

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE SWISS ABROAD

S W I S S

REVIEW

FEBRUARY 2009 / NO. 1



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the Swiss army

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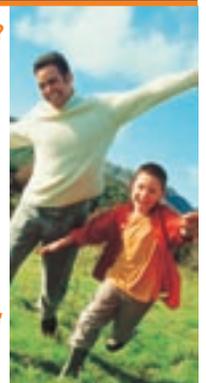
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Policy on Swiss abroad needs a legal framework

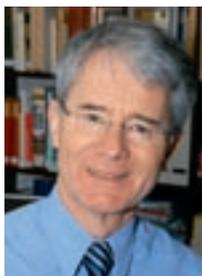
WITHIN THE SPACE OF A FEW MONTHS, Switzerland's councils have managed to approve a proposal to examine direct representation for Swiss people abroad in Parliament, to drastically cut the budget for providing information to Swiss expatriates and, just days later, to establish "Swiss Review" in law. Two steps forward, one step back. Yes to the objective, but no to the cost. Inconsistency in the extreme.

The reduction in the budget for "Swiss Review" on the initiative of the FDFA is painful. Not just because the publisher, the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA), is suddenly faced with a budgetary shortfall of half a million francs, but even more so because this severe course of action raises doubts about awareness in the federal capital Berne of the role played by "Swiss Review" and about how serious people are about recognising the Fifth Switzerland.

"Swiss Review" is the only publication to reach all Swiss citizens registered with representations abroad. It keeps you, the reader, up to date with news about your rights and obligations. "Swiss Review" is your Official Journal. It also has the task of providing you with information to make it easier for you to exercise your political rights in Switzerland. "Swiss Review" also seeks to convey a current and diverse impression of Switzerland. And it serves as an information channel for embassies, consulates and Swiss associations.

OSA is a fierce proponent of the principle that everyone registered with a representation should continue to receive this basic information in future. However, the budget cuts are forcing us to take drastic measures. Postal costs make up the largest item of expenditure.

From this moment onwards, you will find a new online version at www.revue.ch that is the same as the printed copy. We would really appreciate it if Internet users could start using the online version and waive their right to a postal copy of "Swiss Review" from now on. On page 12, we explain how you can register to do this. We are also making a renewed appeal to families who receive several copies of "Swiss Review" to cancel superfluous issues by notifying their consular representation.



Rudolf Wyder

This should result in a significant fall in postal costs in the medium term. Unfortunately, though, in 2009, this will not be sufficient to offset the reduction in the budget. It therefore seems inevitable that "Swiss Review" will have to be published at less regular intervals.

Despite this major setback, Switzerland still does more for its citizens abroad than most other countries. In typically Swiss fashion, this support is distributed among government and non-government organisations, but with no overall strategy. It is based on practical cooperation between the authorities and private organisations, principally OSA. Even though there is a constitutional obligation to foster relations between Swiss people abroad and promote an affiliation with Switzerland, there is no legal framework to define the principles of policy on Swiss citizens abroad, the status of the institutions of the Fifth Switzerland or the corresponding resources. It is high time a federal law was created relating to the Swiss abroad.

RUDOLF WYDER, OSA DIRECTOR, PUBLISHER OF "SWISS REVIEW"



Illustration by Hannes Binder from the new Heidi book

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Cover photo: Armoured infantry in the Swiss army (photo: Keystone)

IMPRINT: "Swiss Review", the magazine for the Swiss abroad, is in its 36th year of publication and is published in German, French, Italian, English and Spanish in 14 regional editions. It has a total circulation of 408 000. Regional news appears four times a year.

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City breaks in Switzerland

Visitors to Switzerland's cities will not just travel from one beautiful place to another, they will also discover the finest achievements in art, architecture and design.

A stroll through the cities of Switzerland will always provide an opportunity to discover new horizons as well as plenty to stimulate the mind and senses. Whether it's the museum of art in Winterthur, a chic sushi bar in Zurich, an open-air event in Ticino or a wine festival in Valais. Authentic aspects of Swiss culture abound in every city. With an alert mind and keen eyes, you will discover a wealth of cultural treasures in Switzerland's cities. These cultural riches are unique and make a great contribution to the extraordinary quality of life. Who could ever complain of boredom?



Geneva

Balmy evenings in a restaurant on the banks of the lake, enjoying culinary delights with the sound of grasshoppers and the hustle and bustle of the city in the background – what could be better in summertime? The mundane routine of everyday life is forgotten. There is a real

joie de vivre in quiet street-side cafés, at trendy live concert venues, chic bars and hip clubs. Switzerland's beautifully laid-out cities have plenty to offer in terms of both relaxation and excitement. There is always something new to see just around the corner. Finding the heartbeat of the city means discovering all aspects of life. All Swiss cities, large and small, are also a shopper's

paradise, whether you are in Montreux, St. Gallen or Chur. Specialist shops for the latest trends and smart designs or mouth-watering delicacies can be found in Locarno's historical centre, Berne's Zibelemärit onion market, Winterthur's Markgasse and picturesque downtown Thun. With an incredible choice of goods, you will find everything the heart desires wherever you go. A shopping expedition is a great way to discover the character of cities both large and small, which provide a memorable experience with their quaint, pedestrian shopping centres.

Many of us want to escape man-made surroundings, to seek out nature and enjoy peace and quiet in an unspoiled environment. You will certainly find what you are looking for in Swiss cities. There is the River Aare in Berne, the botanical garden in Zurich and the "Pfalz" palatial terrace high above the Rhine in Basel. An extensive public transport system ensures that any leafy destination can be reached quickly and easily from all city centres.



Lausanne

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Congratulations

My wife and I greatly appreciate receiving "Swiss Review". Congratulations! Keep up the good work – and do urge the FDFA to continue funding you sufficiently! The FDFA first got rid of swissinfo and the short-wave radio programme. Now they want to deprive their most loyal Swiss subjects abroad of the quarterly "Swiss Review".

The Swiss abroad are Switzerland's best ambassadors internationally, but they need to be kept informed in order to act accordingly! Switzerland's unique historic political culture (including its model fiscal system) needs to be continuously "explained", especially in Brussels and Strasbourg.

D. SCHAUBACHER, BELGIUM

Online version is enough

In the October edition we read that the FDFA suggested only delivering the printed "Swiss Review" to Swiss expatriates who really want to receive the magazine. This request seems justifiable to us given the tight funds because in most cases the information is two or three months old. In any case, many Swiss expatriates read the "NZZ" or the "Tagesanzeiger", either online or as a foreign edition.

As far as we are concerned, we could easily do without the printed version of "Swiss Review"; an Internet edition would be more than enough for us.

H. MANO SOLINSKI, USA

Outstanding

I would just like to thank you for publishing "Swiss Review". Not only is the quality of the journalism outstanding, I also find the information and tips very useful. Thank you!

