

Zeitschrift: Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand
Herausgeber: Swiss Society of New Zealand
Band: 59 (1993)
Heft: [6]

Artikel: Do you know your cutlery?
Autor: [s.n.]
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-944738>

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SWISS, BAD PAYERS TOO ?

Like in New Zealand, Switzerland experiences the same pattern that is so typical in any recession. People can no longer meet their commitments and go into more debts which they cannot pay either. Like here in New Zealand, the few businesses that are really flourishing in Switzerland in the present recession are the debt collecting firms. Over 2 million orders to pay have been sent to customers in 1992 alone. Unpaid debts have reached the staggering amount of 4-5 billion SFR.

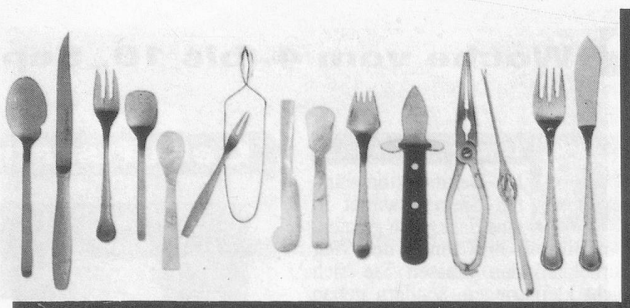
In Switzerland where the rental of an apartment can easily represent over one third of the people's salary, the authorities are bracing themselves for a flood of evictions as more and more people will soon fall behind with their rents. The threat of a whole part of the population becoming homeless is quite real. According to statistics, in 1991 already one fifth of the tenants had difficulties in paying their rents. The slightest incident - illness, accident or, more ominous, loss of a job - will see these people thrown out of their apartments. In Lausanne alone, the number of legal evictions has increased by 21% in 1992. The victims are usually either people who have become unemployed or high flyers who over-committed themselves and who now, during the recession, can no longer meet the costs of their high standard of living and are trapped by their commitments.

Apart from the financial and mental strain, the recession also has created a more sinister type of business: the new debt collectors with their methods of threats, mental and physical, bordering on illegality. The genuine debt collecting firms are facing an ever increasing competition from "cowboys" who have no scruples or business ethics and who consider any method, even violence, good enough as long as it brings in the results.

Sadly enough, Switzerland, one of the richest countries in the world, is experiencing the same trend as most other countries in recession: the rich stay rich or get richer, the middle-class barely survives, teetering on the brink of individual disaster and the poor get pushed down into the category of the homeless and the "down and outs".

DO YOU KNOW YOUR CUTLERY ?

Everyone knows what spoons, forks and knives are for, but can you identify the use of all the items of cutlery pictured below? Have a go. If you get lost amongst all these implements, the answer is on page 12.



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SUGUS

Who does not remember the famous "SUGUS" launched on the Swiss market by Suchard in 1931 at Serrières near Neuenburg?

The last survivor of the chocolate manufacturer Suchard in Neuenburg, the SUGUS has finally emigrated too. From now on it will be produced in Reims (France) under more economical conditions. Before the Neuenburg factory closed down, 40 employees were still producing some seven tons of SUGUS per day. When Klaus Jacobs, after 8 years at the helm of Suchard, sold his Suchard-Tobler group to the Americans, the SUGUS became part of the production of Kraft General Foods, the food stuff arm of Philip Morris, the giant american tobacco manufacturer.

Few bonbons have survived unchanged the fickle taste of consumers, but the SUGUS stayed a favourite with generations of kids. Strangely enough, its recipe originally came from Poland and it has changed little over the years. Today the whole world still wants the SUGUS. In Hong Kong, which by itself alone absorbs a third of the production, it is sold under the name of "Soi-Si-Tong" (translated: the best thing in life). The SUGUS is also manufactured under licence in Indonesia, South Africa, Thailand and Portugal.

But for the 40 employees in Neuenburg, the end was a bitter one. After 60 years of production, an era came to an abrupt end. The 3000 tons of SUGUS produced annually at Serrières-Neuenburg represented only 7.5% of the total turnover of Philip Morris. Therefore in such a huge enterprise, the fate of 40 employees and the demise of a typical Swiss manufactured product do not receive much consideration or sympathy.

So, bye, bye to the good old Swiss SUGUS.

