

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE SWISS ABROAD

S W I S S

REVIEW

FEBRUARY 2014 / NO. 1



Switzerland elsewhere – a book about the world's Swiss colonies

What to do with the vast amounts of rubbish we produce?

Sophie Hunger – an exceptional star of the music scene



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SWISScare

Far-sighted or narrow-minded

THE CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR FESTIVITIES are over. We have returned to our day-to-day lives. This column was written in early January but will only reach readers worldwide a month later. Commenting on his work and the global situation in an interview shortly before Christmas, Cornelio Sommaruga, the well-known former Swiss diplomat and ICRC President, said: "Terrorism and violence can largely be avoided if we respect human dignity. We must resolutely tackle the poverty of one third of humanity, the overexploitation of the environment, and legal and illegal arms transfers." Few would argue against that, except perhaps for a handful of potentates and arms smugglers.

There are various possible ways in which we could help combat poverty and war and foster respect for human dignity in our everyday lives: by demonstrating a generous spirit, by not just focusing on our own interests and by taking heed when our actions are detrimental to others. The outcome of the referendum on 9 February this year on the "initiative against mass immigration", put forward by the Swiss People's Party, will provide an indication of how far-sighted or narrow-minded we Swiss are. I presume that many Swiss abroad in particular would like to see a decision that reflects far-sightedness in Switzerland's relations with the rest of the world rather than small-mindedness and egotism. Didier Burkhalter, Swiss President in 2014, will have a particularly challenging time in dealing with the international community. He will adopt a different approach to that of his predecessor, Ueli Maurer, as he clearly stated after his election. You will find more on his election and that of the presidents of the National Council and Council of States in the "Politics" section, which also includes an interview on diplomatic relations with our neighbouring countries.



In this issue's key focus article one of our editors, Marc Lettau, has taken an in-depth look at something that is quickly disposed of, soon forgotten and which people usually turn their noses up at. He has taken a peek inside Switzerland's rubbish bins and at its mountains of trash, which are growing in line with rising incomes. It is alarming how much food is thrown away and amazing what can be reclaimed from refuse.

Alain Wey profiles the Swiss singer Sophie Hunger in the "Culture" section. She is enjoying major international success with her unconventional, highly diverse music, and creative and surprising collaborations with various artists.

The editorial team wishes you, our readers, a happy and successful New Year and looks forward to hearing from you from afar.

BARBARA ENGEL

4

Mailbag

5

Books: Truths about and opinions on multilingual Switzerland

6

Images: Swiss places outside Switzerland

8

The mountains of waste are gigantic, the recycling business is booming

12

Special representative for neighbouring countries: Interview with Ambassador Hans Jakob Roth

15

Switzerland and China: Big business

Regional pages

17

Literature series: Paul Nizon

18

Sophie Hunger: A lover of music who is herself loved and celebrated

22

Curling: Almost a national sport in Switzerland

24

OSA advice

27

Notes from parliament

30

Echo

Cover photo: Switzerland County with the village of Vevay in Indiana, USA, is one of the places that Swiss photographer Benno Gut photographed for the book "Weltatlas der Schweizer Orte". The texts were written by journalist Petra Koci. Find out more in "Images" on page 6.

Corrigendum: The cover picture of the December edition shows Mount Titlis, not Mount Säntis. We apologise for the error.

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Bad faux pas

To claim that Napoleon was a political genius is more than just a bad faux pas on the part of Peter von Matt. Napoleon was one of mankind's biggest war criminals. It is also unworthy of you as journalists to print such a statement.

PROF. DR. HERMANN HOFER,
GERMANY

Happy I no longer live there

Barbara Engel sounds like a former Communist in her editorial. Switzerland has become so left-wing that I am really happy I no longer live there. Australia has been taken over by the Left in recent years, and the result is obvious, financially and so-called morally. I always thought that Switzerland was

more astute and far-sighted. Unfortunately not.

LEONIE KRISTENSEN, AUSTRALIA

Narrow perspective

It is evident that Berne is already scared stiff about the referenda in 2014. And it is now rallying whoever it can, even the Swiss abroad. But you know what? It won't be enough this time around. There comes a point when all the scare tactics no longer work. What's more, it really surprises me that the Editor-in-Chief of "Swiss Review" has such a narrow perspective. Europe is not the EU. I am already shaking in my boots that old man Putin will run me out of the country due to the referenda in Switzerland... But, Russia, this evil country of oppression with-

out human rights, isn't in Europe, is it?

URS WOLLENMANN, RUSSIA

Positive impact

I really enjoyed the article on pioneers who crossed borders. It again shows the positive impact of immigration. If immigration were a coin, we wouldn't ban it simply because it had two sides.

ANDRÉ BRUNNER, VIA EMAIL

You have to distinguish yourself somehow

Incapable of thinking of anything better, the SVP is having to resort to its old hackneyed tactics. I suppose you have to distinguish yourself somehow in order to justify your mandate and keep obsolete structures in place come hell or high water. No matter what the cost. We can only hope that enough

voters see through the old tired SVP refrain and vote no to the SVP initiative.

ERWIN BALLI, VIA EMAIL

Immigrants needed

The SVP trots out the same refrain again and again. But its party bosses also employ immigrants in their companies. Mr Blocher's EMS Chemie is a prime example. Where would it be without immigrants? Not where it is today, that's for sure. We can't get around the fact that we need immigrants, whether in Switzerland or in the EU. I am also an immigrant, a Swiss abroad living in Germany. I am doing really well here, as there is also a demand for skilled workers in Germany. So I will vote against the SVP initiative.

THOMAS GANTENBEIN, GERMANY



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SWITZERLAND IS OFTEN REFERRED TO AS THE COUNTRY OF FOUR LANGUAGES. We like being referred to in this way – it speaks of cosmopolitanism, cultural diversity, peaceful coexistence and tolerance. And this picture is not inaccurate. Switzerland is indeed a nation forged by the will of the people; it developed against the general European trend of forming a nation around a single dominant language. But, like freedom itself, this nation forged by the will of the people and this linguistic diversity are in danger of being lost if we do not make a continual effort to keep them alive.

These are the thoughts prompted by reading a book by José Ribeaud, a journalist from western Switzerland. The title, “Vier Sprachen, ein Zerfall” (Four Languages, One Decline), says it all: this is a polemic, but an informed and well-argued one, as the author can draw on years of professional experience in both French and German-speaking parts of the country. His diagnosis is as sobering as it is relevant: Switzerland is gambling away one of its most valuable assets. Multilingualism is at risk of becoming an empty myth, an attractive illusion.

His insights are not all new, but the situation has become much more marked in recent years. The ‘dialect wave’ in German-speaking Switzerland is stronger than it has been at any time since the Second World War. According to Ribeaud, the problem is not local dialects themselves, but their exclusive use at the cost of High German. He laments the lack of respect and vanishing consideration for French and Italian-speaking Swiss, not only in personal interactions but also at official events and particularly on radio and television.

Ribeaud reserves his most caustic attack for the invasion of English. The canton of Zurich comes in for particular criticism: he accuses the canton, which cut back on French teaching in schools under pressure from employers, of actively undermining linguistic harmony. In his view, the advance of “Anglomania” into all areas of society is fatal and in “quadrilingual” Switzerland can only be to the detriment of the national languages – even more so than in other countries.

His book is a justified appeal to protect the thing that makes Switzerland what it is: multilingualism. A worrying example of what could happen if nothing is done is Belgium, which is continually threatened with collapse – the direct consequence of a general lack of knowledge among citizens of the country’s other national language and a lack of dialogue between Flemings and Walloons. This dangerous mixture of prejudice, lack of understanding and mutual contempt could also threaten Switzerland’s very existence as a nation.

JÜRIG MÜLLER



JOSÉ RIBEAUD, “Vier Sprachen, ein Zerfall: Wie die Schweiz ihren wichtigsten Vorteil verspielt”. Nagel & Kimche, Munich 2013. The book was originally published in French: «La Suisse plurilingue se déglingue. Plaidoyer pour les quatre langues nationales suisses». Editions Delibreo/Alphil, Neuchâtel 2010

World Atlas of Swiss Places

Where can you find Swiss places outside Switzerland and what are they like? What did emigrants seeking a new life, mainly in the 19th century, take with them when they established new towns like Berne, Glarus, Zurich, Locarno and many more?

Journalist Petra Koci, a Swiss woman with Hungarian roots, set off to explore these outposts of the Swiss Confederation. Her travels took her to countries such as the Netherlands, Argentina, Brazil, Ukraine, Russia and Australia. The result is the World Atlas of Swiss Places, in which she paints a portrait of fif-

teen towns and villages. She not only researched their history, but also participated in the day-to-day life of their inhabitants. Often this everyday existence still reflects the dreams that the founders had when they set off to establish a new "Switzerland" in a foreign land – some out of a sense of adventure and a fascination with far-off places, but most from sheer necessity.

Koci likes the people and tells their stories concisely and

often with a subtle humour, but never lapses into sentimentality. Her partner, photographer Benno Gut, is a skilled documentarist. The

World Atlas of Swiss Places has only one drawback: it is currently only available in German, with no translations produced as yet.

PETRA KOCI, "Weltatlas der Schweizer Orte"; Limmat Verlag, Zurich 2013; 288 pages with photographs by Benno Gut; CHF 39.50, EUR 33; www.limmatverlag.ch



Basel, now Vasilyevka: Russia
 Founded: 20 August 1767
 Population when founded: 166
 Neighbouring villages on the Volga: Glarus, Lucerne, Zug, Schaffhausen, Unterwalden, Solothurn, Zurich, all founded 1767/1768



Zurichtal, now Zolotoe Pole: Ukraine
 Founded: September 1805
 Population: 4,000
 Inhabitants: Ukrainians, Russians, Crimean Tatars



**Villa Lugano, Ciudad Autónoma de Buenos Aires:
Argentina**
Founded: 18 October 1908
Population: 114,253
www.villalugano.com.ar; www.ojodepez.org.ar



New Glarus: Wisconsin, USA
Founded: 1845
Population: 1,341; ten speak Swiss German
www.swisstown.com



St-Maurice, now Hai Mouaz M'hamed: Algeria
Populated: from 1851 by 27 Swiss families
Population today: approx. 10,000



A look inside the nation's rubbish bins

The Swiss recycle a great deal, which is exemplary. However, a look inside the nation's rubbish bins reveals that as salaries and prosperity rise, so automatically does the mountain of refuse. And the vast amounts of food that end up in the rubbish raise moral and ethical issues.

