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Identity crisis

"In altomare", a film about Swiss emigrants, was premiered at the Solothurn Film Festival.

LITERALLY, "IN ALTOMARE" means "on the high seas"; metaphorically, however, it means "to be in a turmoil". This documentary film by Markus Baumann and Hugo

Sigrist features five Swiss families who emigrated to Italy in the 1970s and 1980s. As they reflect on their hopes and fears, the film addresses questions of identity and perspective as well as the ties with Switzerland. The views of these Swiss Abroad allow us to see the home country from an outside perspective and within a European context.

Léa Pool was awarded the Swiss Film Prize in Solothurn for "Emporte-moi"; Stefan Suske was named best actor.

Swiss planes crash

Three plane accidents give Switzerland cause for concern.

A SAAB PASSENGER PLANE crashed in Niederhasli near Kloten. The Crossair Cityliner plunged into a field shortly after take-off and caught fire, killing all ten on board. The three crew members (including the Moldavian captain and Slovakian co-pilot) and seven passengers were on their way to Dresden. The cause of the crash is still being investigated. This was the first crash in the 21-year history of SAir subsidiary Crossair.



The Crossair Saab 340 crashed near Niederhasli (ZH) shortly after takeoff.

SNIPPETS

NO NEW HYDRO PLANT: In view of the unstable electricity market, the Oberhasli power plant has shelved its 3-billion-franc project for Grimsel West. For years environmentalists have been emphasising the risks of this plan.

1000 JOBS OUTSOURCED: The Ascom Group is selling its telephone manufacturing facility in Solothurn with 500 employees to a US company. Ascom Installationen AG, with a workforce of 450, is being taken over by electricity utility Atel.

SWISS SOLUTION FAILS: British cable network company NTL is to purchase Cablecom for CHF 5.8 billion. This works out at CHF 4500 per customer connection.

NO MAJOR UPSETS IN PARLIAMENT: Parliament has reconfirmed all incumbent Federal Councillors. With only 58 votes, Christoph Blocher's attack on the «magic formula» failed.

EXPO.02 ASSURED: Motivated by the budget cuts of crisis manager Franz Steiner, the Federal Council has released the additional credit of CHF 250 million approved by parliament. Unless parliament puts the brakes on the deficit guarantee, the Expo will be staged in 2002.

A Swiss-owned plane crashed in Libya killing 22 of its 41 passengers. The plane was operated by Zurich air transport company Avisto AG. The cause is still unclear. All that is known is that both engines stalled on landing, forcing the pilot to make an emergency landing on water. The passengers – Libyan, British, Phillippino, Croatian, Canadian, Indian and Pakistani nationals – were employed as technicians on oil platforms.

The third crash of a Swiss plane within the same week resulted in the death of its solo Swiss pilot, who was flying a brand-new Pilatus PC-7 in the US state of Colorado.

Text: Alice Baumann, **Photos:** Keystone, zvg

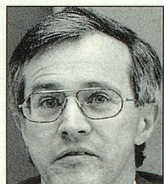
PEOPLE

Former «du» editor-in-chief **Dieter Bachmann** is the new director of the Istituto Svizzero di Roma. He takes over the post from **Hans Christoph von Tavel**.

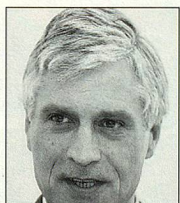


Marie Boehlen, one of Switzerland's first campaigners for women's rights, has died. Since our country only introduced women's suffrage in 1971, she first voted at the age of 60.

The Utility Vehicle Association ASTAG has a new director: former civil servant **Hans-Peter Bloch**.



The new Federal Attorney is **Valentin Roschacher**. The 39-year-old Doctor of Law was formerly the head of Switzerland's Central Narcotics Office.



Ueli Roost of Basle, former head of Keramik Laufen, is the new Chairman and Delegate to the Board of Sulzer.

50-year-old diplomat **Heidi Tagliavini** has been appointed the personal representative of German OSCE Director Wolfgang Schüssel for OSCE missions in the Caucasus.



Walter Marti, pioneer of political documentary film, has died at the age of 76. His works, produced with his partner **Reni Mertens**, were renowned for their humanitarian approach.

Guido Corpataux, former professional boxer and harbourmaster of Faoug, has died at the age of 46.

43-year old **Jens Alder** has taken over the helm at Swisscom from **Tony Reis**.

Director **Louis Naef**, well-known for his open-air theatre performances, has received the Cultural Prize of Central Switzerland.

Gerhard Meister and **Andres Lutz** of the duo "Geholten Stühle" have won the «Salzburg Bull» cabaret prize.

Point of View

"According to our self-perception it is not true that Francophone Swiss are related to the French and Italian-speaking Swiss with the Italians; we are a country ruled by political will, hence linguistic and cultural affinities are not the factors which define a nation."

Paul Widmer, Swiss Ambassador to Berlin until mid-1999, now Ambassador to Croatia.



Hurricane Lothar causes havoc in Switzerland

On Boxing Day, 26 December, a violent storm raged through Switzerland, southern Germany and France leaving at least 80 dead. Fifteen people lost their lives in Switzerland, mostly hit by falling trees and roof-tiles. The damage is in the order of millions of francs. Not since 1879 have Swiss forests been so decimated: 12 million cubic meters of wood were blown down – equivalent to 15 million trees. The worst affected was the canton of Berne. Houses and public infrastructures also suffered major damage, and road, rail and air traffic came to a standstill. Winds reached 240 km/h at higher altitudes and 150 km/h in the lowlands, and isolated gales cut a swathe through forests, felling everything in their path.