M. VIOTTI, BY E-MAIL

Electronic Review

As a loyal reader of the Review, which I like very much, I am convinced that we have nothing to lose in viewing the magazine in electronic format, even though we can access large quantities of information about Switzerland online and on TSR. We only stand to benefit from this because, as well as saving considerable amounts of paper, the use of which is harmful to the environment, and ink, which is more harmful still, readers can view "Swiss Review" on the day that it is published.

J.-P. COSTATINI, SPAIN

Don't take away "Swiss Review"

I was very sorry to learn that we may no longer receive "Swiss Review" in the post. I'm 31 years old, I'm married, I'm a mother and I've been self-employed in the south of France for 5 years, having lived in France for 11 years. Apart from a holiday each year to Switzerland and phone calls with family members, the paper version of "Swiss Review" is my only link with Swiss current affairs. I find this very interesting but, due to a lack of time, it's much easier for me to read "Swiss Review" at home while I'm having a break. Although I work on the Internet, I do not like reading about current affairs online and I never do it. The reception for radio stations is poor and the TV news on TV5 is broadcast too late. Don't take away "Swiss Review". I'm not old, and I am computer-literate, but it's the only way for me to follow current affairs in Switzerland.

Y. JABBOUR, FRANCE

"So Sweet Zerland"

SO SWEET ZERLAND. Amusing, well researched and richly illustrated, this book, "So Sweet Zerland", pays tribute to emblematic Swiss brands, symbols, legendary places and the great figures of our nation. This first volume reveals fifty Swiss stories that are part of the country's collective memory. It is a mine of information. We learn, for instance, that the pens and stationery of Caran d'Ache take their name from a French caricaturist of Russian origin (1859–1909) who was admired by the businessman Arnold Schweitzer. We also discover that velcro was invented by an engineer from the Canton of Vaud in 1941 and patented in Switzerland in 1951. Did you know that Biella's "classeur federal" office stationery is celebrating its 100th birthday this year? Or that it took the name "federal" because it has been supplying the departments of the Swiss administration since 1908? This publication is full of anecdotes. We learn about the origins and history of the Bally shoe company, the yellow post buses, Cardinal beer, Cenovis pâte, Cremo dairy products, Freitag bags, Gerber fondue, Gruyère cheese, Marylong cigarettes and Logitech IT accessories. Not to mention Mövenpick ice cream, Nestlé, Rivella soft drinks, Ovomaltine, Swatch watches, Ricola and Sugus sweets, Victorinox Swiss knives, Voltaren anti-inflammatory ointment, Toblerone chocolate and Rolex watches.

The book also covers prominent Swiss figures, such as Roger Federer, Stephan Eicher, the furniture designer Teo Jacob and, of course, William Tell. It takes a look at the Saint Bernard, the bears of Berne, Lucerne's Pont de la Chapelle (XIV century), the Pilatus aircraft, the station clocks of the Swiss Railways (SBB) created in 1951, the Knie circus, Geneva's water jet, which has been flowing since 1891, the Grande Dixence dam, the Swiss flag, which took on its definitive design in 1889, Cervin and Alinghi. The book has already been published in English and will be available in German by Easter 2009. A second volume in French is due to come out at the end of 2009. Of course, choosing fifty Swiss stories meant taking a selective approach and, according to the Franco-Swiss author Xavier Casile, avoiding direct competition for brands in a particular sector. The book, which is a hundred pages long, is an excellent way of quickly discovering what Switzerland has to offer in terms of creativity. As a foretaste, an interview with the singer Stephan Eicher gets to the heart of the matter. A fondue lover, the artist recalls the sweet tastes of his childhood, such as Tam Tam desserts, Ragusa chocolate and the famous Sugus sweets. Finally, he also touches on Switzerland's image abroad based on his travels

with humour and a sense of irony. He says: "It's like someone who is top of the class, but is then discovered to have cheated in their exams like everyone else."

AW



"So Sweet Zerland" by Xavier Casile, Editions Good Heidi Production, Geneva, 2008. www.goodheidiproduction.ch

Ueli Maurer succeeds Samuel Schmid

The Federal Assembly has elected Ueli Maurer as the successor to Defence Minister Samuel Schmid. With the election of its former president, the Swiss People's Party (SVP) has returned to the Federal Council declaring an end to its one-year period in opposition. By René Lenzin.



The swearing-in of Ueli Maurer, new Federal Councillor and Minister of the DDPS

Ueli Maurer, the official SVP candidate, was elected by the tightest of margins when the National Council and Council of States voted him into national government on 10 December 2008. He was initially one of two official SVP candidates, the other being Christoph Blocher, who had been ousted as a Federal Councillor by Parliament a year earlier. However, Blocher withdrew his candidacy after the first round of voting favoured Maurer. Maurer gained an absolute majority in the third round of voting. With 122 votes, he obtained one vote more than his party and National Council colleague Hansjörg Walter. The president of the Swiss Farmers' Union had been built up as an opposing candidate by the Social Democrats, the Greens and some Civic Democrats despite declaring that he would not accept the position if elected. The SVP, most of the Free Democrat-Liberals and around half the Christian Democrats voted for Maurer.

With Maurer joining the Federal Council, the SVP has renounced its opposition strategy. After Blocher's deselection, it had declared itself an opposition party and expelled Blocher's successor Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf from the party. Samuel Schmid,

the second former SVP Federal Councillor, later left the party of his own accord. Schmid's resignation from office opened the door for the SVP to return to the Federal Council. However, the close-run election shows that almost half the Members of Parliament were not willing to accept a candidate whom they considered to be a political clone of Blocher. Many also saw the SVP's tactics – elect one of our candidates or we will remain in opposition – as blackmail.

From critic to boss

Maurer, who reached the rank of major in the Swiss army, has taken over from Schmid at the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS). This is contentious as the SVP and its former president have been among the harshest critics of the Federal Council's security policy. As defence minister, Maurer will have to represent positions that contradict not only his previous statements but also his party's agenda. It is highly unlikely that the Federal Council or the majority of Members of Parliament will accept fundamental changes in line with SVP policy, especially since the key elements of current army policy have been approved with a large majority by the people.

In addition to the ongoing development of the army, Maurer will have to deal with two important decisions right at the start of his term of office – the appointment of a new army commander-in-chief and the choice of a new fighter jet. The Members of Parliament who elected Maurer hope that the political debate on military issues will abate somewhat. They appear confident that the new Federal Councillor will make the transition from political agitator to member of a collegial government who is willing to compromise. Many of his opponents do not share this conviction.