By Marc Lettau

Let's take a typical family and call them the Zubers. The four Zubers – two parents and two teenagers – sustain Switzerland's image as a clean nation. The Zubers always put their rubbish in the correct containers, and they participate with a degree of pedantry in recycling, a Swiss national sport. They conscientiously take waste glass, empty cans, batteries, PET bottles and old clothing to the collection points. The Zubers can be seen carrying organic waste to their local compost site. These "islands" in the everyday urban environment represent an interface between neat and tidy Switzerland and practical Switzerland. In early summer, the local residents gather here for the "compost share-out". The organic waste produces a rich soil ideal for growing geraniums or vegetables. It is handed out free of charge.

However, this is not all the Zubers do when it comes to rubbish. The family bundles up almost 700 kilos of waste paper over the year for recycling. The four family members provide the recycling industry with 1.4 tons of material in total. A further 1.4 tons of household garbage ends up in the rubbish bin. To be precise, 347 kilos of rubbish is recycled and 346 kilos disposed of as household garbage per person per year in Switzerland (2012). Here are the statistics to go with the Zubers' practices: 97% of waste paper is recycled in Switzerland; 96 out of 100 glass bottles are reutilised; the collection figures are good for aluminium (92%) and tinplate (86%); and the return of PET bottles (81%) and batteries (73%) is satisfactory.

Toxins seep from landfill sites

A key principle in the Swiss refuse disposal system is that household garbage is no longer deposited in landfill sites but instead incinerated at specialist plants. A landfill ban on burnable waste has been in force since 2000. Now only the combustion residue, the cinders, is deposited in landfill sites. The shift from landfill to

waste incineration was a key part of the new environmental policy strategy. Michel Monteil, head of the Waste and Resources Division at the Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN), is aware that the general public draws different conclusions about the chimneys at the waste incinerators in light of the clouds rising from them. Every chimney is associated with the notion of air pollution. However, it is landfill sites that present a greater threat to the environment, he says. "Switzerland has decided against landfill sites because the gas methane, which is very harmful to the environment, is released from the landfill mass," remarks Monteil. Plastic waste,

which causes chemical reactions in the landfill mass, is partly responsible for the formation of methane. In contrast, the CO₂ produced during the incineration of garbage is comparatively harmless – but only because the Swiss waste incineration plants use sophisticated filter systems that prevent the emission of pollutants. Monteil also points out that another reason for abandoning landfill is that polluted effluent often seeps from conventional sites. If only the ashes produced during the incineration process are deposited, the risks to water and groundwater are greatly reduced: "The decision to focus on garbage incineration was a decision taken to im-



prove climate protection and to prevent water pollution,” he says.

It was also a decision taken by a nation with few natural resources to use all the energy found in waste. All of Switzerland’s refuse incineration plants are significant energy providers. Heating for entire residential districts is provided from the waste heat. These plants also produce electricity that is fed into the grid. Power generated in this way today meets around 3% of Switzerland’s total electricity requirements: “If the energy content of rubbish is put to use by incinerating, the use of other energy sources can be reduced,” explains Monteil.

Miners in the trash mountain

Vagrants and other poverty-stricken figures sifting through rubbish bins for useable items are a rare sight in Switzerland. Rum-maging through rubbish is nevertheless part of everyday life in our alpine country, albeit using technically sophisticated methods enabled by the term “urban mining”. At the Development Centre for Sustainable Man-

agement of Recyclable Waste and Resources in Hinwil, Zurich, for example, a lengthy process is used to search through the finely grained combustion residue from the incineration plant. Powerful magnets firstly pull iron from the cinders. The other metals are then sifted out. Aluminium and a fine mixture of copper, silver, zinc, lead and gold trickle out of the end of the high-tech system into the collection containers. The reclamation of copper is particularly productive. The amount of copper found in Swiss rubbish is similar to that in a viable copper mine. Urban mining is quite literally a gold mine for waste recycling firms owing to the high global market prices for metals. An estimated 150 to 250 kilograms of gold also end up in Swiss rubbish bins every year. This is found in the tiniest quantities, partly because many electronic devices contain small amounts of gold. Around 15% of this “discarded gold” can now be recovered.

Switzerland’s urban mining is not just restricted to Zurich. All of Switzerland’s 29 waste incinerators separate metals from the cinders. The search for metals also makes the plants cleaner. Large amounts of zinc can even be recovered today from the filter residue of flue gas cleaning installations. The hydrochloric acid required for this process also comes from the flue gas cleaning installation. Michel Monteil regards this as a stroke of good fortune: “The acid produced during combustion previously presented a problem for the waste incineration plants. Today it is the chemical that we use to recover a valuable metal. That’s urban mining in the extreme.”

Such success encourages urban miners to dream about even greater achievements. Their long-term goal is to separate all heavy metals entirely from the residue. “If this could be achieved, then the cinders could be used as a starting material in construction,” explains Monteil. This would mean that very little burned waste would have to be disposed of in landfill sites. The household waste that the Zubers pack into bags and put out onto the street every week would almost completely become part of a closed loop. Monteil nevertheless concedes that there is still a very long way to go before such visions can be realised.

Rising salaries, growing mountain

So, successful miners plough through the trash mountain and turn it into money. And

up and down the country people are contributing in their everyday lives towards the fact that Switzerland now recycles over half of all rubbish. But the situation is not entirely encouraging. One trend in particular is concerning – the mountain of rubbish is becoming bigger every year despite ever improved methods for recovering recyclable material. The amount of waste per person has more than doubled between 1970 and today. There is an obvious direct correlation between prosperity and the trash mountain. The volume of rubbish is increasing in parallel with rising gross domestic product. If people in Switzerland have more money, they produce more waste. Michel Monteil: “In Switzerland, we have not yet succeeded in uncoupling our prosperity from our consumption. The notion of the more prosperous we are, the more we consume still applies.”

Delicacies from the rubbish bin

A scene change. In the town of Zug, which has a high number of wealthy residents, blonde-haired Lotta Wyss searches through supermarket rubbish containers for food after closing time. The 19 year old has been fishing vegetables, fruit and bread from the rubbish for two years. Wyss is not poor; she is committed to a political cause. She refers to her actions as “a silent protest against the throw-away society”. What she pulls out of the containers is “perfectly good food”. The general use-by dates for food in Switzerland mean that far too much food still suitable for consumption ends up in the rubbish.

Lotta Wyss is drawing attention in her own way to an issue that Switzerland only really became aware of in 2011. The FAO, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, gave the authorities a wake-up call at that time when it said that around one third of food produced for human consumption in Europe ends up in the garbage. In 2012, the WWF reiterated the point with a study on food waste in Switzerland, calculating that two million tons of perfectly good food is thrown away each year across the entire food chain.

Research work conducted at the University of Basel (João Almeida) and the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (Claudio Beretta) has provided the data that Swiss authorities are also using today. The researchers’ most surprising finding is



In 1897, the Zurich engineer Jakob Ochsner developed a dust-free waste disposal system and later on the legendary rubbish bin

that consumers transgress the most. Swiss households do not adopt a frugal approach to food and are responsible for 45% of all food waste. Over 400 kilograms of food each year ends up in the garbage rather than the stomach at the home of our Zuber family. The WWF says that a small 320-gram meal per person is thrown away every day in Switzerland. Thirty per cent of the wastage is accounted for by the food industry, which rejects fruit and vegetables that are too big, too small and too misshapen to satisfy conceptions and aesthetic criteria that are too restrictive. By contrast, the food waste levels recorded in the retail sector are relatively low.

Ethically dubious

“The production of all the food never eaten in Switzerland – based on Swiss production conditions – requires a cultivation area of around 3,500 square kilometres,” points out

AN ICON OF SWISS WASTE

The fact that Switzerland has a reputation for being an extremely clean country is the direct result of the establishment of its regulated waste disposal system at the end of the 19th century. In 1897, Jakob Ochsner, an engineer from Zurich, firstly developed a waste disposal system for the dust-free emptying of rubbish bins. In 1902, the standard rubbish bin he produced from hot-dip galvanised sheet metal proved hugely successful. This bin, made mandatory in many towns and cities over the years, helped to significantly reduce health and hygiene problems in urban areas. The so-called “Ochsner bin”, which was part of the street scene until the 1970s, has long been one of Switzerland’s industrial icons. “Patent Ochsner”, embossed on the lid, still resonates today. One of the best known Swiss bands performing in dialect even adopted the name. “Patent Ochsner” made the leap from the roadside to the Swiss concert stage.

Corina Gyssler, media officer at WWF Switzerland. In light of the scale involved, the experts at the Federal Office for Agriculture (FOAG) have also recognised that a serious problem exists. Vinzenz Jung and Werner Harder of the FOAG believe that the wastage of food is alarming from both an environmental and an ethical perspective. Harder: “Raw materials, such as non-renewable energy, fertilisers, fodder and drinking water, are also used for food that is thrown away.” Pigs have been fed with soya, and forests in South America have been cut down for the cultivation of soya, in order to produce meat that is thrown in the bin: “For every piece of wasted meat, fodder is distributed in vain and the natural environment is put under unnecessary pressure.”

The connections outlined by Harder are by no means trivial. Around 30% of total environmental pollution can be attributed to food consumption. If a third of the food produced for human consumption is wasted, this means that a tenth of environmental pollution is caused by food produced but never eaten. The fact that nobody would have to limit their food consumption if the wastage were avoided provides food for thought.

The moral and ethical aspect of food waste is tremendously important as, according to the FAO, the food thrown away worldwide would be sufficient to feed over three billion people. Switzerland cannot ignore such estimates, especially now in the wake of the food crisis of 2007 and 2008, when the number of malnourished people in the world soared from around 850 million to one billion. Vinzenz Jung believes that the environmental and ethical issues have become closely linked ever since: “By deploying resources for the production of foodstuffs that we ultimately discard, we are undermining the capacity of some of the world’s population to feed themselves.”

