

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE SWISS ABROAD

S W I S S

REVIEW

AUGUST 2014 / NO. 4



**Roger Federer is flawless,
even when others are better**

**The Yeniche in Switzerland
are asserting themselves**

**Franz Weber and his fight for
a better Switzerland**



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SWISS CARE

Critical reflection is not sacrilegious

PEOPLE WERE UPSET and let it be known – politicians as well as journalists. The reason? At the end of June, the “SonntagsZeitung” published a report on a “secret think tank” formed in Berne with the intention of “changing the political system”. The driving force behind the think tank are not subversive elements of the political far left or far right, however, but the Swiss Federal Chancellery. This government office is more or less the centre of political activities within the Federal Palace in Berne and is necessarily involved in the day-to-day functioning of our democracy. Nevertheless, the general public response to the article suggested that people do not consider it the job of the Federal Chancellery to reflect on the system.

Why not? Isn't it true that we have been hearing and reading everywhere that for some time now the political system in Switzerland has not been functioning as “perfectly” as it should and as it once did? In place of democratically necessary controls and critique, a toxic atmosphere of mistrust is spreading. The politicians don't trust one another, and the people have lost trust in politicians, public institutions and authorities, and the media. This is abundantly clear in the campaigns and debates preceding public votes, in which the fears of citizens are manipulated and which focus on polemics and sensationalist propaganda instead of sound arguments. At the ballot box, statements and decisions are then made that can ultimately have fatal consequences – for instance, when the vote contradicts other constitutional norms and international treaties.



Thinking critically about our system, about the causes of the fears that are surfacing ever more frequently, about perceived and real threats, about the responsibility of the people as the sovereign and as the final legislative authority, and about how the losing side is treated in political disputes is not only not sacrilegious but is in fact an absolute necessity for Switzerland.

And now let us turn to the content and future of “Swiss Review”. This issue takes a closer look at the Yeniche, their difficult history and the status of this minority in Switzerland today. The cultural section focuses on a major art collection which the Museum of Fine Arts Berne is set to inherit. This prospect is not a cause for celebration as it once again raises the question of how we should treat art and objects of cultural value when their origins are not entirely clear.

And, finally, a word about the future. Beginning in October, “Swiss Review” will have a new layout. It will be more modern and reader-friendly. Naturally, we will continue to feature articles of substance and provide information important to you as Swiss abroad. The new concept will affect in particular the electronic versions for the app and the Internet. A number of technical innovations will be implemented that will make “Swiss Review” easier and more attractive to read as an e-paper.

BARBARA ENGEL

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Cover image: Roger Federer playing against the Colombian Alejandro Falla in the final of the ATP tournament in Halle on 15 June 2014

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Ecopop and Swiss abroad

The comment on the Ecopop initiative in the editorial of the June issue of “Swiss Review”, claiming that Swiss abroad would no longer be able to return to Switzerland if the maximum immigration limit were reached, cannot – even allowing for a sceptical attitude towards the initiative – be allowed to pass in this absolute form. Swiss nationals are assured of a right to return to their homeland at any time under constitutional provisions, and these provisions are to remain unchanged in the future. In its statements, the Federal Council stands by its undertaking to the effect that the constitutional guarantees, such as those of Art. 24 (2 B), are to be taken into account in

drawing up admission requirements. The text of the initiative does not prevent a distinction between Swiss nationals and foreigners. As Swiss citizens must in all events be permitted to return to Switzerland, if the initiative were accepted the “immigration quota” for foreigners would also therefore depend on the number of returning Swiss nationals.

JEAN-MARC CREVOISIER,
HEAD OF INFORMATION,
FEDERAL DEPARTMENT OF
FOREIGN AFFAIRS (FDFA)

Scaremongering

The commentary on Ecopop in the editorial is subjective scaremongering. No popular initiative can overturn the fundamental constitutional right of the holder of a Swiss

passport to settle in Switzerland at any time. Even if the worst came to the worst, any halfway reasonable court would intervene. The management of immigration is an important part of a country's sovereignty. To simply surrender this sovereignty in negotiations is testament to a catastrophic policy. Immigration policy is a prerogative of the state and should serve to promote the public good. Countries with a history of mass immigration have been aware of this for some time and apply immigration policy accordingly.

MATT FREPP, TORONTO, CANADA

It will have been a waste of 42 years

Does anyone remember the Club of Rome and the “Limits

to Growth” report it published in 1972? It wasn't drafted by extremists, but everyone found it disturbing, and so it got buried. If the Ecopop initiative is accepted, Switzerland and the rest of the world will have wasted 42 years. Or not?

BRUNO STUDER,
SANARY SUR MER, FRANCE

“It is always others who are surplus”

After the success of nationalist movements in the EU elections, the politically correct polemic of “Swiss Review” against the Ecopop initiative is wide of the mark. Especially as our Federal Council has no intention of implementing the mass immigration initiative endorsed by the people. This means that the

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pressure must be increased yet further. After around a quarter of Europeans voted against the EU's present political course, Switzerland can happily leave the bilateral route with the Brussels vasals of the USA: The Swiss government should again finally start fighting for agreements that are in the national interest instead of taking a lead from the ineffectual lobby-controlled behaviour of the Commissions in Brussels.

DR. ING. (ETH) JEAN-PIERRE VOIRET, CALW, GERMANY

Realistic and farsighted decision-making

Some issues may still be a "matter of taste" or a matter of opinion. But (largely) unrestricted immigration and (resulting) overpopulation, on the other hand, are not merely a question of quality of life; they could even become a serious threat to basic survival. As in all areas, common sense applies in this case, too: if we do not remember this, not only will our mental and, as a result, also our physical well-being be jeopardised, we will also lose our room for manoeuvre to protect our basic needs in times of crisis. This is where the utopian faith in unending economic growth, increasing profits and material prosperity is in stark contrast to the reality of increasing environmental destruction and pollution, stress and the growing number of illnesses caused by the former.

It is up to us to face up to this reality, to come to terms with it and to prevent the worst by reacting appropriately as early as possible.

VITAL SCHERRER,
S. JORGE, PORTUGAL

Poor taste

Cover photo of Swiss Review 2: Symbolic, my eye. It is a picture of submission and defeat! Revolting, degrading and poor taste. What's next? A symbolic EU yodel?

ARMIN KUNKLER,
BONIFAY FL, USA

Book tip

Dear Swiss readers and readers from elsewhere in the world – especially from France and Germany: I am sometimes upset when I read the letters from the "Swiss Review" mailbox and, as an exceptionally helvetophile Hungarian, I will take the liberty of recommending my little book "Helvetismen – Deutsches Kulturwörterbuch der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft" [Helvetisms – German Cultural Dictionary of the Swiss Confederation] so that you really appreciate the great treasure that Switzerland has and represents. Then people will also understand the results of referenda without incorrectly interpreting them. With great respect for the sovereign Swiss citizen.

PROFESSOR LÁSZLÓ ÓDOR,
BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

Love in foreboding times

"THERE CAN BE NO FORGETTING; what transcends reason cannot be forgotten," remarks one of the survivors in Urs Faes' book "Sommer in Brandenburg" (Summer in Brandenburg). The narrative, which is actually a work of literary and historical research, begins in 1938. Ron and Lissy meet at the Hachschara centre in Ahrensdorf near Trebbin, one of the farms run by the "Reich's Deportation of the Jews in Germany" along Zionist lines. He is from Hamburg, she comes from Vienna. Both are from affluent middle-class backgrounds. At the "emigration training facility" in Ahrensdorf, young Jews learn about arable farming, beekeeping, agricultural work and craftsmanship to prepare them for emigration to the promised land and a future as settlers in Palestine.

Love blossoms between Lissy and Ron. Urs Faes allows this love story to unfold as literary imagination. Stolen glances, surreptitious brushes, the desire and great hope of a future together – and a day and night together just before they separate.

Faes involves us in his research. In the life of the young people on the farm, an almost idyllic place despite the strict rules, hard work, doubts and fears, news of the gruesome events of nationalistic racial fanaticism only initially arrives through letters from parents and siblings. There are reports of exclusion, humiliation, expulsion and deportation.

"We had no idea how bad it would become," recalls Efraim Jochmann, known as Efri. Faes visits him during his research in Jerusalem. Efri, a 13-year-old orphan back then, was the youngest person at the Ahrensdorf farm. "Never in my entire life have I felt so looked after as I did on that country estate," he recounts as an old man.



But the time comes when the Nazis will no longer tolerate the farms. Lissy had obtained her permit to emigrate with a group to Palestine shortly beforehand. Ron and Efri are sent to the Neuendorf compulsory labour camp; Ron is carried off to a concentration camp in 1943. This is the last we hear of him. And all trace is lost of Lissy somewhere on the journey to Palestine or in Palestine itself.

"I'm completely enraptured by you. You will remain in my heart for as long as I live," writes Ron in a letter to Lissy. It is his last letter – a love story without a happy ending. It was a mere coincidence that Urs Faes stumbled upon this story through photos at the Museum of the Jewish People in Tel Aviv and carried out his research. As an author, not only does he describe the love story as he envisages it from the information available, he also breaks up the chronology of the events using four sequences with notes from his research. This stylistic device may irritate initially, but the encounters with witnesses increasingly emerge as a second moving plotline.

BARBARA ENGEL

URS FAES, "Sommer in Brandenburg"; Suhrkamp Verlag, Berlin; 262 pages; CHF 28.50, EUR 20; also available as an e-book.

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Waterscapes

Glaciers, waterfalls, rivers and lakes – next to rock formations these are the defining elements of mountain landscapes. Water forces its way from the summits to the valley, shaping the landscape over thousands of years. Water in the mountains sometimes seems threatening and wild and sometimes gentle and dreamy. Swiss photographer Roland Gerth and journalist Emil Zopfi have together produced a book full of wonderful images and inspiring passages. It pays homage to the wildness and aesthetic quality of water in the Swiss mountains.



Roland Gerth, Emil Zopfi, "Faszination Bergwasser – Die schönsten Wasserlandschaften der Schweiz"; AS Verlag, Zurich; 128 pages, 105 images; CHF 45, EUR 35.90.



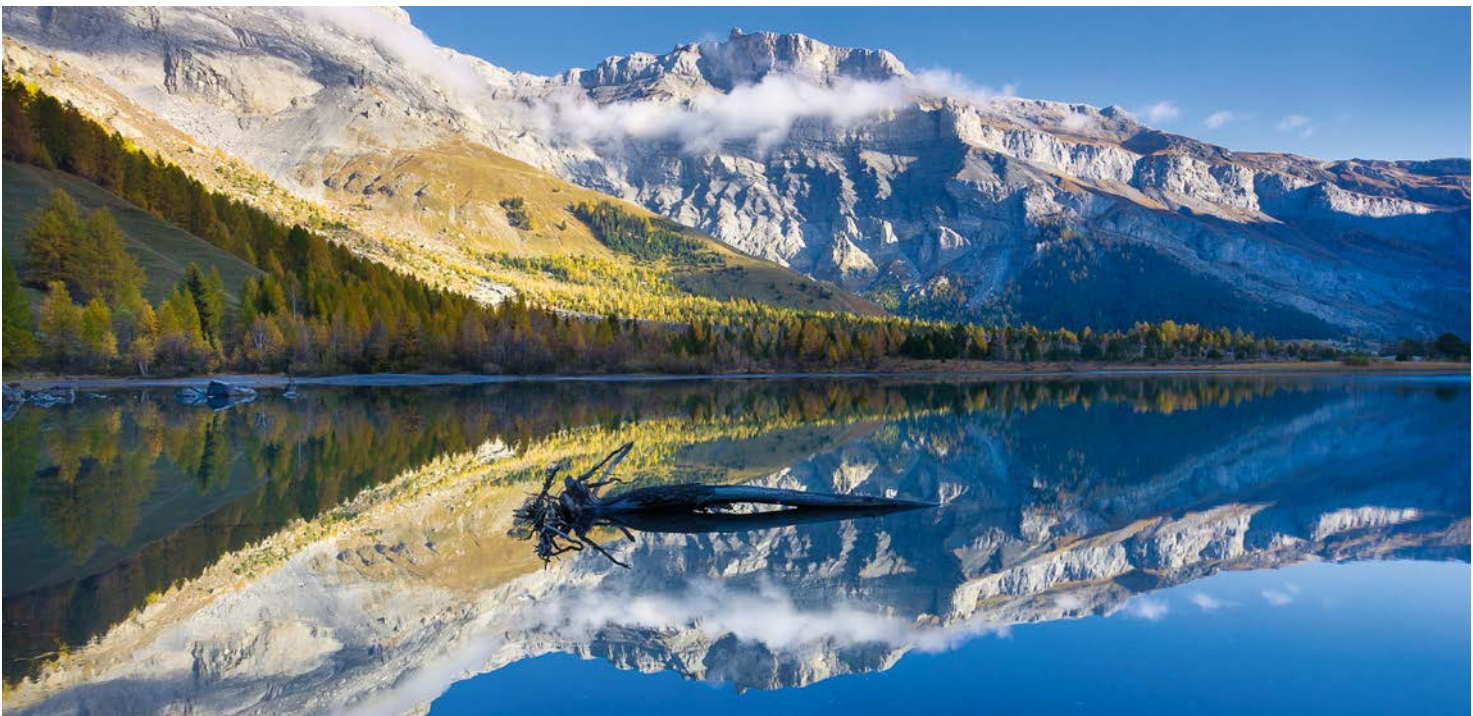
The Maggia near Ponte Brolla in the canton of Ticino



