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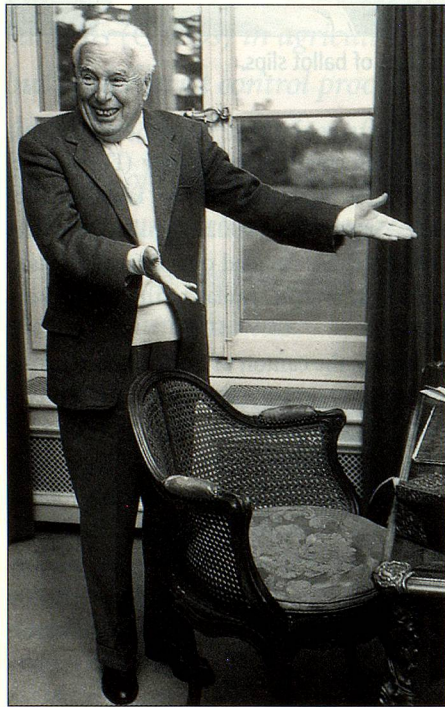
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Born to debt

The State Secretary for Economy has calculated that today's generation is living at the cost of the next generation, due to the trend towards high life expectancy, declining birth rates and rising national debts. Expressed in fiscal terms, this amounts to a debt of CHF 66,000 per head. The account could be balanced if Switzerland lowered its national deficit to CHF 500 million, increased value added tax to 10% and raised the targets for the 11th AHV revision. 

A museum for Chaplin



"Manoir de Ban", Charlie Chaplin's estate in Corsier-sur-Vevey (VD), is to be turned into a museum. To this end a foundation has been set up whose members include the present owners of the property, Michael, Victoria and Eugène Chaplin. The estate on which Chaplin lived for 25 years contains many objects associated with the life of the great film star. Collaboration is planned with the Cinémathèque in Lausanne, which houses a great many Chaplin films and posters. 

SNIPPETS

A GOOD CATCH: An angler from Lausanne managed to land a giant trout from Lake Silvaplana in the Upper Engadine. It measured 113 centimeters and weighed 15.6 kilograms. An innkeeper bought it for stuffing and mounting.

100 YEARS OF CHARITY: The Swiss Caritas relief agency has celebrated its 100th anniversary. It was founded by Catholics as a social response to industrialisation. The aim was "the planned fostering of Christian neighbourly love". In the words of Swiss President Moritz Leuenberger, had the agency been founded today it would be called www.help! rather than Caritas, the Latin for "universal love".

NOVARTIS-ROCHE: Basle pharma giant Novartis has bought a CHF 4.8 billion stake in its rival Roche. The possibility of a takeover or fusion is not excluded. The seller of the stake was controversial financier Martin Ebner.

FIRST STATION CHURCH: The first station church in Switzerland has been opened in Zurich's central railway station. It is open to people of all faiths and will be run by two professional ministers and one volunteer.

SUNDAY PAPERS: The Neue Zürcher Zeitung has announced that it will be launching its "NZZ am Sonntag" (working title) in the spring of 2002. It will initially be sold in Switzerland with a circulation of 150,000.

MORE AND MORE HOUSES: Over the past twelve years eleven hectares of cultural land per day has been built on, according to the zoning department of the Federal Office of Statistics. 400 square meters of land per head of population was used for housing purposes.

SAFE AND WELL: A cave drama in the Jura where eight Swiss students were cut off by floodwater and trapped for almost four days, ended with their rescue after a new exit had been dynamited. The event dominated media headlines for a week.

EXPO PREVIEW: Exactly a year before the National Exhibition, Expo Director Martin Heller invited the Swiss population to a tour of the platforms in the three-lakes region. The pre-Expo attracted 66,000 visitors to Bienne, Neuchatel, Murten and Yverdon.

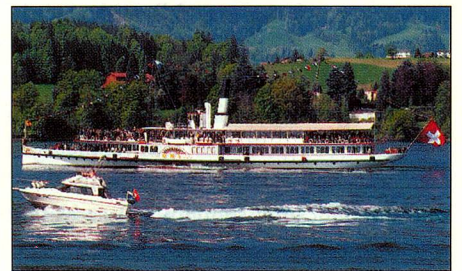
SAME-SEX "MARRIAGE": In Geneva, two homosexual couples were the first in Switzerland to be officially registered as partners. The two women and two men signed a social solidarity pact at the Geneva State Chancellery.


