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P and TT split

The Federal Council has put forward proposals for wide-ranging reform of the postal authority – the PTT. From 1998 the Post Office and the partly privatised Telecom will go their own ways. The status as federal officials of the almost 60,000 PTT staff will be abolished. And a large part of the postal market will be opened up to competition. As independent companies the Post Office and Telecom will have the authority to set their prices and decide their range of products. Telecom has already crossed the Swiss border. It is investing Sfr. 830 million in the Czech

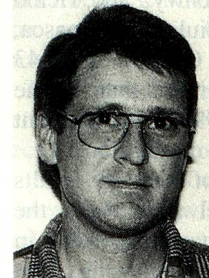
Republic by purchasing 27% of the Czech state telephone company in a joint venture with Dutch Telecom.

Another novelty from the PTT. On the St. Gall-Heiden route you can take the first double-decker post bus in Switzerland. The new vehicle has 89 seats, more than any other bus in the country. The only possible alternative would have been an articulated one, but this would not have been very suitable for such a hilly route, particularly in winter. The new vehicle was made in Germany and has a specially powerful Mercedes engine. It cost Sfr. 650,000.–. ■

People

● The new Swiss wrestling champion is **Thomas Sutter**. This 22-year old from Appenzell beat hot favourite Eugen Hasler and succeeds Berne's Silvio Rüfenacht.

● 41-year old **Heinrich Haller** is the new head of the Swiss National Park in Canton Grisons.



He takes over from Klaus Robin. Haller studied zoology, botany and geography and since 1992 has been director of the St. Gall Nature Museum.

● Lucerne's mayor, **Franz Kurzmeyer**, will retire at the end of August 1996 after 12 years in office. He is a Liberal Party member and is considered open-minded, tolerant and sympathetic towards minorities.

● **Remo Dalla Corte** from Bachenbülach (Zurich), who was under threat of a death sentence in the Philippines for possessing drugs, has fled via Jakarta to Frankfurt and thence to Switzerland. He was arrested on April 6, 1994, after police had found 22 kg of hashish in a house which he shared with others. For reasons which are unclear his trial had been postponed several times. ■

School class seeks penpals

The pupils of Wichtrach Secondary School would like to contact Swiss Abroad anywhere in the world. If you are interested, why not write to these young students, telling them where you live, what you do and why you or your forefathers emigrated? Don't forget to include your own address. Class 3a, Hans-Ulrich Kläy, Sekundarschule, CH-3114 Wichtrach, is waiting to hear from you. ■

Point of view

"For me home is above all the people I can trust and who trust me".

Hannah Walcher, from Braunwald (who fled France for Switzerland in 1940 with eleven children, leaving everything behind including pets).

Joel Curchod has died



Former director of Swiss Radio International Joel Curchod has died at the age of 64. He joined Swiss Radio and Television Corporation's external service in 1963, became the

head of it two years later and remained until 1990, when he retired on health grounds. He was also a member of the Council for the Swiss Abroad. Curchod lobbied successfully for an adequate government subsidy for SRI and recognition of its importance for the future. While he was in office SRI became known worldwide. ■

Gold medal for boat with wings

Markus and Michael Gier from Rorschach flew ahead of 32 boats in the light-weight double sculls at the Rowing World Championships in Tampere, Finland, and thus clearly demonstrated their world-class status. The Gier brothers brought Switzerland its only medal and the first world championship title for 13 years. The chances of winning at Tampere were good because this was the only Swiss boat to reach the 1994 World Championship finals. The last time a Swiss boat took a gold medal was in 1982 in the coxless four. The oarsmen were Saile, Weitnauer, Trümpler and Netzle.



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Snippets

- Swiss people are getting older all the time. Average life expectancy is now 74 for men and as high as 81 for women. Only in Iceland, Sweden and Greece do the inhabitants live longer.

- Children cost money. Swiss parents spend an average Sfr. 1,100.– per child per month. The first one is the most expensive, at Sfr. 1,450.– per month. For the second and third the additional cost is Sfr. 700.– each for rent, food, clothes, insurance, leisure, etc.

- There are now exactly 2,973 municipalities in Switzerland, which brings the number below the 3,000 mark for the first time. This reduction is due mainly to the revision of Canton Thurgau's constitution.

- Neutrality is an indispensable part of national identity for 70% of Swiss. This emerges from a poll taken by the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich. Two-thirds of those asked even think that Switzerland's neutrality should be followed by others. This "idiosyncratic mission syndrome" is interpreted in the poll analysis as an end in itself, a kind of "Swiss way of life".