The Fälese in the canton of Appenzell Innerrhoden with the peak of the Altmann in the background



The Gault Glacier in the canton of Berne and in the morning light



Lac de Derborence in the canton of Valais with the Tour Saint-Martin crag, also known as the Quille du Diable (Devil's Skittle)



Göscheneralp in the canton of Uri with the peaks of the Damma mountains in the background



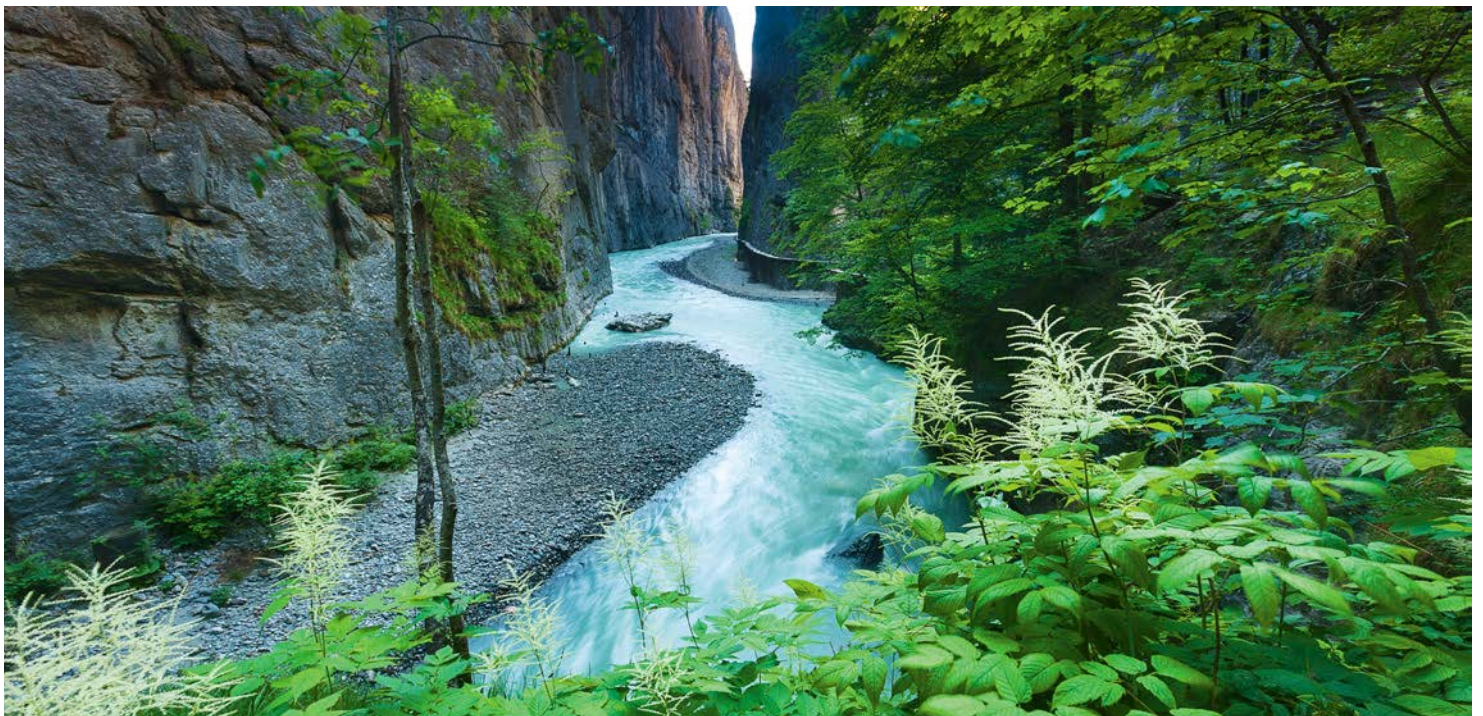
The Crestasee near Flims in the canton of Grisons



background the Bärglistock bathed in the



The tributary that flows into the Märjelensee at the edge of the Great Aletsch Glacier in the canton of Valais



The Aare Gorge between Meiringen and Innertkirchen in the canton of Berne

“We’re very much normal people – just people on wheels.”

Young Yeniche people are insisting on the right to lead an itinerant life as travellers. Switzerland is struggling with this issue as it prompts debate about the treatment of minorities.

By Marc Lettau



Travellers on the Kleine Allmend in Berne in April 2014

Everything is neat and tidy here. All the caravans are clean and well equipped. No rubbish is left lying around, and music is played at a reasonable volume. Freshly washed clothes hang to dry in the sun, and the dogs are well-behaved and kept on leads. You might well think that this is a typically well-maintained holiday campsite.

But you would be mistaken. It is not holidaymakers who are staying in the caravans on Wölflistrasse in Berne. These are the homes of Yeniche travellers who, like those of us who live settled lives, get up early in the morning, go to work, do housework in the evening, remind their children to do their homework, watch television and enjoy a beer. This is not a campsite but simply a car park – without sanitary facilities but with water and power supply. The Yeniche have only just secured this site from the city of Berne and are full of praise for it: “It really is a great facility.”

There was nothing great about Berne several weeks ago. The travellers’ patience was running thin as there is still no sign of the residential and transitory sites that have been promised for years. Young Yeniche people vociferously called for these sites to finally be provided because without them Switzerland’s nomadic minority would no longer be able to continue their way of life. On 22 April 2014, they finally occupied parts of the Kleine Allmend site in Berne parking around 80 caravans. Banners highlighted the issue: “lack of sites” – “help” – “we have rights”.

The authorities finally sent in the police, and the situation turned ugly. The police encircled the group, numbered the Yeniche with stickers and water-resistant marker pens, writing directly on the skin, and led them away, terrified small children among them.

The police actually conducted themselves correctly in line with conventional practice

and refrained from the use of violence. But when “gypsies” are numbered and led away by uniformed officers, sinister episodes are inevitably called to mind and not just among the Yeniche. “It was awful. It felt as though they were warning us: ‘We’ve still got you gypsies firmly under our control,’” says the traveller Albert Rossier, one of the protest organisers. “That day reminded us that discrimination against our people could resurface at any time.”

Fewer instead of more sites

Rossier may be mistaken. It took just days for the cities of Berne and Biel to offer the Yeniche temporary sites. Both cities expressed understanding for the Yeniche sense of despair over the broken promises and said that they could not be blamed for that. The Federal Supreme Court had in fact decided back in 2003 that the cantons and communes had to take account of the travelling community’s requirements and create more



A father with his children, as the police clear the site on the Kleine Allmend on 24 April 2014

sites. Yet the number of sites has since fallen rather than increased. There is a shortfall of around 60 sites in Switzerland. One reason for this, as Venanz Nobel from the Yeniche association Schäft Qwant explains, is that urban development is reducing the traditional stop-over sites.

Distance from the horror of the past

The controversy brings to light a murky chapter in recent Swiss history - the discrimination against travellers by the state and society until well into the second half of the 20th century, the repercussions of which are still being felt today. Particularly oppressive are the consequences of the “support service for the children of the road” set up by the Pro Juventute foundation in 1926. With the assistance of state welfare authorities, around 600 Yeniche children were removed from their families and placed under the care of the “support service”. Alfred Siegfried, the figure behind the aid organi-

sation, regarded the “break-up of the family unit”, “prevention of the formation of undesirable families” and the “internment of incorrigible persons” as a good way of combating “asocial tribes”. Siegfried, whose theories remained unchallenged for many years, always considered the “gypsies” as “intellectually and morally inferior” and as “vagrants with poor genetic make-up” with a “tendency towards slovenliness and criminality”. He publicly proclaimed in 1964 that a significant proportion of the Yeniche had to be “categorised as mentally deficient”. The persecution only ended in 1973. In 1986, Federal Councillor Alfons Egli apologised for the federal government’s financial contribution to the ill treatment. The federal government set up the Future for the Swiss Travelling Community foundation in 1995.

New courageous generation

The young Yeniche are also familiar with the dark chapter in their history which

mostly concerned their grandparents. They nevertheless do not want to portray their generation as victims. They embrace their Yeniche roots, know their rights and duties as citizens and are self-assured. This is not something that can be taken for granted as the Yeniche culture almost died out in Switzerland after the years of persecution. It took years for them to rediscover and re-establish their own identity. Apart from the Yeniche community, quixotic neo-romantics also played a role here. These included the author Sergius Golowin (1930–2006), who believed “cosmic knowledge” lay in Yeniche culture and mediated between the travellers and politicians.

In the course of their journey of self-discovery, the Swiss travellers set up the Travellers’ Society (Radgenossenschaft der Landstrasse) in 1975 and increasingly defined themselves as an independent ethnic minority. Venanz Nobel, who was barely 20

years old at the time, is amazed today at how powerful the Travellers' Society has become. Still persecuted as "vagrants", the founders come across as defiant and visionary Yeniche: "A new generation has displayed Yeniche courage in Berne, a generation that once again has lived on the road since childhood."

No imposition from above

At federal government level, since 1986 the Federal Office of Culture (FOC) has been responsible for the Yeniche minority, their recognition and the protection of their cultural heritage. This is no easy task as the older Yeniche believe much of the repression experienced was brought about by the state. Fiona Wigger from the Culture and Society section at the FOC is aware of this issue: "It is therefore vital that no 'cultural advancement' is imposed on the Yeniche from above. It is a question of supporting what the Yeniche themselves want," she remarks. The emphasis is on the creation of new residential and transitory sites: "Sites are vital to ensuring the continuation of the itinerant way of life. The search for sites is also the most difficult task of all." Voters in the commune of Thal (St Gallen) rejected a stop-off travellers' site in May. The conditions appeared favourable as the plot of land in question was provided by federal government as a site for travellers. The rejection of the proposal in Thal

"showed us that good will alone is not enough", says Wigger.

Settled majority

The Federal Office constantly has to confirm that the number of residential and transitory sites is not increasing. Is the site issue really that significant when only a minority of Yeniche are actually on the road? Wigger points out that the Yeniche who are settled or "have been forced to settle" still strongly define themselves as travellers. The emphasis is therefore placed on the lifestyle of the minority.

The Yeniche language is another identity-defining factor. Yeniche was nevertheless primarily a protective language and less a language fostered for its own sake on which the culture was based. Certainly not all Yeniche people speak the Yeniche language, just as not all of them rattle (travel) around in Scharottel (caravans) in search of a Pläri (site). Not all of them schränze (sell goods door to door), let alone boil their Fludi (water) on the Funi (fire).

But ever greater importance is being attached to the language. The Yeniche themselves increasingly highlight that the appreciation and preservation of their language is part of their recognition as a minority. "Whether majority society accepts us as a people also depends on our ability to master our own language," ob-

served the Schäft Qwant association a decade ago. Wigger explains that the FOC plays a supportive role here and backs projects that document the Yeniche language. The financial contribution is nevertheless modest.

"We are the 27th canton"

Essentially, the question is raised as to whether a few sites would be enough to put right the world of the Yeniche and to declare that the historical failings of majority society are a thing of the past. Daniel Huber, President of the Travellers' Society, remarks: "It would obviously help redress the situation if we were to obtain more sites." He also outlines a much wider claim: "We are, in principle, the 27th canton of Switzerland." The itinerant Yeniche are also citizens. They are all, without exception, registered with a communal authority, are liable to pay taxes there and enrol their children at the local school – the modern Yeniche do not wish to come across as uneducated.

The Zurich-based historian Thomas Huonker, who has been carrying out research into the history of the Swiss Yeniche for years, believes the desire of the Yeniche to be perceived as the 27th canton reflects the essence of all the problems. The historian explains that a completely "normal" level of recognition is far from being achieved as the Yeniche in Switzerland are unable to exercise any rights of self-determination. It is as though the support provided for the Yeniche is granted "as a reward": "If you are good, then you will get something in return." A minority's right to existence must be more than a gesture from the majority.

Huonker believes there is a lack of general appreciation that the Yeniche "do not possess the resources to which they are actually entitled". All Swiss Yeniche pay taxes regularly. But the principle of "no taxation without representation" does not apply to them. Huonker points out: "They pay taxes but are not represented within the state and therefore remain on the periphery."

Voting on the destiny of other people

Huonker is clearly aware that the creation of a 27th canton for a "non-territorial ethnic group" is likely to remain a utopian idea. However, this does not release the state

YENICHE, TRAVELLERS, ROMA

The Yeniche are an ethnic group in their own right with their own language and specific way of life and of making a living who primarily live in Switzerland, Germany, Austria and France. The Yeniche population stands at around 35,000 in Switzerland. The establishment of modern states, beginning in the 17th and 18th centuries, with rights of citizenship and domicile geared towards a settled population had a major impact on the Yeniche. It meant that a nomadic lifestyle became an issue. Like the term "gypsies", the term "travellers" was also subsequently used in a pejorative way: travelling came to represent an unsettled, slovenly way of life. This notion is inaccurate in relation to the Yeniche in Switzerland. Most Yeniche in Switzerland are settled, with an estimated 3,000 to 5,000 living a completely or partially nomadic lifestyle. During the modern period of state formation, the Roma, an ethnic group who migrated to Europe from the Indian subcontinent in the 9th century, also came under pressure in Europe. From a Swiss perspective, the Roma are primarily seen as a people passing through from south-eastern Europe and France and are often viewed in a negative light. There is little awareness of the fact that thousands of settled Roma live in Switzerland without being perceived as such. They have migrated to Switzerland from south-eastern Europe in particular. (mul)

from its obligation to strive for better political integration of the Yeniche. Any marginalising decisions by the majority must at the very least be avoided. He too makes reference to the decision reached in Thal: if the Swiss majority is allowed to vote on the right of existence of a minority, which is also Swiss, at communal level, then the “natural right to exist” is effectively denied to the Yeniche people. Huonker says: “Voting on the destiny of other people is extremely problematic from a constitutional perspective.”

