

News in brief

Objekttyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad**

Band (Jahr): **32 (2005)**

Heft 6

PDF erstellt am: **30.05.2024**

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Schmid at the UN

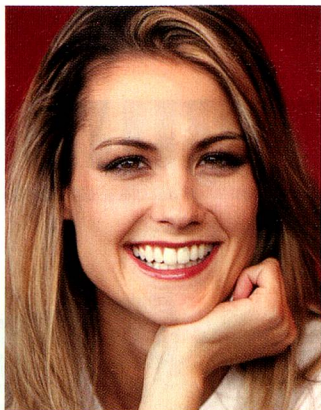
At the 2005 United Nations World Summit held in New York in September, Samuel Schmid called for expansion of the Security Council to make it more representative of the UN's membership, as well as a reform of the UN's operational methods. The Federal President also stressed Switzerland's resolve to establish a Human Rights Council to replace the current Human Rights Commission. At the beginning of October, Samuel Schmid and the Swiss Minister for Foreign Affairs, Micheline Calmy-Rey, met Kofi Annan on his visit to Berne. The UN General Secretary gave his assurance that the council would maintain its seat in Geneva in the future. He also cited Switzerland as a driving force behind the proposed UN reforms.

Swiss Guard celebrates its 500th anniversary

For an entire year the Swiss Papal Guard will be staging a series of events in Switzerland and Rome to celebrate "500 years of courage and loyalty". In the autumn of 1505, 150 Swiss infantrymen responded to an appeal from Pope Julius II and made their way to Rome, arriving there on 22 January 1506. Nowadays the Swiss Guard consists of 110 mainly German-speaking men. In addition to their ceremonial duties at important events, they are responsible for security at the Apostolic Palace, the pontiff's physical safety, and guarding specific entrances to the Vatican.

Miss Switzerland 2005

The most beautiful woman in Switzerland is from the French-speaking region. In mid-September, 21-year-old law student Lauriane Gilliéron was crowned Miss Switzerland 2005 in Locarno. The blonde from the Vaud succeeds Fiona Hefti of Zurich, bringing the title to western Switzerland for the first time in eleven years. With her boyfriend Michael Ngoy, a mem-



ber of Fribourg-Gottéron ice hockey team, she will have a strong man at her side during her one-year term of office.

Marc Rosset says farewell to tennis

After more than 15 years as a professional, Marc Rosset has decided to end his tennis career at the Swiss Indoors in Basle. The Geneva ace ranked among the world's top 100 players for more than 13 years, and was a leading light of Swiss tennis post-Jakob Hlasek and pre-Roger Federer, making it to ninth in the world rankings in 1995. In 1992 he won gold at the Barcelona Olympics, and in the same year led the Swiss Davis Cup team to the finals in America.

Free newspaper in western Switzerland

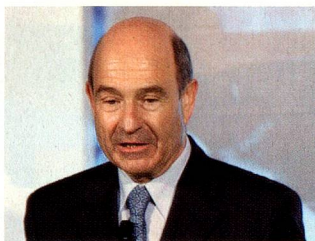
The first free newspaper in western Switzerland was launched by the Edipresse Group at the end of October. "Matin Bleu" will be distributed in the "Arc lémanique" region between Geneva and Aigle. Free newspapers are already enjoying huge success in German-speaking Switzerland, where "20 Minuten" is the most widely-read daily, outranking even the tabloid "Blick". The Zurich-based publisher, Tamedia, has decided to distribute the popular newspaper in French-speaking Switzerland as well from the spring of 2006. Readers in western Switzerland will therefore have the choice of two free dailies: good news, but not for other dailies which are facing a decline in advertising revenue.

National squad makes 2006 World Cup

Go Switzerland! The Swiss national football team has qualified for the World Cup in Germany. Ranked second in its group after France, the national squad had to take part in play-offs against Turkey. After a 2-0 victory at the *Stade de Suisse* in Berne, Köbi Kuhn's players picked up their tickets for Germany by the skin of their teeth with a 4-2 win against Turkey in the away leg. This last match proved a nightmare for the Swiss, who were assaulted by the Turkish players in the changing rooms after the final whistle. Result: one Swiss player in hospital. The idea of fair play clearly has some way to go in Turkish football, and Fifa is to open an inquiry. The last time Switzerland reached the final phase of the World Cup was in 1994.

Last Grand Prix for Peter Sauber

After 13 years on the Formula 1 circuit, Swiss Peter Sauber has sold his racing stable to BMW. At the last Grand Prix of the season in Shanghai, Sauber drivers Felipe Massa (Brazil) and



Jacques Villeneuve (Canada) came in 6th and 10th respectively. While the Swiss team has never won a race in the Constructors' World Championship, it achieved six places on the winners' podium in 2001 as well as a fourth place (Kimi Räikkönen, who is having a brilliant season

this year with McLaren). The 62-year-old talent scout from Zurich, who drove his first race in a VW beetle 40 years ago, enjoys an excellent reputation among Formula 1 insiders and is regarded as a true gentleman.

Switzerland and apartheid

Contemporary Swiss history may at times appear somewhat untransparent. Did Switzerland really support the apartheid movement in South Africa? According to a study by the Swiss National Science Foundation, Swiss relations with South Africa were very close during the 1980s, at the height of massive human rights violations. Illegal arms exports, secret nuclear transactions and a more intensive exchange of information between secret services: The study by Basle historian Georg Kreis throws light on the dubious relations our country maintained with Pretoria.

Award for former Vice Chancellor

The Oertli Prize is awarded for services in the cause of building bridges between Switzerland's linguistic regions. This year the award went to former government spokesman Achille Casanova. As Vice Chancellor, the government official from Ticino helped to show the government in its best light for over 20 years. The national languages in which he was fluent, coupled with his highly-tuned talent for communication, were praised by the Federal President and other political VIPs. Former winners of the Oertli Prize include the clown Dimitri and comedian Emil (2003), Martin Heller (2002) and Alfred Berchtold (1990). ALAIN WEY

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