

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK
Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom
Band: - (1981)
Heft: 1778

Rubrik: Farmer in Berne

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Farmer

in Berne

POPE John Paul's June visit to Switzerland is running into problems.

Several organisations say that during the Pope's six-day tour they intend to stage joint protest actions – directed not against Switzerland's Roman Catholic population, they stress, but against church doctrines which advocate "the suppression of women and the condemnation of homosexuality".

The protest movement says it also opposes the planned meeting between the Pope and all seven cabinet ministers – a meeting which, complains the movement, virtually turns the Pope's tour into a state visit to confessionally-neutral Switzerland.

In another development several Roman Catholic scholars have urged on the Pope to rehabilitate Swiss theologian Professor Hans Küng, who has been banned from teaching by the Vatican. The scholars say they are still awaiting a reply to a similar appeal made a year ago.

Professor Küng – who now works from the West German university of Tübingen – has constantly challenged the Pope's infallibility and the Vatican's teaching on priestly celibacy and birth control. The appeal urges the Pope to act "before the Holy Father makes his visit to the homeland of Hans Küng".

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SWISS milk producers are

donating five tons of milk powder to Poland to help relieve food shortages.

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WALTER Sturm – the man Swiss newspapers call "the breakout king" – has done it again.

The 39-year-old bank robber has escaped from prison for the fourth time since being sentenced in 1972 to an eight and a half year jail term. But for his breakouts he could have earned good behaviour remission and been set free a long time ago.

Embarrassed officials at the Regensdorf prison for major offenders said they found a sawn-off bar on Sturm's cell window, two collapsible ladders

outside the prison walls and car tyre marks leading away from the scene of the breakout. Sturm even left behind a "goodbye" note.

Said a prison spokesman: "He must have had outside help – but we don't know how. He had been kept in isolation in a top-security cell. We always opened all his mail and searched his visitors."

Switzerland's Federal Court last year rejected an application by a group of lawyers that Walter Sturm be treated like any other prisoner. They claimed his confinement to an isolation cell was harming his health.

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VINEYARDS and orchards in parts of eastern and central Switzerland have

been hard hit by a recent wave of unseasonably cold weather.

Preliminary estimates suggest that 50 per cent or more of the vineyards in the cantons of Zurich, Lucerne and Thurgau may have been affected by late snow and frosts which followed an unusually long warm spell.

Damage to blooming orchards of cherry and apple trees in the canton of Berne also may have been extensive, said a spokesman for the Swiss Farmers Union.

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THE Swiss government will seek parliamentary approval later this year of a planned new constitutional article on the right of Swiss citizenship. Its main aim is to grant equal citizenship rights to all the children of mixed marriages in which one partner is a Swiss.

Under current law the child of a Swiss father obtains Swiss citizenship automatically. But the child of a Swiss mother married to a non-Swiss can obtain citizenship only if both parents are resident in Switzerland at the time of the birth.

The planned new article would also make it easier for refugees and foreign children who have grown up in Switzerland to obtain Swiss citizenship.

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"IF you drink, don't drive" – that's the message behind a nationwide road safety campaign being launched this summer in Switzerland.

Official statistics show that although the number of deaths has fallen encouragingly in Switzerland over the last decade, deaths due to drunken driving have increased by 7 per cent and the number of injured by a dramatic 81 per cent. One road death in every five is now attributed to drunken driving.

And Swiss police report that nearly 22,000 drivers had their licences suspended here last year – almost 10,000 of them for drunken driving.

The Pope's programme

POPE John Paul II will prove his linguistic prowess on his visit to Switzerland this month by celebrating open-air masses in all three of the country's official languages.

The programme is:

May 31: Arrival at Zurich airport and almost immediate departure for Lugano in Italian-speaking Switzerland, with a mass in Italian at the local airfield.

June 1: Meeting with local priests and nuns at Lugano cathedral, departure for the pilgrimage town of Einsiedeln

with its famous abbey, a mass in German and a meeting with the bishop's conference.

June 2: Meeting with Caritas, the Red Cross and other charity and welfare aid organisations, lunch with the monks of Einsiedeln, a mass for foreign workers and a meeting with representatives of Swiss youth associations.

June 3: To Solothurn for meetings with Swiss Protestant leaders and Jewish leaders, a meeting in nearby Lohn with the seven-member Swiss Federal Council, then to Fribourg to

meet the diplomatic corps in Switzerland.

June 4: Visit to Fribourg university and members of the catholic theology faculty, an open-air mass in French, departure in the afternoon for Geneva.

June 5: An open-air mass in French for foreign workers, talks at the World Council of Churches, an address to the annual assembly of the UN's International Labour Organisation, meetings with other UN agencies, departure for Rome in the evening.