What needs to change? Werner Harder says: “Food is a means of survival. The value of nutrition must be better conveyed at school and as part of vocational training in future.” Harder’s objective in terms of raising awareness is simple – we need to relearn whether food is edible using our own senses. “Unopened yoghurts are often thrown out today with a mere glance at the expired use-by dates.” The aim must be to





Reusable materials, such as copper, aluminium and even gold, are sorted out from the cinders of waste incineration plants



If disposed of properly, the huge amounts of green waste produced in gardens and kitchens becomes compost for the garden



Around a third of Europe's food ends up in the bin. Photo from the "food waste" exhibition in Basel

at least open the lid: "In all likelihood, it will still be perfectly good."

However, federal government does not wish to delegate all responsibility to educational institutions. The FOAG, together with other federal offices, has engaged in expert dialogue with all stakeholders in the food chain from the field to the plate. The goal is to convince all parties concerned to make a contribution towards reducing wastage – producers, the food processing sector, retailers and, in particular, the catering industry. Federal government has also initiated dialogue among researchers. The Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office, which was newly founded at the beginning of 2014, will address the pressing issue of whether and how Switzerland should introduce new regulations on the dating of foods.

Coop has responded

However, Switzerland has no wish to set specific objectives with regard to food waste, in contrast to the EU, which plans to reduce it by 50% by 2050. Harder: "You can set such a target, but the costs involved in regularly and comprehensively recording waste quantities in order to measure target attainment would be unfeasible." The agricultural expert nevertheless remains confident even without benchmarks: "I am delighted that so many initiatives aimed at reducing food waste have been launched in Switzerland within such a short space of time." Jung also believes there is a relatively high level of willingness to understand the problem: "Many consumers change their behaviour when they realise the scale of what is being wasted." The market bears out his viewpoint. Coop, a major supermarket chain, introduced the "Unique" label in summer 2013 – this is for "fruit and vegetables deviating from the norm", which reveal "the vagaries of nature". Crooked carrots, oversized cauliflowers and apricots slightly blemished by hailstorms have since returned to the shelves and have sold extremely well.

Switzerland aims to obtain a much more accurate understanding of waste disposal behaviour and meticulously examines the nation's rubbish bins every ten years. As part of the latest "rubbish bag study", the household garbage from over 30 selected communes was scrutinised on behalf of federal government and carefully sorted,

weighed and analysed according to 23 criteria. The results of the analysis will be published in spring. Harder and Jung are particularly anxious to learn one figure – the amount of food in its original packaging ending up in the rubbish will also be recorded for the first time.

The Zubers require 2.8 planets

And what does the future hold? Michel Monteil of the FOEN says that Switzerland is today capable of resolving highly complex refuse management issues but the possibility of new products and new consumer habits presenting new waste and environmental problems can never be ruled out.

Observed objectively, the main problem remains the fact that the Swiss consume too many raw materials. "If everyone lived as we do in Switzerland, we would need 2.8 planets," reveals Monteil. The Federal Council aims to address this excessive environmental footprint by focussing efforts on a green economy. According to its "Green Economy Action Plan", raw materials and energy are to be used much more efficiently in future than at present in Switzerland. The approach will also target more rigorous environmental legislation, less food waste and the expansion of recycling activities in the aim of reducing the environmental footprint of the Swiss to 1.8 instead of 2.8 planets within 30 years.

But not everybody is applauding. Sectors of the economy fear State interference. Several environmental organisations would like to see more radical plans. The Green Party wants binding targets and is calling for a green economy and "One Earth" objective by 2050 through a popular initiative. Fundamental critics who argue that a truly better world cannot be achieved without sacrifice are also entering the political debate – even a "green" T-shirt comes at an environmental cost, they say.

“I see myself as Swiss and Asian, as a person quite simply”

Two years ago, Ambassador Hans Jakob Roth was given the task by the Federal Council of coordinating Swiss foreign policy with the border regions in neighbouring states. He primarily views himself as a mediator. His many years of experience with other cultures has proved extremely beneficial.

Interview by Barbara Engel

“SWISS REVIEW”: *The position of Ambassador for Cross-Border Cooperation was created two years ago. Was there a particular reason?*

HANS JAKOB ROTH: It came about as a result of the foreign policy strategy adopted by the Federal Council in March 2012 in which relations with neighbouring states and the European Union were defined as a priority in Swiss foreign policy. It was therefore deemed appropriate to appoint a special ambassador for cross-border cooperation. This service already existed and had been part of the International Law Division until 2006. It had become increasingly evident that many issues could not be resolved just on a legal level, but instead had to be addressed at a political level.

What is your role?

My task, in general, is the coordination of foreign policy in the cross-border regions – between the competent authorities at federal level as well as between federal government and the cantons with their governments. This requires the development of a good personal network and personal relationships with the relevant politicians and officials, in the cantons usually the heads of the chancellery. I therefore devote a great deal of time to fostering relationships and analysing problems. I have no authority to issue instructions to these people and can only use powers of persuasion. The FDFA is in fact directly responsible for very few cross-border issues. The cantons have extensive powers in regional cross-border foreign policy, while other authorities are usually responsible for specialist matters.

What day-to-day issues do you face?

One of the problems we face with cross-border cooperation is the fact that we are dealing with neighbouring countries, above all France and Italy, which are organised differently in terms of political structure. Many

matters that fall under the authority of the cantons in Switzerland are decided upon by Paris and Rome in our neighbouring countries. This means that federal government in Berne is also involved in these processes. Under the Federal Constitution (art. 56, par. 3), federal government mediates in contact between the cantons and major foreign authorities.

Can you think of a specific example?

In the Geneva region, for example, there are problems with personnel in the healthcare sector. France trains people who often then go to work in Switzerland, resulting in precarious situations in French hospitals and care institutions. We are now in the process of concluding a framework agreement at federal level with the government in Paris that will enable the canton to find a solution directly with the neighbouring country. In specific terms, this will involve training personnel together.

The new inheritance tax agreement is causing great concern among the Swiss abroad in France. Are you also involved here?

No, not directly. Our service only really deals with issues that affect the border situation directly. I can give you a current example – France is planning to change the fundamentals of its health insurance system from the middle of next year. Anyone living in France will be entirely subject to the French system. For people who, for example, have been receiving treatment for chronic illnesses in Switzerland for years, this means that they may no longer be able to maintain this. Will they be granted a transitional period in which to organise care in France or will the contributions to care costs be discontinued overnight? Our service deals with such issues in cooperation with other departments and the cantons.

We have noticed that right-wing parties with sometimes xenophobic agendas have enjoyed

great success in elections in the border cantons of Geneva and Ticino. This phenomenon has not arisen in the border canton of Basel. Why is that?

A kind of closed cultural area has existed in the Basel region for centuries. The “Waggi”, a pivotal figure in the Basel carnival, actually comes from Alsace rather than Basel. Alsatians are therefore part of the city of Basel’s culture in a sense. The situation in Ticino and Geneva is different, as this spirit of cross-border unity does not exist to the same degree. There is perhaps also a tendency to look for scapegoats across the border in times of difficulty. However, in my experience, the representatives of the opposition or of the parties you refer to are very cooperative within the government in the search for solutions to cross-border issues. I have also stressed this point to French representatives, as fears were expressed there after the election to the Geneva cantonal government of a member of the Mouvement des citoyens.

You have just published a book entitled “Die Krise des Westens – eine Krise des Individualismus” (The Crisis of the West – a Crisis of Individualism). Tell us about this book.

It is an analysis of Western society, primarily European society, from an Asian perspective. I lived in Asia for twenty years, mainly in China and Japan.

So you now feel Asian?

I identify with both Swiss and Asian people. I feel an easy and close bond with Asians. I admire their way of doing things and how they foster relationships.

Could you give us more of an insight into what your book is about? How does individualism relate to the crisis in the West?

Our society’s strategic focus is no longer right. We have secured our role as global leaders through individuality and man’s in-

dependence from his group. However, this independence has reached a level today where it constitutes a lack of responsibility. In our society positive developments are accepted and perceived as a matter of course, while negative ones are immediately blamed on society.

Decisions will be made in the near future on the extent to which international law should prevail over national law in Switzerland. Have the debates received attention abroad and have any comments been made to you?

Nothing has been said to me so far.

You will join the Centre for Security Policy in Geneva at the beginning of 2014. What will your role be?

Much of my work will be in a teaching or training capacity. I am relishing the prospect because I firmly believe that intercultural understanding and intercultural training are extremely important. This training obviously cannot simply anticipate the experiences that a diplomat, for example, will have but it can prevent unpleasant surprises and help to prevent mistakes. This is not primarily about table manners, which are covered by every travel guide today, but rather interpersonal skills. For instance, mistakes made when forging relationships in Asian society can be almost impossible to rectify.

What are the key points when dealing with Asian partners?

Relationships are essentially always a matter of proximity and distance. Asians place more emphasis on proximity than we do, which is also true of many people who do not belong to European civilisation. However, they make a much greater distinction between their own circle and outsiders. Harmony and consensus are extremely important in their own circle, whereas outside groups are excluded. We Swiss are very similar in some respects.

You are due to retire in two years. Will you return to Asia?

I plan to live in a city in eastern Asia, but I don't know where yet. Even as a senior citizen there, I will certainly make my intercultural experiences available to businesses or other sections of society.

Hans J. Roth

was born in Thurgau, grew up in Basel and has worked for Switzerland's consular and diplomatic services for over 30 years.

After serving in Tokyo, Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong, he has been the Ambassador for Cross-Border Cooperation for the past two years. He will join the Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP) at the start of 2014. The GCSP is a foundation established in 1995 with 45 member states to promote the building and maintenance of peace, security and stability. The GCSP was founded by the Swiss Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport, in cooperation with the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, as a Swiss contribution to Partnership for Peace (PfP). It primarily provides consultation and training on security issues and intercultural affairs, particularly for diplomats and military personnel. Some 45 people work at the GCSP. www.gcsp.ch

The photos come from a feature for SRF's ECO show.

BARBARA ENGEL is the editor-in-chief of "Swiss Review"



Swiss President in year of destiny

Minister of Foreign Affairs Didier Burkhalter is Swiss President in a crucial year for Switzerland. Responsible for policy on Europe, probably the government's thorniest issue, he must put relations with the European Union on a new footing.