Longings of “ordinary people”

Although the prejudices against the Yeniche continue to have an effect, Huonker has also observed a change in attitudes: “Swiss people increasingly see the Yeniche as essentially people who live and work here and who simply want to be recognised,” he says. Settled “ordinary people” do not feel particularly attached to their home turf, and the nomadic lifestyle is very much en vogue: An itinerant existence for work purposes is seen as a modern way of making a living, and there are lots of amateur travellers who head off for a “transit site”, in other words a second home, in Tuscany, Provence or Berlin.

With their growing recognition as a Swiss minority, there is also an increasing need – even pressure – among the Yeniche to distinguish themselves from foreign travellers. “We are confederates,” underlines Mike Gerzner, the young President of the Movement of Swiss Travellers. He says this to distance himself from the foreign Roma who often pass through the country from France. Sites are therefore required for Swiss travellers who visit their customers as door-to-door salespeople and tradesmen, explains Gerzner, and separate sites are

needed for the often large groups of Roma passing through.

Locals versus foreigners

The emphasis on the national aspect is securing the Yeniche growing support from conservative-minded factions who were previously very critical of them. SVP National Councillor Yvette Estermann has become something of a political advocate of the Swiss travellers. She is calling for greater protection of the “domestic Yeniche” from the federal authorities against the incoming Roma. Racism expert Georg Kreis believes the distancing of the Swiss Yeniche from their “foreign brothers and sisters” is also a “cause for reflection”. It underlines once more “that minorities discriminated against – not least owing to pressure from the majority and a compulsion to distance themselves – tend to pass on the discrimination they have experienced themselves to others”. Perhaps it is in fact much more banal than that and the Yeniche and Roma are getting in each other’s way because it is becoming increasingly crowded on their sites. Foreign Roma have only been allowed to enter Switzerland since the mid-1970s. As previously mentioned, the number of sites has since fallen instead of increased.

No longer like refugees

Claude Gerzner, also from the Movement of Swiss Travellers, is very optimistic. He has seen a change for the better in recent

months: “Far less prejudice now exists. We feel much less like refugees in our own country.” If a Yeniche family turns up with their caravan today, “everyone now knows that we’re very much normal people. Just people on wheels”. Venanz Nobel is somewhat more restrained. It is mainly travelling Yeniche who are enjoying better recognition: “We will have achieved our goal when the Yeniche as an entire ethnic group – including both settled and travelling Yeniche – obtain recognition.”

Back to Wölflistrasse in Berne. What do people here think about the debate on Switzerland’s treatment of the Yeniche minority? A powerfully built, bearded man standing next to his caravan takes a deep draw on his cigarette, looks vaguely towards the Alps and does not really address the question. He has no use for intellectual rigmarole. He feels the urge to leave. He suddenly decides: “Come on, Claudia, let’s get going!” The couple start to pack. He wants to leave immediately. He does not want to become like the “stationary Yeniche” who have had “travelling driven out of them”. Where is he heading? “Perhaps to Ticino or to Central Switzerland – we’ll see.”

MARC LETTAU is an editor with “Swiss Review”



A photo of travellers in Switzerland taken in the 1930s – the children were frequently taken away from their parents back then

Just one health insurance fund instead of 60

The outstanding but expensive Swiss healthcare system is a constant political issue. The Swiss people are set to have their say once again – the creation of a unified health insurance fund is on the referendum agenda for 28 September 2014.

By Jürg Müller

Is someone trying to treat the “flu with chemotherapy” here, as CVP National Councillor Ruth Humbel claims? Or is it a matter of combating a cost-driving “pseudo-competition” and ending actuarial chaos, which is how SP National Councillor Jacqueline Fehr sees the situation? As usual, political adversaries are at odds over the precise diagnosis and correct treatment for the sick patient, the “healthcare system”. This is no different in the case of the latest product to be put in the political medicine chest, the unified health insurance fund.

Whether this treatment will actually be used will be decided on 28 September 2014. This is when the Swiss people will vote on the initiative for a “public health insurance fund” supported by various user and consumer organisations, the Social Democrats and the Greens. The initiative’s key demand is as follows: “Social health insurance is to be provided by a unified, national institution governed by public law.” If the proposal is adopted, the 60 or so private health insurance funds would have to withdraw from the mandatory basic insurance market. They would only be allowed to provide supplementary insurance.

“Dangerous treatment”

Proponents of free competition believe this is the wrong approach. This is despite certain grievances that both service providers (hospitals and doctors) and patients have with health insurance funds. As Ruth Humbel puts it: “A unified fund is worse than simply an illusory solution. It is a dangerous treatment with serious ramifications.” Opponents in Parliament warned of a monopoly system with no freedom of choice or incentive to provide healthcare cost-effectively. A proven system is being put in jeopardy for a high-risk experiment, and a unified fund would result in higher costs and premiums, they said. The FDP Council of States member Karin Keller-

Suter from St Gallen called it a “first step towards a healthcare system fully financed by the taxpayer”. Several speakers in Parliament emphasised that the main reasons for the rise in costs were greater life expectancy and medical advancements and not, as is often claimed, the administrative and advertising costs of the health insurance providers.

“Increasing bureaucracy”

This is precisely where supporters of the initiative disagree: “We have increasing bureaucracy,” says SP National Councillor Jacqueline Fehr. The problems are set to become greater and greater. There are now 300,000 insurance products with which the funds attempt to attract new policyholders: “That’s chaos, not competition.” With their marketing and advertising costs as well as the annoying telephone advertising, the health insurance funds have demonstrated that they care “more about their business than the wellbeing of patients”. Complaints about the funds’ aggressive and irritating advertising campaigns are indeed becoming increasingly frequent.

It is claimed that the system would become simpler, fairer and more cost-effective if the initiative were adopted. Simpler because the current system has become “completely unmanageable and lacking in transparency”, as the initiative organisers state. Fairer because the health insurance funds currently invest heavily in the acquisition

of healthy policyholders, known as “good risks”, resulting in higher premiums overall, and more cost-effective because the rising costs would be halted thanks to savings on advertising and administration. Significant savings would also be made because the funds would be able to provide care for the chronically ill and expensive patients more efficiently and they would have greater interest in prevention and a stronger negotiating position for the setting of rates and prices.

The popular initiative has already proved fruitful in one respect at least. The Federal Assembly agreed a modification to the spread of risks between the individual funds in spring in order to curb the pursuit of good risks.

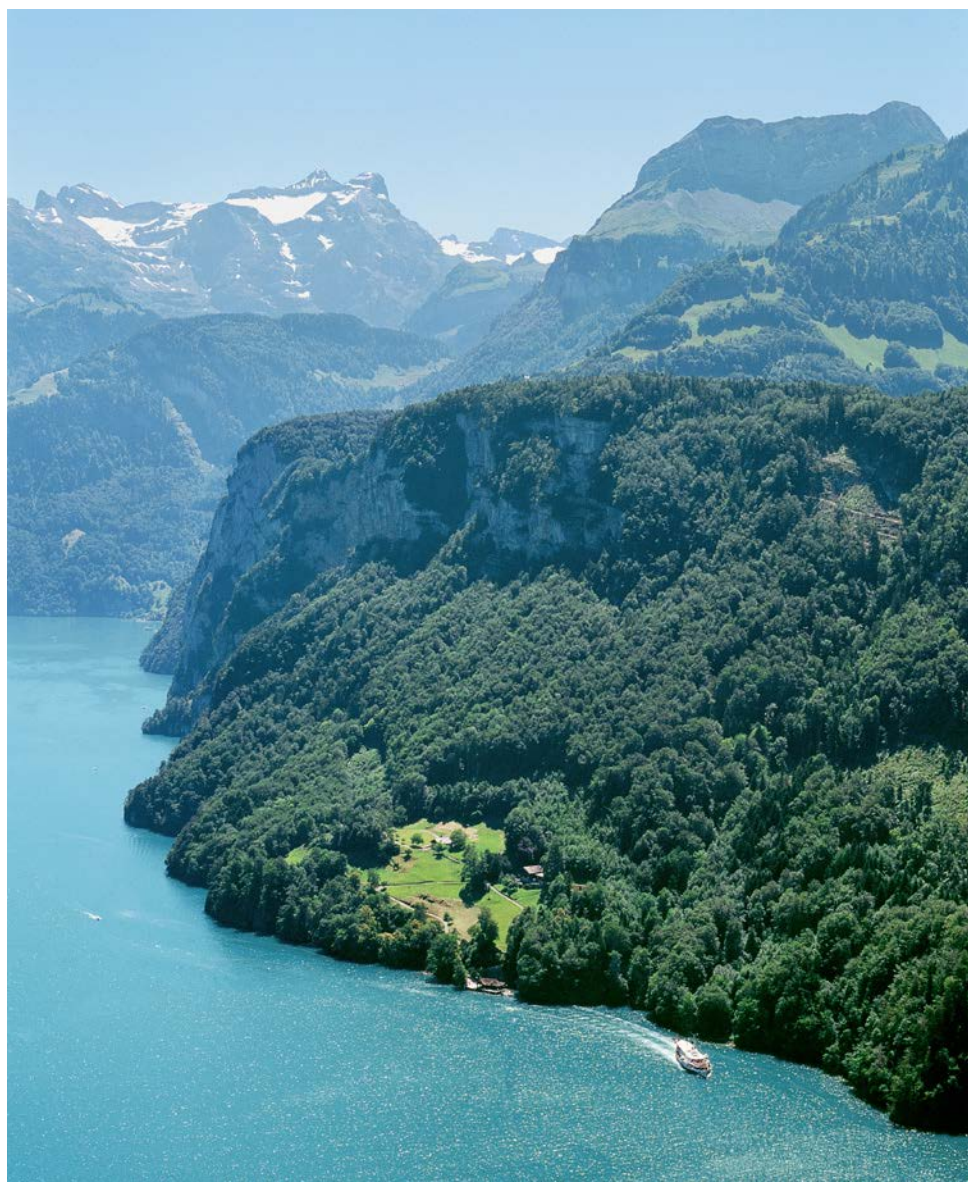
HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY WANTS LOWER VAT RATE

The gastronomy sector feels discriminated against – services in the hospitality industry are subject to a higher rate of VAT than take-away establishments. Customers eating in a restaurant have to pay the standard 8% VAT compared to just 2.5% at a food stand. The popular initiative entitled “End to VAT discrimination in the hospitality industry”, launched by GastroSuisse, will be put to the vote on 28 September 2014. It seeks to make restaurants subject to the same tax rate as that applied to simple food provision, which includes take-aways. It should be noted that the normal rate of VAT in Switzerland is 8%, while the reduced rate of 2.5% applies to everyday goods, such as food. There is also a special rate of 3.8% for accommodation services. The Federal Council and Parliament are opposed to the initiative, not least because the lower rate would result in a tax shortfall of up to 750 million Swiss francs. (JM)

An idyllic meadow full of drama

The Rütli meadow has become a symbol of Swiss national legend, with myth playing a decisive role. The site continues to hold great appeal to the present day, although that harbours a risk of misuse and overexploitation.

By Jürg Müller



The Rütli by Lake Lucerne in the canton of Uri

It was a gathering under the cover of darkness when the three confederates met on the Rütli in 1291 to pledge an oath of alliance. Such a meeting would not be as straightforward today as authorisation would have to be obtained and the three valiant figures could only have conducted their affairs during the daytime as overnight stays on the famous meadow in the forest above Lake Uri are not permitted. And a “fully completed application” would

have to be submitted today for such an emotive issue as an oath of confederate alliance. This is according to the regulations on the use of the birthplace of Switzerland issued on 9 January 2014 by the Swiss Society for Public Utility (SGG), which manages the Rütli site.

Times have changed, but one thing has remained the same despite the new regulations — the Rütli is simply a meadow and not a pompous national shrine. It is a na-

tional memorial site which exudes calm owing to its very simplicity. Halfway between the landing stage and the meadow, visitors can stop off at the Rütlihaus restaurant and enjoy a small exhibition and the Three-Countries Fountain. It is a rather remote plot of land which is only easily reached from the lake, an unspoilt location in a dramatic setting. Having arrived at the meadow, visitors are no longer sure whether they are captivated by the wonderful scenery alone or whether prior knowledge of the genius loci permeates their visual experience.

Not an historical site

This knowledge today also includes the recognition that there is little historicity surrounding the site. The historian Roger Sablonier writes that the elements of the founding myth, “the crimes of the rulers, conspiracy, Tell’s feat, the destruction of the castles and the popular uprising, were combined at the end of the 15th century to produce a picture story about the origins of the nation, but they have very little to absolutely nothing to do with actual events circa 1300. The founding myth was used in the post-1470 period as a literary and legal justification for the confederation’s special existence

as a state at this time, rather than as an historically accurate account of historical events in the more distant past”.

