in the Muota Valley near Schwyz in Central Switzerland. This system includes a variety of shapes and fantastic stone formations and part of the caves are open to the public. Finally there are the Sandbalm Caves, which can be reached by postal from Göschenen (on the Gotthard Railway Line). These historic mountain crystal caves, the biggest in the Alps, have an accessible length of 800 feet of quartz, calcite and chlorite layers.

QUARTZ WATCH WITH HANDS: THE SMALLEST MOVEMENT IN THE WORLD

At the 1976 Basle Fair, a watch factory from La Chaux-de-Fonds presented a collection of watches with hands equipped with a new quartz electronic movement, which is the smallest of its kind ever made. The result of over ten years' experience in the making of quartz watches, this movement makes it possible

to create wrist watches combining the three fundamental qualities: precision, reliability and elegance; it also opens up new prospects for the creation of models for women.

Every watch stylist knows that in order to create an elegant watch, the movement needs to be very small and conveniently shaped. The new calibre to be presented at Basle satisfies these demands: it has a volume of 1,221 mm³, a height (including battery) of 3.70 mm and a diameter of 20.50 mm – i.e. the smallest ever made for a movement of this type.

INCREASE IN SAVINGS IN SWITZERLAND

According to the figures published by the Swiss National Accounts Department, consumption by private households and non-profit-making organizations increased by 83 per cent between 1968 and 1974, rising from 45.1 to 82.53 billion francs. During the same period, savings increased by 159 per cent, rising from 3.57 to 9.25 billion francs. Thus, in Switzerland, the proportion of savings in the available revenue (i.e. after deduction of direct taxes and payments of social insurance schemes) rose from 7.3 per cent in 1968 to 10.1 per cent in 1974.

LUCERNE – SEASON CALENDAR 1976

A list of events in Lucerne during the year 1976 is available from the Swiss National Tourist Office.



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