By Jürg Müller

Changes of direction in the Swiss Presidency, which rotates annually, are rarely as glaringly obvious as on this occasion. Defence Minister Ueli Maurer constantly played on variations of the theme of "David versus Goliath", little Switzerland against the world's major powers, in his presidential appearances. By contrast, Didier Burkhalter has adopted the maxim of "Switzerland and the world" for his presidential year during which he aims to focus particular attention on opening up Switzerland's outlook.

Openness is hardly what the Free Democrat from Neuchâtel, elected Swiss President in impressive style, is known for. He is regarded as an introvert and does not seek the big stage. He will nevertheless appear in the spotlight more than any other Federal Councillor in 2014. This is not just because he will represent Switzerland to the outside world, but also because he will take over the presidency of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) at the same time.

Burkhalter is also responsible for the government's most contentious policy area, namely relations with Europe, and he has set himself ambitious targets here. He intends to put relations with the EU on a new footing this year. He will not only have to overcome foreign policy pitfalls but also political obstacles domestically. Even Burkhalter himself is calling it a "year of destiny". Burkhalter has focused on Europe in his foreign policy at a much earlier stage than his predecessor, Micheline Calmy-Rey. He has placed a greater emphasis on neighbouring countries and is attempting to create a more favourable climate for Switzerland in Brussels through closer relations with individual EU member states.

Didier Burkhalter, born in 1960, was elected to national government as Pascal Couchepin's successor in 2009, taking over the Federal Department of Home Affairs (FDHA) from him. After Minister of Foreign Affairs Calmy-Rey stepped down, he became head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA). Burkhalter was elected as a member of Neuchâtel's municipal government at the age of just 31 and served there until 2005. He became a National Councillor in 2003 and a Council of States member in 2007. He has three adult sons.

Lustenberger and Germann elected Presidents

Christian Democrat Ruedi Lustenberger (1950, pictured left) was elected President of the National Council at the beginning of the last win-

ter session. Formally Switzerland's highest office holder, he comes from Entlebuch and is seen as an affable figure. Lustenberger, a mas-

ter carpenter and father of five adult children, has sat on the National Council since 1999. He belongs to the conservative wing of the Christian Democratic People's Party (CVP) politically but is regarded in many quarters as a bridge-builder between different factions.

Hannes Germann of the Swiss People's Party (SVP), born in 1956, who is the new President of the Council of States, has also gained a reputation as a consensus politician. The primary school teacher, economist and business journalist from the canton of Schaffhausen is also President of the Association of Swiss Communes.



The conquest of China

Switzerland has become the first European country to sign a free trade agreement with China. Even sceptics were reluctant to oppose the agreement, in view of the country's economic power. China is already Switzerland's third biggest trade partner, after the EU and the USA. In 2012, exports to China amounted to CHF 7.8 billion.

By Hubert Mooser

The timing could not have been better. As the Historical Museum in Berne was unveiling for the first time terracotta figures from the mausoleum of Qin Shi Huang, the first Emperor of China, bringing the history of China to Switzerland, far away in Beijing Swiss and Chinese negotiators were hammering out the final details of a free trade agreement. Here the birth of a superpower, there its economic expansion. China has electrified the rest of the world. Never has a country risen with such rapidity from agrarian economy to industrial superpower. Since the economic reforms of 1978, this huge nation with 1.3 billion people and a fast-growing middle class has grown at an astonishing rate. And Swiss industry is hoping that China could become an even bigger sales market for its products.

Fears have suddenly evaporated

There was euphoria on 6 July 2013 when the Swiss Minister of Economic Affairs, Federal Councillor Johann Schneider-Ammann, and his Chinese counterpart, Gao Hucheng, put their signatures to the 1,000-page free trade agreement in Beijing. As of mid-2014, the agreement will introduce the easier exchange of goods and services, better market access for both countries, more security for investors and enhanced protection for intellectual property. The savings on customs duties alone will save Swiss companies over CHF 200 million per year. "The agreement will remove customs duties on an estimated 95% of trade with China," says Ambassador Christian Etter, head of the Special Foreign Economic Service Division in the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), who led the tricky negotiations with China. Machinery manufacturers, watchmakers, the chemical industry and pharmaceutical companies all stand to benefit, but so too do consumers because cheaper imports bring prices down. But above all, the agreement with China gives Swiss industry and service providers an edge over European competitors be-

cause there is as yet no free trade agreement between the EU and China.

Fears that more and more Swiss companies would relocate to China and that Switzerland would be flooded with cheap foodstuffs, clothes and toys from the "world's factory" have suddenly evaporated.

Federal Councillor Schneider-Ammann described the agreement as a milestone in the history of Swiss-Chinese relations. President Ueli Maurer even went so far as to say that a line should be drawn under the Tiananmen Square massacre of 1989, the violent suppression of the pro-democracy movement by the Chinese military in which some 2,600 people were killed.

Critics in a hard place

Organisations and politicians who point to events like the Tiananmen massacre, forced labour, the lack of freedom of assembly and freedom of religion, human rights abuses, dangerous working conditions, environmental pollution and the question of Tibet are in a hard place. Politicians should take seriously the fears of Tibetans of even more persecution, and not just in the signing of petitions, said SP Vice-President Jacqueline Fehr in December during a debate on the agreement in the National Council. However, her motion to reject the free trade agreement and her attempt to make it subject to a referendum both failed. Not even all those on the left or all the Greens supported the efforts of the National Councillor from Zurich.

The agreement presented the unions, in particular, with a dilemma. "It's very disappointing that the protection of human rights and a reference to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights do not explicitly figure in the agreement," says Vasco Pedrina, the former president of inter-professional trade union Unia and now an advisor to trade unions on international affairs. He believes, however, that the general conclusion was that despite the serious weaknesses of the agreement, "a rejec-

tion and a referendum would not get us anywhere".

Even the powerful farming lobby, which successfully blocked free trade agreements with the USA, has given its support to the agreement. "The free trade agreement with China satisfies all the requirements of the farming industry," says Markus Ritter, president of the Swiss Farmers' Union and CVP National Councillor.

China accepted reference to UN charter

The agreement was rubber-stamped by the National Council, and in the Council of States, where the agreement will be debated in the spring 2014 session, resistance is likely to be even less. This widespread acceptance comes as no surprise to Ambassador Etter. "So far, parliament has approved all 28 free trade agreements," he says. The agreement with China has caused somewhat more debate, he concedes, because it has a higher profile. This, he adds, is doubtless why more attention has been given to the human rights situation. "But this is not entirely new because human rights were also an issue in parliament in connection with the agreement with Colombia in 2009," says the trade diplomat. Etter emphasises that concessions were achieved in the negotiations with China: "Concessions that are by no means a matter of course for this country." One example is the reference to Article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations, which stipulates that human rights must be respected in international relations. Etter believes that closer relations with China will promote not only the economic but also the political opening up of the country.

Historical background

China has been endeavouring for several years to secure better access to foreign sales markets. When it joined the World Trade Organization in 2001, its export trade grew exponentially. In 2009, China overtook Germany in terms of exports to



Federal Councillor Johann Schneider-Ammann with the Chinese Premier Li Keqiang at a meeting in Beijing on 6 July 2013

become the world's biggest export nation. The fact that Switzerland has become one of the first western countries to sign a free trade agreement with China also has an historical background. "China has not forgotten that Switzerland was one of the first countries to recognise the People's Republic of China," says Etter. He points out that Swiss lift manufacturer Schindler was one of the first companies to set up a joint venture in China after the economic reforms of 1978. Since then, he says, relations between the two countries have steadily deepened.

In 2007, the then Swiss Minister of Economic Affairs, Doris Leuthard (CVP), sent

Ambassador Etter to Beijing for initial talks. Between 2008 and 2010, there were exploratory talks and workshops with Swiss companies. Negotiations were formally opened by Leuthard's successor Schneider-Ammann in 2011. After two years and nine rounds of negotiations, the agreement was finalised. The media described it as a fast result. Etter responds: "I have known negotiations to last between six months and ten years. Two years is certainly a good outcome."

In negotiations such as these, cultural differences are not as important as is often thought, says Etter: there is give and take, and both sides are looking for win-win sit-

uations. The agreement will be reviewed and, if necessary, amended every two years to make sure that trade relations with China are a success – just like the Qin exhibition, which attracted over 300,000 visitors to the Historical Museum in Berne, setting a new record.

HUBERT MOOSER is an editor at the "Tages-Anzeiger"

FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS ARE IMPORTANT TO LITTLE SWITZERLAND

A small country like Switzerland depends on its export markets. The statistics reveal just how much free trade agreements are worth to the country: almost 20% of all Switzerland's exports are currently governed by free trade agreements. Negotiations for further agreements are currently underway with India, Indonesia, Thailand and the Russia-Belarus-Kazakhstan customs union. In 2013 free trade negotiations were completed with the Central American states of Costa Rica and Panama as well as with Bosnia-Herzegovina. Negotiations are due to begin with Malaysia next year. Switzerland is also interested in stronger trade links with the Mercosur countries (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay). The question of how economic relations

could be stepped up is currently being considered. "The diversification of export markets is a declared aim of the Federal Council," says Ambassador Christian Etter with regard to the ongoing efforts to expand foreign trade.

CHINA AS AN EXPORT MARKET

China is Switzerland's third most important export market, after the EU and the USA. In 2012, exports to China amounted to CHF 7.8 billion per year, while Switzerland imported CHF 10 billion worth of goods from China. China, together with Hong Kong, is now Switzerland's largest sales market in Asia. Economists predict that the free trade agreement will double the volume of trade with the People's Republic over the next 10 years.

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

By Charles Linsmayer

Rome and Barcelona brought out the writer in him, but Paris became his literary home – Paul Nizon

“Nothing, as far as I know,” is the answer to the question “What do you have to say?” in Paul Nizon’s first novel, “Canto”, written in 1961. “Nothing, no opinion, no agenda, no story, no fable, no theme. Only this passion for writing in my fingers.” Completed in 1962, the novel reflects a period spent in Rome in 1960 – an experience that awakened not only the writer in him, but also the “creature of instinct”, the eroticist, for whom the body of the city and the body of a woman combined to form a single, enthralling enigma.