- Shock at Zurich Airport. Swissair has cut 1,600 jobs. The resulting redundancies, early retirements and a hoped-for 900 voluntary departures by the end of 1997 are due to the books being deeply in the red. In the first half of 1995 the budget gap was Sfr. 86 million (Sfr. 48 million last year).

- Another press merger. For cost reasons Lucerne will only have one daily, the "Neue Luzerner Zeitung", from the beginning of 1996. The left-of-centre "Luzerner Neusten Nachrichten" and the conservative "Luzerner Zeitung" are to merge. The latter will provide the editorial team, management and head office. 120 jobs will go. Only four years ago Lucerne had three or more newspapers.

- The Basle pigeon celebrates. Switzerland's most famous postage stamp – a white pigeon with a letter in its beak – is 150 years old. ■

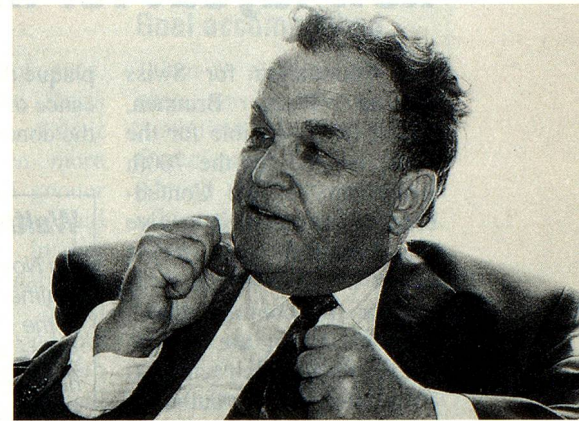
Text: Alice Baumann

Photos: Keystone, Michael Stahl, zvg

Otto Stich bows out

When it comes to saving Otto Stich is extremely resourceful. But this is not all. His sudden resignation just before the parliamentary elections caused a great flurry amongst politicians and resulted in a surprising round of musical chairs in the Federal Council. His 49-year old successor, Moritz Leuenberger, a declared opponent of nuclear energy, took over the Federal Department of Transport, Communications and Energy and is the first Social Democrat to hold this post since Willi Ritschard in 1979. The SVP's Adolf Ogi was forced to take the Military Department, with its former head, Kaspar Villiger, moving to the Department of Finance. This means that after 16 years the federal finances are back in the hands of the centre-right. The private sector had been hoping for this in order to balance the budget more quickly. Jean-Pascal Delamuraz at Economics, Flavio Cotti at Foreign Affairs, Arnold Koller at Justice and Police and Ruth Dreifuss at Home Affairs remain where they are. In the run-up to Stich's succession maverick manoeuvring nearly led to disaster, since just four weeks before the federal elections the latter tried to smash the magic formula with a shock candidate of his own, Mrs. Vreni Spoerry – which was unsuccessful not to say embarrassing.

All these chess moves show that Otto Stich is a master of stratagem. By departing so suddenly for tactical reasons he certainly added strength to



the Social Democratic Party. For several weeks it was in the headlines much more than all the other parties – which were pushed into the background. The usual election issues, such as European integration and the trans-Alpine railways, were swept under the carpet, and there was a general feeling of jitteriness.

Stich – who had been in office longer than any of his colleagues – did not succeed in getting the budget completely back into balance. He leaves to his successor, Kaspar Villiger, a 1996 federal budget with expenditure estimated at Sfr. 44.1 billion, leaving a deficit of Sfr. 4.3 billion. But for a nation of savers the character of the man himself seems to have been just as important as the financial result. As holder of the purse strings Otto Stich appeared close to the people's hearts, and they gave him their confidence to an extent very rare for a federal councillor. ■

Holidays in Switzerland for Swiss Abroad children

The Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad is again organising holidays in Switzerland for Swiss Abroad children in order to strengthen their ties with the homeland.

Where?

– In a Swiss family

– At a holiday camp organised by the Foundation

When?

Summer holidays July/August '96 for any two-week period, ski holidays over New Year 96/97 for one week.

Who?

Children aged 7–15 of Swiss nationality or whose mother was born Swiss.

How much?

A contribution of Sfr. 150.– is required for a holiday stay with a family, while that at a holiday camp is offered at cost price.

Registration

Before April 15, 1996

Through your diplomatic post abroad (embassy or consulate)

Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad

Holiday Scheme, Wattstrasse 3,

CH-8050 Zurich, Tel: 41 1 313 17 17 ■

NEW ON THE INTERNET



Federal Berne on the Internet. Those interested across the globe can get information on Switzerland via the Internet, including the minutes of National Council and Council of States sessions. The World Wide Web address is <http://www.admin.ch/>