For historians the Rütli has long since played an insignificant role as an historical site, just as William Tell plays an unimportant role. However, it still has a powerful impact as a tale steeped in history. In the new standard work “Geschichte der Schweiz” (History of Switzerland) published in 2014, Susanna Burghartz, professor of



The three confederates in the entrance hall of the Federal Palace

history at the University of Basel, writes: "Although this Tell never existed, he certainly played an historical role as a figure and, towards the end of the 15th century, was already part of the set of ideas to which an important integrative role was attributed in the emergence of federal consciousness and its legitimisation." This "set of ideas" also included the Rütli.

The role of the myth

Historians recognise that legends and myths can play a positive role. Ulrich Im Hof, a former professor of Swiss history at the University of Berne, suggests that only positivistic thinking believes in "renouncing the myth and being able to dispense with an awareness of national identity". This approach is problematic, he says, because "this vacuum created could be filled by other, more uncontrollable notions of identity". The "components of national identity and their myths — provided they embody real values and are always analysed critically — remain essential to the existence of a political society", writes Im Hof in his book entitled "Mythos Schweiz" (The Myth of Switzerland) in 1991.

The literary scholar Peter von Matt also believes myths play a fundamental political role. In his 1 August address on the Rütli in 2009, he said that for many people "this Rütli is a piece of national hokum. It is dismissed as a symbol of historical blindness, a phantom and a collective delusion". But we should be careful as we have fallen into the trap in recent years of only asking the question of myth or reality? It is not quite that simple. The origins of all nations are condensed into exciting tales and "these tales play a major role. They are essentially political codes of conduct". In the case of William

Tell the message is: "Obedience in the state has its limits. The servile spirit should never gain the upper hand." From the Rütli oath we might infer "that we in Switzerland do not need or want a chief". In his address Peter von Matt also touched upon the Seelisberg tunnel which runs beneath the Rütli and is one of the major north-south links in Europe: "The Rütli stands for the will of the confederation to belong and remain together. The tunnel represents the equally strong desire to reach out beyond national borders and play a role in the interaction between the European powers."

The Rütli can also quite plainly be seen as the location of a European dawn even without the tunnel — at least that was still true in 1991. Ulrich Bremi, the Free Democrat President of the National Council, remarked during the Swiss confederation's 700-year anniversary celebrations back then: "The Rütli must now also become a platform for a modern European Switzerland. If we are serious about what the Rütli signifies, then we will today embrace the challenge of becoming a Switzerland with an open and a European outlook." Some 5,000 invited guests, including all the

European parliamentary speakers, listened to the celebratory address on the Rütli meadow. The Rütli spirit of 1991 has nevertheless failed to help Switzerland reach the great European heights outlined by Bremi. Let us turn our attention back to the past then.

From Friedrich Schiller to Henri Guisan

The Rütli — with the meadow above Lake Uri being visited by around 100,000 people a year — has not just become a popular national pilgrimage destination in recent times. The original cantons in particular continually held events there during the 17th and 18th centuries. However, there were three events in the 19th and 20th centuries that were of major myth-building significance: Friedrich Schiller's play "William Tell" of 1804, the acquisition of the Rütli meadow by the Swiss Society for Public Utility (SGG) in 1859 and General Henri Guisan's Rütli address in 1940.

The mythical founding event by Lake Lucerne was actually canonised and exaggerated in Schiller's drama. Gioachino Rossini's opera "William Tell", which premiered in Paris in 1829, also contributed to its Europe-wide popularisation. The enthusiasm was initially greater abroad than in Switzerland. However, the revolutionary ideas did not escape the censorial authorities in Milan, Rome, London and St Petersburg, and they found themselves obliged to tone down the content in a few contentious places.

The meadow's purchase by the SGG in 1859 triggered another Rütli boom. The money was raised through a national collection campaign. This prevented a touristic development project on the memorial site. The campaign was organised very effectively. Swiss youngsters were involved in the collection, and all school pupils received a steel engraving featuring a romanticised picture of the Rütli as a token of gratitude. The SGG donated the land to the Swiss confederation as an "inalienable national asset" which transferred it to the SGG's Rütli Commission to manage it, and this remains the situation to this day.

The Rütli became a place steeped in symbolism and history thanks to Henri Guisan. The general assembled all senior officers from the rank of major upwards for the Rütli address on 25 July 1940. He outlined

the reasons for the National Redoubt and vowed that the people and army would categorically resist Nazi Germany. The event occupies a special place in the Swiss collective consciousness. “In this historic event the mutually inspiring and supportive effect can be seen which emanates from the mythical quality of the location to the events held there and — conversely — from the use of the site to the site used,” as Georg Kreis, an historian from Basel, writes in his book “Schweizer Erinnerungsorte” (Swiss Memorial Sites).

Dual depiction of the Rütli at the Federal Palace

Interestingly, the Rütli as a symbol of the old confederation was also incorporated into the symbolism of the new federal state of 1848. The Rütli myth is immortalised twice at the Federal Palace in Berne — extremely prominently in the entrance hall where the three powerful, 24-ton confederates stand pledging an oath, and very subtly in the National Council chamber where the Rütli is captured in Charles Giron’s monumental painting “Wiege der Eidgenossenschaft” (Cradle of the Confederation).

The Rütli still occupies a prominent place in the imagination of many Swiss people. It was originally patriotic and nationalistic factions who recognised the symbolic value of the site at the heart of early Switzerland. A subliminal battle for interpretational sovereignty over the Rütli continually flares up today in which all social and political movements are involved. It is used by many groups as a surface onto which a wide range of issues are projected — for or against a Swiss policy of openness towards Europe, for peace and justice, for a strong army, against the left, against the right, and for democracy, etc.

While only simple federal celebrations tended to take place on the Rütli in the past, in recent times Federal Councillors have also used the sacred site for public appearances. Addresses by Federal Councillors were totally disrupted by neo-Nazis on two occasions, in 2000 and 2005. In 2007, Alliance F, the federation of Swiss women’s organisations, launched a new approach to “wrest the Rütli from the conservative, male-dominated world and nationalistic forces”, writes Georg Kreis. President of the Swiss Confederation



Mural by Charles Giron in the National Council chamber featuring Lake Lucerne, the Rütli meadow and the Mythen mountains in the background. A naked female figure floats in the clouds holding a golden olive branch — the symbol of peace — in her hand.

Micheline Calmy-Rey (SP), President of the National Council Christine Egerszegy (FDP) and SGG President Judith Stamm (CVP) held a large joint 1 August celebration there.

Protection against misuse

A further indication of the vitality of the Rütli is the intensive media coverage given to all major events. The SVP executive address in 2011, which included an appearance by SVP Federal Councillor Ueli Maurer, received great attention. This event should not actually have been allowed to take place as political events are never held on the site. Shortly afterwards, CVP Federal Councillor Doris Leuthard was therefore not permitted to speak on the Rütli meadow at an event organised by the CVP cantonal parties.

CVP National Councillor Ida Glanzmann subsequently submitted a postulate to the Federal Council requesting that the parties be given free access to the Rütli. The Swiss Society for Public Utility (SGG), as the body responsible for managing the Rütli, was therefore obliged to undertake a fundamental review of its usage. According to SGG Director Lukas Niederberger, no clear regulations concerning the political parties previously existed. The SGG now sought to prohibit all party events in light of the controversy. Following an intervention by the Federal Chancellery, the ban was not worded quite so stringently: Anniversary celebrations of

parties can be held but the “Rütli must not be used for specific political objectives or commercial goals”. This is the wording in the new regulations on usage. Events which “address political issues that will be voted on in the next three months” and which promote specific persons or groups six months before elections, for example, are banned.

The Rütli is also to be protected against political extremism as neo-Nazis constantly attempt to draw attention to themselves there. It must not be used for objectives which “bring into question the fundamental values of the Swiss confederation”, whereby tolerance towards people who hold different views is specifically mentioned. Activities “directed against certain persons or groups in Switzerland” and which “polarise public opinion and do not accept social and cultural diversity” are therefore prohibited.

These guidelines make one thing clear — national memorials can be places of reflection. However, they always carry the risk of being misused for negative purposes owing to their great symbolic significance. The Rütli shares this fate with similar sites throughout the world.

Franz Weber and the dream of an untouched Switzerland

In his villa in Clarens on the shores of Lake Geneva, Franz Weber – a major public figure who is rather atypical of Switzerland – reflects on a life devoted to the “beauty and wellbeing of nature, humankind and animals”.

By Stéphane Herzog



Franz Weber in his home in Clarens

Franz Weber has been part of the Swiss landscape for half a century. Baby seals and the artificial version in the form of miniature cuddly toys (an idea conceived by Judith Weber, Franz's wife) are part of the childhood memories of generation X. They and their parents remember TV images of Brigitte Bardot hugging a baby seal on the ice pack. The year was 1977.

At the Hôtel Giessbach, on the steep banks of Lake Brienz, there is gratitude towards Franz Weber for rescuing the hotel complex. The crystalline lake, the belle époque boats and the small train climbing up to the hotel encapsulate the Switzer-

land that has always inspired the illustrious native of Basel and that the Swiss take delight in finding “untouched”. In Valais, Weber's shadow is cast over the villages, and the townspeople who wander this countryside are full of empathy and admiration for this man who was sprayed with liquid manure in Val d'Anniviers whilst campaigning to protect the area from developers. “I prefer manure to concrete,” he quipped after the event. The residents of Val d'Anniviers later thanked him for his efforts, as René Langel recounted in a biography published in 2004*. Will the people of Valais also thank him for persuad-

ing the Swiss to restrict the building of second homes in their valleys in 2012? Only time will tell.

“An autocrat but in the best possible sense”

Travelling to interview Franz Weber in his beautiful home in Clarens, nestled a stone's throw from Lake Geneva, was like going to meet a legendary hero. “Mr Weber, are you a hero?” we asked this 87-year-old gentleman who received us in a small, quiet dining room with walls decorated with prints. “I don't think of myself in those terms. We can all be heroes in any given moment,” remarked the founder of Helvetia Nostra with a rather distant smile. His last battle – a third referendum to prohibit development on the Lavaux hillsides – ended in defeat. The approval by the people of a counterproposal mitigated this setback, “but while the bill is a compromise it remains dangerous because it gives the impression of affording good protection”, observed Judith Weber. Slender, charming and choosing her words with great care, she describes her husband as an obstinate lone wolf. “He acts like an autocrat but in the best possible sense,” she smiles. “It is not Franz's way to surround himself with a big team. He indicates what has to be done and people either follow him or they don't.” She has not always agreed with him but ultimately she is a great supporter of her husband's work, which has engulfed her own life and that of her daughter Vera, who has now taken up the baton.

Franz Weber, like Winkelried and William Tell, but also perhaps like Christoph Blocher, whom he respects, is fearless and uninterested in the middle way. “He has often been called upon for help by people in fear,” explained his wife. “But they are transformed after he has spoken to them. It's as though they are filled with courage and are able to walk on water.” Judith recalls two major battles – the protection of the site of Delphi against an in-

dustrialisation project and the campaign to save the Hainburg alluvial woodlands on the Danube in Austria (both in the 1980s).

Always voicing objection

In Surlej, Sempach, Lavaux, Crans Montana, Ouchy, Simmental, Jura, Ardèche and Provence, as well as in Australia and in Togo, Franz Weber has constantly voiced objection. He has said no to unreasonable and ugly real estate developments, no to motorways left, right and centre, no to industrial projects on unique sites, no to the slaughter of animals, no to seaplanes and vivisection. He even said no to arbitrary procedures when he took up the defence of an Afro-American – Carzell Moore – sentenced to death in the US after an apparently botched trial.

In the cosmogony of Franz Weber, the bad guys and the motives that drive them are patently clear. “It is personal gain which warps the conscience and leads to the destruction of what is beautiful,” he declares. The establishment and developers are in cahoots and are perverted by money. The politicians make decisions over the heads of the people and they have to be stopped. Public opinion will judge over the unscrupulous cliques and underhand dealings.

Where does all this anger come from? From the preaching of his father, who was a church minister? Or from his mother who died tragically when he was ten? Franz Weber is not very forthcoming on this subject and will not be pinned down. For him, a love of beauty and harmony (between buildings and nature) and the passion for protecting these assets are simply innate traits. “Genuine wellbeing is a beautiful landscape and happy people and animals,” concludes this pioneering ecologist. He denies being drawn to any political dogma. “I enlighten public opinion about what is at risk of being lost. I tell people: ‘Look, this landscape is a thousand times more important than the benefit to be gained by a

handful of people.’ And it’s the majority who decides.”

Emotion and intelligence

Invited to the World Economic Forum in 1981, Franz Weber outlined his beliefs to an audience of incredulous decision-makers. He talks (mainly) about waste management and built-in obsolescence, touches upon operational savings (proposing shared vehicles), vehemently criticises “agro-chemistry” and defends the “polluter pays” principle. He focuses on the long-term value of the countryside, tackling the issue of the wellbeing of people in their environment, which is the definition of sustainable development. He also thinks along Malthusian lines as he



In order to rescue the Hotel Giessbach, which dates back to the Belle Époque period, Franz Weber set up the “Giessbach for the Swiss People” foundation in 1983

believes the main cause of humankind’s problems is overpopulation. Does he lean towards the initiatives aiming to restrict the influx of foreigners to Switzerland? One might suppose so.