Cities as places of experience

Nizon was born on 19 December 1929, the son of a Russian father and a Bernese mother. For him, cities have always been both vital places of experience and sources of inspiration. Berne, the city of his birth, appears in “Im Hause enden die Geschichten” (1971) as the place that offers a young man the first opportunity to escape a family home that feels like a prison. In Zurich he wrote not only “Canto” but also the thought-provoking “Diskurs in der Enge” of 1970: an essay that recognises a basic condition of the Swiss artist in “closeness and what it engenders: flight”. Barcelona, the setting for “Untertauchen” (1972), led, through an encounter with a dancer, to his final split with bourgeois existence and a life as a full-time writer: “disappearing in order to finally exist”.

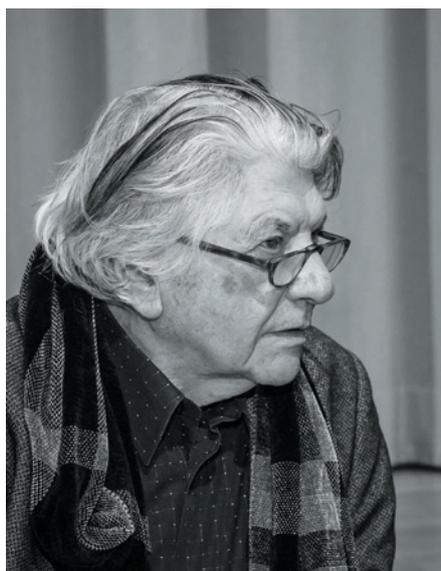
“Stolz”, a novel about an artist who has lost himself, made Nizon a successful writer in 1975. But it also precipitated a life crisis from which he, unlike the eponymous main character, escaped not through death, but by fleeing to Paris, where he has lived ever

since and where he achieved the recognition as an author long denied him in the German-speaking world.

Writing in a boxroom

Working in his legendary boxroom and other writing studios, while coming to know the city as a very personal habitat and a backdrop for all manner of love affairs, he has produced not only the masterly Paris novels “Das Jahr der Liebe” (“My Year of Love”, 1981), “Im Bauch des Wals” (1989), “Hund. Beichte am Mittag” (1997) and “Das Fell der

Forelle” (2005), but also over 1,500 pages so far of his “Journal”. This record of his life and work is a precise yet personal account of Nizon’s writing – writing which continues to refuse commitment and conveys experiences and memories in words so intensely, monomaniacally and unhesitatingly that he can state without exaggeration: “I crawl out of my books.”



Quotation:

“The reality I am talking about cannot be distilled or packaged once and for all and carried around in a bag, a box or a word. It happens. It wants to be lived out in a process of trying to understand it and, more than that, it needs to be fashioned, for example through the medium of language. That is why I write. The reality created by language is the only reality I know and acknowledge. It gives me a sense of being present and to some extent in harmony with what really happens in secret.”

(“Die Belagerung der Welt. Romanjahre”, Suhrkamp-Verlag, Berlin 2013)

Consistent to the last

Nizon, who has lived in Paris since 1977, whose name is included in the “Larousse” and whom “Le Monde” has described as “currently the greatest magician of the German language”, has always remained a Swiss citizen. “I would have become a Parisian,” he says, “if there were such a thing as Parisian citizenship”. At an age when most have retired, he still sits at his desk every day and continues his lifelong dialogue with himself and his memories. “Do you want to die at your writing desk?” Dieter Bachmann asked him in an interview in 2009. “Yes, absolutely,” he replied. “I hope soon to finish a book I’ve started, entitled “Der Nagel im Kopf”.

CHARLES LINSMAYER is a literary scholar and journalist in Zurich

BIBLIOGRAPHY: All the works mentioned here are available from Suhrkamp-Verlag, Frankfurt. Most recently published: “Die Belagerung der Welt. Romanjahre”.

Sophie Hunger: Versatile, inventive and highly acclaimed

In the space of six years, Sophie Hunger has established an international reputation. The folk-pop-blues singer has just completed a year-long European tour, performing around 150 concerts. An artist who flouts styles and stereotypes, she is surrounded by virtuoso musicians on stage.

By Alain Wey

Paléo Festival, Nyon, July 2013 – wearing an elegant black dress, Sophie Hunger appears on the Grande Scène to light up the famous festival on Lake Geneva. She sits down at the grand piano and has the audience enraptured with her voice from the very first notes. She is surrounded by four seasoned musicians providing the perfect accompaniment to her songs. A trumpet, clarinet and trombone lend her pop music a sound bordering on jazz. Her music has been honed by thousands of miles on the road. The vibrant thirty-something is very much at home on stage. The audience goes wild. Having released four albums, in December the Zurich-based performer completed a 150-date tour from Canada to Europe which began in October 2012. This musical odyssey produced a live double album, a film and a book entitled “Rules of Fire”. Where will she be in 2014? Wherever her next songs take her. She will return to a path inspired by her love of music.

A diplomat's daughter on a journey of self-discovery

It is not by chance that Sophie Hunger has an almost perfect command of English. The daughter of the diplomat Philippe Welti and the politician Myrtha Welti (née Hunger), Émilie Jeanne-Sophie grew up between Berne, London (1985–1989), Bonn (1996–1998) and finally Zurich. Artistic talent is in her genes. Her grandfather Arthur Welti was a radio broadcaster, actor and author, her great-great-uncle Albert Welti (1862–1912) was a painter and an engraver, and her great-uncle Albert J. Welti (1894–1965) a writer and painter. Has she rekindled a flame by launching herself body and soul into music? Her family history is a source of inspiration. After studying literary subjects for her school-leaving diploma, she began a degree course in German and English. It was the age when



On stage at the Schüür concert hall in Lucerne in 2011

the great questions of youth arise. What was she going to do with her life?

"I've always loved music but I held back from pursuing it. I kept my distance. There was so much going on in my mind, I'd analyse everything. I had to quell my conscience and almost forget my own identity. It was when I became nothing that I was finally able to open myself up to music."

She has played the piano from the age of nine and began the guitar at 19. She has taken part as a singer in various musical projects since 2002 under the name she is known by, *Émilie Welti*. She was also part of the rock trio *Fisher*. Her cited influences include the greats of folk music, Bob Dylan and Johnny Cash, whose songs she does not hesitate to re-interpret on stage. In 2006, she showed great audacity home-producing her debut album "Sketches on Sea" in her Zurich apartment. It was a smash hit. The critics raved about it and her musical peers took her under their wings. Stephan Eicher opened the door to France for her in 2007 (they sing "Spiegelbild" together), Young Gods invited her on stage and eventually asked her to join the first leg of their acoustic tour in 2008, and the jazz trumpeter Erik Truffaz requested her vocal skills. She has been surrounded by accomplished musicians from the outset. Her second album "Monday's Ghost" came out in May 2008 under the Lausanne label "Two Gentlemen" with production by Erik Truffaz' bassist, Marcello Giuliani. This was her consecration. *Rolling Stone Magazine* included her in the "10 newcomers" of the year. The album easily topped the Swiss charts. She signed with Universal Music Jazz in Paris in June. This first studio album has been available in France, Germany and Austria since 2009.

Being on stage: her inspiration and her raison d'être

"You learn things when you're touring and performing every evening. That's where you completely bare your soul. A musician's work becomes increasingly clear and the music evolves with the audience." Since 2009, Sophie Hunger and her band have played over 100 concerts a year on average. She performed at the Montreux Jazz Festival in 2007, 2008 and 2010. She often plays to packed venues in Switzerland. France and Germany remain the countries where she appears most often

and she crossed the Atlantic in 2010. Her desire to learn led her to produce her own album "1983" in collaboration with the sound engineer Stéphane Alf Briat (*Air*, *Phoenix*). On an enigmatic cover, Sophie Hunger holds two fingers in the form of a revolver to her head while pointing another at the onlooker. She was directly inspired by the self-portrait by the painter Maria Lassnig entitled "You or Me" and revealed that she believes suicidal behaviour stems from individualism. "The harm I do to you, I do to myself". The album contains her rendition of the *Noir Désir* track "Le vent nous portera" in a punchy, purified rock version. This featured on the soundtrack of two films, "Terraferma" in 2011 and "Les Beaux Jours" in 2013, and went straight to the top of the Swiss charts. The subsequent tour saw her take to the legendary stage at the Glastonbury Festival in the UK, the first time a Swiss artist has ever performed there. 2011 was the year she went global. Sophie Hunger played concerts in Canada in June and then in the US in November with the Tuareg band *Tinariwen*. In March 2012, she completed her long tour with a series of solo concerts in homage to one of her spiritual inspirations, "Bob Dylan – Be Part Of My Dream", in Dürdingen, canton Fribourg, and then in Paris.

Between Europe and Los Angeles

After three European albums, the fourth, "The Danger of Light", entered new stratospheres. Sophie Hunger called upon the Californian producer Adam Samuels (Stephan Eicher, Pearl Jam, John Frusciante, Daniel Lanois) and recorded live in Lausanne, Carpentras (France), Los Angeles and Montreal. In Los Angeles, she even engaged the services of Josh Klinghoffer, the current guitarist with the Red Hot Chili Peppers. Always very mysterious, the album title was thought-provoking. "I was walking down the street when I got a call from my agent. I had been putting off choosing the album title for weeks but he wanted it right there and then. I looked at the sun and said: "The Danger of Light". It was completely instinctive. I later asked myself what I wanted to say. I'm still discovering new meanings today." Starting with the mystical track "Rererevolution", the album





Sophie Hunger on the album "The Danger Of Light"



At the Halden Pop Festival in 2010

touches upon current issues with "The Fallen", evoking the tragic fate of African immigrants, and "Heharun", exploring forbidden love in the Middle East, as well as the timeless subject of freedom with "Z'lied vor freiheitsstatue". In the video of the track "Likelikelike", Sophie Hunger plays football while passing through the streets of Paris. From the Luxembourg Gardens to the Eiffel Tower, she shows off her footballing skills in high heels and a black dress. She keeps up the ball, dribbles past passers-by, heads it and kicks it furiously. There is certainly a good deal of humour and a sense of irony.

