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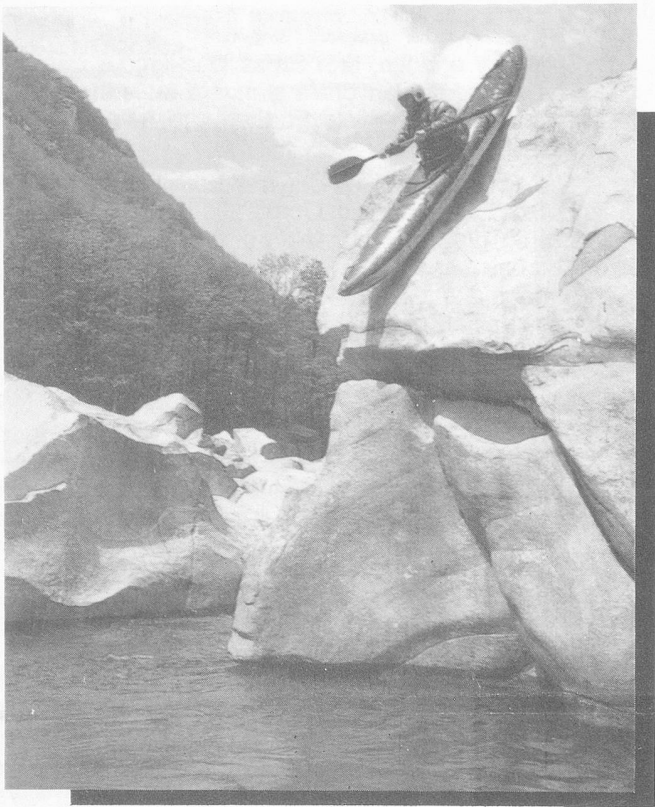
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DRY START

White water canoeing and rafting has also become very popular in Switzerland. This unusual dry-land start is particularly impressive. If you do not get it right the first time, you are out of the race before it even started. Not recommended for the tender and faint-hearted. It is certainly not the place for the proverbial "up the creek without a paddle". As long as you do not rip off the bottom of your canoe before you hit the water, you might be all right, we guess.

DEATH OF VOLI GEILER

Most Swiss of the elderly generation will remember the vivacious comedian and cabaret artist **VOLI GEILER** from the famous Zurich cabaret "Cornichon". Voli Geiler died recently at the age of 77. Her biggest triumphs go back to the Second World War when she presented her unique brand of humour at the "Cornichon". She continued her career of satire and parodies unabatedly during many years in a double act with her partner Walther Morath all through the 1950's and 1960's.

UNMANNED BORDER CROSSINGS

The Swiss Customs Department has announced that it will no longer man 43 small border crossings situated mainly in the cantons of Geneva and Tessin. Although these border crossings will remain open, no Customs officers will be on duty there anymore to check passports and look out for smuggled goods. According to the Customs Dept. the affected crossings are minor ones, usually used by local traffic only. Although no permanent personnel will be present anymore, Customs officers will still patrol these crossings at various times, so you never know whether you might be stopped by a roving patrol.

The reasons for this move are primarily to free Customs officers for more important duties at major border crossings and secondly to avoid attacks on lonely Customs officers in isolated and little used posts where traffic does not warrant the presence of more than one officer at any one time.

Trusting in the good nature of people, the Customs Dept. does not expect that people would take advantage of this easing of Customs control.... We wonder.

LOW YIELD RAILWAY LINES

The Swiss Railways are working hard to curb their ever increasing losses. As part of their assessment, the SBB-CFF published the list of their most uneconomical lines, some of which may well be abandoned in the very near future. Most of you are sure to recognise one or the other of these railway lines and feel a twinge of nostalgia rising in you when reading this list:

Le Pont-Le Day
Les Verrières-Auvernier
Le Locle Col-des-Roches-La Chaux-de-Fonds
La Chaux-de-Fonds-Neuenburg
La Chaux-de-Fonds-Reuchenette-Péry
Sonceboz-Sombeval-Moutier
Monthey-Bouveret
Vevey-Puidoux-Chexbres
Büren an der Aare-Solothurn
Sissach-Läufelfingen-Olten
Kölliken-Suhr
Wettingen-Mellingen
Beinwil am See-Beromünster
Hochdorf-Lenzburg
Luzern-Interlaken Ost (Brünig-Bahn)
Niederweningen-Niederhasli
Winterthur-Kreuzlingen Hafen
Winterthur-Rüti ZH
Bischofszell-Gossau
Wattwil-Uznach
Rapperswil-Ziegelbrücke
Netstal-Linthal

For those of you who do not know where all these lines are, dive for your Swiss map and look them up.

ZURICH IS EXPENSIVE

Zurich is Europe's third most expensive city. According to a recent survey, Zurich and Geneva are, after Oslo and Copenhagen, the most expensive cities in Europe.

On the global scale, Tokyo remains the most expensive city in the world, followed closely by Osaka. Surprisingly, in third and fourth positions in the world are the African cities of Libreville (Gabon) and Brazzaville (Kongo), then comes Oslo in fifth position. Zurich is eleventh and Geneva twelfth, followed by Moscow, Vienna and Paris. Most expensive city in Germany is Munich (25th) and, strangely enough, New York only turns up in position 42, equal with Leipzig. Cheapest city in the world: Bogota.

In this survey, the New Zealand cities are nowhere in sight, so we should consider ourselves as very lucky. However, such surveys always have a major flaw. They do not take into account the local salaries and wages, in other words the purchasing power of the local consumers, which really decides whether the average consumer is better off in Tokyo or in Bogota for instance..

UNEMPLOYMENT

Switzerland has now 120.000 unemployed people. This represents 3.9% of the working population, a long cry from the 11% in New Zealand, so the Swiss should consider themselves lucky. However, this is certainly of no consolation to the people directly affected by the present recession in Switzerland.

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