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NEW BUDGET HOTELS FOR SWITZERLAND

The hotel chain Accor (Sofitel, Pullman, Novotel, Mercure-Altea, Ibis, Arcade) with over 2000 establishments throughout the world wants to move into Switzerland where it intends to build up to 20 budget type hotels where triple rooms will only cost around SFR 47.-. The first hotel is to be built in Bussigny (Canton Waadt).

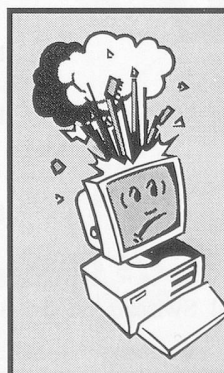
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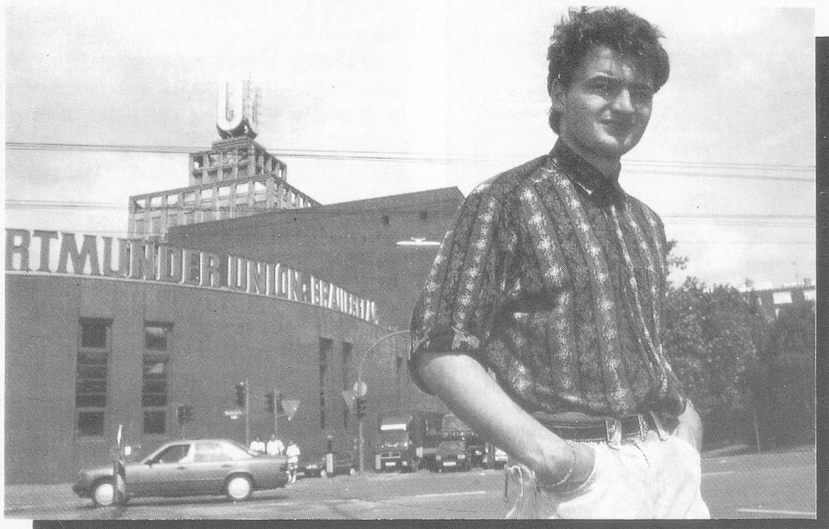
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Stephane Chapuisat, the golden boy of soccer remains mostly unaffected by his great success and wealth.

BUDDING SINGING STAR



Sandra SCHWARZHAUPT, at the young age of 12 was given the prize of "Europäischen Kulturförderpreis für Musik" by the world famous Semper-Opera in Dresden. She has already produced her own CD with the backing of the Carnegie-Hall orchestra. And yet, Sandra who goes to school in Gstaad, prefers mountain climbing above everything else. "Rock climbing is my hobby" she says. Of course there is no shortage of rocks to climb in the area of Switzerland where she lives.

INFLIGHT PHONES

It has always been Swissair's goal to make travelling as easy and pleasant as possible. Beginning this month, telephone communications from air to ground will be possible. Swissair is one of the first airlines to offer this service in its widebody aircraft (initially in two MD-11s) via SATCOM. The satellite system allows for telephone connections to any point on the globe at all times.

DO YOU KNOW YOUR CUTLERY ?

Answers to the picture on page 10.

From left to right: Soup spoon, steak knife, desert fork, ice-cream spoon, egg spoon, snails fork and tongs, caviar knife and spoon, oyster fork and opener, lobster tongs and fork, fish fork and fish knife.

SWISS FOOTBALLERS

You all probably know about Wynton Rufer, the New Zealand born Swiss footballer who made such an impact on New Zealand soccer and who now plays in Germany as a professional player.

But he is not the only Swiss who is doing well in German soccer. Stephane CHAPUISAT (Chappi as they call him), the golden boy from Switzerland, plays for the German soccer team Borussia Dortmund. By a huge margin (40% against 12% for the second) he was voted Germany's most popular soccer star. Since he joined Dortmund he and his team have attracted an average of 40.000 spectators whenever they play. Despite the fact that he is under contract to Dortmund until 1995, he has had offers from Benfica Rome, Inter Milan, Paris St Germain, Marseille and Atletico Madrid. His transfer price would be around 15 million NZ Dollars, making him by far the most expensive player in Germany.

Stephane started playing soccer at the age of 5 at St Prex (near Lausanne). At 18 he already played in the Swiss National League with F.C. Lausanne. Then came the transfer to Germany. At 23, he earns over a million SFR a year.

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