He draws his strength from a combination of emotion and intelligence. He is outraged by what he sees and, having been a journalist, he understands the role of the media perfectly. “I am completely honest and impartial and I rely on gut instinct,” he reveals. He considers nature, especially Switzerland’s, to be sacred. Engadine in the 1960s? Paradise on earth. “Switzerland has an abundance of outstanding places,” reiterates Franz Weber who is enthralled by their beauty. At what point does a landscape meet such criteria? What yardstick is used to measure beauty? Franz Weber does not answer these questions in a theoretical way.

Beauty is self-imposing. Does he eat meat? “Only when I’m invited to dinner but never at home.”

Above the din of the world

In the large house in Claren, purchased thanks to his earnings as a journalist in Paris, principally as a society reporter, time seems to stand still. But Franz Weber declares himself ready to continue the battle and to “fight until his last breath”. He is happy to show visitors his library but the entire house is full of books, points out Judith. His collection includes works by Gottfried Keller, Sartre, Goethe and Nietzsche, who reflected on a rock perched above the village of Surlej in Grisons. Franz Weber also shows

us copies of the *Voix des poètes*, a periodical he edited with the Parisian Simone Chevallier, his partner at the time. Picasso, Salvador Dali, Somerset Maugham, Jean Cocteau, Françoise Sagan, Georges Simenon, Georges Pompidou, Brigitte Bardot, Mélina Mercouri, Grace Kelly, Yves Montand and Jacques Brel, etc. – the man is acquainted with many famous people. “But as time goes on, you begin to feel above the din of the world,” he reflects with a coy smile, calling his wife for assistance

with dates, facts and scraps of information.

Despite his age, Franz Weber has retained the art of symbolism. He demonstrated this last spring in Berne where, having been invited to give an address to public officials from the Federal Office for the Environment, he lit a torch and put it in the hands of the flabbergasted Director, Bruno Oberle. Rebekka Reichlin, who witnessed the event, admits that she was moved by the presence and the performance of the old campaigner. The communications officer said: “Many things would have been impossible to achieve in Switzerland without Franz Weber, particularly with regard to the protection of the landscape.”

* RENÉ LANGEL, “Franz Weber – L’homme aux victoires de l’impossible”; Favre, 2004.

STÉPHANE HERZOG is an editor with the “Swiss Review”

An inheritance and many questions

A German art dealer has bequeathed a large collection of art to the Museum of Fine Arts Berne. But the gift has not been welcomed by all. The Gurlitt collection raises questions about the approach Swiss museums should adopt towards stolen cultural assets.

By Silvia Süess

The donation came as a complete surprise to the Museum of Fine Arts Berne. The German art collector Cornelius Gurlitt, who passed away in May, bequeathed his entire collection to Berne without ever having been in contact with the museum. His collection includes works by Pablo Picasso, Marc Chagall and Max Beckmann. It remains uncertain whether the Bernese museum will accept the inheritance. It has six months to decide. The precious gift raises various issues. Gurlitt's father Hildebrand was a highly regarded art

to establish the origins of the works of art. Gurlitt died six months later.

Origins need to be established

Why Gurlitt bequeathed his collection to the Museum of Fine Arts Berne of all places remains unclear. What is certain, however, is that the Museum of Fine Arts now faces a major challenge and many unresolved questions. If it accepts the collection, it will no longer be the "Schwabing Art Trove" taskforce that is responsible for carrying out the provenance research – the

amines the exhibit and maintains close relations with expert colleagues all over the world.

"The major challenge is adopting the correct approach towards such collectibles. All political, ethical, legal and historical issues have to be explored," remarks Tisa Francini. It is absolutely essential that the works are checked systematically and that fair and equitable solutions are sought for unlawfully obtained property. This is also stipulated in the Washington Agreement of 1998 under which 44 countries – includ-



dealer during the Third Reich. Several hundred of the 1,500 or so works are suspected of being stolen art, in other words paintings stolen by the Nazis from Jewish individuals. In addition to stolen art, the Gurlitt collection also contains works of so-called "degenerate art" which the Nazis removed from state museums and sometimes sold to procure foreign currencies.

The German authorities discovered Cornelius Gurlitt's collection in 2011 during a house search at the elderly man's Munich home. German customs officials had become aware of Gurlitt a year earlier during a check carried out on a train travelling between Zurich and Munich. He was carrying 9,000 euros in cash. News of the incredible discovery reached the public in 2013. The "Schwabing Art Trove" taskforce was set up at almost exactly the same time

investigation into the origins of the works – but the Bernese museum. The origin of each individual piece of work would have to be ascertained. Once the origin has been determined, then the problems will begin in earnest. Who will assert a claim to the items and be entitled to them? Under what circumstances will they have to be returned?

Can the museum accept this inheritance at all in light of this situation? "It can," says Esther Tisa Francini. She has been working as a provenance researcher at the Rietberg Museum in Zurich since 2008. This museum collects art from Asia, Africa, the Americas and Oceania. It is one of the few Swiss museums to have created a position for conducting research into the history of museum exhibits. To discover an item's biographical details, Tisa Francini carries out research in archives and libraries, ex-

ing Switzerland – undertake to identify stolen art and actively carry out provenance research.

In the Berne case, particular transparency and communication are most definitely required, according to Tisa Francini: "However, all in all, this represents an opportunity for Switzerland to indirectly gain an in-depth insight into the history of the international art trade via the origins of the Gurlitt works."

Provenance research is still very much in its infancy in Switzerland. For a long time neither the museums nor the public were interested in how works arrived at museums and other institutions. An initial milestone in the public reappraisal was the Bergier report entitled "Flight Assets – Looted Assets – the Transfer of Cultural Assets to and through Switzerland from 1933 to 1945 and the Problem of Restitu-

tion”, which was published in 2001. Esther Tisa Francini was a co-author of this study. “The Bergier Commission helped to come to terms with the past in various respects, but this was not provenance research in the sense of a systematic assessment of museum collections,” she says. “It was basic theoretical research.”

Who will pay for the research?

There are unresolved issues in the Gurlitt case. If the museum accepts the inheritance, who will bear the cost of the mandatory establishment of the origin of the works? The Museum of Fine Arts Berne does not possess the financial resources required, and the city of Berne, canton of Berne and federal government have already declared that they would not pay for the provenance research. The question is also raised as to whether Switzerland, which was spared by the Second World War and

Tisa Francini from the Rietberg Museum also points out that her research to date has primarily focused on the route of the works of art in Europe and only occasionally on the countries of origin. Such investigations would nevertheless be required to address the issue of who is entitled to a museum exhibit of contentious origin.

Row over Bolivian statue

The Historical Museum in Berne is also currently contending with this issue. A row has erupted over a small antique statue with religious significance. The Ekeko fell into the possession of Johann Jakob von Tschudi in 1858 after he persuaded the indigenous owners in Bolivia to sell him the statue following the consumption of a considerable amount of alcohol. The Bolivian government is now demanding the restitution of the Ekeko, and the Historical Museum must examine its origins. Was the

our museum only visited the countries conquered and collected cultural assets there after colonisation.”

The Sarasins’ “love of the tropics”

The science and colonial historian Bernhard C. Schär, who conducts research at the Federal Institute of Technology Zurich as chair of History of the Modern World, disagrees with Schmid. “Switzerland absolutely does have a colonial past, and explorers were actively involved in it.” The Basel cousins Paul and Fritz Sarasin, for example, who undertook numerous expeditions in the Pacific region around the year 1900 and were founders of the Museum of Cultures in Basel, explored the Indonesian island of Sulawesi before it was conquered by the Dutch. Their explorations were supported by the Dutch. Several years later the Dutch colonial army benefitted from the knowledge that the Sarasins had obtained on



Portrait of art collector Cornelius Gurlitt and works from his collection (from left to right)
 “Monk” by Christoph Voll
 “Sitting Woman” by Henri Matisse
 “Veiled Woman” by Otto Griebel
 “Self-Portrait” by Otto Dix
 “Tram” by Bernhard Kretzschmar

benefitted from dealings with Nazi Germany, should profit from an art collection of dubious origin? Indeed, doesn’t the collection actually belong to Germany?

Switzerland has come to terms to some extent with the past with regard to its role as an art dealing centre and conduit for cultural assets during the Nazi period. However, another chapter in the theft of cultural assets has hardly been addressed – Switzerland’s role during the colonial period. Millions of works were brought to Europe from the colonies, including many to Switzerland. Like the stolen art under the Nazi regime, these items are also associated with stories of theft, violence and oppression at the expense of a state, society or individual. But these stories are little known, as extensive research is often not conducted at Switzerland’s ethnological museums.

Ekeko actually stolen? And if so, who should the statue be returned to if the Historical Museum actually decides to give it back? Should it be handed over to the ethnic group that worshipped it or to the state as its legal successor?

Anna Schmid, Director of the Museum of Cultures in Basel, is also familiar with such issues. She would be delighted if the museum could afford provenance research: “We actually know where almost all our exhibits have come from and, in most cases, who contributed them. We indicate this in the exhibitions as far as possible. But what we often do not know is the exact route that the items have taken.”

However, strictly speaking, the Museum of Cultures in Basel has no stolen assets or art. “Switzerland was never a colonial power,” remarks Schmid. “The Swiss explorers whose collections are on display at

their journeys when the army conquered the island militarily.

Schär, whose dissertation “Tropenliebe” (Love of the Tropics) about Paul and Fritz Sarasin will be published next year, therefore concludes: “Ethnological and natural history museums have a cultural mandate, and that includes coming to terms with dark chapters of history. A large proportion of their collections comes from the colonial period, and colonial violence is a significant part of their history. As is the case abroad, there is growing academic and social interest in Switzerland in finding out more about this colonial legacy.”

“Are the Romands Swiss?”

In response to the clear rejection of the mass immigration initiative in French-speaking Switzerland, doubt was cast over the patriotism of the French-speaking Swiss – such misgivings were publicly expressed, for example, by Christoph Blocher, the central figure in the Swiss People’s Party (SVP). The “Maison du Dessin de Presse” (House of Press Caricatures) in Morges is currently holding an exhibition to present press cartoonists’ view of the referendum outcome.

By Andrea Kucera

Switzerland put itself in a difficult position on 9 February 2014, and many people would say it has actually marginalised itself. The approval of the initiative against mass immigration is seen as a turning point in relations between Switzerland and the EU. The referendum is also having an impact on cohesion between the various parts of the country. The Romands in French-speaking Switzerland were outvoted by a majority of German-speaking Swiss (52% in favour) and Italian speakers in Ticino (68% in favour). In French-speaking Switzerland, around 58% of voters opposed the initiative. The phenomenon of the Röstigraben (a notional dividing line between the French and German-speaking parts of Switzerland) is once again on everyone’s mind. The fact that Christoph Blocher announced shortly after the referendum, in an interview with the “Basler Zeitung”, that the French-speaking Swiss had always had a less well-defined sense of Swiss identity, which explained why the majority opposed the proposal, has added fuel to the fire.

The Röstigraben as a halfpipe

The “Maison du Dessin de Presse” in Morges explores the issue of whether the French-speaking Swiss are actually less patriotic in an exhibition that focuses on the ramifications of the adoption of the SVP initiative. The event is provocatively entitled: “Les Romands sont-ils suisses?” – “The Romands, are they Swiss?”

Just short of 30 Swiss caricaturists and cartoonists who accepted the museum’s invitation and submitted work on the topic provide a wide range of answers to this question. Many illustrators avoid giving a clear answer and instead play with the question posed by parodying it. Orlando – one of the few German-speaking Swiss caricaturists on display – portrays Blocher as a ram kicking sheep that are not patriotic enough – in other words, the French-speaking Swiss – off the Swiss flag. Chappatte, probably the best-known French-speaking press cartoonist, comes up with the image of a border post between German and French-speaking Switzerland. “Vraie Suisse” (Real Switzerland) appears on a sign above the barrier that divides French-speaking Switzerland from the German-speaking part.

The motif of division is one of the exhibition’s recurring themes. It crops up in many forms and variations – as a river, as a trench (Röstigraben), as mountains, as a canyon and even as an earthquake zone and as a halfpipe through which Blocher surfs on a skateboard.

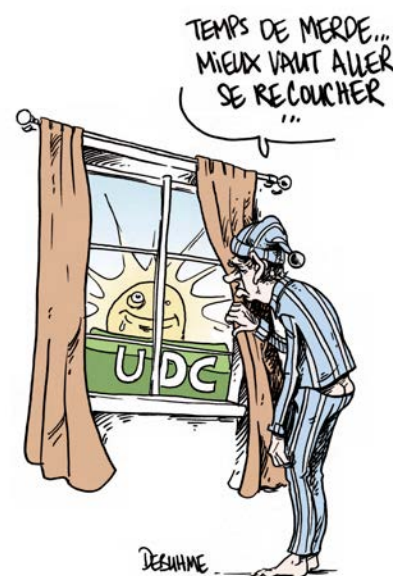
The exhibition clearly reveals that all the illustrators hold a negative view of the initiative and its organisers. In providing such an overview the exhibition also deserves credit for acknowledging contemporary creative work in an art form which is very popular in French-speaking Switzerland. Many drawings also suggest a power play between the various parts of the country – whether this is imaginary or real remains an open question. German-speaking Swiss are always depicted as being a head taller than their French-speaking compatriots.