BABY DEPOT: Because there are still young mothers who do not want to or cannot keep their baby, the Einsiedeln Regional Hospital has set up a "baby flap" where mothers can anonymously deposit their unwanted babies.

AID AGENCIES ON THE INTERNET: 30 Swiss organisations have set up an Internet portal for questions on international co-operation and development policy. www.interportal.ch is supported by aid agencies, political and cultural organisations and institutions in the educational and careers advisory sectors.

GENETIC RESEARCH DAYS: Three Genetic Research Days were held in various Swiss cities. Research scientists presented their genetic engineering projects, while Greenpeace, the environmentalist organisation, held demonstrations against genetic research.

RABBI MURDER: An orthodox Israeli tourist has been murdered in a Zurich street. The rabbi was in Switzerland collecting funds for his Talmud highschool in a suburb of Tel Aviv.



PADDLE-STEAMER CELEBRATION: Switzerland's oldest paddle steamer, the "Uri", celebrated its 100th birthday with a harbour festival in Flüelen. 

To the Eyrie borne

100 years ago the lammergeier was believed to be extinct. For the past ten years Europe's largest vulture has had its habitat in the Swiss National Park. Already more than 20 have been transported to alpine peaks and released.



PEOPLE

Kaspar Schuler is the new Director of Greenpeace Switzerland. The environmentalist who lives in the Canton of Grisons has been fighting against the construction of a dam in Val Madris for 13 years.



Alfred Defago has been appointed visiting professor at the University of Wisconsin. The former editor-in-chief of Radio DRS and ex-director of the Federal Office for Culture was appointed from outside the normal diplomatic ranks to become Swiss Ambassador to Washington. During his time in office the debate on dormant accounts was launched.

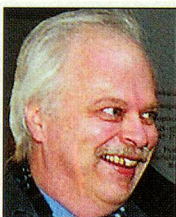
She is one of the first Swiss women to stand on the roof of the world: Alpine guide and helicopter pilot **Evelyne Binsack** of Beatenberg recently reached the summit of Mount Everest. She brought back with her a stone which Ernst Schmied, the first Swiss to stand on the roof of the world back in 1956, had left there.

The Swiss CVP has elected Thurgau State Councillor **Philipp Stähelin** to succeed

Obwalden National Councillor Adalbert Durrer as its new President.

The new federal officer for data protection is **Hanspeter Thür**. He made his name as a POCH politician and later Aargau National Councillor and integrative President of the Greens.


Ex-State Secretary **Raymond Probst** has died at the age of 82 in Bienne. As a diplomat he helped shape Swiss foreign policy over a period of 42 years. The climax of his career was the mediation between the US and Iran during the hostage crisis in Teheran in 1979.



Jean-Noël Rey, forced to resign in 1998 as Head of the Swiss Post Office under a cloud of accusations of nepotism, and rehabilitated since the beginning of 2001, is the new General Director of Direct Parcel Distribution, a direct competitor of Swiss Post.

Peter Arbenz, former Federal Council delegate for refugees and now independent consultant for strategic development and busi-

ness management, has been named the new President of the Helvetas relief agency.

Denner founder **Karl Schweri** has died at the age of 84. Regarded as one of the most flamboyant figures in the Swiss retail trade, he fought a personal battle against cartel trading and price fixing for brand articles. Schweri leaves behind him a family-owned discount empire of 300 sales outlets and 200 satellite stores with annual revenues of CHF 1.3 billion. Schweri's role model was Migros founder Gottlieb Duttweiler. 

Point of View

"To represent a country internally and externally is a major communications opportunity which one can naturally exploit fully as a Federal Councillor and Swiss President. This function gives me the chance to talk about the official Switzerland in my own personal style."

Federal President Moritz Leuenberger

Texts: Alice Baumann / Photos: Keystone