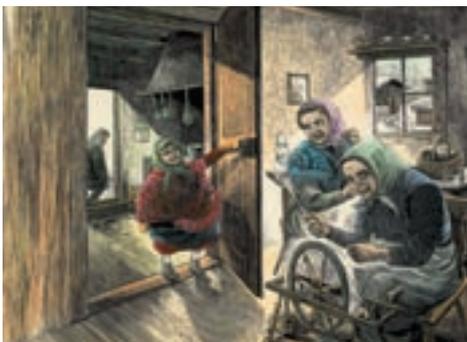
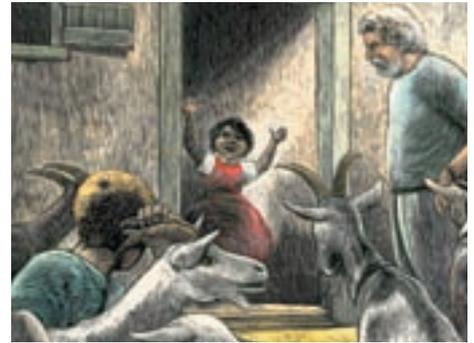
58-year-old Maurer is married with six children. From 1978 to 1986, he sat on the municipal council (executive) of Hinwil, the commune in which he lives. Between 1983 and 1991, he represented his party in the Zurich cantonal parliament and subsequently in the National Council. As President of the SVP from 1996 until the beginning of 2008, he made a significant contribution to the party's rapid rise. In August last year, he took over the presidency of the Zurich section of the SVP, a position he had to give up after his election to the Federal Council. Ueli Maurer is the first non-academic in national government since Adolf Ogi, Samuel Schmid's predecessor.

As during Christoph Blocher's term of office, the Canton of Zurich now has two representatives in the Federal Council in Ueli Maurer and Moritz Leuenberger, while the Canton of Berne has no representatives in national government for only the second time in the history of the federal state. Since the SVP entered the Federal Council in 1929 through Rudolf Minger, its representation has traditionally come from Berne. Before Samuel Schmid left the party, this tradition had only been broken during the term of office of Leon Schlumpf (1979 to 1987), who was from the Canton of Grisons.

Hans-Rudolf Merz is President of the Swiss Confederation

The Federal Assembly has elected Hans-Rudolf Merz as President of the Swiss Confederation for the coming year. The 66-year-old Free Democrat from Appenzell Auser rhoden took up office just weeks after suffering a heart attack that he only just survived. Parliament has elected 45-year-old Christian Democrat Doris Leuthard from Aargau as Vice-President.

Heidi – Based on the Story by Johanna Spyri. The famous story of orphan girl Heidi – probably one of the most well-known Swiss figures internationally – has been rewritten by Peter Stamm, with illustrations by Hannes Binder, in a unique, artistic edition published by Nagel & Kimche. It is a jewel among the new titles out last autumn. This 42-page book has been published in German, with colour illustrations throughout, and can be ordered for CHF 29.90 from www.nagel-kimche.de



The Swiss army – where does its future lie?

Having gone through three reforms in fifteen years, the Swiss army is looking for a solution to new threats. Some factions want to bolster the traditional defence of Switzerland, while others wish to see the military deployed for peace in the world. The Swiss people are behind their army, but there is an air of uncertainty. By Rolf Ribi

“The Swiss army is not on the brink, but it has lost its way”, says the “Neue Zürcher Zeitung”, which points the finger at a “military policy impeded by ideology”. The fact that there is no common ground in Parliament on the analysis of the strategic position or on the role of the army is “alarming”.

Three current bills show just how divided political opinion on the army is at present. The 2008 armaments programme concerns vehicles for the armoured transport of infantry units and principally an upgrade of the F/A-18 fighter jets, which form the backbone of air defence. An alliance made up of the Swiss People’s Party (SVP), the Social Democrats and the Greens defeated the bill in the National Council, and it will now go before these representatives of the

Article 58 of the Federal Constitution reads: “The armed forces shall serve to prevent war and to maintain peace; they shall defend the country and its population. They shall support the civilian authorities in safeguarding the country against serious threats to internal security and in dealing with exceptional situations.” The army’s general mandates are derived from this article:

- Territorial protection operations to safeguard important areas and air space in the event of a strategic threat, usually in conjunction with civilian authorities.
- Active defence against a military attack in order to stop or destroy the attacking enemy using weapons, blockades and military



“Security through cooperation”

The army and military reform have been a constant topic of political and public debate since the 1990s. Three factors explain this – the new global situation after the end of the Cold War, deficiencies in the army and an increasingly restricted budget. The “Army 95” proposal, the 2000 security policy report, the “Army XXI” proposal and, more recently, the 2008-2011 military reform are all milestones. The “Army 95” document



people again after being presented to the Council of States. In respect of the replacement of 54 outdated Tiger fighter jets with the Swedish Gripen, the French Rafale or the Eurofighter, the budget only stretches to 22 new aircraft and the left opposes the acquisition of new fighter jets. The right, on the other hand, is strongly against military deployment for peace-keeping missions abroad.

The role of the army

What is the role of the army under the Federal Constitution? What are the mandates of the militia army in the present day?

strongholds and by means of counter-attack.

- Army deployment in a supporting role at the request of civilian authorities, such as military disaster relief, safeguarding of air supremacy (for international conferences, for example), support for police and border control units, and protection of property (such as foreign embassies).
- Operations to establish peace abroad and prevent the outbreak of armed conflict based on a mandate from the UN or OSCE and usually in cooperation with other countries.

(400,000 men as opposed to 600,000, shorter periods of compulsory service) revealed fundamental shortcomings in the army, in particular with regard to training and support for senior officers. The Federal Council said at the time that the “defence situation was unsatisfactory”.

The Federal Council report to Parliament on Switzerland’s security policy in June 1999 highlighted the new principle of “security through cooperation”. This meant greater cooperation between the army and civilian authorities in Switzerland and an increased contribution to peace-keeping abroad. The



100-page military blueprint XXI for the “Armada Svizra” (as the army is known in Romansch) was based on this security policy report.

The security report and army blueprint led to the next step in the reform process – the “Army XXI” proposal. This communication from the Federal Council to Parliament in October 2001 contained the following key elements – as well as defence and territorial protection, the army would

2008–2011 army reform

The next controversial step in the reform of the army came in May 2005. The army’s main responsibility was no longer to be the traditional task of national defence. Its main role would be territorial protection involving surveillance of border crossings, localities and transport axes. Federal Councillor Samuel Schmid said: “National defence should not be restricted to defence against military attack.” He said traditional warfare in Europe was “unlikely in the foreseeable future even though it cannot be ruled out altogether”. On the other hand, he said, the threat of terrorism was very real and it was now a matter of “protecting a high-tech society”.

The capacity for traditional defence was therefore to be reduced by half to around just 18,500 personnel. The total number of people serving in the army was to remain unchanged at 220,000 men (and women). Equipment was to be transferred from the armoured units and the artillery to the infantry. The infantry would assume responsibility for territorial protection and the armoured units would provide military expertise.

