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Annus horribilis for the Swiss airline industry



Alongside Swissair's ongoing tale of woe, Crossair is now also experiencing turbulence. At the heated General Meeting held in December 2001 the founder of the

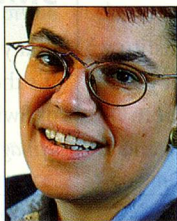
Basle-based airline finally decided, after much soul-searching, to relinquish a seat on the board of the new Crossair. Shareholders elected Dutchman Peter Bouw as

Chairman of the new Board of Directors. Moritz Sutter shed a few tears and took the opportunity of his farewell speech to settle a few scores with Swissair and with the steering committee headed by Nestlé chairman Rainer Gut. He attacked the doomed national airline and accused it of abusing its monopoly status. But he called on Crossair staff to support CEO André Dosé. As anticipated, the Swissair fleet was reduced by 30% and the scenario of taking over 26 medium haul and 26 long haul aircraft is still valid. As far as a Swissair social plan is concerned, staff will have to wait until spring. Only then will they find out whether the assets protected under Chapter 11, which were to be used as preliminary financing, are in fact available. The decision is in the hands of trustee Karl Wüthrich, who has indicated that the actual assets could be "significantly lower" and the total of privileged claims could rise dramatically by spring. 

PEOPLE

Two French-speaking Swiss preside over parliament's two chambers

The presidency of a parliamentary council often crowns a long parliamentary career. Not so for **Liliane Maury Pasquier** (SP/GE), who has been a National Councillor since 1995 and was recently elected to succeed Zug CVP representative Peter Hess. A change of style is on the cards: the mother of four is particularly interested in family and social policy issues. Long-standing Fribourg CVP representative **Anton Cottier**, appointed President of the State Council and successor to Geneva Liberal Democrat Françoise Saudan, is similarly inclined.



Gerhart Riegner, lawyer and former General Secretary of the World Jewish Congress

(1965–1983), died in Geneva in December at the age of 90. In 1942 the then Secretary of the WJC was one of the first to inform the Allies (and the Federal Council) about the holocaust. But at that time no-one believed him, and the so-called "Final Solution" was regarded as too monstrous to be true. Only later was Berlin-born Riegner, who emigrated first to Paris then to Geneva, granted Swiss citizenship. He campaigned for a frank re-assessment of Swiss history during the Second World War and propagandised for a monument to be erected in honour of Jews turned back during the war.

Brutal shock for **Pierre Boulez**. While staying in Basle in November 2001, the French composer and conductor was rudely awakened in his five-star hotel, in the middle of the night naturally. The police confiscated his passport on the grounds that he was listed as a suspect in connection with an obscure affair involving a false bomb alarm in 1995.

Kaspar Villiger takes

over the office of Federal President for the second time - almost a routine matter for him. The 60-year-old Liberal Democrat from Lucerne, appointed 13 years ago (by 124 votes) as successor to Elisabeth Kopp, was selected by 183 out of 203 votes and is now the oldest serving member of the Federal Council. Pascal Couchepin, the second FDP Federal Councillor, was elected as Vice President of the Federal Council by 144 out of 178 votes. This creates an atypical tandem for the 2002 presidency, with two Liberal Democrats from cantons dominated by the CVP. Two potential troublemakers at Switzerland's helm?



Ueli Forster succeeds Andres Leuenbergers as President of *économiesuisse*, the Swiss organisation for employers and advocate of corporate interests, especially for the export industry. Due to the fact that none of the

SNIPPETS

IN MEMORY OF 24 VICTIMS of the crash of a Crossair Avro RJ100 ("Jumbolino") on 24 November the Zurich community of Bassersdorf has decided to erect a memorial financed by Crossair and consisting of a pond, a rock and a bench. The inauguration is scheduled for 24 November 2002.