EXHIBITION: LES ROMANDS SONT-ILS SUISSES? Until 19 August at the “Maison du Dessin de Presse” in Morges.

ANDREA KUCERA is an editor with the “Neue Zürcher Zeitung”

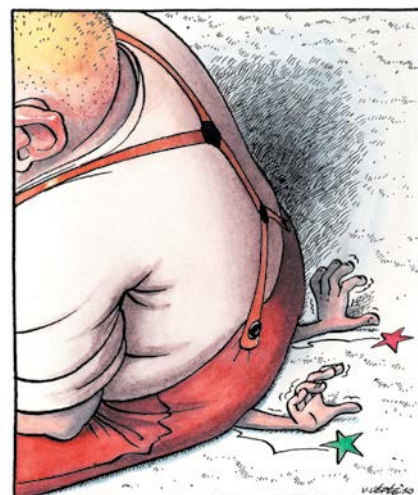


Christoph Blocher as a school pupil: He says Switzerland lies at the heart of Europe



“Awful weather, I might as well go back to sleep again,” says the French-speaking Swiss when the SVP sun shines

UDC: des Welches à l'étroit



The SVP is making it a bit cramped for the French-speaking Swiss



...sleeps while the History teacher explains that



French-speaking Swiss have to present their papers at the border when entering German-speaking Switzerland or, as it's called, the "Real Switzerland"

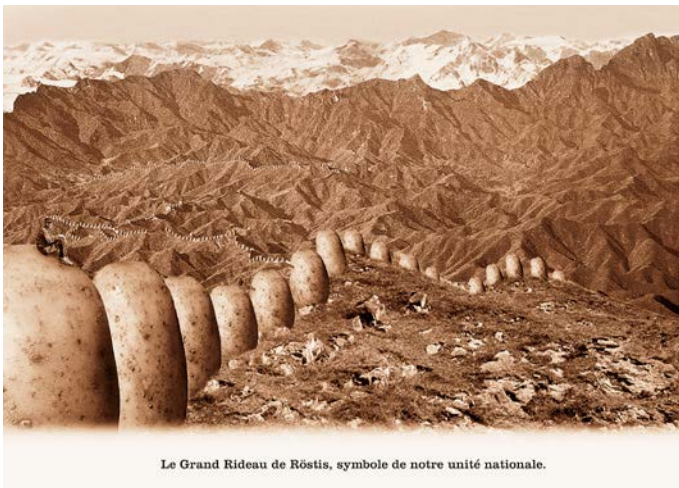


"A foreigner" proclaims the border official, "and an intellectual to boot," says Christoph Blocher. Erasmus is thus expelled from Switzerland

MORAL
**LES ROMANDS SONT PLUS DÉPRIMÉS
 QUE LES ALÉMANIQUES**



The psychiatrist says that French-speaking Swiss are more frequently depressed than German-speaking Swiss. "The German-speaking Swiss make me feel depressed," the patient explains to him



The Great Wall of Rösti, the symbol of our national unity



Tennis with Wawrinka. "What a tireless battler" "He would be a worthy choice for German-speaking Swiss of the year"

People can't get enough – he's just so perfect

Switzerland has the Matterhorn, Toblerone, Swatch and Rolex. It also has William Tell, Henri Dunant, Friedrich Dürrenmatt, Alberto Giacometti, Christoph Blocher and Sepp Blatter – and a few other names that the Swiss either love or loathe. And there is one figure who towers above all the others – Roger Federer.

By Guido Tognoni

There is not even the slightest tarnish to his image on or off court. Roger Federer is impeccable and untouchable. He does not grunt or groan when serving and does not have a tattoo on his arms or highlights in his hair. He is one of the few players to use the one-handed backhand and does so seemingly effortlessly. He glides across the court from one corner to the other and from the baseline to the net with great elegance and incredible levels of fitness. He communicates fluently in three languages and endeavours to ensure that there is always substance not just to his tennis but also to his interviews. He is very much himself and gives little sign of strain or frustration, even during the defeats which have occurred with increasing frequency in recent times.

Even the sportswear produced for Roger Federer by his main sponsor Nike is finer than that of the other players under contract. An individual logo was created for him – if other players also have them, nobody is aware of it. As far as sponsors are concerned, Roger Federer is one of the few sports stars to be honoured with a contract from Rolex. The luxury watch brand represents the high end of advertising. Only a few carefully selected greats from the world of culture and several athletes have had this distinction bestowed upon them. Rolex sponsorship is communication at the highest level with mutual benefit.

Everyone is treated equally

When selecting sponsors, Roger Federer displays his typically well-balanced approach. Of the ten equipment suppliers and sponsors – leaving aside the international brands of Rolex and Credit Suisse – three come from Switzerland: Lindt, insurance company Nationale Suisse and household appliance manufacturer Jura. The question as to whether a company that makes irons is too mundane a partner for an illustrious



Roger Federer at Wimbledon in 2013

name like Federer has not been raised since the outset of their collaboration. Anyone who wants Federer as an advertising partner has to make a big impression. Jura did so, and its efforts clearly paid off. The advertising messages featuring the tennis star increase the brand's prestige. Jura now belongs to a different market segment. On Roger Federer's website, Jura appears between Credit Suisse and Mercedes because his advertising partners are not listed according to their weight and importance but rather in alphabetical order. This avoids unnecessary discussions. Federer's website is also typical of the image of the 33-year-old from the canton of Baselland – neat and well-structured, clear, subtly refined and elegant – like Federer's style of tennis, one might say.

Nobody minds that Roger Federer, thanks to sponsorship payments, enjoys a questionable level of income, like other high earners. In contrast to some managers, the tennis star's earnings are essentially dependent on his performance. Nobody objects if Federer, his wife Mirka, who also has a tennis background, and his

rapidly growing family – few Swiss have twins twice – decide to optimise their tax situation by living in Freienbach or in Wollerau, to where they recently moved. Everyone knows about his foundation, which mainly works for the benefit of African children, and this generates no end of goodwill towards him. No Swiss person has ever been a better representative of our nation than Federer. Television spreads awareness of Federer and Switzerland to every corner of the planet. What does all the work undertaken by Presence Switzerland, the federal government's communications agency, amount to compared with Federer's presence? What is the impact of a fondue in New York's Times Square or a VIP lounge at football's World Cup in relation to a Wimbledon title?

An outpouring of affection thanks to the twins

All the Swiss love Roger Federer today, but that was not always the case. It took a while to win over their affections. Federer enjoyed an incredible string of successes, going from one victory to the next with ap-

parent ease and in complete contrast to his great rival, the hard-working Rafael Nadal. So much success is initially viewed with a degree of scepticism in Switzerland where everyone is brought down a peg before they get too carried away. The fact that he was named “world sportsman of the year” four

Federer and Nadal have now been joined by a third contender who is at least on a par with them, and a new generation of emerging players are no longer in awe of the big names. Early exits for Federer are no longer a shock but instead a possibility in any tournament. The chances of climbing back to

and technique mean that he shows fewer signs of wear and tear than others of the same age.

Problems at the Davis Cup

Roger Federer has not yet won everything despite his unique record of achievements.

He has yet to triumph in the Davis Cup. He has always had a complicated relationship with this competition. The team tournament, which is popular with fans, has often not fitted into his annual schedule and if there has occasionally been discord between the Swiss Tennis federation and its best player, it has been over the Davis Cup. Sometimes he did not wish to take part, while on other occasions he did and failed to perform well.

Today, the two Swiss, Roger Federer and the upcoming Stanislas Wawrinka, are so well placed in the world rankings that the duo can be seen as favourites in the Davis Cup. Twenty-two years after the defeat of Jakob Hlasek and Marc Rosset in the final against the USA, the chances of victory have never been as good. Stanislas Wawrinka has always loved the Davis Cup, and it seems that Federer has also become fond of the competition as he has mel-

lowed with age. The semi-final against Italy will take place in Geneva between 12 and 14 September before the winner meets France or the Czech Republic. Switzerland's first Davis Cup win may be the last major title of a wonderful career for Federer.

His last major success but hopefully not the end. Federer could actually retire then but should not. The idea of Roger Federer, the aesthetically pleasing tennis genius, who has given us so many wonderful and anxious hours on the screen from all over the world and with whom we have suffered and cheered, no longer playing is a sad thought indeed. The fifteen years of Roger Federer have been wonderful. We have still not had enough though.



Mirka and Roger Federer with their twin daughters Myla and Charlene in December 2009

times was OK but was not greeted with any great euphoria. Switzerland does not need heroes. The nation of skiers, riflemen and wrestlers does not warm all that quickly to a superstar of a global sport where toughness is not in evidence.

Roger Federer nevertheless succeeded. His epic duels with Rafael Nadal, the loss of top spot as number 1 in the world rankings, the increasing number of defeats and the magnificent re-emergence as number 1 – all of this made an impression over time and not just in the minds of sports fans. Federer received a major boost in public affection with the birth of his twins Myla and Charlene in 2009. Now not only was he a sporting great, the Federer family had also become a topic of social interest. Public goodwill was further enhanced on 6 May this year when the size of the family grew again with the birth of a second set of twins: this time boys, Leo and Lenny.

Defeats no longer a rarity

Roger Federer has now reached a difficult point in his long career. In the Serb, Novak Djokovic, the once dominant duo of

the top of the rankings, where Federer spent 302 weeks, longer than anyone else, for a third time seem remote. The hope of a victory in a grand slam tournament is slimmer now than it has been for years. But there is still a chance. It is as slender or as great as it could be for a 33-year-old father-of-four who is in the twilight of his career. Federer – like Nadal – has lost the aura of invincibility and is no longer able to dominate tournaments at will. But if everything comes together, he is still capable of winning a grand slam tournament. The fact that opponents and experts still regard him as being among the favourites is more than just deference to one of the greatest sportsmen of our time.

For how much longer will he continue to play? For as long as possible, one might hope. Federer himself has never given any indication that he is considering retirement. Quite the contrary, he seems as highly motivated as ever, appears to still enjoy his profession, is fitter than some of his younger competitors and is today benefitting from the fact that he has always looked after his body. His efficient style of play

Between two worlds: books and literary figures among the Swiss abroad

By Charles Linsmayer

Born in Switzerland, she became a leading figure among Italy's literary avant-garde – Alice Ceresa

When, in 1967, Edoardo Sanguinetti and Giorgio Manganelli brought out an experimental series of books entitled “La ricerca letteraria” (“The Literary Awakening”) with the Einaudi publishing house in Turin, the first title published was the prose work “La figlia prodiga” (“The Prodigal Daughter”) by Alice Ceresa, who was working in Rome as an editor. The work creates a female counterpart to the prodigal son in the Bible. However, it remains entirely in the abstract sense of a hypothesis, eschews consumption and financial gain, and was a highpoint in the experimental literature of the 1960s. This abstract modernity is all the more remarkable since the book's author was educated by one of the great Italian neorealist writers, Ignazio Silone (1900–1978).

Basel, Bellinzona, Zurich

Born in Basel on 25 January 1923 as the daughter of an Italian-speaking father and a German-speaking mother, Alice Ceresa grew up bilingually in Bellinzona and wrote her first works for the newspaper “Il Dovero”. In 1943, she moved to Zurich where she got to know Ignazio Silone who was living there in exile. The Italian, a committed socialist who fought against fascism, wanted to turn her into a writer according to his own designs. She is said to have responded that the art of writing can only come from what an author has to say.

She nevertheless followed Silone to Rome when he founded the “Associazione Italiana per la Libertà della Cultura” in 1951 and spent ten years working as the organisation's secretary. A dual Swiss and Italian citizen, she fully integrated into life in Italy, worked as an editor for the Longanesi publishing house and remained in the eternal city even after Silone's death.

The end of the family

Alice Ceresa's second novella “La morte del padre” (The Death of the

Father), published in a magazine in 1979 and finally as a book in 2003, possesses a similar spirit of rebelliousness to “La figlia prodiga”. The family gathered for the father's funeral is mercilessly dissected character by character. Alice Ceresa displayed her unique style of writing most impressively, however, in 1990 in the novel “Bambine” (Girls). She poignantly and disconcertingly depicts two adolescent girls in an absurdly repressive family and in a Kafkaesque environment teeming with the sick and the mad. The social construct of the “family” has rarely been as radically and ruthlessly reduced to its power structures as it is in this shocking novel. It brings to mind a film in slow motion and inexorably denounces childhood as a school of unkindness, repression and grand delusions.

Characters like dolls

Averse to any kind of sentimentality and anything realistic or naturalistic, in all her works Alice Ceresa mercilessly scrutinises reality, its mechanisms and the relativity of language used to convey something. Her characters seem like dolls staggering around helplessly and without hope in a fragile world. One literary critic once remarked: “In the perfect syntax of her sentences, life is transformed into the bleak parody of a prison from which there is no escape.”

When Alice Ceresa died in Rome on 22 December 2001, the Italian media lauded the Swiss author as one of the great experimental writers of Italian literature in the 20th century. This was categorically confirmed in 2003 when the novella “La morte del padre” finally appeared in book form.



