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Point of View

"In the old days those making staff redundant were very shy of publicising the fact. Nowadays company managers are almost proud to take their redundancy figures to the media to show evidence of their dynamism and toughness."

Peter Ulrich, professor of economic ethics in Zurich, on the subject of workplace redundancies.

People



Otto Piller has been appointed director of the Federal Social Insurance Office, which will have to take very important decisions in the next few years on the future of Swiss social security (the old-age pension and disability insurance scheme, sickness insurance, etc.). Otto Piller is a Social Democrat and was Fribourg State Councillor from 1979 to 1995. He takes up his new post on January 1, 1997.

Dick Marty will succeed Paul Reutlinger at the head of Switzerland Tourism. The 51-year old lawyer was a member of the Ticino government from 1989 to 1995 and since then has represented his canton in the Council of States. Since 1992 he has been president of the Ticino Tourism Association. He is a member of the Liberal Democratic Party.



Snippets

- The Swiss National Association for Sport and the Swiss Olympic Committee will merge on January 1, 1997, to become the Swiss Olympic Association. This new umbrella organisation for Swiss sport will include about 120 associations.

- Between 1984 and 1994 the number of Swiss young people leaving school with a diploma enabling them to attend university has increased from an annual average of 12% to 17%. The highest percentage is in Geneva (32%), followed by Ticino (25.4%) and Neuchâtel (23.7%), while the lowest rates are in Lucerne, Schwyz and Uri (9.5% each) and Thurgau (9%).

- All Swiss banks manage about 2,340 billion francs (written out: 2,340,000,000,000). According to a study made by Basle's Research Office for

the Labour Market and Industrial Economics, portfolio management provides 50,000 jobs and two-thirds of all bank profits.

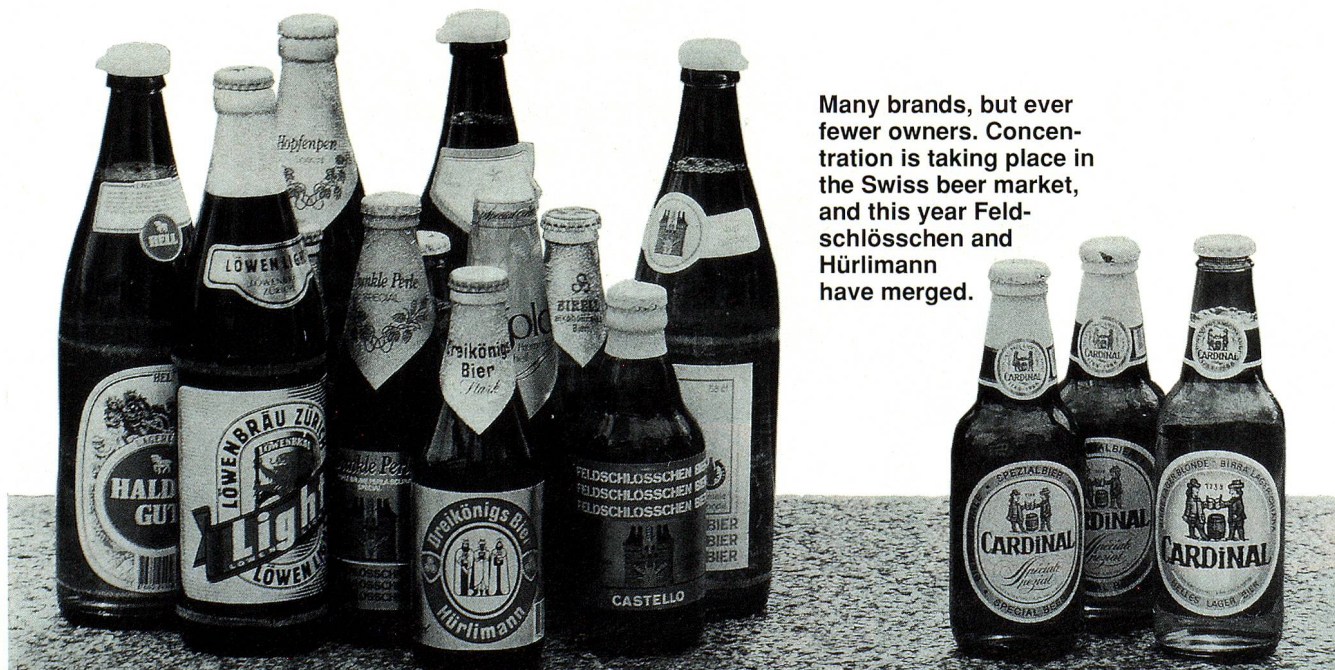
- InterDiscount, which was until recently one of Europe's greats amongst household electronic firms, is being liquidated following huge losses. The Swiss part of the group has been sold to the Coop, and the remainder is being disposed of on a country-by-country basis.

