

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: 1780

Rubrik: Farmer in Berne

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FARMER IN BERNE

TOURISTS entering Switzerland by road may have to pay an annual fee to use the national motorway system – if parliament adopts a controversial proposal from one of its commissions.

Even with parliamentary approval, a national referendum would have to be held because a constitutional amendment is involved. But the commission thinks the charge could come into force in 1983.

It proposes a Sfr 30. – annual fee for all private cars – Swiss or foreign – using the motorways. The estimated revenue would be Sfr 70 million from Swiss drivers and between Sfr 240 and 360 million from foreign cars.

The plan is already meeting strong opposition from the Swiss tourism industry, which points out that some 40 million vehicles enter the country every year – and that most of them use the motorways. The industry also doubts that the “admission fee” scheme would be feasible administratively.

And it argues that most of the tourists affected would come from countries like West Germany, the Netherlands and Britain – which make no charge for using their motorways.

★ ★ ★

GOING up in Switzerland – the price of beer in restaurants. Some brands are going up by as much as 17 per cent. Breweries and restaurant owners say the increase is necessary because of a new collective contract providing improved benefits for restaurant personnel.

★ ★ ★

GOOD news for wine connoisseurs! After five years of research Swiss scientists believe they have solved the mystery of “corkiness” – the unpleasant taste derived from the cork in the wine bottle.

They've been able to identify

the substance responsible for the taste. And, more important, they now know how it gets there.

The substance is a chlorine compound called Trichlorinasol – or TCA for short. It gets into the wine because the bottle corks are bleached with chlorine, which in turn reacts with the cork to create TCA. And TCA has such a powerful effect that as little as a hundred-millionth of one gram of the stuff in the wine is enough to offend the finest palate.

One solution would be to stop bleaching the corks in the first place – a purely cosmetic process which merely makes them look nicer.

★ ★ ★

Repräsentative BLICK-Umfrage zeigt:

**7 von 10
Schweizern
meiden
die Kirche**

HOW many Swiss are regular churchgoers? Not very many at all, according to a public opinion poll conducted by the country's top-selling daily newspaper, Blick.

The survey – carried out among 16 to 65-year-olds in German and French-speaking parts of the country – revealed that 14 per cent of Swiss adults never go to church at all, and that 60 per cent go only when they have to attend weddings, christenings and similar ceremonies. That leaves only 26 per cent who go to church regularly.

Forty per cent of the Swiss polled considered the church as “unimportant”, and younger Swiss in particular displayed a lack of interest in churchgoing.

Commented Blick: “There is crisis in our church. Our Federal Constitution contains references to God. And almost all of us pay church tax. But membership of our local club has become more important than our religious affiliation. And our places of worship are becoming more and more empty. This is not good enough. Somehow, somewhere

the churches have failed.”

Blick editor-in-chief Peter Uebersax said the newspaper had been overwhelmed with letters from readers confirming the survey findings.

★ ★ ★

THE Swiss parliament has elected a new Federal Chancellor – often described as the “eighth man” in Switzerland's seven-member cabinet. He is Walter Buser, 55, who has been deputy to retiring chancellor Karl Huber for the past 14 years. The Federal Chancellor acts as an adviser to the Swiss cabinet and is involved in the planning of government business.

Asked by Blick how much he would be earning in his new post, Chancellor Buser said he really had no idea. So the newspaper found out for him – Sfr 187,961 a year.

★ ★ ★

A SWISS woman who escaped from a Berne prison nearly 20 years ago has been extradited from the United States to complete her jail term.

Former socialite Josette Bauer, now 45, was jailed in 1960 for complicity with her then husband in the murder of her wealthy father. But she escaped after serving only five years of the eight-year-term, and fled to the United States under a false name.

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Alles darüber

A CASE for James Bond? Interpol is investigating the theft of Sfr 6 million worth of precious metals at Geneva Airport – the biggest ever robbery in Switzerland.

The metals – gold, silver and palladium – were in the form of shavings and dust from Swiss watchmaking companies. They were in bags awaiting movement abroad and were in the back of a truck outside the airport freight terminal. The driver had left the key in the ignition for a few minutes while he was collecting the necessary freight documents.