Quotation:

“When they gather around the dining table at home as a group to feed all the different mouths there, it is perhaps as though they are feeding a composite body whose individual parts are the limbs. They work in unison so that they can all visibly demonstrate their organic participation. Later, or rather now, inexperienced dirty little hands will calmly clasp the family cutlery in touching imitation of the adults. Here you can see the usefulness, if not the essence, of learning in a small group...” (From: “Bambine. Geschichte einer Kindheit” (Girls. Story of a Childhood))

CHARLES LINSMAYER is a literary scholar and journalist in Zurich

Bibliography: “La morte del padre” is available in Italian from Tartaruga in Milan. The German translations are currently out of print.



Jean-Jacques Cevey has passed away

Jean-Jacques Cevey, the honorary president of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA), passed away in Montreux on 11 May aged 85. Cevey presided over OSA from 1992 to 1998. He was an extremely committed president who always maintained close contact with the Swiss abroad and successfully conveyed their concerns to Swiss politicians. OSA benefited tremendously from his great political experience. Among the positions he held, Cevey was the municipal mayor of Montreux (1969–1988), president of the Vaud Free Democrats (Parti radical) and a member of the National Council from 1967 to 1991, serving as its president in 1987. He was also President of Switzerland Tourism from 1980 to 1994.

Jean-Jacques Cevey was born in 1928 in Sainte-Croix. He studied law and worked as

a journalist and editor before and after his career in politics. He was awarded an honorary doctorate from Aix-Marseille University for his wide-ranging commitments, which included cultural interests.

OSA advice

I have lived abroad with my foreign husband for many years. What requirements have to be met in order for him to apply for Swiss citizenship, and how should we proceed?

A fundamental requirement for the naturalisation of a partner is that the Swiss spouse already held Swiss citizenship when they got married. If the Swiss spouse obtained Swiss citizenship through regular naturalisation after the wedding, simplified naturalisation is not possible.

If you meet this requirement, your spouse may make an application for simplified naturalisation. In your case, as you reside abroad, the criterion is that you must have been living in a stable marital relationship for at least six years. The foreign spouse must also have a close relationship with Switzerland. They must meet certain criteria in order to fulfil the close

relationship requirement. These include regular visits to Switzerland, the nomination of referees in Switzerland and the ability to communicate in a national language or a Swiss dialect. The linguistic abilities may be demonstrated during an interview at the embassy or consulate. Irrespective of the place of residence, applicants must be integrated into Swiss life at least in spirit, comply with the Swiss rule of law and not jeopardise Switzerland's internal or external security. In the event of naturalisation, your spouse will acquire cantonal and communal citizenship at your place of origin.

Naturalisation applications must be sent to the relevant Swiss representation (embassy or consulate).

Further information can be found on the website of the Federal Office for Migration www.bfm.admin.ch > Topics > Swiss citizenship / Naturalization

Addresses of the Swiss representations abroad: www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/rebs.html

OSA LEGAL DEPARTMENT

OSA's Legal Department provides general legal information on Swiss law and specifically in areas that concern the Swiss abroad. It does not provide information on foreign law and does not intervene in disputes between private parties.

SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE ORGANISATION OF THE SWISS ABROAD AND PARTNER INSTITUTIONS

The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA), a foundation governed by private law, is a centre of expertise for safeguarding the interests of Swiss citizens living abroad. Besides the publication of "Swiss Review", it provides various services for Swiss citizens abroad in collaboration with its partner organisations.

■ **Legal advice.** Free advice on emigrating abroad and returning to Switzerland.

www.aso.ch – "Consultation" section

■ **Network.** The website Swiss-Community.org provides the opportunity to network with Swiss citizens all over the world.

www.swisscommunity.org

■ **Offers for children and young people.** Organisation of

holiday camps and language courses, etc. for young Swiss abroad seeking a better understanding of their native country.

www.sjas.ch

■ **Advice on education and training in Switzerland.** Young Swiss abroad wishing to train or study in Switzerland receive support and guidance in selecting training and

educational opportunities and making grant applications.

www.educationsuisse.ch



Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA)
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The *educationsuisse* – Education and Training in Switzerland team: Fiona Scheidegger, Director (left in photo) and Ruth von Gunten

Embarking upon education and training

The 2014/15 academic year is soon set to begin in Switzerland. Trainees have already started work at their companies. University students will attend their first lectures in a few weeks.

Many young Swiss abroad come to their native country each year for education and training. Most are well organised beforehand. However, it is often only later that they realise that the cost of living in Swit-

zerland is high and may exceed what their families can afford.

Young Swiss abroad generally have the opportunity to apply for a grant from their canton of origin. Grants are awarded on the basis of parental income and family circumstances. The grant system is run by the cantons in Switzerland. This means there are 26 different sets of grant regulations, and submission deadlines vary greatly. Trainees and students who now wish to apply for a grant should contact the relevant office immediately for information.

The Education and Training in Switzerland department at *educationsuisse* advises young Swiss abroad and provides assistance

with grant applications. Fiona Scheidegger and Ruth von Gunten would be pleased to provide you with further information.

educationsuisse

Education and Training in Switzerland
Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Berne,
SWITZERLAND

Tel. +41 (0)31 356 61 04

Fax +41 (0)31 356 61 01

info@educationsuisse.ch

fiona.scheidegger@educationsuisse.ch

ruth.vongunten@educationsuisse.ch

www.educationsuisse.ch

Young Swiss abroad vote

The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) encourages young people to take part in political life in Switzerland and prepares them for exercising their political rights. We are supported in our efforts by Didier Burkhalter, the President of the Swiss Confederation.

OSA is organising two events over the coming months which will enable young Swiss abroad to gain an insight into Switzerland's political system and actively participate in

DONATION FOR YOUNG SWISS ABROAD

The Swiss foundation Pro Patria will donate a significant share of its collection this year to the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad's projects for young people.

The generous donation from Pro Patria is motivation and grounds for us at OSA's Youth Service to plan new projects and offers for young people and to incorporate these into our programme. The funds from the Pro Patria collection will also enable us to assist the many young people who cannot afford to take part in the youth programmes, making it possible for them to visit their second homeland.

We have not yet secured all the funding we need for all our projects. We are relying on further donations, especially for the activities for young people in the anniversary year - OSA will celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2016.

We wish to express our sincerest gratitude to the Pro Patria foundation, and hope we will be able to implement all our projects thanks to further donations.

Please send donations, mentioning "programmes for young people", to:

Organisation of the Swiss Abroad

Berner Kantonalbank, Bundesplatz 8, 3001 Berne

Account no.: 16.129.446.0.98

IBAN: CH71 0900 0000 3000 6768 9

SWIFT: KBBECH 22

Or: Post office account: 30-6768-9

BIC: POFICHBE


IBAN: CH97 0079 0016 1294 4609 8

Or via PayPal at:

www.swisscommunity.org/en/about/support-us

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it. Swiss President Didier Burkhalter has announced that he will be visiting the young people.

Seminar on the age-of-majority celebrations for Swiss abroad:

17.10. – 23.10.2014

Swiss abroad born in 1995 and 1996 are invited to take part in a political seminar organised by OSA in Berne to coincide with the celebrations for reaching the age of majority. Participants will be welcomed in Berne on 17 October by OSA and their host families. The young citizens will then receive an introduction to Switzerland's political system. They will be informed about how they can exercise their political rights in Switzerland. The young people will also be prepared for the age-of-majority festivities organised by the city of Berne at the Federal Palace.



Seminar on the Federal Youth Session:

10.11. – 16.11.2014

Over 200 youngsters gain an insight into Swiss political procedures each year at the Youth Session. This allows them to find out about political processes and ways of participating in political decision-making without any obligation. This makes it easier for them to engage in further political activity or to undertake civic commitments.

Youth Session places are reserved for Swiss abroad aged 14 to 21. OSA will explain the procedures and issues to participants in the days leading up to the session. The young politicians will then actively participate in the Youth Session from Thursday to Sunday.

OSA has inserted a new section featuring political offers for young people at www.swisscommunity.org. We hope any young people interested will visit us at the community website.

JUSKILA camp at Lenk free of charge

The ski camp for children will take place from 2 to 9 January 2015. Twenty Swiss children living abroad, 13 and 14 years old, can attend free of charge.

Every year the Swiss-Ski association organises a ski camp at Lenk for 600 Swiss children born in 2000 and 2001, including twenty Swiss children living abroad. To take part in the Juskila trip, Swiss children living abroad must be able to communicate in at least one of the three Swiss national languages (German, French or Italian). The places for Swiss abroad are decided by a draw. Those who win a place do not have to pay for the camp itself (winter sports coaching, food and accommodation). Parents will be responsible for organising and financing travel to and from the camp. Applicants will be informed of the outcome of the draw at the end of October.

Sign up for the draw now, using the registration form below.

Winter camp for 8 to 14-year-olds

Whether they are skiers or snowboarders, beginners or at an advanced level, Swiss children living abroad aged 8 to 14 will have a great time at our winter camp.

Winter camp Lantsch (Grisons)

Date: Saturday, 27 December 2014 to Monday, 5 January 2015

No. of participants: 48

Cost: CHF 900 (contribution to the camp)

Ski or snowboard hire: approx. CHF 150

Registration deadline: 30 October 2014

Registration

Precise details on the winter camps and the registration form will be available from 15 September 2014 at www.sjas.ch. Reduced contribution rates are available in exceptional cases. The application form can be requested via the registration form. We are also happy to post you our information brochure on request.

For more information:

Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA)

Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Berne,

SWITZERLAND

Tel +41 31 356 61 16. Fax +41 31 356 61 01

info@sjas.ch, www.sjas.ch

REGISTRATION FORM FOR THE DRAW FOR JUSKILA (2 TO 9 JAN. 2015)

Please complete in clear print.

First name: _____ Surname: _____

No., street: _____

Town/city, postcode: _____

Country: _____ Date of birth: _____

Female Male Telephone: _____

Commune of origin in Switzerland (see Passport/ID): _____

Name of parent(s)/guardian(s): _____

Email address and phone no. of parent(s)/guardian(s): _____

Type of sport Alpine skiing Cross-country skiing Snowboarding

Please only tick one box. The type of sport cannot be changed after the draw.

Language of child German French Italian

Signature of parent(s)/guardian(s): _____

Signature of child: _____

Please send the form, together with a copy of the Swiss passport of a parent or the child, by 15 Oct. 2014 (date of receipt) to: Foundation for Young Swiss abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Berne, SWITZERLAND.

The Swiss abroad and Swiss banks

What can be done if Swiss banks close accounts held by Swiss citizens abroad? What if they tighten up the conditions or increase account administration charges? These are just some of the increasingly common questions concerning Swiss bank accounts.

The Swiss abroad are currently finding, with ever greater regularity, that Swiss banks are restricting services for private customers domiciled abroad, or completely withdrawing from this business segment. The reasons for this are the tighter regulatory environment and the provisions of international tax law. This affects anyone who is not domiciled in Switzerland and is subject to foreign tax laws. The Swiss abroad also generally belong to this clientele.

We have attempted to provide answers to frequently asked questions. However, we have done so without going into technical tax issues, and we provide no guarantee of or claim to completeness. We have also assumed that all assets (bank accounts, real estate and other sources of income) have been duly declared in the country of residence of the Swiss citizen abroad.

My Swiss bank is closing my account. What can I do?

We recommend that Swiss citizens concerned arrange a personal meeting with their customer advisor to explain their individual situation and to seek a solution together. If no agreement can be reached, then consideration must be given to terminating the banking relationship or switching to another bank.

Various Swiss banks still offer accounts to Swiss citizens abroad. However, finding a suitable bank can prove time-consuming and normally requires a visit to the bank in person and therefore a trip to Switzerland. A sufficiently long transitional period for account closure should therefore be negotiated with the bank that is wishing to terminate the relationship.

Do I have to visit the bank in person in order to open or maintain an account? Why can't I get my signature certified at the embassy?

Swiss banks work according to the *know-your-customer principle*. They usually require a personal meeting with the customer to open an account. Both contracting parties – the bank and the customer – sign the contract on site in Switzerland.

Am I being discriminated against if I cannot hold a Swiss bank account as a Swiss citizen abroad?

Banks differentiate between customers domiciled in Switzerland and customers



abroad. Persons domiciled outside Switzerland – including the Swiss abroad – are considered foreign customers. The decision to restrict customer segments geographically is part of a bank's business policy and is entirely at its discretion. Contracts between Swiss banks and their customers are governed by private law pursuant to the Swiss Code of Obligations (OR). The bank is free to structure such contracts within the scope of the OR. The bank's general terms and conditions of business are part of this contract.

I own a property in Switzerland and have a mortgage with a Swiss bank. What will happen to my mortgage if my bank no longer wishes to provide services for customers from my country of domicile?

A mortgage requires an account relationship between the bank and the customer. Mortgages are therefore also affected by the termination of a customer relationship.

They are usually continued until their normal expiry date. However, the bank is free to decide whether it wishes to continue or renew the mortgage. In the event of termination, the debtor repays the mortgage or another bank takes it over.

Some banks are willing to renew a mortgage irrespective of the place of residence abroad if the customer has a strong relationship with the region and property. For example, the customer uses the property personally as a holiday home and does not rent it out, the customer has strong ties with or has grown up in the region and/or the property is the parental home and is to remain in the family's possession.

What happens with old-age pensions? My old-age and survivors' insurance/invalidity insurance (AHV/IV) pension is paid into a Swiss account. Can I have it paid abroad to a foreign bank if my Swiss bank terminates my account?

The Swiss Compensation Office (SCO) in Geneva pays pensions into the bank account indicated by the recipient worldwide (see www.zas.admin.ch). In the case of payments abroad, the amount of pension credited monthly is affected by the exchange rate and

any bank charges incurred.