Opposition from military circles...

The 2008–2011 development plan sparked

defence scenarios. He said: “No army would enter into an operational security mission without such resources.” This former senior officer also believed the concept of the militia army was in jeopardy as there would be very few positions of command and staff officer roles for militia officers (alongside professional officers) in a significantly scaled-down army.

Jean-Pierre Bonny, President of the Association of Former Members of the Swiss Army (Pro Militia), was critical of the “Federal Council’s hasty move just 14 months after the entry into force of the XXI Army reform approved by the people”. He said the proposed reduction in defence forces would also have a detrimental effect on territorial protection as armoured divisions would be “absolutely indispensable” for this purpose.

... and from politicians

The restructuring of the army for the years 2008 to 2011 caused great controversy in Parliament. The new role of the army came in for criticism from the left and right of the political divide. The National Council soundly rejected the reform in October 2006. The Swiss People’s Party said the proposals



also be deployed to “prevent and overcome life-threatening dangers” (together with civilian authorities in Switzerland and abroad) and to “safeguard peace and tackle crises” (together with other countries and international organisations). The number of army personnel would be reduced from 360,000 to a maximum of 140,000 with a reserve corps of 80,000. The compulsory service age would be lowered to 30 and the training of recruits extended to 21 weeks. In May 2003, the Swiss people approved the “Army XXI” proposal by a majority of 76%.

strong criticism from military circles and in Parliament. Former Lieutenant General Simon Küchler said a “muddled situation” had emerged as the security report and army blueprint had been superseded by the new reform proposals. According to Army XXI “defence remains the army’s key responsibility”, yet it was felt that this was no longer the case in view of the proposed reduction in defence forces.

Former Major General Paul Müller also voiced criticism, arguing that warfare involving the use of heavy weaponry was called for in territorial protection as well as in de-

moved too far “away from the traditional role of defence towards that of combating terrorism” as it was apprehensive about a coalition with NATO in an emergency situation. The Social Democrats were wary of army operations within Switzerland and believed its peace-keeping missions abroad were in jeopardy.

Defence Minister Samuel Schmid attempted to reach a political compromise – the abolition of just two instead of four armoured divisions and no increase in military peace-keeping operations. The slightly toned-down army reform was unanimously

approved by the Council of States in March 2007. But there was still criticism from some quarters. The “Neue Zürcher Zeitung” highlighted “concessions made to the supporters of an outdated traditional defence-oriented army” and “lost opportunities to develop expertise and gain experience” owing to reduced international operations.

The 2008–2011 reform bill was then returned to the National Council. The representatives of the people also gave the reform their resounding approval in June 2007 as the

Social Democrats (unlike the Swiss People’s Party and the Greens) also supported the proposal. However, a key issue remained unresolved – the number of armoured battalions to defend the nation. By law, this decision lies with the Federal Council and not Parliament ...

A militia army?

The militia army has been a key issue in every step in the reform process in recent years. Does Switzerland need a militia army or a professional army? What size should the

army be in future? Is general compulsory military service still appropriate or do we want an army of volunteers?

The militia army is as deeply engrained in the Swiss mindset as direct democracy and federalism. It is the traditional means of defence for Switzerland as a small, armed and neutral nation. And it is also part of the Federal Constitution: “Switzerland shall have armed forces. In principle, the armed forces shall be organised as a militia” (Article 58). Prominent critics nevertheless fear the clandestine abolition of the militia army by the



“WE NEED THE ARMY”

INTERVIEW WITH KURT R. SPILLMANN, FORMER PROFESSOR OF SECURITY POLICY AND CONFLICT RESEARCH AT ETH ZURICH

How do you see the security situation in Europe?

I cannot envisage any military threat to Switzerland today or in the foreseeable future. I believe the threat comes instead from terrorist and criminal organisations. This type of threat cannot be combated by military means. However, today’s threats and risks are often indirectly linked to violent conflicts sometimes in distant parts of the world. The key task of the armed forces is to secure peace and stability in these conflict regions.

Could Russia become an aggressive major power in Europe?

I don’t believe that is likely in the foreseeable future. Russia only possesses around 10% of America’s military strength excluding nuclear potential, which can hardly be used for military purposes. Unfortunately, under President Bush the USA failed to integrate Russia more into the international system. The new American President Obama now wants to open fresh dialogue with Russia. This may improve global security.

What if, for the sake of argument, Switzerland were to come under military attack?

Before launching a military attack on Switzerland, the foreign army would have to have overcome the defence forces of NATO and the European Union. That being the case, Swiss militia officers and soldiers would face a very battle-hardened army. This would be a war of self-destruction that we would have to prevent by using all of our political guile.



Should Switzerland have its own air force?

Yes, but this air force should not just operate in its own air space. Our fighter jets can make a contribution towards securing European air space. Incidentally, autonomous national defence means having to secure your own air space, but to achieve air supremacy you need to have your own satellite, which Switzerland doesn’t have.

How do senior officers and soldiers in the Swiss army motivate themselves when there is no evil enemy in sight?

Switzerland needs to hold a major debate on whether it should increase its cooperation on peace-keeping operations in view of the current threat situation. I am thinking primarily of the European Union, which is developing civilian and military peace-keeping forces as part of its security and defence policy. To say to our soldiers that they have the task of ensuring security on the periphery of Europe would provide great purpose.

INTERVIEW BY ROLF RIBI

department of defence and senior military staff. They argue:

■ Switzerland now has a regular army. Single-term conscripts carry out their entire compulsory service of around nine months in one go. They are now trained by professional soldiers instead of militia officers. They say: “the gradual professionalisation of the army is alienating it from the people.”

■ Compulsory military service provided for by the Constitution is being avoided. Only 60% of men now discharge their compulsory service as set out in the Constitution. The

tary expert Barbara Haering of the Social Democratic Party. She believes 10,000 soldiers with high availability and 40,000 with lower availability are sufficient and that peace-keeping missions with the international community are the most important task. She also says that increasing the use of the army to ensure internal security is the wrong approach.

Former Brigadier General Hans-Ulrich Ernst would like to see a militia army of just 30,000 men. He says: “The army is too big. We have 140,000 soldiers who have to serve

battle tanks in densely populated areas (former National Councillor Ulrich Schliker). On the left, the Social Democrats and Greens would like to see the army’s operations within Switzerland restricted and instead to increase peace-keeping missions abroad. Josef Lang, the Green Alternative National Councillor, said: “The real challenges facing our country are no longer military ones. They concern protection of the environment, natural catastrophes and global poverty.”

However, official military policy also comes in for criticism. The “security through



remainder perform civil defence or are rejected as unfit for service. They say: “This contradicts the spirit of equity in the application of the draft and undermines the concept of the militia.”

