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PEOPLE

Johannes Matyassy,

until now General Secretary of the FDP, has been appointed as head of "Swiss Presence" with the title of ambassador. "Swiss Presence" is the successor to the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs' Koko (Co-ordination Commission for the Promotion of Switzerland's Presence Abroad). Matyassy's successor as General Secretary is FDP press spokesperson **Guido Schommer**.



Teo Jakob is dead. For decades the 77-year-old promoter of Swiss art and design furniture ran a furnishing store of national repute in Berne which became a synonym for aesthetic style and quality.

Not the top favourite **Bruno Gehrig**, but Vice President and FDP sympathiser **Jean-Pierre Roth** has been appointed as President of the Swiss National Bank. The fact that CVP member Gehrig was passed over by the Federal Council and only appointed as Vice

President unleashed strong emotions in parliamentary corridors. CVP President Adalbert Durrer accused Federal Councillor Pascal Couchepin, a former liberal Valais MP, of being a "CVP hater".

The new president of the Locarno Film Festival is **Marco Solari**. He is Vice President of the Ringier group and will be devoting 50% of his time to his new task. The successor to the late Giuseppe Buffi was Federal Council Delegate for the 700th anniversary celebrations of Switzerland in 1991.

Thomas Held is to head the "Foundation for the Future of Switzerland". This economic "think-tank" endowed with more than CHF 50 million was set up to promote innovation in Swiss industry. Among other things the 54-year-old sociologist and business consultant earned his reputation as the instigator of the Lucerne Congress Centre.



Military publicist and ex-Major General **Gustav Däniker** has died at the age of 72.

Until 1988 Däniker was Chief of Staff of Operative Training at the Military Department (now the VBS) and held this office until retirement. He was regarded as having paved the way for a more open defence policy.



Graubünden author **Flurin Spescha** has died unexpectedly at the age of 43. He won several awards for his literary achievements in the German and Romansh language and was for a time personal advisor to Mayor Josef Estermann.


22-year-old **Nicole Deck** of Winterthur has committed suicide. She wrote about an earlier suicide attempt, her blindness and a violent childhood in her book "Ich schwimme ins Leben" (Zytglogge Verlag Berne) and qualified for the 2000 Sydney Paralympics.

Amidst a sea of flowers in front of Zurich's Cathedral, 2000 mourners paid tribute to **Andy Hug**. The world champion kick-boxer from Aargau became a household name in Japan, where he died from acute leukaemia at the age of 35.

At the grand old age of 99, Bernese dancer and dance teacher **Béatrice Tschumi** made her final exit from the world stage. She first gained attention with her performance at the National Exhibition of 1939. Together with her husband, the artist Otto Tschumi, she promoted dance in Switzerland.

Mountaineer and photographer **Dölf Reist** died in Interlaken at the age of 79. He was the first climber to conquer the highest peak on every continent.

Dieter Chenaux-Repond, columnist and former Swiss ambassador to Germany and many other countries, has died aged 66.

Markus Gisler, editor-in-chief of the business newspaper "Cash" since 1991, has been appointed CEO of the new Internet financial platform set up by major Swiss bank Credit Suisse, Internet provider Bluewin and the Zurich-based publishing house, Tamedia. He is succeeded at "Cash" by journalist **Fred David**. 

Natural disaster in the Valais

"I still have my friend. Everything else will come in time." Wandering around dressed in only a nightgown and robe, the Valais lady who spoke these words was literally left with the clothes she was wearing when a landslide thundered down in the early hours of 15 October. Residents of Switzerland's southern valley had their hands full coping with rainfall of deluge proportions, landslides and floods. Road and rail traffic was crippled, and several villages were completely cut off. Several bodies were recovered and a dozen people are still missing. The Chain of Fortune collected more than CHF 68 million.



75 years of Migros

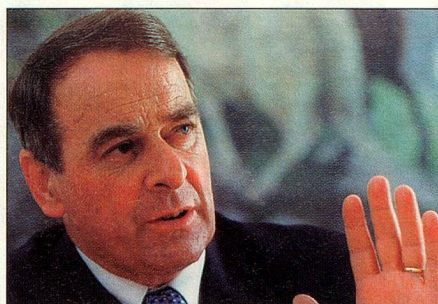
In former times Migros would travel to its customers, but nowadays the majority of the Swiss population make regular pilgrimages to branches of the orange giant. Gottlieb Duttweiler founded Migros in 1925 with a staff of 16 and five Ford mobile shops. Then they carried only seven articles, whereas nowadays their stocklist runs to 120,000 items. Duttweiler also wrote history by founding the Migros Club Schools, the Hotelplan travel agency, the Ex Libris book club, the cultural percentage, and through his political capers which culminated in throwing two stones at a parliament window.

