

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 29 (2002)
Heft: 3

Rubrik: Mosaic

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SNIPPETS

TRIMMING DOWN: Switzerland's largest life assurance company, Rentenanstalt, has launched cost-cutting measures and is aiming to cut 800 jobs by the end of 2003. Last year the company's profit dropped to CHF 124 million compared with CHF 924 million in 2000. Rentenanstalt currently employs some 13,000 persons, 55% in Switzerland.



600 JOBS TO GO: Despite a marked rise in profit from CHF 3.2 to 5 billion for the 2001 financial year, Swisscom has announced it is cutting 600 jobs. A good manager must be prepared for less positive times, declared Swisscom CEO Jens Alder (whose salary was increased last year by 28% to CHF 1.8 million).

SWISSWINGS GROUNDED: Swisswings, the regional airline, has suspended operations and discharged its 120 employees. Founded in 1987 under the name Air Engiadina, the airline entered into an alliance with KLM in 1996. Due to difficulties it re-dimensioned its network of routes and was given a new name only a year ago.

INCOME SINKING: The average income in the agricultural sector fell last year by 21% to CHF 30,400 per farming family. The Federal Office for Agriculture ascribes this poor result to inclement weather and the meat market crisis.




HARE AND HEARTY: The field hare is faring better, according to the Federal Office for the Environment, Forests and Landscape. However, the animal is still under-represented in most regions throughout Switzerland, and efforts are being made to find additional habitats.

ONEWORLD: The new airline Swiss is aiming to join the Oneworld alliance, whose members include American Airlines, British Airways and Iberia. With this in mind it has signed an agreement with American Airlines

with the aim of gaining British Airways' approval for its membership.

ZURICH SAYS NO: In April the citizens of Zurich voted against the city's CHF 50 million participation in Swiss, the new airline created from the Swissair debacle. Two months previously, voters in the canton of Zurich approved a cantonal contribution of CHF 300 million.

100TH ANNIVERSARY: On 22 March the Houses of Parliament celebrated their 100th anniversary in modest style. Nevertheless a comic was published to mark the occasion, featuring an architectural tour in the guise of a criminal novel. In summer the public will be able to visit an exhibition about the architecture.

MAJOR DEFICIT: The Sulzer Medica Group posted a major deficit of almost CHF 1.2 billion for the 2001 financial year. This is mainly attributable to damages paid out by the company to persons who were given defective knee or hip joint prostheses. 



Davos are Swiss Champions

After dominating the ice hockey season, HC Davos won their 26th Swiss championship title. With four victories to zero the team won the final against ex-champions ZSC Lions. This was the first such success for HC Davos for 17 years. The Grisons club trained by Arno del Curto is now Swiss record-holder: with its 26th Swiss championship title it far outstrips SC Berne, which ranks second with 10 titles.

The other Grisons club, HC Chur, was relegated and will be replaced in the A League by Club Geneva-Servette, which has nursed promotion ambitions for years.

PEOPLE

Paul-René Martin, the last Liberal Democrat mayor between 1981 and 1989 and former National Councillor, died in Lausanne at the age of 72. He is particularly remembered for his success in bringing the Maurice Béjart Ballet to Lausanne in 1987.


The Swiss women's alpine team has a new coach in the person of Austrian **Karl Frehsner**, who previously coached in Switzerland in the 1980s and has been trainer of the Austrian women's ski team since 1997.

For the first time a woman was elected mayor of Schwyz when citizens voted for CVP representative **Bernadette Kündig-Blättler**.

The famous footballer Eugen "Geni" Meier has died in Berne at the age of 72 after a serious illness. Meier played for the Swiss



national team 42 times and scored 249 goals over his fifteen-year career in the National League: a record that has been beaten only by Servette player Jacky Fatton (274 goals).

"Geni" Meier played centre forward in Berne's legendary Young Boys, who won the Swiss championship four times in a row between 1957 and 1960. 

Election news

Stability and low turnout are the two main hallmarks of elections in the **Canton of Berne**. Nothing changed in the distribution of seats for the cantonal government: 3 SVP, 2 FDP, 2 SP. The retiring Social Democrat Dori Schaer was replaced by Barbara Egger. The main winner of these elections in the legislative is the EVP (Evangelical People's Party), which gained three seats, while the Freedom Party lost its last four seats. The turnout was a mere 28.17%.

The SVP made inroads in the **Obwalden** parliament, where it conquered seven seats. However, it failed in its attempt to gain a government seat. In **Nidwalden** the SVP also won seven parliamentary seats, while the CVP lost its absolute majority in the government, which is no longer a completely male domain (another first) and now boasts two women.

In **Grisons** the FDP held onto its seat with the election of Martin Schmid. He replaces Peter Aliesch, who is involved in a bribery case.

In **Vaud** the SVP also made significant parliamentary gains (+8 seats), while the reigning Cantonal Councillor Francine Jeanprêtre (SP) failed to be re-elected and was replaced by her fellow SP member Pierre Chiffelle.

The election for **Zurich City** ended with a victory for the SVP which, with five seats, has become the largest faction in the community parliament, while Social Democrat Elmar Ledergerber succeeded his party


World cycling centre

The world cycling centre was opened recently in Aigle/VD. This ultra-modern complex built by the International Cycling Union and featuring a velodrome will be used to train talented cyclists from around the world. Other sports associations in the gymnastics and athletics fields are also showing interest

in the centre. The inauguration of the new complex in western Switzerland was attended by a large number of sports personalities, including ex-champion Ferdi Kübler: a small consolation for the cancellation of the six-day race in Zurich's indoor stadium due to lack of public interest.

Claude Monet ... to digital impressionism

At the beginning of last century a lily pond and a lovingly tended garden in the village of Giverny were the point of departure for a painting revolution launched by Claude Monet. The significance and range of his work was recognised only at the end of the Second World War. Now, at the start of the 21st century, an exhibition on "Claude Monet... to digital impressionism" organised by the Beyeler Foundation in Basle will

allow visitors to follow, picture-by-picture, the path followed by Monet in the confrontation with abstract painting and digital impressionism. The exhibition ends on 4 August 2002. 

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Photos: Keystone/Imagopress

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