- The hidden cost of air pollution from traffic in Switzerland is estimated at Sfr. 1.6 billion per year. Such air pollution is responsible for about 2,100 early deaths annually, which accounts for the major part of the cost. This emerges from a study which was prepared at the request of the federal administration.

Towards harmonised beer?

Elephant marriages are at present all the fashion in the Swiss economy. The merger of Ciba and Sandoz to become the new chemicals giant, Novartis, was followed by the failed – for the moment – attempt to merge Union Bank of Switzerland with Crédit Suisse group and a merger between the steel firms, Stahlwerke Von Roll and von Moos, to become Stahl Schweiz AG. Now two Swiss beverage manufacturers, Feldschlösschen and Hürliemann, have said Yes to each other. The new Feldschlösschen-Hürliemann-Holding has

over 1.2 billion in sales, provides about 3,600 jobs, produces around 4.5 million hectolitres of beer and soft drinks a year and possesses more than 50% of the Swiss market. It is not yet clear how many jobs will be lost. This means that concentration amongst Swiss beer manufacturers is continuing apace, with Feldschlösschen increasing its dominance. The new group now includes beer brands Cardinal, Gurten, Löwenbräu, Valaisanne and Warteck. We can only say: Cheers!



Many brands, but ever fewer owners. Concentration is taking place in the Swiss beer market, and this year Feldschlösschen and Hürliemann have merged.

Swiss soccer players: out in the preliminaries

Not unexpectedly, the Swiss national soccer team got no farther than the first round in the European Cup. They started with a very respectable 1–1 draw in the opening match against host country England. Despite playing well, they were defeated 0–2 by Holland, but still hoped they would get to the quarter finals. However, they went down 0–1 against Scotland, leaving them at the bottom of the group table.

In the run-up to the European Championships Switzerland's performance was seen by the press in the light of the team composition and tactical decisions made by their new national coach, Portugal's Artur Jorge.

Alain Sutter and Adrian Knup, who were two of his predecessor's undisputed favourites, were left at home, and he also shook up the 4–4–2 line-up to which Roy Hodgson had clung with such determination. This had led to a press campaign against Jorge, particularly in the tabloids.

But this ended abruptly during the European Cup. Apart from the game against Scotland the Swiss players were very successful with the tactics of their new coach. The qualification rounds for the 1998 World Cup will soon be start-



The Swiss team held out well against Holland – here, goalkeeper Marco Pascolo – but they lost in the end and were later eliminated in the first round.

ing, which makes the good performances of younger team members, such as Vogel (19), Henchoz (22) and Vega (25),

very hopeful. Switzerland will play its first qualifying match in Azerbaijan as soon as the end of August. ■

NEW ON THE INTERNET



The AFS Intercultural Programme works in youth exchange all over the world and also offers, together with the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad, a scheme for Swiss Abroad between the ages of 15 and 25. Its Internet address is:

<http://www.afssui.ch/afs>

Three ICRC delegates murdered

Three Swiss delegates of the International Committee of the Red Cross have been murdered in the central African state of Burundi. They had travelled to the northwest of the country in order to distribute medicines and water to hospitals. The Hutu militia and the Tutsi-dominated army both accuse each other of these deliberate murders. Following the tragedy, the ICRC has for the moment withdrawn its other delegates from Burundi. ■

The German language to be reformed

On August 1, 1998, national-day speakers in German will break out in stutters during their speeches! On that precise day new language rules will be officially introduced throughout the German-speaking world. The main purpose is to eliminate contradictions (e.g. platziere instead of plazieren), to Germanise foreign words to some extent and to simplify the rules about commas. But students, journalists, authors, officials and other lovers of the written word have plenty of time – until the year 2005 – to get used to the changes. After that, traditionalists and/or the ignorant will be subjected to a merciless red pencil.

The signature of the "Interstate Declaration on Spelling Reform" was the result of long negotiations between German-speaking countries and regions, in which concessions were made to multi-lingual Switzerland. For example, foreign words from French and Italian

may keep their original spelling: *exposé* instead of *exposee*, *marroni* instead of *maroni*, etc.

August the First speakers in 1998 will be helped, however, by the fact that the new edition of Duden Spelling will already be available this summer. French speakers will have reason to be jealous since there is no generally recognised French spelling bible, but instead a sour dispute between dictionaries. Do we write "chariot" (Robert) or "charriot" (Larousse/Hachette)? Does "décréditer" refer only to persons (La Nuance) or also to things (Larousse)? The second example is particularly interesting since both dictionaries are from the same publisher. ■

Texts: René Lenzin

Photos: Keystone