

Colin Farmer reporting from Berne

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Colin Farmer

Cartoon causes Swiss fury

DESTROYER ANGLAIS COULÉ !!



CONTROVERSY has erupted in Switzerland over the newspaper cartoon reproduced here relating to the Falklands Islands conflict.

The front-page cartoon, published by the Lausanne-based Tribune le Matin after the sinking of the British warship HMS Sheffield, showed a caricature of Mrs Thatcher saying: "Thirty fewer unemployed!"

The newspaper admitted later that it had received "numerous and sometimes violent protests" and that critical reactions to the cartoon had outnumbered favourable comments by nine to one.

It quoted the cartoonist's defence that "the sequence of crisis-unemployment-war is nothing new in world history, and the Argentine dictatorship could hardly escape it. But to see England, this cradle of democracy, this neighbour and friend, fall prey to it called for a drawing of indignation."

The newspaper also asked: "Where is the scandal – in this cartoon, or in this war which so far has not been officially declared?"

Letters from readers – Swiss and British – described the cartoon as "the depth of disgrace" and "an insult to a country in difficulty, its unemployed, its armed forces, its dead and their families."

One British diplomat in Switzerland, speaking privately, said the cartoon had "revolted the decency of any ordinary man" and British Embassy Press Attaché Francis Geere said he intended having "a few quiet words" with the newspaper's editor.

Geneva-based British Consul General, Robert Ford, in a letter published by the Tribune le Matin, protested against the suggestion "that the tragic loss of human lives aboard the HMS Sheffield was part of a diabolic plan on the part of the Prime Minister to reduce the level of unemployed in Britain."

Mr Ford added: "Your cartoonist has a

right to his opinions and I acknowledge your right to publish them. But I am saddened by the fact that he has contributed nothing to the understanding by your readership of the fundamental problem relating to the Falkland Islands or to the efforts by our government to resolve our economic difficulties".

Mr Ford said the results of recent local elections in Britain had demonstrated "the massive support" for Mrs Thatcher's policies.

And he added: "Judging from the numerous telephone calls I have received, many of your readers share my views."

TRAFFIC is flowing freely along the River Rhine again after a shipping blockage described by officials as one of the longest and most costly in European history.

The week-long hold-up followed the spillage overboard of 50 containers from a barge and the subsequent sinking of the vessel near the small German town of Unkel, south of Bonn.

Before the vessel went down, the two-man crew and several women and children were forced to jump overboard when fire sparked by a falling oil heater engulfed their deck-house.

The sunken barge and the spilled containers blocked shipping in both directions on one of Europe's busiest waterways, and at one stage nearly 500 vessels were at anchor.

German divers were able to recover the containers and salvage the vessel. But shipping experts say the blockage may have cost millions of francs to Swiss and other shipping companies in lost revenue and overtime pay to crews.

The Rhine is landlocked Switzerland's only link with the high seas, with about one quarter of total Swiss trade being shipped on this river. Swiss shipping companies operate

a combined fleet of several hundred Rhine vessels, and thousands of foreign ships use the Basle ports every year.

EVERY year at this time, summer in Switzerland uncovers the ugly face of skiing. As the snow melts away, bottles, empty cans and even entire ski poles are found scattered throughout this country's scenic slopes.

Environmentalists fear the damage may be more extensive than it appears. Prominent nature protection campaigner Franz Weber describes skiing as "the worst plague" to have stricken his country this century. Weber says skiing is destroying the Alps, and research has produced some evidence to support that claim – even from within the tourism industry.

In a poll conducted last year, by the privately organised "Clean Switzerland Campaign," 21 of 100 winter resorts complained that ski trails were found to be "dirty". Now, several Swiss alpine resorts have launched a research project aided by aerial photography and computer technology to provide detailed data on the damage done by man to the mountains.

Over the years thousands of trees have been felled and acres of shrubbery destroyed in Switzerland to make way for new ski courses and improve existing ones.

In addition, the heavy vehicles used to prepare the ski slopes compress the snow and thus slow the melting process. This prolongs the skiing season – but it shortens the already brief vegetative period.

Said a veteran Swiss forestry official: "In the pioneering days of the sport, skiing was an adventure and a most rewarding experience. People went up beautiful mountain slopes without technical assistance – and the descent crowned the day."

Now there are some 1,600 mechanical

... reporting from Berne



skilifts in operation – and more are on the way.

★ ★ ★

MORE teenage girls than boys in Switzerland are now smokers and are exposing themselves to greater health risks, a World Health Organisation report has revealed.

The report by the Geneva-based WHO states that in 14 of 22 countries surveyed worldwide, the percentage of female smokers in the 16-to-18 age group is now "for the first time ever" higher than or equal

to that of boys.

And one of the greatest girl-boy gaps is here in Switzerland where, according to the survey, 46 per cent of girls are now smoking compared with 36 per cent of boys. In Britain the position is reversed.

The WHO report warns: "The rise in female smoking combined with the use of oral contraceptives – now used more than ever before – increases the risk later in life of circulatory disorders as well as coronary heart diseases."

The report also expresses concern at

tobacco industry advertising "crafted to appeal to young adults and suggesting that team spirit or rugged individualism are achievable with a cigarette in the hand."

The country-by-country survey included the following percentages of smokers in the 16-to-18 age group: Italy 55 per cent of girls, 51 per cent of boys; Greece 54-46; Switzerland 46-36; Belgium 45-44; France 43-43; New Zealand 43-29; Denmark 42-34; West Germany 40-40; Sweden 33-21; Norway 28-22; USA 19-16; Australia 32-45; Britain 37-42; Nigeria 10-14; India 6-9.

SWISS SOCCER

This year's Football Cup winners in Switzerland are Sion. In the traditional Whit Monday final they defeated Basel 1-0 before a 44,000 crowd in Berne to win the trophy for the second time in three years. The goal was scored in the 21st minute. Here are the football league tables up to and including June 2.

'A' Division	Pl	W	D	L	Gls	Pts	
Servette	28	20	5	3	71	26	45
Grasshoppers	28	19	7	2	64	22	45
Zürich	28	16	10	2	52	23	42
Neuchâtel	28	16	9	3	59	26	41
Young Boys	27	14	7	6	47	36	35
Sion	28	11	6	11	46	43	28
Basle	28	11	5	12	44	46	27
Lucerne	28	10	5	13	49	54	25
Aarau	28	9	7	12	46	53	25
St. Gallen	27	10	4	13	38	41	24
Vevey	28	5	11	12	38	50	21
Lausanne	28	6	8	14	36	45	20
Bellinzona	28	6	7	15	31	62	19
Bulle	28	4	9	15	27	55	17
Chiaso	28	4	8	16	23	56	16
Nordstern	28	6	4	18	27	60	16

'B' Division	Pl	W	D	L	Gls	Pts	
Winterthur	28	17	7	4	58	23	41
Wettingen	28	16	9	3	56	28	41
Chênois	28	16	8	4	50	26	40
La Chaux-de-F.	27	12	8	7	50	30	32
Mendrisiostar	28	13	6	9	43	51	32
Grenchen	28	10	11	7	41	30	31
Biel	28	8	14	6	45	39	30
Locarno	28	11	7	10	52	37	29
Lugano	28	10	8	10	50	45	28
Berne	28	9	7	12	42	52	25
Ibach	28	6	12	10	32	42	24
Fribourg	28	6	10	12	34	42	22
Aurore	28	7	7	14	23	60	21
Monthey	28	6	7	15	26	42	19
Altstätten	27	3	12	12	20	44	18
Frauenfeld	28	2	9	17	23	54	13

Lines separate championship leader, relegation and promotion zones.