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A Solidarity Fund and a Holocaust Fund

In a speech drawing much comment, Swiss President Arnold Koller has discussed Switzerland's conduct during the Second World War. He lauded the determination and perseverance of a large part of the population, while at the same time admitting that there had been errors in refugee and economic policy which now had to be illuminated without any holding back. In the second part of his speech Arnold Koller announced that the Federal Council hoped to set up a Solidarity Fund in the 1998 anniversary year. The contents would be used to help victims of natural disasters and human rights violations. Amongst these were victims of the Holocaust.

The fund would be fed by proceeds from the sale of the Swiss National Bank's gold reserves. However, the proposal would require an amendment to the constitution, and this would have to

be ratified by the people and the cantons. Sale of gold reserves had in any case been planned for the medium term as part of the process of managing the National Bank's assets. This would now be brought forward and part of the proceeds used for the new fund. The Federal Council was thinking in terms of Sfr. 7 billion. The annual yield of about Sfr. 300 million would be used inside and outside Switzerland in equal parts.

The Swiss private sector had previously announced the setting up of a Holocaust Fund. In a first step towards this, Union Bank of Switzerland, Swiss Bank Corporation and Credit Suisse have together earmarked Sfr. 100 million. The same amount is being added by the National Bank, and more than Sfr. 60 million in contributions has been announced so far by other companies. ■

of women remained fairly constant until June 1995 and since then has even risen by 3,500. In consequence, throughout the recession women have succeeded in raising their share of jobs from 39% to 41%.

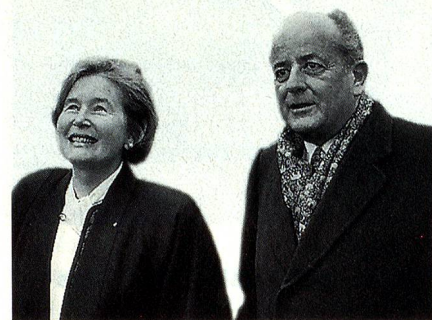
● The marks of Swiss schoolchildren are not particularly good in comparison with other countries. In mathematics, for example, Switzerland is 8th amongst a total of 27 countries, while in natural sciences it comes in at the 18th place. Czech children are the most brilliant in Europe, and Singapore pupils in the branches mentioned were top worldwide. A small consolation for Switzerland is that the United States comes in 21st. A total of half a million 14-year olds from 15,000 schools, including 13,000 children from Switzerland, were tested. ■

Monument protection: the Wakker Prize for Berne



Berne has received the highest award for monument protection. The Sfr. 20,000 Wakker Prize went to the city for rehabilitating old industrial constructions with great skill. According to the eulogy, Berne has "saved valuable witnesses of the early industrial period from destruction" and has at the same time helped to produce interesting solutions for the creation of leisure areas. Special mention was made of a parquet factory, a power station, two gasworks, a mechanical embroidery mill on the banks of the Aare and a former chocolate factory, now used as a "think factory" (Unitobler, see photo). ■

Fraud...



Hans W. Kopp, the husband of Switzerland's first woman federal councillor, has lost the right to exercise his profession. First his Zurich lawyer's licence was withdrawn from him, and now his Lucerne one. This means that Kopp can no longer refer to himself as a lawyer and cannot represent clients in court. The only thing he can do in this field is to give legal advice. Aged 66, Kopp has completely lost his credibility and is now being sued for a million Swiss francs. The process started with his criminal activities in 1981/82 in connection with the Trans-K-B affair, which was also responsible for the fall of his wife, Elisabeth. Pressure from public opinion forced her to resign as federal councillor.

...and deceit

Still in office but his honour lost, Coire's bishop, Wolfgang Haas, awarded himself a false university degree at the end of the 1970s. He signed letters as "Dr. Wolfgang Haas". ■

Not all rich, bright and successful

● A first Switzerland-wide study on poverty, based on 1992 data, finds that almost 10% of the population are poor. Contrary to expectations, those mainly affected are not pensioners, but people under 40. Over half are couples with children and people undergoing training. Expressed in figures, there are between 390,000 and 680,000 poor people in Switzerland, making up 5.6% to 9.8% of the population. Poverty is defined as when a single-person household has less than Sfr. 2,000 a month at

its disposal. The worst figures are in French-speaking and Italian-speaking Switzerland and amongst the resident foreign population (of which 19% are in this category).