A militia army or a professional army? A professional army “going it alone” without dependence on an international alliance is not a cheaper option than a militia army. An army with professional soldiers only makes sense if military operations abroad are required, but not if the army has a purely defensive role. The Federal Constitution would also have to be amended to provide for such a change and there is no majority support among the people or the cantons for a professional army.

“We don’t need a huge army”

The Federal Council and the army leadership agree that the size of the army has to be reduced. The Swiss army currently numbers around 220,000 active soldiers (77,000 of whom are reserves). The size of the army, which is large by international standards, is primarily due to general compulsory military service. “Having an army based on the compulsory military service system makes no sense from a security or military perspective and is financially unsustainable”, says mili-

tary expert Barbara Haering of the Social Democratic Party. She believes 10,000 soldiers with high availability and 40,000 with lower availability are sufficient and that peace-keeping missions with the international community are the most important task. She also says that increasing the use of the army to ensure internal security is the wrong approach.

Former Brigadier General Hans-Ulrich Ernst recommends that in future 90% of recruits carry out military service of seven months’ duration in one go. This means that 9,000 soldiers would be available constantly. These single-term conscripts would be trained and led by professional officers and senior militia personnel in permanent positions. Such a move would reduce the army in active service to around 30,000 soldiers in addition to 80,000 reservists as before.

Karl Haltiner, a military expert from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH), proposes a militia army made up of 30,000 men – a core armed force of 25,000 volunteer soldiers and 5,000 professional soldiers. His recommendation is modelled on the National Guard, the American voluntary militia who are well-equipped and led by militia officers. His idea would provide a financially attractive solution.

Rigid military policy

The opposing sides in the debate about a modern Swiss army are fairly uncompromising. On the right, there is the Swiss People’s Party and Pro Militia, the association of former army members. They support traditional national defence using tanks, infantrymen and artillery and talk about positioning

cooperation” principle remains a controversial issue. The army’s new mandate for territorial protection, the decline in importance of traditional defence and the threat situation in general do not seem to have been fully thought through. One thing is clear, and that is that in the foreseeable future any threat to Switzerland comes not from foreign armies, but from global terrorism (see the interview with security expert Kurt Spillmann).

Both opponents and advocates of the army reforms can find support among the people. Almost 70% of Swiss people believe the army is necessary. Around 80% want to see a “well-equipped and well-trained army”. 51% are in favour of the militia army, while 42% support the abolition of general compulsory military service. The authors of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology study on security say: “The army still has the backing of the people. Support for general compulsory military service is declining. There is definitely an air of uncertainty.”

DOCUMENTATION

The Federal Council’s report to the Federal Assembly on Switzerland’s security policy of 7 June 1999
XXI Army blueprint of 24 October 2001
Documentation centre doku-zug.ch
(www.doku-zug.ch)



Change of address now possible via the Internet

Have you moved recently or are you about to? You must inform the representation (embassy or general consulate) where you are registered of any change of address. You can now easily register a change of address via the website of your representation. The websites of the Swiss embassies and general consulates are listed at www.eda.admin.ch (Representations).

Electronic delivery of "Swiss Review" and other publications

The Swiss Parliament has adopted the 2009 Federal Budget, which provides for cuts in funding for "Swiss Review" on a scale of CHF 500,000. The largest item of expenditure for "Swiss Review" are printing and postal costs. The use of the Internet enables postal costs to be reduced thanks to electronic delivery. Electronic delivery of "Swiss Review" also has other benefits:

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SANDRA MARTIN, FDFA, PROJECT MANAGER

Electronic delivery takes account of changes in the reading habits of many Swiss people abroad. Make the most of the benefits of this efficient, modern service. Register to receive "Swiss Review" electronically and be amongst the first to obtain information from Switzerland.



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The ABC of Diplomacy

What does it mean when an ambassador presents a letter of credentials? What rules govern the diplomatic bag and what is a diplomatic note? Who do the Geneva Conventions protect and what is meant by preventive diplomacy?

The "ABC of Diplomacy" brochure produced by the FDFA clearly explains these and other terms. Historical photographs

provide a look back at key moments in diplomacy.

The "ABC of Diplomacy" brochure can be downloaded in English, German, French or Italian from the FDFA's website at www.eda.admin.ch (Documentation – Publications – Diplomacy) or obtained from the following address: Information EDA, Bundeshaus West, CH-3003 Berne



NEW POPULAR INITIATIVES AND REFERENDA

No new popular initiatives had been launched since the last edition at the time of going to press.

At www.bk.admin.ch/aktuell/abstimmung you will find a list of pending referenda and popular initiatives and the corresponding signature forms if available. Please complete, sign and send the forms directly to the relevant committee which is responsible for the authentication of your signature.

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Love and kisses from Hollywood

Marc Forster from the Canton of Grisons is flying high. The chameleon director of the 22nd Bond movie, *Quantum of Solace*, became a naturalised Swiss citizen in June 2008. Switzerland's man in Hollywood has managed the third-largest budget in the history of cinema. A profile of one of the most gifted moviemakers of his generation. By Alain Wey

"Everyone told me it was impossible to get into movie-making. But I'm doing it and I'm living my dream", says Forster. Switzerland's man in Hollywood has already directed stars as celebrated as Dustin Hoffman, Johnny Depp, Halle Berry, Kate Winslet, Heath Ledger and Emma Thompson. Naturalised as a Swiss citizen in June 2008, at 39 Marc Forster has become the youngest director of a Bond movie. With some surprise he reveals: "I used to only be interested in art house cinema, but I now find myself in charge of extremely commercial films." He has now mastered the mechanics of producing a blockbuster and is sure to make other action movies. Forster, from the Canton of Grisons, excels in comedy and drama,



Our man from Davos: Film Director Marc Forster

but has also made thrillers and horror movies. His work reflects a blend of genres while retaining a very distinctive individual style. This chameleon filmmaker, the only director of a Bond movie not to come from the Commonwealth, is from Switzerland like the spy himself who is half Swiss through his mother (Ian Fleming mentions this in the novel "You Only Live Twice"). Also a scriptwriter and a producer, Marc Forster has his own production team which he used on the latest Bond film. The spotlight on an American dream.

From Davos to Hollywood

Marc Forster is the youngest of three children and comes from a wealthy family. He left Germany with his parents to live in Klosters at a young age. From 1982 to 1990,

he was educated at the Institut Montana in Zugerberg, a boarding school for boys from Zug which includes John Kerry and Nicolas Hayek Jr. amongst its alumnae. His father, who was a doctor, was to lose his entire fortune following high-risk investments. In 1990, the young man from Grisons moved to New York to study cinema at New York University's Film School until 1993. He says: "I can see myself now in Zurich sitting on an aeroplane. I looked out of the window and saw that it had started to rain. I said to myself: 'Have I really just said goodbye to my whole life?' I didn't speak English very well and I didn't know any filmmakers. Generation after generation, everyone in my family had either been a doctor or a butcher. New York changed me

the moment I set foot there." He lived in a basement apartment that was cold and damp, but he felt "incredibly happy and a great sense of freedom". They were difficult times. His family was concerned by his stubbornness, but he refused to allow his reputation to be damaged. He now lives in Los Angeles. In 1998, the Forster family was hit by tragedy. His father died of cancer and his elder brother, who suffered from schizophrenia, committed suicide. Forster says: "These ordeals caused me great distress but did not break me. I was more determined than ever to pursue my dream."

