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NEWS IN BRIEF

2 September. The Federal Office of Health urges the Swiss to eat less and exercise more. According to the 2002 survey on health, some 1.8 million people over the age of 15 (29%) were overweight in 2001, and half a million (7.7%) were obese – this comes to a total of around 2.3 million, representing 40% of the adult population and 25% of the child population in Switzerland.

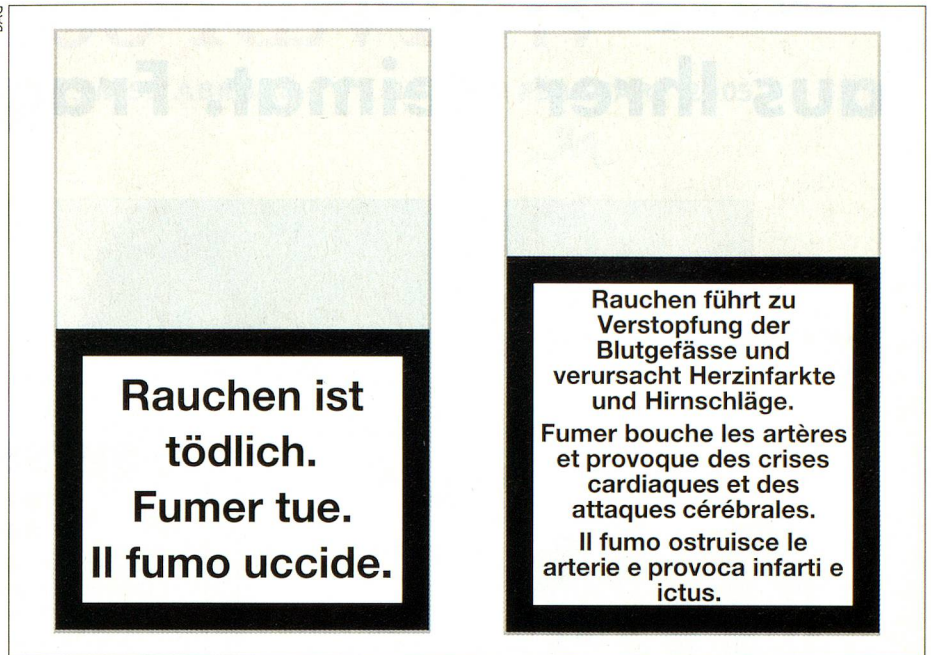
8 September. The problems surrounding construction of Zurich's new Hardturm stadium come to a head. No European Football Championship matches are to be played in the Hardturm in 2008. If the project for an alternative EU-compatible extension of the Letzigrund stadium also comes to nothing, there will be no Euro 2008 games played in Zurich at all. An embarrassment for the city that is home to FIFA headquarters.

14 September. Roger Federer wins the US Open and comes one step closer towards becoming a tennis legend by celebrating his third Grand Slam Title of the year. With his follow-up win in the Thailand tournament, he becomes the third player after Björn Borg (1979/1980) and John McEnroe (1984/1985) to win twelve consecutive finals.

15 September. The umbrella economic association *economiesuisse* issues a communiqué underscoring the major importance of aviation for the Swiss economy which, because it is heavily dependent on foreign business, must have good connections to the international air traffic network. For this reason Zurich needs an international hub and Switzerland needs a national airline, emphasises *economiesuisse* Director Rudolf Ramsauer.

20 September. In recent years Swiss business leaders have been increasingly crossing over from the FDP to the SVP. It remains to be seen whether Peter Hasler, President of the Employers' Association, can stop this trend with his open letter in the "Blick", replying to the SVP's polemic advertisements ahead of the referenda on facilitated naturalisation. The President of the Employers' Association admonishes the campaign thus: "Such shocking posters marginalise people.

BAG



The new tobacco ordinance requires all packages to bear a clear warning and prohibits the use of the terms "light" and "mild".

The SVP is slowly becoming a totalitarian party: everything that is not SVP is socialist and contemptible."

26 September. The results of the federal referenda: Yes to maternity insurance, two Nos to facilitated naturalisation, No to the postal initiative.

27 September. Following an unsuccessful referendum campaign, Pascal Couchepin is visibly irritated when Christoph Blocher claims that Federal Councillors should hold their tongues once the people have spoken. The Liberal Democrat Federal Councillor from Martigny insists on the right of members of the Federal Council to advocate ideas. In an interview with the Swiss-French daily "Le Temps", he says: "I am convinced that the Swiss people do not want to be governed by faceless executive bodies with no vision or opinion."

1 October. Start of a tough month for smokers. First, a price increase of CHF 0.50 per cigarette packet is announced from 1 December, and several weeks later the Federal Office for Health announces that in 18 months all cigarette packets must bear a clear warning, in a prominent position, that "Smoking kills". Will a general ban on smoking be next?

8 October. Micheline Calmy-Rey travels to Sri Lanka. During the same month, Pascal Couchepin visits China and Joseph Deiss makes a state visit to Japan. Fortunately, internal dissension does not prevent our Federal Councillors from maintaining international relations.

26 October. Federal President Joseph Deiss and Federal Councillor Micheline Calmy-Rey travel to Luxembourg to sign the second bilateral accords between Switzerland and the European Union as well as the protocol to extend free movement of persons to the new EU states.

27 October. According to a survey conducted in 60 countries, the Swiss population is particularly critical of the USA. Only 13% of Swiss respondents had a positive image of the USA. By way of comparison, Japan, the UK and Italy are viewed in a positive light by 40% of Swiss, Germany and France are viewed positively by 50% of Swiss, and 74% of Swiss view Canada positively!