The documentary "The Rules of Fire", which accompanies her recently released "live" double album, gives the audience an insight into some of the facets of the singer's complex personality - playful, modest, reverent and passionate. It also reveals the friendship and osmosis that create the bond with her backing musicians from French-speaking Switzerland. It is impossible to separate her from the band which complements her tracks: drummer and percussionist Alberto Malo, bassist, guitarist and clarinetist Simon Gerber, trumpeter and keyboard player Alexis Anérilles and violinist Sara Oswald.

Bob Dylan, Nina Simone, Jeff Buckley

Her world and her many inspirations are embodied by the evocation of her imaginary musical family. Bob Dylan is at once her father, brother and child. Nina Simone is her big sister. Thelonious Monk embodies the family spirit and the expression of freedom. Jeff Buckley is her sweetheart. She also likes hanging out with her neighbour Tom Waits. Sitting together on the porch of the house, they see Thom Yorke (Radiohead vocalist) pass by in a futuristic vehicle. As for her mother, that would be none other than Billie Holiday - and her father, Charlie Chaplin. Yes, Sophie Hunger's world is a place always full of creative exuberance where the artist's steps are guided by instinct.

www.sophiehunger.com

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Curling – a game of chess on ice

Since its introduction at the 1998 Winter Olympic Games, curling has emerged from the shadows and has benefited from renewed public interest every four years. Amongst the leading nations in the sport, Switzerland has never returned from the games empty-handed.

By Alain Wey



Mirjam Ott releasing a stone with Carmen Küng and Janine Greiner at the Olympic Games in Vancouver in 2010

An ice rink, a target (house), granite stones weighing almost 20 kilos and brooms – curling is a winter sport like no other, which requires both physical strength and strategic ability. With around 7,000 registered players and 154 clubs, Switzerland is one of the most decorated nations at the World Championships along with Canada, Scotland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark. Just a few days before the opening of the Sochi Olympic Games, the medal hopes rest with the teams of Mirjam Ott, who has twice won silver, and the young Sven Michel, who became European champion last December. “With some 10,000 players in Switzerland, there is huge interest in curling,” remarks Patrik Lörtscher from canton Vaud, who was Olympic champion in Nagano in 1998 and is Vice-President of Swiss Curling. “It is becoming increasingly popular amongst young people. In the 1970s, there were four or five juniors in Lausanne whereas today there are around fifty. Since curling became an Olympic sport, there has always been an increase in the number of participants after the games. This then drops off a little

before building up again for the following Olympics.”

Invented on the frozen lochs of Scotland

While more recent than skiing, curling is one of the oldest winter sports. Historians trace its origins to the 16th century in Scotland, although the Netherlands also stakes its own claim. It was nevertheless in the United Kingdom that the oldest curling stone – the famous “Stirling Stone”, dated 1511 – was found. This is where the game took off and the first clubs emerged. “It was introduced to Switzerland at the beginning of the 19th century by the English who took holidays in mountain resorts like St. Moritz, Château-d’Œx and Gstaad,” explains Patrik Lörtscher. The first official competition took place in St. Moritz in 1880.

The first clubs were subsequently founded in Grisons and then in the Bernese Oberland and the alpine regions of cantons Vaud and Valais. The Swiss curling association (Swiss Curling) was established in 1942. Switzerland has since hosted interna-

tional tournaments on many occasions including the World Championships in 1974, 1979, 1988, 1993, 1997, 2001 and 2012. The Swiss medal tally at the World Championships is testament to the talent and consistency of our national teams. The women and men have won gold 6 times, silver 7 times and bronze 11 times. Since the introduction of curling to the Olympic Games at Nagano in 1998, Switzerland has also secured gold (1), silver (2) and bronze (2) medals. The first Olympic champion, the skip Patrik Lörtscher, recalls that Switzerland arrived in Japan as outsiders. “They saw us as one of the two teams that had no medal hopes. Everything went well for us. We won our first match against Germany, the European champions, with the last stone and that gave us a winning mentality. It was incredible, in fact quite miraculous as it was completely unexpected!”

Champions of Europe 2013

Last December, the Adelboden team (canton Berne) led by 25-year-old skip Sven Michel won gold at the European Championships in Norway. However, after finish-

ing in 6th place in the World Championships in Victoria (Canada) in March 2013, they are not travelling to Sochi as favourites. Patrik Lörtscher explains: "There are six or seven teams at the same level of performance as Sven Michel's team. The best nations of all include Sweden, the reigning world champions, Canada, the country of curling, and then Norway, despite losing to

Switzerland in the final of the European Championships. Then there are Scotland, Switzerland and Denmark. To secure a medal, Switzerland must finish in the top four and then win the semi-final or the bronze medal play-off." The Vice-President of Swiss Curling never tires of extolling the merits of his sport. "I've always been fascinated by the tactical aspect of

the game. This sport does not just require physical prowess (5 km covered per match, half of which in sweeping) but also tactical nous. You have to produce strategies. Curling is like a game of chess on ice."

www.curling.ch

ALAIN WEY is a journalist on the "Swiss Review"

"We want to win a medal"

The figurehead of Swiss women's curling, the 41-year-old skip Mirjam Ott is travelling to Sochi to attempt to win a 3rd Olympic medal after picking up silver in Salt Lake City in 2002 and Turin in 2006. With her teammates Carmen Schäfer, Carmen Küng, Janine Greiner and Alina Pätz, she received a bronze medal at the last European Championships and was crowned world champion in 2012. The captain of the CC Davos team has an incredible track record. She also won a bronze medal at the World Championships (2008) and two gold (1996, 2008), three silver (2004, 2005, 2009) and four bronze (2001, 2006, 2010, 2013) medals at the European Championships.

At what age did you take up curling?

At the age of ten in Berne. It is something of a family tradition as my father also played curling. My teammates also started playing curling through family connections.

What appealed to you about the sport?

Playing in a small team to achieve a common goal together. Curling is an extremely dynamic and varied sport. Accuracy, coordination, athletic ability, strategy, mental strength and communication within the team are all key elements.

What role does the skip play in the team's performance?

It's a similar role to the captain of a football team. They take responsibility for the team, decide on the strategy to adopt before the match, lead the discussions during the match and often play the last two stones of the end.

How long has this team been together?

Since 2009–2010. Carmen Schäfer and Janine Greiner joined the team in 2007.

You are the most talented female player in the history of Swiss curling...

I've been on the circuit for a long time. I took part in my first international tournament in 1996 and immediately became European champion. Eighteen years later and I've now played over 220 international matches!

What is a year like for a world-class curling player like you?

The tournament season begins in September. We go to Canada two to three times for two to three weeks and take part in lots of competitions in Switzerland and Europe. On average, we are on the road every two weeks from Thursday to Monday. We spend over 100 days a year abroad in Olympic, European Championship and World Championship seasons.

Why were you unable to take part in the World Championships in Riga (Latvia) in March 2013?

The winners of the Swiss championship take part in that tournament. We were just edged out in the final by Silvana Tirinzoni's Aarau team and were consequently unable to defend our world title in 2013. Last season was a difficult one. I injured my

knee in January and was uncertain whether I'd be able to take part in the Swiss championship in February.

However, since March, you have won the Grande Prairie tournament in Canada...

Yes, we took part in that instead of the world championships and accumulated the points required to qualify for the Olympic Games.

What are your objectives in Sochi?

We want to win a medal. We just came up short in the play-offs (4th place) in Vancouver in 2010. We know that we are an experienced team and have demonstrated our abilities on the international stage many times.

Which nations do you fear?

We are facing extremely stiff competition from Canada, the United Kingdom (Scotland), Sweden, Russia, China, and of course South Korea too. It is hard to predict which nations will reach the semi-finals. There are ten countries in contention, each of which will take part in nine matches in the round-robin stage from which the four best teams will qualify.



Switzerland's Carmen Küng, Mirjam Ott and Janine Greiner (left to right) at the World Championships in Canada in 2012



Thank you Ruedi Wyder

Rudolf Wyder, or Ruedi to those who know him well, is from the start of this year no longer director of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad. It is hard to believe as he has been an inextricable part of the OSA for the past 28 years. Ruedi Wyder, a historian, quickly developed the abilities required to lead a team with intellectual authority and indisputable ethical standards. He made a major contribution towards structuring the meetings of the Council and the Executive Board. The latter, starting with the first of the successive presidents that it worked with, continually relied upon the management and secretariat that he led. Under his leadership, this body increasingly expanded its activities on behalf of the Swiss abroad, including activities with the associations that are connected to the OSA, while remaining autonomous.

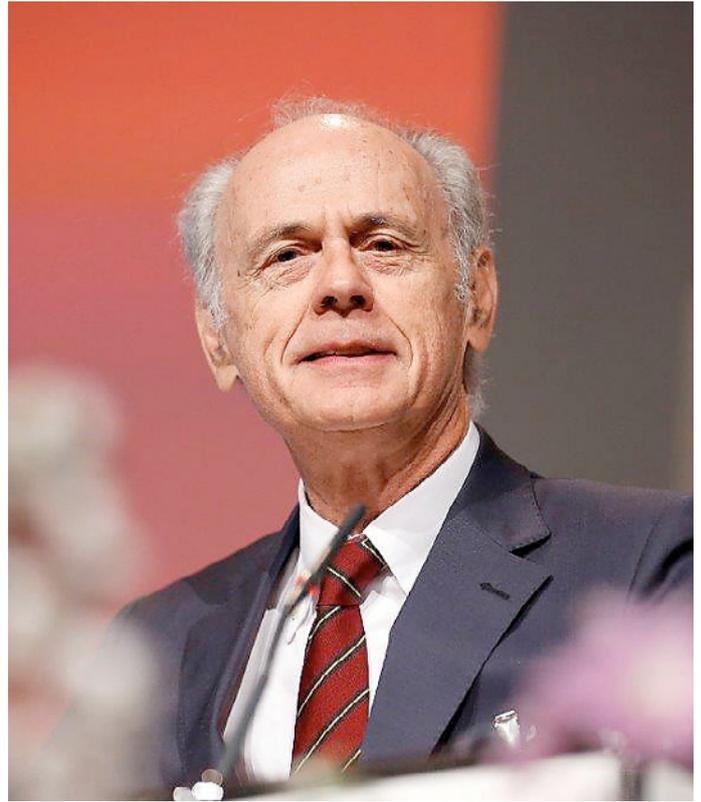
In addition to his professional abilities, Ruedi Wyder also possesses vital attributes: strength of character, dedication to the cause, loyalty towards the presidents, the Executive Board and, of course, his staff. These qualities inspired those who worked with him to show the same attitude in return. He also provided great substance to the annual congresses during his years of office, ensuring they generated interest.