Recognition

Forster's breakthrough finally came in 2000 with "Everything Put Together", which at-

tracted attention at the major independent film festivals in America. But it was with "Monster's Ball" that Marc Forster really conquered Hollywood. He explains: "This film changed my life." Halle Berry was awarded the Oscar for best actress and the full-length version was a box-office hit. The director has made seven films in just ten years. He says: "I have fulfilled my dreams, but I have discovered that each of them comes at a price. It is not by chance that all the characters in my films are locked within themselves and suffer emotional issues. Over the next decade, I would like to produce impassioned, extrovert films with characters daring to step forth and embrace the world."

Marc Forster completed the shooting of "Quantum of Solace" in under a year. The director was exhausted by the Bond adventure and will not be back immediately for a second film. If you look at the careers of the Bond directors, the risk is worth taking. While the producers already had him in mind for "Casino Royale", Marc Forster agreed to make the 22nd Bond movie after protracted negotiations. He even used his entire production team on the film and modified the screenplay to deepen the introspection of the character introduced in the previous film. There was also twice as much action, as the budget reached \$230 million this time compared to \$160 for the first film with Daniel Craig. It is the most expensive Bond film ever and the third most expensive film of all time behind Pirates of the Caribbean 3 and Spiderman 3. Was Forster's film a success? In less than a month, the film has brought in more than \$500 million worldwide and is on course to set a new record in box-office takings for a Bond movie.

One day Forster would like to return to Switzerland and to Davos. He says: "It is just a question of when." When reflecting on the next ten years, he speaks with the kind of profoundness often found in his films and also a hint of irony. He says: "I hope to be able to really open my heart to enhance my stories and my life. To do so, I will have to fight against my own reserved nature. It won't be easy, I am after all Swiss!"

MARC FORSTER "OFFICIALLY SWISS"

Background. Born on 27 January 1969 in Ulm, Germany.

His father was a German doctor and his mother a Swiss architect. The family moved to Klosters in Grisons.

German-Swiss. On 28 June 2008, he obtained Swiss citizenship in Davos. To mark the occasion, a party was organised in the municipality in Grisons attended by Federal Councillor Moritz Leuenberger. Despite considering himself Swiss, speaking the Grisons dialect fluently and legally living in Davos, Marc Forster was officially still German. He says: "I love Switzerland. It is my country. I grew up there. It shaped my qualities and my faults. I was excited at the prospect of getting the passport. I am now officially Swiss and I am delighted as I believe the country has progressed in the right direction over the last decade."

(Le Temps, 9.11.2008)

First film seen at the cinema. Apocalypse Now by Francis Ford Coppola at the age of 12.

Do you think mankind is making progress? Mankind is constantly regressing and progressing. I believe that we are currently going through a progressive stage and that the resonance of mankind is soaring again. People are more aware of what is happening around them and I hope that future generations will have the resources and opportunities to introduce new ideas and really change things.

Next film. Marc Forster is making a horror thriller, adapting a novel by Max Brooks (son of Mel Brooks), World War Z. The screenplay conveys the accounts of the survivors of an invasion of zombies throughout the world. While no actors have been approached yet, it is understood that Brad Pitt's production company will finance the film. The director was enthused by the project. He says: "I've always been fascinated by this kind of film. When they told me about the storyline, it reminded me of the films from the 1970s with their paranoid conspiracies, like 'All the President's Men'."

FILMOGRAPHY AND AWARDS

- "Lounger". 1995, musical comedy, budget: \$100,000.
- "Everything Put Together". 2000, box office: \$3 million.
- "Monster's Ball". 2002, drama, budget: \$4 million, box office: \$44 million. With Billy Bob Thornton, Halle Berry (Oscar for best actress), Heath Ledger.
- "Finding Neverland". 2004, comedy drama, budget: \$25 million, box office: \$116 million, 7 Oscar nominations, won the Oscar for best film music. Laterna Magica Prize at the Venice Film Festival (2004). With Johnny Depp, Kate Winslet, Dustin Hoffman.
- "Stay". 2005, thriller, box office: \$8 million. With Ewan McGregor, Naomi Watts.
- "Stranger Than Fiction". 2006, comedy, budget: \$30 million, box office: \$54 million. With Will Ferrell, Dustin Hoffman, Emma Thompson.
- "The Kite Runner". 2007, drama, box office: \$73 million. Director of the Year at the Hollywood Film Awards.
- "B22: Quantum of Solace". 2008, budget: \$230 million, box office: more than \$500 million. With Daniel Craig.



British actor Daniel Craig, left, Ukrainian actress and model Olga Kurylenko, second from left, German-Swiss film director Marc Forster, second from right, and Swiss actor Anatole Taubman, right, pose during a photo call for the upcoming James Bond film, Quantum of Solace, in Moscow, Monday, 13 October 2008. (AP Photo/Sergey Ponomarev)

Figures in US dollars. Source: box-office mondial, www.boxofficemojo.com

Source for quotations: Le Temps, 8.11.2008. Le Matin, May 2008.



87TH CONGRESS OF THE SWISS ABROAD IN LUCERNE, 7 TO 9 AUGUST 2009

The Swiss abroad – a great asset for our country?

In what ways are Swiss people abroad, who make up 10% of the Swiss population, an asset for our nation? Do they offer Switzerland added value in terms of image, kudos and global networking? And do our compatriots abroad see themselves as ambassadors for Switzerland and its values? All these questions will be addressed at the 87th Congress of the Swiss Abroad taking place at the congress centre of the Swiss Museum of Transport in Lucerne from 7 to 9 August 2009 under the title "The Swiss abroad – a great asset for our country?"

Almost 700,000 of our fellow citizens live abroad, and 120,000 of them are enrolled on a Swiss electoral register. While their political importance is slowly but surely being recognised by the political parties, the contribution they make economically, socially, culturally and in terms of image is still largely overlooked. These Swiss citizens are not just "ambassadors" for our values abroad, they also provide extraordinary "networking" opportunities. In today's globalised world where people, their economic activities and political systems are increasingly interdependent, don't the Swiss abroad represent a great asset for our country? Should we not make better use of their skills and knowledge? Are the government and the Swiss population in general

aware of this potential? And what are the views of our compatriots abroad?

