

Switzerland is reduced to tennis

Switzerland's image in the foreign media

The Swiss had to realize in the Arab countries at the beginning of 2006, how fast an image problem can arise: In the heat of the cartoon controversy, their national flag was burned along with the Danish one.



The wounds have healed slowly. At the turn of the millennium, the country of the Alps, of lakes and chocolate was faced with a media storm on a part of its history, which the Swiss themselves would have preferred to ignore: What role did their politicians, entrepreneurs, scientists, teachers and others actually play during the Hitler period?

The neutral image, passed on for decades in schoolbooks, rhetorical speeches and media coverage, had cracked in view of an international wave of litigation that was caused by American lawyer Ed Fagan, representing Jewish victims of the Holocaust. He tried to publicly demonstrate that Swiss banks, in particular, but also other companies, as well as the Federal Council of Bern had profited from the victims' suffering.

For months, Switzerland made headlines with a subject matter that nobody wants to be associated with. It was especially damaging to the image of a country that had gotten extremely cozy in the niche "exclusive neutrality", and one that was paid good money for this reputational advantage: Few other countries benefit from UN postings like Switzerland does. On occasion, some banks' dealings with dictators have made headlines, whenever accounts from Imelda Marcos and others showed up in Zurich, Geneva or Basel. But those headlines normally remained below the awareness

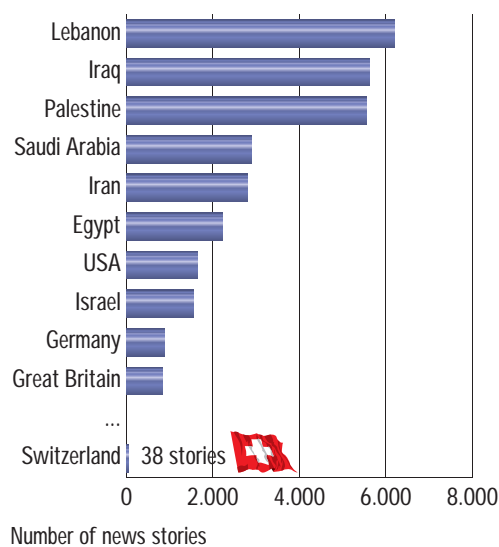
threshold – something that cannot be maintained about the outrage on the Holocaust connections.

That said, the scars seem to have healed. Switzerland has sunk back into media nirvana. **Graph 1** illustrates the extent to which this has happened: The US prime time news have done entirely without references to events in the 26 cantons, and the same is true for journalists of the **BBC** or **ITV**. Arab TV news as well as South African and German news broadcast occasional stories. Yet **graph 2** shows that TV journalists in particular, seem to become aware of this country in the heart of Europe when their tennis idol is playing at a tournament. Without Roger Federer, Switzerland would be just as relevant for the international TV stage as Mozambique, the Seychelles or Andorra.

Business sections of the international media do not provide another, more active image of Switzerland, either. One example is the company coverage in Switzerland's most important economic partner country: The German opinion leading media largely ignore corporations such as ABB, Nestlé or UBS. Novartis tops the news coverage with 250 stories – for the analysis period of 10 months this is an average of 25 news stories per month in 18 media outlets analyzed (**Graph 3**). This is less than two stories per month per media outlet.

In view of this routine coverage, Switzerland cannot build an image that creates awareness for

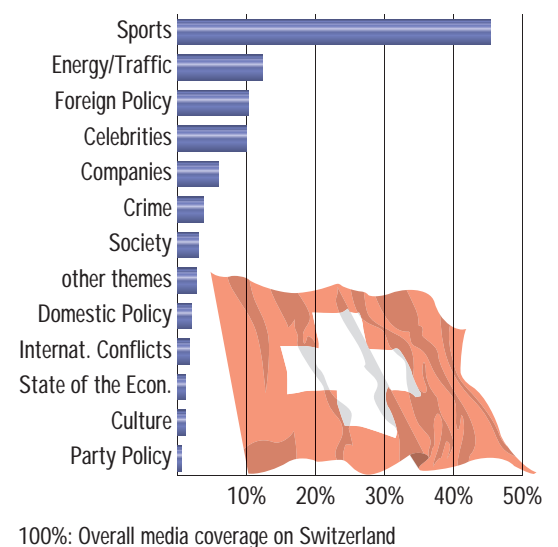
1) Presence of Switzerland in the Arab TV news



Source: Media Tenor
01/01 – 08/31/2006

Basis: Overall 44.817 mentions
in 7 arabic media

2) Topical structure of coverage in TV news



Source: Media Tenor
01/01 – 08/31/2006

Basis: 351 stories on Switzerland
in 31 TV news

the special qualities of its companies. Yet the corporations from Basel, Vevey or Zurich enjoy high standing within the German journalistic community. Coverage is rather positive on balance – aside from the bankrupt Swissair. Its successor SWISS has gained a respect on par with Roche or Swatch in the editorial rooms from **FAZ** to **Spiegel**. However, the media performance of Swiss companies does not appear to be sustainable.