★ ★ ★

GOING down – the cost of medium and long-distance telephone calls within Switzerland. Local calls went down in July, and calls over distances of more than 12 miles are to be reduced from October. The lower rates follow the Swiss Post Office's announcement of a record Sfr 410 million profit last year.

★ ★ ★

AMERICAN magazine Newsweek has transferred the entire printing of its Atlantic edition from England to Switzerland because of "enormously" increasing production costs.

Part of the 400,000-copy Atlantic edition – which is distributed throughout Europe, the Middle East and Africa – had been printed in Switzerland for several years. Now the entire print-run has been transferred to Druckerei Winterthur AG.

Said Atlantic edition publisher Paul J. Haisman: "Our costs in Britain have gone up enormously over the past four or five years – 75 per cent compared with only 12 per cent in Switzerland".

In 1967 she was arrested in Florida for drug smuggling. Fearing extradition to Switzerland, she escaped from an American prison, was recaptured, served a further 18 months and was then released.

Mrs Bauer claims she agreed to co-operate with the United States authorities in 1969 in cracking the notorious French Connection drugs ring in return for a lighter sentence and a promise that she would not be extradited to Switzerland.

She won early court decisions to be allowed to stay in the USA, but a higher court ruled that the United States extradition treaty with Switzerland must be observed.

★ ★ ★

ALSO in trouble with the Swiss law – American oil magnate and racing car sponsor David Thieme.

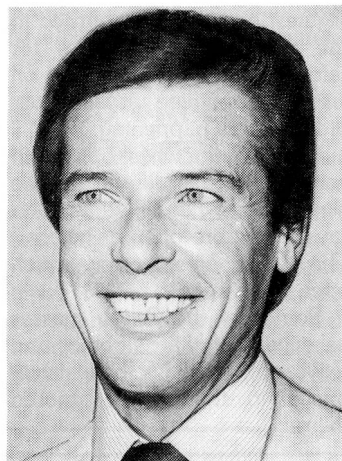
Forty-one-year-old Thieme – flamboyant owner of the Essex Overseas Petroleum Corporation and a major sponsor of the Lotus racing team – was detained by Zurich police for 13 days in April on embezzlement charges brought by the large Credit Suisse bank. Now he is suing the bank for Sfr 400 million, accusing it of "unprincipled, deceitful and ruthless conduct".

Thieme says he was arrested after a raucous business meeting with Credit Suisse officials at the bank's head office.

Now on release on undis-

closed bail, he denied the Credit Suisse charge that he violated a contractual agreement with the bank. Credit Suisse alleges that he disposed of assets worth Sfr 10 million to which the bank was entitled.

★ ★ ★



SECRET agent James Bond is moving to Switzerland.

British actor Roger Moore, popular star of the successful Bond films, has won official permission to buy property in the fashionable Alpine resort of Gstaad. The 53-year-old actor is reportedly purchasing an eight-room chalet-style villa for nearly Sfr 2 million. Other property owners in Gstaad already include Liz Taylor, Julie Andrews, David Niven and other celebrities.

A Swiss Justice Ministry spokesman said the federal

authorities had earlier opposed Moore's planned purchase because of a law restricting property sales to non-resident foreigners. The spokesman said the actor had now been granted a residence permit because he had been a regular visitor to Gstaad over the past 15 years and had stayed in the resort for up to six months at a time. In addition, said the spokesman, Moore's children were attending school in Switzerland.

The Schweizer Illustrierte magazine recently published a lengthy interview with Moore, quoting him as saying that he and his Italian-born wife would like to set up base in Switzerland to be near their children and friends. But he denied that the move was for tax reasons, and added: "Anyway, there are two things I never discuss – my sex life and my finances." The magazine cover pictured the actor in a barn – milking a Swiss cow.

★ ★ ★

PROMINENT Swiss authors – among them Max Frisch – have appealed to President Gustav Husak of Czechoslovakia to intervene on behalf of Czech dramatist Vaclav Havel, detained in a labour camp since 1979 for alleged anti-state activities. The authors say they fear that his continued imprisonment will lead to "lasting psychic damage".