The key task of the director of the OSA is a political one. The contacts and relationships fostered with government, the departments and especially with the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, with members of parliament and party leaders, with the cantons and important associations, in short with everyone who matters and on whom the OSA relies are a key part of the role of director of the OSA. Ruedi Wyder was simply outstanding in this respect. He instigated the establishment of the parliamentary group for the Swiss abroad. He was the inspiration behind the draft law on the Swiss abroad currently being debated by the chambers which should give our fellow Swiss citizens abroad a more solid foundation and ensure better recognition and greater impact for our organisation.

One could discuss Ruedi Wyder's achievements at much greater length. We should mention the vital relationships that he maintained with the associations of the Swiss abroad and with the clubs in the different countries where our compatriots abroad live. He attended many of their meetings each year. In a manner of speaking, he personified the diversity and unity of the Swiss abroad. Demonstrating commitment wherever required, Ruedi Wyder proved himself the director the OSA needed as the organisation underwent change.

Approaching statutory retirement age, he knew that nobody would tell him to stand down. He took the lead himself by explaining to the Executive Board that it was in the interests of the OSA to plan for his succession.

The Executive Board acknowledged his decision. A comprehensive and rigorous procedure to evaluate candidates was carried out by the members of the Executive Board elected by their peers. The Executive Board eventually focused upon a solution that offered continuity but also represented a unique gamble. Two OSA employees already in charge of the key departments put forward their



Jacques-Simon Eggly paying tribute to Rudolf Wyder

joint candidature as co-directors. They highlighted how well they complement one another. Sarah Mastantuoni and Ariane Ruschelli therefore took over as directors of the OSA at the beginning of the year. The Council will confirm this decision in March. The first candidate was already well respected as a lawyer and deputy director. All responses to legal consultations passed by her. She had also been head of human resources for several years. The second has produced remarkable innovation for OSA's services: the Swisscommunity.org online network, which has established links between the Swiss abroad themselves and between expatriates and the cantons as well as the secretariat, which is of course available to them. The two candidates still had to present a proposal outlining their strategy and an adapted internal structure. They did so convincingly. The Executive Board was won over and expressed its confidence. The two joint candidates further underlined their credibility by demonstrating that they had together undertaken a course leading to a master's degree in management and business administration on an extra-occupational basis. The Executive Board fully accepts its duty of loyalty and support for the two co-directors.

A person is judged on the manner in which they depart and hand over the reins. Ruedi Wyder was exemplary in this respect. The greatest recognition that one can give him is to show our confidence in the two women who have taken up the directorship with such high levels of motivation, courage and determination.

*Jacques-Simon Eggly
President of the OSA*

OSA advice

I live abroad and I have lost my driving licence, which was issued in Switzerland. Can I get a new one from the cantonal authority which issued it or from a Swiss representation abroad?

The Swiss authorities are not able to issue a new Swiss driving licence. From the date on which you begin residing abroad, it is the authorities of your country of residence who have authority with regard to your driving licence rather than Switzerland. On account of the principle of territoriality, you are subject to the legal system of the state where you reside. Consequently, the area of road traffic is exclusively governed by the law of the country of residence. The cantonal road traffic authority which issued the driving licence can therefore only provide you with an attestation stating that you are the holder of a Swiss driving licence. By issuing this attestation, the cantonal authority certifies that you have obtained a driving licence based on the conditions stipulated by Swiss law. You will then have to verify with the authorities responsible in your country of residence which conditions have to be met for a driving licence to be issued to you (confirmation of the information contained in the attestation, driving test, etc.). The attestation from the cantonal road traffic authority may be useful to you at this stage. If necessary, this document can be certified by your Swiss representation abroad.

The contact details of the cantonal road traffic authorities can be found at: <http://www.strassenverkehrsamt.ch/>

SARAH MASTANTUONI,
HEAD OF THE 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.

A guest in Switzerland

Young Swiss abroad spend exciting holidays in Switzerland. The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) offers attractive and affordable programmes for young people from all over the world. The summer offers have now been published on the OSA websites.

Anyone spending holidays in Switzerland will enjoy a pleasant return to nature. Switzerland's breathtaking mountain scenery and lakes attract large numbers of tourists during the summer. Switzerland as a holiday destination provides wide-ranging opportunities for discovery, enjoyment, exercise and relaxation.

Swiss from all over the world get to know one another in a relaxed atmosphere through OSA's activities for young people while enjoying sporting or educational holidays. The OSA programmes provide topical and fascinating insights into Switzerland's culture, geography, history, politics and society. The young people are looked after well by the OSA team, and OSA can offer attractively priced tickets for public transport thanks to its partnership with Swiss Travel System (www.swisstravelsystem.com) This allows participants to explore Switzerland independently.

OSA looks forward to receiving registrations for the offers for young people: at www.aso.ch or at www.swisscommunity.org.

Adults are also welcome:

There are still places available for last-minute participants at the snow sports week in Davos from 29 March to 5 April 2014. The snow sports week for adults was set up at the request of former participants of camps for young people who wanted to meet up again in Switzerland to enjoy winter sports together.

The "Discover Switzerland" offer, which is combined with a stay with a Swiss host, is

also open to young adults. Some longstanding host families express a preference for hosting older Swiss abroad.

Information is available from OSA's Youth Service via:

Tel.: +41 31 356 61 00, youth@aso.ch,
www.aso.ch, www.swisscommunity.org



Educational and training advice now provided by educationsuisse

The Association promoting Education for Young Swiss Abroad (AJAS) merged with educationsuisse, the body representing the interests of Swiss schools abroad, on 1 January 2014.

Educationsuisse's educational advisory service will continue to support young Swiss abroad and now also other students who have attended Swiss schools abroad and wish to undertake educational courses in Switzerland. educationsuisse will advise young people who have questions about educational opportunities in Switzerland and supply them with the relevant contact details. It will also provide them with assistance in securing cantonal grants.

For information on educational courses and grants: info@educationsuisse.ch

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Young Swiss people from abroad visiting Switzerland in the summer of 2013



Summer camps for 8 to 14 year olds

Are you aged 8 to 14? Would you like to spend 14 days in Switzerland getting to know your homeland better? Then sign up for a holiday camp run by the Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad. We organise summer holiday camps in Switzerland's most beautiful regions during July and August.

Programme

Our camps give you the opportunity to see the sights, to discover lakes, mountains, rivers and incredible scenery, to go on short hikes and perhaps even visit some cities. Some days are also spent at the camp, where we organise games, sporting activities and various workshops.

You will also have the chance to learn lots of useful things about Switzerland. For example, we look at the Swiss languages, Swiss songs, Swiss recipes and typically Swiss games and sports.

The interaction between participants beyond all linguistic, cultural and national boundaries provides an opportunity to enjoy an unforgettable experience and to make lots of new friends.

Language at camp

The people who take advantage of our offers come from all over the world and therefore speak different languages, such as German, French, English, Spanish and Italian. The leaders run the programmes in German, French and English. So, the language at each camp does not depend on the language spoken at the camp location.

Prices

The prices of the offers are set out in the list below. The Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad wishes to give all Swiss children abroad the opportunity to spend a holiday in Switzerland at least once if possible. We therefore offer the possibility of reduced camp rates. The relevant application form can be requested with the registration form.

Travel/meeting point

The meeting point is around lunchtime at Zurich airport.

Travel to and from Zurich airport is organised and paid for by parents.

Leaders

Experienced, multilingual teams of leaders ensure that the two-week holiday camps are well-organised and offer a wide variety of activities.

Registration

The exact details of the individual holiday camps and the registration form can be found as of now at www.sjas.ch. We are also happy to post you our information brochure on request. The deadline for registration is 15 March 2014.

Summer camps 2014

- Sat. 28.6. – Fri. 11.7.14: Valbella (Grisons) for 36 children aged 8–12, price: CHF 900
- Sat. 28.6. – Fri. 11.7.14: Wyssachen (Berne) for 40 children aged 11–14, price: CHF 900
- Wed. 2.7. – Fri. 11.7.14: Swiss trip for 24 children aged 12–16, price: CHF 950
- Sat. 12.7. – Fri. 25.7.14: Rigi Klösterli (Schwyz) for 36 children aged 8–12, price: CHF 900

- Sat. 12.7. – Fri. 25.7.14: Vignogn (Grisons) for 42 children aged 11–14, price: CHF 900
- Sat. 26.7. – Fri. 8.8.14: Seelisberg (Uri) sport camp for 48 children aged 11–14, price: CHF 950
- Sat. 26.7. – Fri. 8.8.14: Balmberg (Solothurn) for 30 children aged 8–12, price: CHF 900
- Sat. 9.8. – Fri. 22.8.14: Wildhaus (St Gallen) for 36 children aged 11–14, price: CHF 900
- Sat. 9.8. – Fri. 22.8.14: Engelberg (Obwalden) for 42 children aged 8–14, price: CHF 900

Please contact the office in Berne for further information:

Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad
 Alpenstrasse 26,
 3006 Berne, Switzerland
 Tél. +41 (0)31 356 61 16
 Fax +41 (0)31 356 61 01
 Email: info@sjas.ch
www.sjas.ch



Follow Me

The Federal Palace or Parliament Building is one of Switzerland's most attractive sights. Over 110,000 young people and adults visited the time-honoured institution in 2012. This doubling of visitor numbers over the past ten years presents a challenge for the "Parliament Visits" team, which conducts tours of the neo-Renaissance-style building.