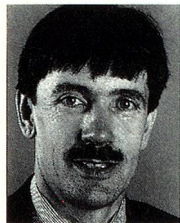
● The recession has led to another surprising fact. The Federal Statistics Office reports that over the last five years women have been more resistant to the crisis than men. While employment amongst men has fallen by almost 5% in the five years since the economic turndown started in 1991, that

People

To the surprise of his political friends and enemies alike, Social Democratic Party (SP) chairman **Peter Bodenmann** has decided to retire after seven years in office.



The outspoken 44-year old national councillor from Upper Valais will also leave the federal parliament at the end of the year. Under Bodenmann's leadership the SP increased in strength to become the biggest party in the Federal Council coalition. On March 16 he became the first social democrat to be elected to the Valais cantonal executive.



The new chairman of Switzerland's Christian Democratic Party (CVP) is **Adalbert Durrer** from Upper Unterwalden. He was elected with only one vote against. In his acceptance speech Durrer promised to put the party's losing streak behind it. The grass roots share this aim. The CVP is the second biggest party at cantonal level and number two in the federal parliament.

Jacqueline Maurer joins the Canton Vaud executive as its first woman member. She obtained the vacant Liberal Democratic seat in a second round of voting and succeeds States Councillor Jacques Martin, who is retiring for health reasons.

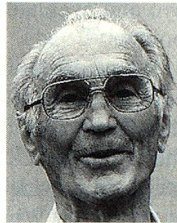


His posters were famous throughout Switzerland, and now he has quietly left us at the age of 62. Berne illustrator and poster artist, **Heinz Jost**, created innumerable catchy book covers, drawings and advertisements for the theatre and the opera. His sense of poetry, fantasy and humour, sometimes bordering on the grotesque, will prove unforgettable.

Swiss conductor **Mario Venzago** is to be the new artistic director of Basle's

General Music Society (AMG). Starting with the 1997/98 season he will direct the new Basle Orchestra, born of a merger between the Basle Symphony Orchestra and the Basle Radio Symphony Orchestra. The 49-year old conductor was previously chief conductor of the Graz Opera and the Graz Philharmonic Orchestra.

Thurgau photographer **Hans Baumgartner** has died in Frauenfeld of heart failure at the age of 85. He was trained as a secondary school teacher and taught himself photography. He was one of the Swiss photographers who in the 1930s and later made photo history by using the art as a means of reporting. His death coincided almost exactly with the first exhibition devoted exclusively to his work at the Zurich Art Museum.



Jörg Zumstein has died at the age of 74. He was chief of the general staff from 1981 till 1985. After retirement he was suspected of working for the secret resistance organisation, P-26, and the

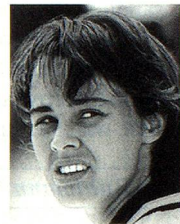
Point of view

"We should make ourselves aware that Switzerland as a nation has existed for just 150 years. It was a Frenchman who nailed us together, and it was an Italian immigrant who wrote our constitution".

Hermann Strittmatter, advertising specialist

secret intelligence service, P-27. In 1993 he was acquitted by a military court.

Sensation at the Australian Open: the New York Times talked of the precision of a Swiss watch and the temperament of a piranha to describe the way **Martina Hingis**



"annihilated" Mary Pierce. This victory over the French tennis star made the talented Swiss player the youngest individual Grand Slam winner in over a century at the age of just 16 years and 116 days. It was the last of a series of dramatic wins which brought her within reach of becoming the world's top seed.

Swiss skiers on top

There was a rain of medals for Switzerland at the Sestrières world championships in Italy. Bruno Kern (below) from the Bernese Oberland completely surprised by becoming world champion in the descent after winning the silver combination. The second gold medal for Switzerland went to another Bernese Oberlander, Michael von Gründigen, in the giant slalom. Valais' Karin Roten (right) won silver in the giant slalom and bronze in the slalom. Heidi Zurbriggen rounded off the success list with a silver medal for the descent.



Texts: Alice Baumann, René Lenzin
Photos: Keystone, zvg