This congress aims to highlight and illustrate the ways in which the Swiss Diaspora provides added value for Switzerland and why this potential should receive more recognition and be harnessed to greater effect by public authorities and companies. Experts – Swiss people living in Switzerland and abroad – will share their knowledge and personal experiences relating to this subject at the congress.

The 87th Congress of the Swiss Abroad will take place in the beautiful city of Lucerne and has plenty to offer the heart, mind and taste buds.

Prominent speakers will hold short talks, each followed by a round table session, examining the reality and myths concerning the contribution made to our country by Swiss people abroad.

A visit to the Swiss Museum of Transport will allow congress participants to discover a series of accomplishments that were achieved thanks to Swiss people spending time abroad. Finally, on the Sunday, there will also be an opportunity to visit the city of Lucerne and its surrounding area.

Further information on the congress and the registration form will be available on our homepage from the beginning of 2009 at: www.aso.ch/en/offers/congress-of-the-swiss-abroad/2009

Be our guest in Switzerland!

Young Swiss people abroad enjoy rewarding study trips and holidays in Switzerland. The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) offers attractive and affordable programmes for young people from all over the world. Contact us for advice and book your place now. OSA extends a warm welcome to you.

A holiday in Switzerland provides a great opportunity to enjoy nature. Switzerland's winter sports resorts offer you many different ways of moving across the snow. Switzerland's breathtaking alpine scenery also attracts scores of tourists during the summer. As a holiday destination, Switzerland provides a wide range of opportunities to enjoy sport – you can try your hand at trekking, mountain sports, mountain biking, water sports, ball sports and much more besides in our programmes.

You will make friends with young Swiss people of the same age from all over the world and together you will enjoy a sporty holiday in a relaxed environment. At the OSA camps, you will also learn about topical and important aspects of Swiss culture, geography, history, politics and society. Make the most of this opportunity.

Take advantage of the forthcoming offers:

Easter camp in Langwies 5 to 13 April 2009

Young Swiss people from all over the world will meet up to enjoy winter sports in Arosa. Arosa's alpine panorama invites us to spend sun-

87TH CONGRESS OF THE SWISS ABROAD FROM 7 TO 9 AUGUST 2009 AT THE SWISS MUSEUM OF TRANSPORT IN LUCERNE

I am interested in attending the next Congress of the Swiss Abroad. **Please send me the registration documents** for the 87th Congress of the Swiss Abroad (7 to 9 August 2009 in Lucerne) in spring 2009 to the following address:

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Please write clearly in block capitals and send the completed form to: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA), Communications Department, Congress Organisation, Alpenstrasse 26, CH-3006 Berne

To save time and postage, you can also contact us directly by e-mail: communication@aso.ch

The Congress of the Swiss Abroad will be held **in German and French only** (with simultaneous interpretation) for organisational and financial reasons.

The latest information on the forthcoming congress will also be updated regularly at www.aso.ch/de/angebote. It is well worth visiting our website from time to time!



filled days on snow-covered mountains. OSA's skiing and snowboard instructors are looking forward to teaching you the latest winter sports techniques. OSA also provides lots of alternatives to snow sports at the residence in Langwies.

Summer camp 2009 in Leukerbad **19 to 31 July 2009 and** **2 to 14 August 2009**

We offer two 13-day camps both for 60 participants during the summer. We help you practise a sport of your choice at these OSA camps. Fully trained and experienced instructors are there to assist you. Fun and adventure are guaranteed. In addition to sport, we also take a close look at a typically Swiss topic. Come and join us for an active and creative way to discover Switzerland!

Educational programmes

Take advantage of OSA's educational programmes to develop your knowledge of Switzerland.

Our "Training in Switzerland" programme aims to provide you with an insight into educational opportunities in Switzerland. You will visit Swiss universities and we will advise you on your options for studying or training in Switzerland.

Language courses

OSA's language courses are aimed at young people who have little or no knowledge of a Swiss national language. The two-week courses focus heavily on developing conversational skills. We aim to increase your motivation to tackle a new language and develop in-depth knowledge. Studying a language should be fun. The teachers will do

their utmost to fulfil your wishes.

Youth seminar

OSA is organising a youth seminar in Lucerne before the Congress of the Swiss Abroad. Enjoy a fascinating, educational week at one of the world's most famous tourist destinations.

OSA Youth Service

Tel.: +41 31 356 61 00

E-mail: youth@aso.ch

Summer camp 2009

Swiss children abroad aged between 8 and 14 can attend our two-week holiday camps in July and August 2009.

A few places are still available on our summer camps. The same as every year, there will be between 30 and 50 children from all over the world at each camp.

The parental contribution of CHF 900 covers all the costs of the stay.

The Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad would like all Swiss children abroad to have at least one opportunity to enjoy our programme. This is why a fund for reduced contributions has been set up. An application form can be requested with your registration.

Further details on the individual holiday camps and the registration form can be found at www.aso.ch (under "Offers for Children and Young People"). Registrations are processed in the order in which they arrive. Please register your child as quickly as possible. And do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.
Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad
Tel.: +41 31 356 61 16
sjas@aso.ch

The National Council says yes to representation of the Swiss abroad in Parliament

The National Council has approved the Sommaruga parliamentary initiative, which calls for direct representation of the Swiss abroad in the Federal Assembly. The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) welcomes this decision as a clear indication of recognition for the important contribution made by Swiss citizens abroad to Switzerland's interests.

The parliamentary initiative put forward by National Councillor Carlo Sommaruga (SP/GE) in June 2007 calls for the creation of a legal basis for direct representation of the Swiss abroad, initially in the Council of States and then also in the National Council. The National Council has approved the initiative and has instructed its Political Institutions Committee to draw up a bill. The almost 700,000 Swiss expatriates are a great asset for Switzerland. Around 120,000 of them are enrolled on a Swiss electoral register and therefore take an active part in political life in their country of origin.

ORGANISATION OF THE SWISS ABROAD

Our services:

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- Committee for Swiss Schools Abroad (CSSA)
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The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) welcomes the decision, which expresses Parliament's acknowledgement of the contribution that Swiss citizens abroad make in helping the country to thrive. The decision also underlines the National Council's recognition of the growing political importance of the Fifth Switzerland. OSA understands that a solution may involve the creation of an implementation law for Article 40 of the Federal Constitution. This could establish the framework for the Swiss Confederation's policy on the Swiss abroad and govern political representation, including the role of the Council of the Swiss Abroad as the representative body of the Fifth Switzerland.

OSA is keen to emphasise the fact that Switzerland has a strong interest in improving its relationship with its citizens abroad. Strengthening communication is vital for enabling Switzerland to reap more benefits from the experiences and networks of its nationals abroad. The "Swiss abroad" parliamentary group now led by Council of States member Filippo Lombardi (CVP/TI) will have a key role to play in this. It already has more than 100 members from the National Council and Council of States.



