

# News

Objekttyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad**

Band (Jahr): **30 (2003)**

Heft 6

PDF erstellt am: **01.05.2024**

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## NEWS IN BRIEF

**15 September:** At the end of 2002 Switzerland's population numbered 7.3 million: 0.8% more than the previous year. The number of Swiss citizens emigrating from Switzerland as well as those returning dropped slightly.

**17 September:** After almost 15 years in the national government, Federal Councillor Kaspar Villiger is to retire at the end of this year. The Radical Free Democrat from Lucerne started off in the Military Department and has headed the Federal Finance Department since 1996. Villiger was Federal President in 1995 and 2002.

**24 September:** Swiss enters the Oneworld airline alliance and agrees on direct cooperation with British Airways. The alternative would have been to integrate Swiss in the German airline Lufthansa.

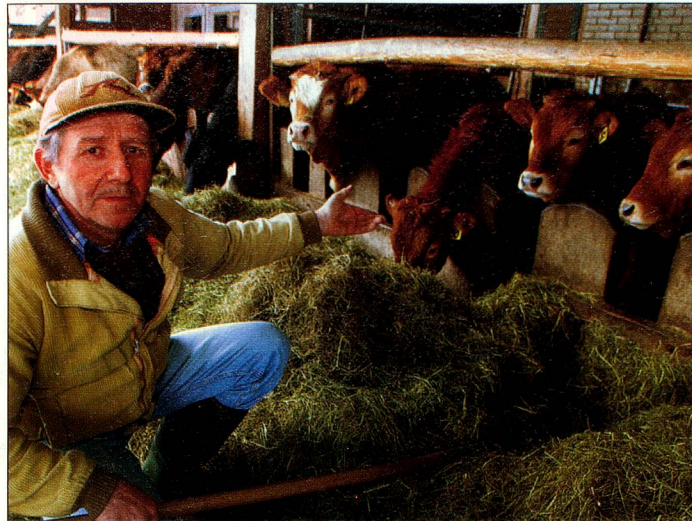
**29 September:** The Swiss housing market shrinks even further, with the number of vacant accommodations dropping to below 1%. The cause is the growing population and the slump in the home construction industry.

**7 October:** The unemployment rate is now 3.7%, equivalent to 142,000 persons. Unemployment among young people aged 15 to 24 has risen to 5.2%. Long-term unemployment is also on the rise.

**7 October:** The army's Red Cross Service celebrates its 100th anniversary. This service now includes some 1000 female volunteers who work in hospitals and in the military ambulance service, as well in the Swiss Company (Swisscoy) in Kosovo.

**8 October:** Every year, 2.7 million further education courses are attended in Switzerland. Some 40% of the adult population – mainly persons who are already well qualified – take advantage of the courses on offer.

**10 October:** Fredy Knie senior dies at the age of 83. Regarded as the founder of "humane equestrian dressage", he was famous for his spectacular equestrian acts in the Swiss National Circus.



Imagopress/Patrick Lüthy

Farmer Stefan Dissler in the Grisons. The livelihood of many farms continues to be at risk (see 17 November).

**11 October:** According to the Federal Office for Social Insurance, health insurance will rise by 4.3% next year. But the real increase is likely to be 6% (higher excess, lower discounts).

**15 October:** The closure of SBB rail stations continues. Next year 38 of the company's 316 stations are scheduled for closure. Since 2000, more than 100 stations have been closed and replaced by ticket vending machines.

**19 October:** The SVP wins the National Council elections and emerges the strongest party, with 55 seats. The SP and Greens also gain additional votes, winning 52 and 13 seats respectively (see Page 4).

**20 October:** The number of persons dependent on alcohol in Switzerland is 300,000, while another 300,000 suffer from hazardous alcohol consumption. A study estimates the associated material costs of medical treatment and production losses at CHF 2.2 billion.

**25 October:** Switzerland has lost some measure of attractiveness as a business centre. According to the Geneva World Economic Forum, our country is ranked seventh (compared to fifth last year) behind Finland, USA, Sweden, Denmark, Taiwan and Singapore.

**28 October:** The autumn forecasts of economic institutes and major banks predict economic growth of between 0.6 and 1.6% in Switzerland for this year and next. They

all anticipate marked growth in the second half of 2004.

**30 October:** Shortly before six o'clock, the first plane lands at Zurich airport via the new southern approach path. 2,500 angry citizens protest in vain. The southern approach path was necessitated by unilateral bans on flight paths in Germany.

**1 November:** According to the 2002 health survey, almost two million people (37% of the Swiss population) are overweight, while 13% are underweight. Middle-aged people are most likely to be carrying excess weight.

**10 November:** One in two crimes committed by young people in Switzerland involves violence. Almost 42% of crimes committed by young perpetrators are crimes of violence, 40% are drug-related, and 12% are road traffic offences.

**17 November:** According to the latest agricultural report, the number of working farms in Switzerland is now 67,400: 25,400 fewer than in 1990. Farms with 20 hectares or less continue to be at risk of dying out.

**18 November:** With a virtually perfect final match against the American Andre Agassi, Roger Federer wins the Masters Trophy in Houston and becomes the world professional tennis champion and APT No. 2, only 160 points behind the leader Andy Roddick.

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Translated from German.