Another scandal, and the international media will see red again. This can happen at any time, as the Swiss had to realize in the Arab countries at the beginning of 2006: In the heat of the cartoon controversy, their national flag was burned along with the Danish one. Had they communicated above the awareness threshold, the mistake would have occurred to the journalists in charge. (rs)

Basis:

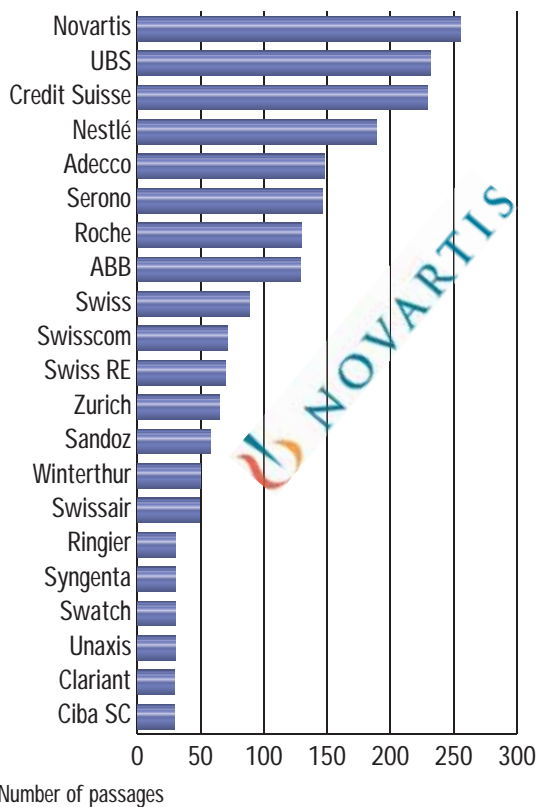
Media: 31 international TV news (Germany, U.S., UK, Arabia, South Africa): Germany: ARD Tagesthemen, ARD Tagesschau, ZDF Heute, ZDF Heute Journal, RTL Aktuell, Sat.1 News, ProSieben News, U.S.: NBC Nightly News, CBS Evening News; ABC World News Tonight, FOX News; Südafrika: Africaans News, English News, E-tv News, Zulu/xhosa News, Sotho News, SABC 3 News @ One, SABC 3 News @ 10, SABC 2 The Newsmarker; UK: BBC 1 6 O'Clock News, BBC 1 10 O'Clock News, ITN Early Evening News, ITV News At Ten, BBC 2 Newsnight; Arabic media: Al Manar, Al Alam, Al Arabiyah, Al Ikhbariya, Al Jazeera, Lbc, Nile News; 18 German TV and print media (coverage on companies)

Period of analysis: 01.01. – 31.10.2006

Analysis: 351 stories on Switzerland; overall 145.322 stories in 31 TV news were analysed, and 209.350 passages (at least 5 lines/sec.) on companies in German TV and print media.

Low awareness: The German opinion leading media can easily do without ABB, Nestlé or UBS.

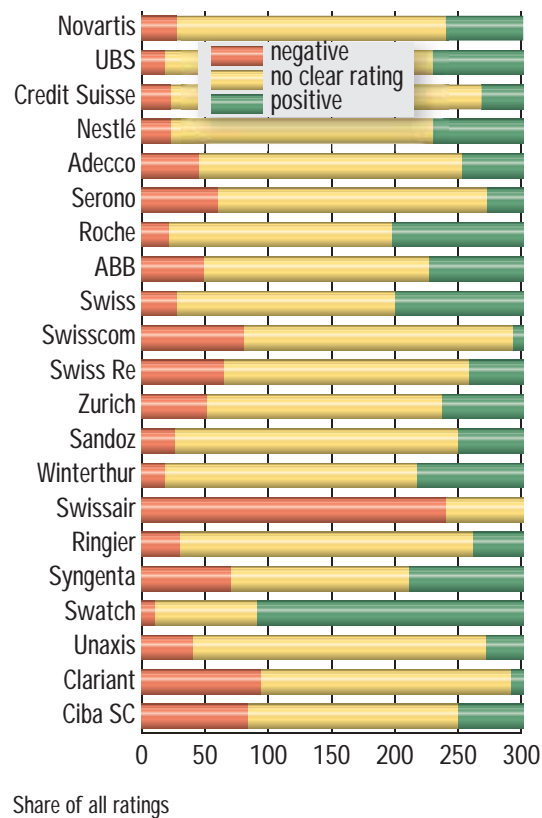
3) Presence of Swiss companies in German media



Source: Media Tenor
01/01 – 10/31/2006

Basis: 209.350 passages on companies, industries and managers in 18 German media

4) Rating of Swiss companies in German media



Source: Media Tenor
01/01 – 10/31/2006

Basis: 209.350 passages on companies, industries and managers in 18 German media