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## PEOPLE

Lawyer **Dina Balleyguier** is the new head of the Money Laundering Control Authority. From 1993 up to the present she worked for the legal service of the Federal Banking Commission, where she recently led the officially assisted procedure against two banks involved in the affair of Nigerian dictator Sani Abacha's accounts.

**Paul Zinsli**, specialist in Valaisan folk lore, has died in Berne at the age of 95. From 1951 to 1971 he lectured in Swiss-German language, literature and cultural history at the University of Berne. Born in Chur, Zinsli was particularly well-known for his book on Valais folk lore in Switzerland, Vorarlberg and Liechtenstein, first published in 1968 and now in its fourth edition.

Molecular biologist **Meinrad Busslinger** of the Vienna Institute for Molecular Pathology has been awarded the Wittgenstein Prize for his discoveries on the origins of the B-cells responsible for the production of antibodies against foreign substances. Busslinger used stem cells in his research work.

The Faculty of Law of the University of Udine, Italy, has conferred an honorary doctorate in European law on Federal President **Moritz Leuenberger**, in recognition of his efforts to promote understanding between Switzerland and the European Union on air and overland transport policy.


Historian **Ulrich Im Hof**, one of the greatest experts on the Age of Enlightenment, has died at the age of 84. St-Gallen born, Im Hof retired from lecturing at the University of

Berne ten years ago. His observations on the Enlightenment are contained in a monumental work entitled "Europe in the Age of Enlightenment" which has been translated into ten languages. Another famous book was the "History of Switzerland", which was translated into eight languages and compulsory reading at many university faculties.

Balloonist **Bertrand Piccard** of Vaud, who with Englishman Brian Jones circumnavigated the Earth in a hot-air balloon in 1999, was awarded the Legion of Honour by French President Jacques Chirac.

**Raimondo Rezzonico**, Honorary President of the International Film Festival of Locarno, has died at the age of 81. The passionate art-lover and film enthusiast had worked for the festival since 1946. President of the festival between 1981 and 1999, he played a key role in turning it into one of Switzerland's most important cultural events and a leading European film competition.

**Paul Reutlinger** is giving up his post as President of Presence Switzerland at the end of December, little more than a year after taking up office. He will be succeeded by former CVP National Councillor **Ruth Grossenbacher**, former President of the National Council's Commission for Science, Education and Culture and member of the parliamentary delegation to the OSCE. Born in South Africa, she was responsible for Switzerland's participation at the 2000 World Fair in Hanover. Reutlinger's resignation, announced in October, had been the subject of speculation for several weeks since, as former head of Sabena and Swissair, his name had been linked with the recent turbulent developments at both airlines.

At the World Swimming Championships in Fukukoa (Japan) **Flavia Rigamonti** of the Ticino won the silver medal over 1500 meters. This was the third medal Switzerland has ever won at these championships: 15 years ago the silver was won by Dano Halsall and the bronze by Marie-Thérèse Armentero at the World Championships in Madrid. 

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## Bloody retribution:

Incredulous shock and profound grief – these were the overwhelming sentiments of Swiss citizens in the aftermath of 27 September, when an armed 57-year-old man forced his way into the Zug parliament building and shot 14 people – three State Councillors and 11 Cantonal Councillors – before killing himself. Switzerland was united in its mourning: The National Council session was suspended and the national flag flew at half-mast. Messages of condolence poured in from every corner of Switzerland as well as from abroad. The massacre was apparently connected with repeated complaints and attempts at legal action the man had made to the authorities, all of which had been rejected. The bloodbath also sparked off a debate on the inadequacy of security precautions: the killer, clothed in a security officer's uniform, was able to walk unheeded into the cantonal parliament.

## SNIPPETS

**TOO MANY POOR:** In Switzerland 7.5% of the active population aged between 20 and 59 belong to the so-called "working poor" – people who live on the poverty line despite being employed. Based on statistics compiled by the State Secretariat for the Economy (seco) in 1999, the subsistence wage for a one-person household is a mere CHF 2100 per month. 250 000 people live in this situation in Switzerland, or 535 000 if one takes families into account. Mostly they comprise unskilled labourers, persons working in traditionally low-paid sectors, self-employed persons – particularly farmers – and part-time employees. Women, foreigners, persons with few skills and part-time employees are the high-risk social groups. This problem increased towards the end of the 20th century, with new risk groups emerging in the form of single-parent families and families with three or more children. The family budget is primarily strained by fixed costs such as health insurance premiums.

**MAJOR ORDER:** As part of the so-called "Three-Gorge" dam project in China, Swiss-Swedish ABB Group has won another major contract worth some CHF 600 million for the construction of a 1000 kilometer long high-voltage link between the gigantic hydroelectricity plant and the industrial region of Guangdong.

**PSYCHOLOGICALLY UNFIT:** Over the past twenty years the number of recruits who fail to complete their military training has virtually doubled, rising from 8.37% in 1980 to 14.18% in 2000. There has been a marked



Erwin Zbinden

The number of Swiss recruits who complete their military training is declining.


rise in psychological disorders, with 7% of recruits aborting their training last spring because they could not adjust to the military environment. Under Switzerland's XXI Army Reform, a new 3-day inspection process is to be introduced which will subject potential recruits to more rigorous psychological tests.

**BIOLOGICAL AGRICULTURE:** When it comes to biological farming, Switzerland is well in front: The proportion of farms operating without chemical products is currently 10%, compared to 4% in the European Union. In a study commissioned by the Federal Office for Agriculture, an international panel of experts recommended that Swiss research be stepped up in this area due to the promising economic rewards of biological farming.


**UN:** A helicopter carrying Major Mark Hofer, the Swiss military observer for the United Nations in Abkhazia, was shot down, killing Hofer and eight other passengers. This is the first death by a Swiss military observer on assignment abroad.

## Horrific accident in the Gotthard tunnel

On Wednesday 24 October a devastating accident occurred in the Gotthard tunnel, resulting in a death toll of eleven. The accident involved 13 trucks, four delivery vans and six cars.

According to the Ticino Cantonal Police, shortly before ten o'clock two trucks were involved in a head-on collision at a point approximately one kilometer in from the south portal. The southbound truck was loaded with automobile tyres, while the northbound vehicle was carrying insulation materials. Fire broke out along a 200-meter stretch, followed shortly afterwards by violent explosions. 

**HISTORY OF SWITZERLAND:** Five years after its inception, the Bergier Commission has presented the first eight volumes reporting on various aspects of Switzerland during the Second World War. The first eight studies confirm the country's close economic ties with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. Seventeen more studies are scheduled for release in December.

**MEDIA:** Publishing house "Le Monde" has purchased a 20% stake in the Western Swiss daily "Le Temps" from the Sandoz family. Eric Hoesli, CEO of the French-speaking paper, issued assurances that this move would not result in layoffs or any change in the editorial line. 

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