

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: - (1984)

Heft: 1813

Rubrik: [Media]

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Swiss banks hit back

MAJOR Swiss banks have attacked as "premature and ill-advised" newspaper reports predicting the end of banking secrecy in Switzerland.

The Swiss electorate are due to vote in a nationwide poll on May 20 on a controversial "anti-banking" campaign, launched by the Social Democratic party. The campaign aims to curb the flow of fraudulently acquired money into Switzerland.

But in a statement defending bank secrecy, the Swiss Bankers' Association says: "It is a rare occurrence when Switzerland hits the headlines of the international press.

"In this small, neutral country world-shaking events are few and far between - no strikes, no rebellions, no government crises. Accordingly, all the more attention is attracted by any 'un-Swiss'

episodes that come to pass".

The bankers say much foreign media interest has been aroused by the "anti-banking" move, but that this interest is based upon "a wealth of spurious interpretations of the facts, exaggerations and disinformation campaigns.

"A lot of publicity has created the impression abroad as if the end of Swiss banking secrecy was in sight. But foreign press comments are premature and ill-advised. Banking secrecy is alive and well in Switzerland and will remain so for a long time to come".

★ ★ ★

ROMAN Catholic church authorities have urged the media not to turn the Pope's June visit to Switzerland into a "show".

Pope John Paul is to make a five-day visit to Switzerland. He was to have toured the country three years ago, but that visit was cancelled at the last minute when the Pontiff was injured in the attempt on his life in Rome.

In a message to the Swiss media, a Swiss Roman Catholic church spokesman has written:

"We request that you avoid turning the Pope's visit into a show.

"It is not the Pope as a person and where he sleeps and what he eats that is important, but the religious message he brings".

★ ★ ★

POLICE authorities in Switzerland have condemned press publication of an unofficial report critical of the way the Zurich police force is run.

The report was compiled by two Zurich policemen - who have since resigned from the force - and excerpts were published in Zurich's top-selling quality daily, the *Tages-Anzeiger*.

The newspaper front-paged the report which, it said, had been sent to its offices anonymously.

Zurich police authorities said the document would be studied carefully, but they regretted the way the report had been made public.

The 120-page survey described the city police force's administration as "bureaucratic", and said the force was "lacking in leadership".

An official enquiry into the run-

ning of the Zurich city police force is nearing completion, and its findings are due to be published shortly.

★ ★ ★

TELEVISION and newspapers in Switzerland are to establish a permanent joint operation similar to the Ceefax service in Britain.

Known in Switzerland as Teletext, the service has already been in operation for a two-year trial period.

The Swiss government has now authorised the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation and the Swiss Newspaper Publishers Association to form a joint company - Teletext Suisse - to establish the operation on a permanent basis.

Teletext - which is to be financed by restricted advertising - provides information such as news, weather, sport and stock market reports in written and graphic form.

★ ★ ★

SWISS journalist Guido Tognoni has been appointed new press chief of the Zurich-based International Football Federation (FIFA).

Tognoni, who is 33, was previously sports editor of the Zurich *Tages-Anzeiger* newspaper.

At FIFA he succeeds Rene Courte of Luxembourg who has resigned the post.

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