I receive benefits from a pension fund in Switzerland which are paid into my bank account in Switzerland. Can I have these paid abroad?

The pension fund is a second-pillar old-age pension scheme which is mandatory, but contributed to privately during periods of employment in Switzerland. The fund is fed by the employer and the employee. The payment of pension fund benefits abroad is governed by the terms and conditions of the respective fund and must be clarified with the provider concerned.

Are there supervisory bodies for banking relationships with customers?

As the umbrella organisation of the Swiss financial industry, the Swiss Bankers Association (SBA) is primarily focused on promoting optimal framework condi-

tions for Switzerland's financial industry in the domestic market and abroad. It is not able to impose provisions for account and customer management on its members.

The banking ombudsman (www.bankingombudsman.ch) steps in if a bank conducts itself unlawfully or if, for example, it imposes account termination conditions on customers that are not provided for in the general terms and conditions of business. The contractual termination of a customer relationship by the bank is carried out in accordance with the Swiss Code of Obligations and the bank's general terms and conditions of business.

Is there also a department responsible for banking customer relationships in the federal administration?

The relationship between customers and banks is governed by private law and is beyond the influence of the federal administration. We can only recommend that customers discuss their individual situation with their bank personally, at the branch managing their account, to find a solution by mutual agreement.

The Price Supervisor, who reports to the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research (EAER), analysed the issue of the banking relationships of the

Swiss abroad in Switzerland in summer 2012. He did not find any distortions of competition or cartel-like arrangements among the banks.

As already mentioned, various Swiss banks still provide account management options for the Swiss abroad. However, the search for a suitable bank may prove time-consuming and may require the customer to visit Switzerland in person. We are unable to make recommendations regarding individual banking institutions.

This issue is discussed, and useful information is exchanged, on the social platform of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) – www.swisscommunity.org.

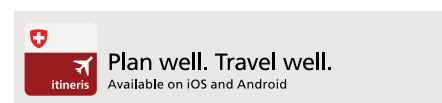
CONSULAR DIRECTORATE,
RELATIONS WITH THE SWISS ABROAD

Publication

Travel with the itinerisApp!

Download the app free of charge on your smartphone to stay abreast of the latest security situation at your travel destination and to keep the addresses of the Swiss embassies and consulates close at hand. The app also now includes useful information and

tips for emergency situations locally if you are attending a major event, such as a world championship or Olympic Games.



- > [itinerisApp for iPhone \(App Store Switzerland\)](#)
- > [itinerisApp for Android \(Google Play Switzerland\)](#)

Important notice

Inform your Swiss representation of your email address(es) and mobile phone number(s) and/or any changes to these, and register at www.swissabroad.ch to ensure you do not miss any communications ("Swiss Review", newsletters from your representation, etc.).

The latest "Swiss Review" and previous issues can be read and/or printed out at any time at www.revue.ch. "Swiss Review" (and "Gazzetta Svizzera" in Italy) is sent free of charge to all Swiss households abroad registered with an embassy or consulate general either electronically (via email or as an iPad/Android app) or in printed format.

FEDERAL REFERENDA

The following two proposals will be put to the vote on 28 September 2014:

- Popular initiative of 21 September 2011 "Schluss mit der MwSt-Diskriminierung des Gastgewerbes!" (End to VAT discrimination in the hospitality industry!) (BBl 2014 2851), see also page 12
- Popular initiative of 23 May 2012 "Für eine öffentliche Krankenkasse" (For a public health insurance fund) (BBl 2014 2849), see also page 12

All information on the proposals (voting pamphlet, committees, party statements, electronic voting, etc.) can be found at www.ch.ch/abstimmungen.

Further referendum date in 2014: 30 November.

FDFA OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS OFFICER:
PETER ZIMMERLI, RELATIONS WITH THE SWISS ABROAD
BUNDESGASSE 32, 3003 BERNE, SWITZERLAND, TELEPHONE: +41 800 24 7 365
WWW.FDFA.ADMIN.CH, EMAIL: HELPLINE@EDA.ADMIN.CH

POPULAR INITIATIVES

The following federal popular initiatives had been launched by the time of going to press (deadline for the collection of signatures in brackets):

- "Schweizerisches Zentralregister für die Beurteilung von Sexual- und Gewaltstraftätern" (Central Swiss register for convicted sexual and violent offenders) (29.10.2015)
- "Haftung für Rückfälle von Sexual- und Gewaltstraftätern" (Liability for recidivism among sexual and violent offenders) (29.10.2015)
- "Höchstgeschwindigkeit 140 km/h auf Autobahnen" (Maximum speed of 140 kmph on motorways) (20.11.2015)
- "Für gesunde sowie umweltfreundlich und fair hergestellte Lebensmittel" (For healthy food produced in an eco-friendly and fair way) – (Fair Food Initiative) (27.11.2015)
- "Für krisensicheres Geld: Geldschöpfung allein durch die Nationalbank! (Vollgeld-Initiative)" (For crisis-proof money: creation of money solely by the National Bank! (Sovereign Money Initiative)) (03.12.2015)
- "Ja zur Abschaffung der Radio- und Fernsehgebühren (Abschaffung der Billag-Gebühren)" (Yes to the abolition of radio and television licence fees (abolition of Billag charges)) (11.12.2015)

The list of pending popular initiatives can be found at www.bk.admin.ch > Aktuell > Wahlen und Abstimmungen > Hängige Volksinitiativen.

Little gems

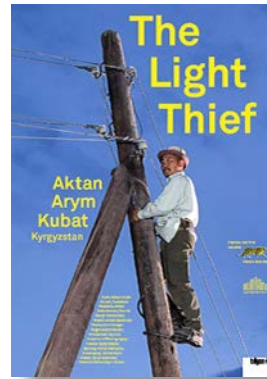


Mr Light

The audience in Locarno's Piazza Grande was enchanted, and film critics showered the film with the most lavish praise. The film is "The Light Thief" from Kyrgyzstan. The film's hero is an electrician

called, quite simply, "Svet-Ake", or "Mr Light", and he feels responsible for fixing everything to do with sparks and electricity, whether it be short circuits, power failures or even marriages where tensions are running high. Svet-Ake does not hesitate to help anyone in his home town. Even if it means breaking the law, such as the time when he turns back an electricity meter so that, instead of having to pay a bill, a poor family receives a payment from the electricity company. Aktan Arym Kubat, the film's direc-

tor and leading actor, depicts life in the post-Soviet Central Asian country as an often amusing adventure in spite of many hurdles. The DVD of the film is available from Trigonfilm with subtitles in German and French. Subtitles in other languages can also be downloaded via SubtitleSeeker.com.



To order: "The Light Thief" by Aktan Arym Kubat via www.trigon-film.org. Direct link: http://www.trigon-film.org/en/movies/The_Light_Thief



A great little ghost

"Ghost Knigi" has been around for some time now. The little ghost is the brainchild of Benjamin Sommerhalder, an illustrator and author from Zurich. First appearing in Sommerhalder's own small publishing house, Nieves, in Zurich, Knigi has now been "adopted" by the renowned Diogenes Verlag. The story goes like this: Knigi, the little ghost, receives a book from his aunt. But something's not quite right with it: the pages are all completely blank. The little ghost hasn't learned to read yet, which is why all books strike him as just empty pages.

Knigi decides to discover the secret of what's behind this mysterious thing called "reading". And when he does, he discovers a miraculous explosion of colour, adventure and joy leaping out from the pages. This charming little book is the perfect gift for young and old. If you love books, you'll love Knigi.



"Knigi", Diogenes Verlag, Zurich; 24 pages; CHF 19.90; EUR 15.40; also available in German, French and Spanish, as well as an e-book.

"Flying is wicked"

Only insiders know how the Swiss Air Force functions. Sometimes, however, after faults, accidents or scandals, information leaks out. Swiss voters' "No" in the referendum on the Gripen fighter jets on 18 May might have something to do with this secretiveness. Margrit Sprecher, a reporter for Swiss and international media, was given the opportunity to accompany military pilots over several years of their training.



She has now brought out a book describing her experience, entitled "Unsere Kampf-Piloten" (Our fighter pilots). It is an attempt to cast some light on a closed world, which has its own ideas, rituals and rules – a world where the phrase "flying is wicked" is often heard. It would appear that individuals with ideas of

their own are not exactly welcome in the Air Force. It is all about adhering to the norm: in preparatory training, military rank, size and vocabulary. Sprecher presents readers with a type of collage in ten pictures. This book will have readers smiling in places, amazed in others and sometimes simply shaking their heads.

Margrit Sprecher
"Unsere Kampf-Piloten";
Echtzeit Verlag Basel, 2014;
128 pages with photos by
Fabian Biasio; CHF 32,
EUR 24.
www.echtzeit.ch



Bulletins

Dialogue on equal pay is a flop

In March 2009, the social partners, i.e. the Swiss Employers' Association, the Swiss Industry and Trade Association, the Swiss Federation of Trade Unions and the trade union umbrella organisation Travail.Suisse, agreed to eliminate discriminatory pay inequalities between men and women in Swiss companies as quickly as possible and received the support of federal government. After five years spent on the "equal pay dialogue", the result is mixed. The objective of eliminating wage discrimination against women has not been achieved. According to a press release from the organisers, the main reason for this is that there were only 51 companies involved in the project – a figure that is much too low to make an impact.

Sharing responsibility for childcare

Since 1 July, unmarried and divorced parents have had to look after their children together. This is a situation that divorced fathers, in particular, have been fighting to achieve for years as in the past normally only the mothers gained custody over the children. It is still unclear what will happen in the future in disputes over child custody. The public authorities, especially the Cantonal Conference for the Protection of Children and Adults (KOKES), have already declared that they will not adopt the role of mediatory bodies. The courts can refuse to grant custody rights to a parent where there are sufficient grounds.

More money for UN organisations

Switzerland is set to increase its contributions to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population

Fund (UNFPA), as was decided by the Federal Council in June. Switzerland's contribution to UNICEF for the years 2014–16 will increase from CHF 20 million to CHF 22 million per year, and UNFPA will now receive CHF 16 million per year instead of CHF 14 million. These increases were triggered by Parliament's decision to put more money aside for international development cooperation.

Seniors in the majority

As of 2030, the over-55s will make up the majority of all eligible voters in Switzerland. According to a study carried out by the University of Lausanne, it is already the case that more than half of those who vote are over 55. Having a majority of older people may lead to a generational conflict that is hard to resolve. The researchers have found that the generational discourse has already changed dramatically – the problem most frequently discussed is no longer the rebellion of youth, but rather the power of older citizens.

New national anthem

The competition for a new Swiss national anthem has received well over a hundred suggestions. In addition to proposals for lyrics in German (70), French (40), Italian (4) and Romansh (1), a Portuguese song has also been submitted. This entry cannot be considered according to the competition rules. A judging panel will now select a maximum of ten songs, which will be presented to the public via the Internet in spring 2015. The Swiss people will be able to listen to the songs and choose their favourite three for the final. The winning song will then be decided by a phone and SMS vote and will be submitted to the Federal Council as the replacement for "When the morning skies grow red".

Quotes

"We Swiss are like potatoes – our eyes are only opened when we are stuck in the mud."

Tim Guldemann, Swiss Ambassador to Berlin, on the vote held on 9 February in a speech to the SP in Zurich

"I'll spell this out clearly: We shouldn't leave anything undone. We shouldn't tie our own hands behind our backs."

Federal Councillor Johann N. Schneider-Ammann announces his intention to campaign against the initiative for inheritance tax

"He who is not satisfied with a little, is satisfied with nothing."

Epictetus, Greek philosopher (341–271 BC)

"A person should desire what they own, not what they owned in the past."

Charles Ferdinand Ramuz (1878–1947), Swiss author

"We stand disappointed and watch on with concern, the curtain is closed and all questions are open."

Bertold Brecht, German playwright (1898–1956)

"Going into politics is the equivalent of saying farewell to life – the kiss of death."

Hans Magnus Enzensberger, German author

"The art of politics is to antagonise others while not becoming antagonised yourself – by means of confrontation with hard facts."

Peter Bodenmann, former National Councillor and SP President, now a hotelier



"I am just frittering away my time in the National Council," was the message former Federal Councillor Christoph Blocher gave to his party leadership and the media on 9 May 2014. He relinquished his position in Parliament at the end of May and is set to dedicate all his efforts in future to fighting to sever Switzerland's close institutional ties with the EU as well as to combatting mass immigration. Blocher's decision has generated a great deal of coverage in the media. "With the help of Swiss citizens, he wants to decide on the future of the country and is flying in the face of the government, Parliament and the entire political and economic establishment," writes "Die Zeit" newspaper of Hamburg. The Swiss "Wochenzeitung" publication rendered the following judgement on his announcement: "His resignation is a declaration of war, he is making a lot of fuss in order to increase his strength and is using defamation as a stylistic device (...). The old man is getting ready for his decisive battle – a fight against the future." The "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" does not like the style of the former Federal Councillor either: "Blocher has not refrained from strongly discrediting the elected representatives of the people and states and from dragging the concept of parliamentary democracy through the mud in the most populist manner." The "Aargauer Zeitung" also commented on the situation: "Blocher's resignation is mainly the prelude to his last battle (...). This should be a warning to all those who advocate an open and liberal land."



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