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Farmer

in Berne



REPRESENTING Switzerland in this month's Eurovision Song Contest – being hosted by Dublin on April 4 – are Peter, Sue and Marc (pictured below).

By far Switzerland's most succesful pop group of recent years, they have over the past decade scored a dozen top-selling hits, recorded 10 LPs, appeared in some 80 TV shows and attracted a huge following of fans. This is the fourth time the trio has been selected to represent Switzerland in the Eurovision Song Contest – but it is also definitely the last.

The Berne-based group which once described themselves to me as "the perfect musical marriage" – shocked the Swiss pop scene last month with the announcement that they intend to break up the partnership shortly after their date in Dublin. New York born Sue (31) wants to sing solo, Peter (32) plans to sail round the world, and Marc (33) wants to go into the wine business.

Their 1981 Eurovision entry is sung in Italian and is entitled – appropriately, in view of the imminent break-up of the group – "Io Senza Te (Me Without You)."

Switzerland has won the Eurovision Song Contest only once in the 26 year history of the event. That was in Lugano in 1956 – the first year of the contest and the only time it was ever staged in Switzerland – when Lys Assia took top honours with a song called "Refrain." Since then the Swiss entry has been placed second

on three occasions and fourth on four occasions.

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MR Marcel Bezençon – they called him the Father of Eurovision – has died in Lausanne at the age of 74.

He retired in 1972 after 33 years with the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation, 22 of them as Director General.

It was after the Second World War, as head of Radio Lausanne, that he submitted to UNESCO the idea of creating an international programme exchange – a project which was later to develop into Eurovision.

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A CLOSE aide to Ayatollah Khomeiny has told a Berne press conference relations between Switzerland and Iran are "very good." Iranian member of parliament Hajazi Fakhradine – on a tour of

European capitals – praised Switzerland's role in representing United States interests in Iran. But he regretted that the Swiss press had not had a "greater understanding" for Iran's Islamic revolution.

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TRACES of chemical substances have been discovered in eggs, poultry and pork, report Swiss health authorities. The traces originate from a tranquilizer used to calm pigs before they are slaughtered and a substance used in the production of animal fodder. But, say the authorities, the use of such substances is not illegal and the traces discovered so far do not constitute a health hazard.

Widespread protests erupted in Switzerland last year when it was revealed that calves had been illegally treated with hormones, enabling breeders to produce more meat with less fodder.

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AN amendment to the 1977 agreement on preventing double taxation of income has been signed by Switzerland and Britain. The amendment tightens up loopholes in the existing document which, according to a Swiss Finance Ministry official, "favoured certain abuses." The modified agreement is subject to parliamentary approval in both countries.

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A SHORTAGE of Swiss border

guards is causing government concern. 75 guards left the service last year and 71 in 1979, compared with an annual average of 27 resignations in previous years. The reasons – irregular hours, excessive night and weekend shifts, and the increasingly dangerous nature of the work. But parliament was told, salaries have just been increased and a five-day week is planned.

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SEVERAL hundred young demonstrators have marched through Geneva in a protest demonstration against the shortage of low-rent living accommodation in the city. The demonstrators claimed that 1,000 empty flats had recently been withdrawn from the local housing market for the purpose of "lucrative speculation."

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INLAND telephone calls in Switzerland are to cost less from this summer. The reduction in rates follows an announcement by the PTT that it made an overall record operating profit last year of Sfr 410 million – nearly 50 per cent more than budgeted.

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PAIN-killing pills can now be bought in Switzerland only on prescription. The new government regulations, which came into force last month, are aimed in particular at reducing the consumption of pills containing phenacetin which, research has shown, may harm the kidneys.

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LAST month Bellinzona celebrated its 100th anniversary as capital of Canton Ticino. The Ticinese electorate approved the choice of Bellinzona by 14,000 votes to 7,000 in 1878 and the cantonal government established its permanent headquarters there three years later. Before then the seat of government had alternated between Bellinzona, Lugano and Locarno.

Colin Farmer



Peter, Sue and Marc