DAVOS EXILED TO NEW YORK: For the first time in 32 years the World Economic Forum, held every January, took place in the North American metropolis of New York rather than in the Grisons resort of Davos. The decision was made as a symbolic gesture in memory of the anti-US attacks on 11 September 2001. However, WEF Director Klaus Schwab also made this decision due to the security problems with which he was confronted in 2001 when demonstrators against globalisation disrupted the WEF. Protecting the numerous VIPs in Davos was also a major headache. It is now up to the government to decide on whether the forum will return to Switzerland in 2003.

key Swiss captains of industry volunteered for the post, Forster's nomination was interpreted by some as a "declaration of bankruptcy" or a "sign of disharmony" as a result of management crises in the wake of the Swissair debacle. SME employer Forster has been dubbed a hard-liner since he spoke out against the flanking measures to mitigate the social consequences of the bilateral accords with the EU.

TV TURBULENCE: After three years Tele24, the first trans-regional private TV channel, ceased transmitting on 30 November 2001. Roger Schawinski, the 56-year-old ex "radio pirate", sold his station in August to Tamedia, which pulled the plug on the station (according to SRG its market share was never above 2.5 percent). Shortly after this it was the turn of TV3, the entertainment channel which made headlines with its "Big Brother" programme. Total liberalisation of advertising – perhaps the only chance for private channels – will be one of the main areas covered by the new radio and television law expected in 2004.


COMEBACK OF ABSINTHE...WITHOUT ABSINTHE: In early December the "green fairy" i.e. the "clean" version of the aniseed drink so beloved by Jura residents, was launched in a highly official ceremony in Val-de-Travers/NE in view of the fact that the race for AOC (Appellation d'origine contrôlée) designation had been announced in France. At only 45 proof (as opposed to the 50-proof of the real thing), the ersatz drink developed for these commercial motives was given a lukewarm reception by the local population and will find it difficult to draw loyalties away from the traditional moonshine variety.

SWITZERLAND TO HOST THE EUROPEAN UNDER-21 CHAMPIONSHIPS: The Executive Committee of UEFA has commissioned the Swiss Football Association to hold the finals of the European tournament for promising young footballers at the end of

May. This is an ideal opportunity for SFA officials to prove their organisational skills before the decision is made on the venue for the 2008 European Football Championships, which Switzerland and Austria are hoping to hold jointly.

ONE IN FIVE SWISS PUPILS HAS DIFFICULTY READING AND WRITING: For the first time the Swiss schools authority took full part in an international study conducted by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The



result: While Swiss students come out well in maths, they are deficient in scientific subjects and in reading. Compared with other countries they rank as average when it comes to reading. An above-average number of school-leavers had only rudimentary skills or none at all in this area: One in five is barely able to understand a simple text, 13% are unable to absorb a text for learning purposes, and 7% constitute a "risk group". The performance of Swiss schoolchildren lags behind the best-in-class (Finland, Canada, Sweden and the UK) but is ahead of France, Spain and the USA. 


André Bucher "2001 European Athlete of the Year"

The 2001 Swiss sportsman of the year and world 800-meter champion was named European Athlete of the Year by the European Athletics Association.

Bucher beat Jan Zelezny, the world record-holder in javelin and Lithuanian Virgilijus Alekna, world silver medallist in discus.

This additional honour is the jewel in the crown of an exceptional career. In 2001 25-year-old André Bucher won the Grand Prix overall ranking and the Golden League jackpot. With his impressive chain of victories -

five Golden League wins as well as eleven victories during the 2001 season – André Bucher has finally earned his place among the 800-meter "greats".

His outstanding achievements also earned him the 2001 Credit Suisse Sports Award. 

Point of view

"I don't believe that small shareholders have anything against me personally. They are simply rooting for Moritz Suter."

(Peter Bouw, the new Crossair chairman and successor to Moritz Suter, in an interview with "Schweizer Illustrierte")

Text compiled and edited by: Isabelle Eichenberger
Photos: Imagopress
Translated from the German by N. Chisholm