Nine Olympic medals

Switzerland's medal count at the Olympic Summer Games in Sydney was one gold, six silver and two bronze.

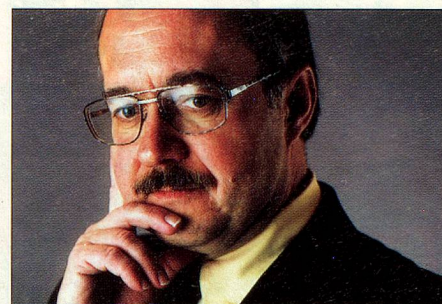
Brigitte McMahon of Zug won the women's triathlon, with Magali Messmer claiming the bronze. Gianna Hablützel-Bürki of Basle won the silver for fencing, while 15-year fencer Sophie Lamon and her team-mates Diana Romagnoli and Gianna Hablützel-

Federal Councillor Ogi's home game is over



Adolf Ogi has announced his intention "to retire like a sportsman: at the height of his career." After 13 years in politics the 58-year-old Swiss President for 2000 is giving up his office as Federal Councillor. Between 1988 and 1995 he headed the Department for Transport and Energy after which he was appointed Supreme Commander of the Army.

Federal Councillor Samuel Schmid to succeed Ogi



Bernese MP Samuel Schmid won the 6th ballot with 121 votes against SVP representatives Ulrich Siegrist, Rita Fuhrer, Roland Eberle and Christoffel Brändli as well as the Green wild-card candidate Cécile Bühlmann. In his acceptance speech given in four languages, the 53-year old declared that he was taking up the post of Federal Councillor with confidence and enthusiasm.

Bürki won silver in the team event. Pistol marksman Michel Ansermet shot his way to the first men's medal for Switzerland, winning a surprise silver medal. Barbara Blatter picked up a silver in the mountain biking

events, while in the same discipline Christoph Sauser won bronze. Favourite Xeno Müller had to content himself with second place in the rowing, and the Swiss show-jumping team also claimed a silver.

SNIPPETS

INFRINGEMENT OF DUTY OF CARE: The Federal Banking Commission has reprimanded six of 19 banking institutions for accepting funds from former Nigerian dictator Sani Abacha. The criticism was levelled at Credit Suisse, Bank Hofmann and Bank Leu, all members of the Credit Suisse Group, as well as Crédit Agricole Indosuez (Suisse), the UBP Union Bancaire Privée and M.M. Warburg Bank.

NEW ROLES FOR RAILWAYS: The BLS Lötschberg Railway has taken over a majority stake in the Berne S-Bahn (rapid transit railway). In a countermove, Swiss Federal Railways is to take over responsibility for passenger traffic through the Lötschberg and to Interlaken.


SULZER RESTRUCTURES: The Winterthur-based group is divesting its industrial operations. Five divisions – Infra,

Pumps, Textiles, Turbo and Burckhardt – are to be sold off and 15,600 jobs to be shed. Sulzer is redirecting its focus on medical and material technologies. The stock exchange reacted negatively to this new strategy.

CONSOLIDATION IN THE SP: As predicted, 53-year-old Geneva senator Christiane Brunner was elected new President of the Social Democratic Party (SP). The expectation is that she will be able to cement the cracks inside the party. Her election signals the SP's clear left-wing bias.

HEIDI AND HIGH-TECH: In a move to promote a new image, Switzerland has opened the world's first scientific consulate in the research metropolis of Boston. The aim is to serve as a meeting place and mediating centre between the USA and Switzerland.

LEADING THE ACADEMIC RANKS: The Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich is apparently rated among the best universities

in the world. Due to the fact that it has continually brought research scientists of international repute to Zurich, its own brochure confidently claims it to be a "World-class institution within a small state". At present 40% of its professors are non-Swiss. 

Point of View

"People need to believe they are doing things better than the previous generation. Children should have dreams and reach for the stars. We live in a wonderful country of which we can be proud. But we are masters of self-criticism. Swiss negativism must be stopped and the country must become more open. Family and homeland are the roots."

Jürg Schmid, Director of Swiss Tourism

Texts: Alice Baumann/Photos: Keystone