Re-election of the CSA for the 2009–2013 term of office

The Council of the Swiss Abroad (CSA) is the representative body for Swiss people living abroad. It represents the interests of all Swiss expatriates in political circles in Switzerland. The CSA therefore plays a key role in protecting the interests of the 700,000 Swiss citizens abroad. The delegates of the CSA are to be newly elected for the 2009 to 2013 term of office. An international appeal is being made to any Swiss abroad who would like to sit as a delegate on the CSA. This body is made up of representatives from the Swiss communities abroad and Swiss people living at home. Recognised by the authorities as the official mouthpiece of the Swiss abroad, the CSA represents the interests of our compatriots abroad and adopts positions on political issues that are of importance to them. It is the “Parliament of the Fifth Switzerland”, the legislative body of OSA and it meets twice a year in Switzerland.

Who can be elected to the CSA? All registered Swiss citizens abroad who submit their candidacy to the specialised organisation or a Swiss association in their country of residence.

Where do candidacies have to be submitted? Candidacies must be submitted to the specialised organisation of the country of residence or to a Swiss association recognised by OSA.

What must a candidacy contain? Each candidate must send a curriculum vitae to the organisation responsible (see below).

How long does a term of office last? Members are elected for four years. Re-election is possible.

Who elects the members of the CSA? The specialised organisations of the Swiss associations and institutions (in a country or group of countries) recognised by OSA are responsible for the election of the members of the CSA based abroad. Where there is no recognised specialised organisation, the CSA can assign this responsibility to one or more associations abroad or assume responsibility itself.

Who organises the elections? The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) provides Swiss people all over the world with information about forthcoming elections. However, it is the specialised organisations and the associations of the Swiss abroad recognised by OSA in each country that are responsible for actually organising the elections. The specialised organisations and the associations of the Swiss abroad recognised by OSA receive information direct from OSA concerning the organisation of elections.

When will the elections take place? Between October 2008 and summer 2009. The newly elected council will hold its constitutive meeting on 7 August 2009 in Lucerne.

Further information is available at www.aso.ch.

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■ Recession in Switzerland?

All the specialist institutes' forecasts have been drastically revised downwards. The collapse of the financial markets and recession in the three major economies - USA, Europe and Japan - will hit Switzerland hard. The Swiss National Bank anticipates a decline in real GDP of between 0.5% and 1% next year. Within the next 12 months, unemployment is expected to increase from 2.7% (November 2008) to 3.5%, 3.7% or even 4%. However, the Swiss National Bank is not predicting a significant drop in consumption levels in Switzerland. The property sector remains in good shape. As for inflation, which peaked at 3.1% in July 2008, this is expected to be around 0.9% in 2009 and 0.5% in 2010.

■ **Switzerland's skiers** have started the season with a bang following Daniel Albrecht's victory and Didier Cuche's second place finish at Sölden in Austria as well as Carlo Janka's second place at Lake Louise in Canada and Silvan Zurbriggen's fourth place in Finland. In women's skiing, Dominique Gislin, Fabienne Suter and the young Lara Gut have achieved some good results (2 podium places).

■ Less badly hit by the financial crisis than UBS, **Credit Suisse** refused government aid. It has however announced losses of CHF 3 billion in the fourth quarter of 2008 which is likely to result in 5,300 job cuts between now and the first quarter of 2009. This amounts to 11% of the workforce.

■ The cantons of Fribourg, Valais and Vaud are banning smoking in public places. Almost half of the Swiss cantons have now adopted a "no smoking" law.

"I personally do not understand the problems some Swiss people have with German immigrants. Many of them have integrated very well into Swiss life."

Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf, Federal Councillor

"If you go around randomly firing an assault rifle, you go straight to prison even if you don't hit anyone. I don't see why it should be any different with speeding."

Moritz Leuenberger, Federal Councillor and Transport Minister

"The free movement of persons with the European Union has been a great success. It has improved economic output by four to five billion francs a year."

Doris Leuthard, Federal Councillor

"Swiss people are often too pessimistic and no longer truly appreciate achievements such as federalism, direct democracy, consociationalism and multiculturalism."

Chiara Simoneschi, President of the National Council

"There will be increasing political pressure from the USA and the European Union regarding banking confidentiality. But Switzerland as a financial centre has more to offer than just banking confidentiality."

Josef Ackermann, Swiss national, Head of Deutsche Bank

"The revenues of the financial sector are 700 times greater than gross national product in Switzerland, but only 80 times greater in the USA. This has benefited us for many years, but these days it is a disadvantage."

Pierre Mirabaud, Chairman of the Swiss Bankers Association

"People in Switzerland are basically very friendly and dependable. It is my impression that here the state belongs to the citizens and not the other way round."

Gertrud Höhler, German national, literary scholar and political advisor

"I think we should welcome Germans into Switzerland. Granted, they are not Swiss, but that is their only shortcoming."

Peter Stamm, author



"Swiss Personality of the Year 2008": Pulling in 69.62 percent of votes, Federal Councillor Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf was chosen by television viewers as their personality of the year 2008 during a live broadcast of the SF show "SwissAward".

■ According to a survey carried out by UBS, the number of Swiss people using e-bills passed the 300,000 mark in November 2008, and 40% of

Swiss bank customers now make these payments via the Internet. This method is particularly popular amongst the younger generation. 50% of

those aged 25 to 39 use it, compared to 29% of those aged over 55.

■ After dinosaur remains and the shells of sea turtles, palaeontologists have now discovered the skeleton of an **estuarine crocodile** at Courtedoux in the Canton of Jura. This reptile lived some 152 million years ago. It is the first time that an animal of this kind has been found in Switzerland.

■ **Hans-Rudolf Merz** has been elected **President of the Swiss Confederation**, succeeding Pascal Couchepin. Despite suffering a heart attack in the autumn, the 66-year-old finance minister is ready to take up office.

■ In ski jumping, **Simon Ammann** got the season off to a flying start with two victories in the World Cup. He even equalled the hill record at Trondheim in Norway with a leap of 140 metres.

■ Double Olympic medallist and winner of the Milan-San Remo race, cyclist **Fabian Cancellara** was named "**Best Swiss Sportsman**" at the Sports Awards.

■ The former senior management of **UBS** gave back CHF 70 million in bonus payments in November. But this is a mere drop in the ocean as they received more than CHF 800 million in recent years according to information published in the press. In December, the "SonntagsZeitung" revealed that Switzerland's largest bank will have to make another 3,000 to 4,500 job cuts, including 750 in Switzerland. According to the Zurich-based weekly newspaper, more than 11% of jobs in the banking sector in Switzerland are under threat, which equates to 12,000 jobs.

ALAIN WEY

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