The Federal Palace is in vogue and Andreas Blaser, Head of Public Relations at the Parliamentary Services, is delighted: "This public enthusiasm represents an excellent opportunity to bring fellow citizens closer to the Federal Assembly." The architecture and works of art convey Switzerland's legends and history better than any book. A glance upwards in the domed hall or a walk through the lobby gives visitors a sense of the power of the Swiss confederation and its political system.

The guides from the Parliamentary Services provide visitors with tours of the building in German, French, Italian, English and Span-



Around 4,000 visitors during the Museum Night.

ish as part of their normal duties. During parliamentary sessions, guests have the choice of commentary in one of the three national languages or English. They are accompanied to the visitors' galleries from where they can follow the parliamentary debates. Visitors who book in advance even have the opportunity to speak with their member of parliament. The "Parliament Visits" team also works during the annual Museum Night and on the Open Day that takes place every year on 1 August, the national holiday. Both events regularly attract large visitor numbers.

This building, over 100 years old, has exuded a renewed splendour since 2008 following a three-year renovation project. It has three additional floors, two underground and one at the very top. Thanks to glass roofing between the cupolas, daylight floods into the building, which is fully accessible to the disabled. Ten professional guides conduct the tours, which are regularly adapted to the requirements of old and young, tourists from Switzerland and abroad, as well as delegations from Swiss and foreign parliaments and government bodies.

MARIE-JOSÉ PORTMANN

Virtual tour: www.parlamentsgebaeude-tour.ch



A visitor takes the microphone during the Open Day.

ILLUSTRIOUS GUEST LIST

Filippo Lombardi, President of the Council of States, received 25 foreign delegations in 2013. Switzerland's "highest-ranking person", Maya Graf, President of the National Council, welcomed guests including Martin Schulz, President of the European Parliament, the Swiss winners of the WorldSkills Competition and the Dalai Lama. The spiritual leader of the Tibetan people posed impromptu with a school class. The pupils swore they would never wash their hands touched by His Holiness again... Other prominent guests, who visited the Federal Palace in 2012, were Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General, José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commis-

sion, and Aung San Suu Kyi, Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

In 2010, all the members of the Public Relations service were called upon to accompany around 1,000 politicians from all over the world belonging to the International Parliamentary Group. Leading world tourism experts visited the seat of the Swiss government in early 2013.

DEFENDING ONE'S OWN IDEAS

"Oh, how beautiful! Like a church!" exclaimed overwhelmed school pupils during a Federal Palace visit. The trip to Berne is often the highlight of politics courses. Around 750 school classes come to the Federal Palace each year. Around 400 classes visit the parliament and poli-

ticians from their region during the parliamentary sessions. The "Schools to Berne" association arranges for around 30 school classes a year to gain an insight at first hand into the legislative work carried out here under the guidance of former Federal Councillors.

In the run-up to the federal elections, the game "Mein Standpunkt" (My point of view) attracts over 1,000 young people at secondary school level. In the recreated "parliamentary chambers" in Berne's Käfigturm, young people engage in parliamentary and ideological debates chaired by the presidents of both councils.

Further information is available at www.juniorparl.ch/besuche-im-bundeshaus

AHV/IV worldwide

Under certain circumstances, Swiss living abroad can remain insured under the AHV/IV (old-age and survivors' insurance and invalidity insurance) system and thus avoid gaps in insurance cover. However, this does not apply to anyone resident in the EU/EFTA area, and has not done so since 2001. The Swiss Compensation Office (SCO) manages just under 110,000 eligible Swiss pension recipients and around 18,000 contributors abroad.

AHV/IV contributions

Contribution assessments are carried out annually. The SCO sends out the income and asset declaration forms by no later than the beginning of December, and these have to be completed, signed and returned by post by the end of January. If the file is incomplete reminders, for which a fee is charged, are sent out in March and May. If information required for an accurate calculation has still not been provided by June, the insured party is assessed ex officio. The SCO must be in receipt of full contributory payments by 31 December.

The SCO is aware that adherence to deadlines can present problems for those insured abroad because local tax authorities and postal services work to different deadlines in some cases. Solutions to individual problems are sought and the situations in the respective countries of residence are taken into account where legally possible and logistically feasible. However, the SCO is also bound by legal requirements and instructions from the Federal Social Insurance Office. A correspondence address in Switzerland can help in the event of problems with postal delivery. Payments on account can prevent the initiation of exclusion proceedings in the event of a nega-

tive balance on 31 December. (Full details can be found at www.zas.admin.ch > Voluntary insurance.)

Pension benefits

An officially endorsed life certificate is required each year to ensure that pension benefits are paid out correctly. These documents, numbering more than 70,000, are automatically registered before they are individually checked by the SCO. The Swiss representations abroad attest life certificates from the SCO or a Swiss pension fund free of charge, though the attestation may be restricted to just the person himself or herself (without attestation of residence and civil status). If the life certificate has not been returned within 90 days of being sent by the SCO, pension benefits are suspended for security reasons.

The insured party must immediately notify the SCO directly of changes affecting pension benefits. Violations of this mandatory notification requirement may result in prosecution.

The following must be reported:

- Changes of address
- Deaths
- Changes to civil status
- Changes to foster child circumstances
- Interruption or completion of children's education
- Enforcement of prison sentences and other penalties (with invalidity insurance pensions)
- Changes to earnings situation, capacity for work and state of health (with invalidity insurance pensions)

Pension benefits are paid out on the fifth working day of each month. The actual date

may vary due to public holidays or weekends. (Payment dates at www.zas.admin.ch > Swiss Compensation Office > Payment > Payment dates.)

Constant improvement to processes

The SCO puts its resources to the best possible use and improves processes on an ongoing basis. As part of this, cases are freely assigned to employees so that the same person does not always manage the same insured parties. Every enquiry, whether electronic or on paper, is processed according to date of receipt. Clear information about the person and his/her AHV number facilitate the work and reduce processing times. An experienced team works hard to provide an optimal service on a daily basis despite geographical distances and the challenges that these pose.

FLORIAN STEINBACHER, SCO,
HEAD OF VOLUNTARY INSURANCE

Notice

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

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

www.revue.ch

We look forward to your online visit.





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www.twitter.com/travel_edadfae

itineris

Online registration for Swiss citizens
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www.fdfa.admin.ch/itineris

Publication

Switzerland – EU: Free movement of persons – Salaries, immigration, AHV/IV... Questions and answers

The brochure provides key information on the importance of the free movement agreement and on issues concerning salaries, employment, business, immigration and social welfare institutions.

The brochure in German, French and Italian can be ordered free of charge (Art. No. 201.600.D/F/I) – BBL, Verkauf Bundespublikationen, CH-3003 Berne, www.bundespublikationen.admin.ch, or downloaded at www.eda.admin.ch/publikationen > Europäische Angelegenheiten (German version)



FEDERAL REFERENDA

Three proposals will be put to the vote on 9 February 2014:

- Federal decree of 20 June 2013 on the financing and expansion of the railway infrastructure (direct counterproposal to the popular initiative "Für den öffentlichen Verkehr" [For public transport])
- Popular initiative of 4 July 2011 "Abtreibungsfinanzierung ist Privatsache – Entlastung der Krankenversicherung durch Streichung der Kosten des Schwangerschaftsabbruchs aus der obligatorischen Grundversicherung" (The funding of abortion is a private matter – relief for health insurance through the removal of abortion costs from mandatory basic insurance)
- Popular initiative of 14 February 2012 "Gegen Masseneinwanderung" (Against mass immigration)

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

Further referendum dates in 2014: 18 May; 28 September; 30 November.

POPULAR INITIATIVES

At the time of going to press, the following new federal popular initiative had been launched (deadline for the collection of signatures in brackets):

- "Radio und Fernsehen – ohne Billag" (Radio and television – without Billag) (12.05.2015)

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

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

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Little gems

“I am more than one”

Buenos Aires, 1913. At the famous Café Tortoni, piano music is playing in the background and a man is telling the story of how his father emigrated from Switzerland to Argentina more than 50 years ago. He talks about farewells and hopes. “I bi meh aus eine” (“I am more than one”) is the emigration story of a settler from Emmental uncovered by Swiss author Pedro Lenz on a trip to Argentina. As well as turning the story into a book, he collaborated with musician Patrick Neuhaus to create a stage show that is now also available on CD.

It is the story of watchmaker Peter Wingeier from Trubschachen, who raided the welfare assistance fund and then fled to Argentina, where he masquer-



Pedro Lenz: “I bi meh aus eine. Die bemerkenswerte Geschichte eines Emmentaler Siedlers.” Available as a book and audiobook from Cosmos-Verlag, Muri bei Bern; book, 75 pages, Swiss German, CHF 25, CD 78 minutes, CHF 29; www.cosmosverlag.ch; schaerer@cosmosverlag.ch

BE



“Suberg for Example”

Simon Baumann hails from Suberg, a Swiss village like many others. The 33 year old grew up in the village, where he bought an old house from his parents that he shares with his girlfriend. But he doesn't actually like Suberg. The village has fallen victim to modern mobility, with what was once a village community becoming no more

than a dormitory settlement. In his documentary film, “Suberg for Example”, Simon Baumann seeks to find a sense of home in his home village. He talks to people, some friendly, others less so: his parents, former National Councillors Stephanie and Ruedi Baumann (SP and Greens, respectively), are still regarded by many with a certain amount of hostility, even though

they have been living in France for the last ten years. Simon Baumann seeks to make connections, but opportunities are thin on the ground. One is the male voice choir to which he now belongs. In the film he sometimes appears as a detached analyst, sometimes as a bogeyman, but he never mocks others even when the opportunity presents itself. The result is an engaging,

humorous yet melancholy film – not just about Suberg, but about Switzerland. It is proving enormously popular at Swiss box offices.

BE

Available on DVD from FAIR & UGLY; www.fairandugly.ch, info@fairandugly.ch; Swiss German narration with German and French subtitles; CHF 27 plus CHF 7 P&P for international delivery
Interview at: <http://www.zeit.de/2013/48/film-zum-beispiel-suberg-simon-baumann>



The best of Switzerland

It is called “bestswiss.ch” and it promises to provide no less than the very best of Switzerland. And visitors to www.bestswiss.ch, the website of bestswiss GmbH from Zollikofen, will certainly find plenty high-quality, exclusive and unusual Swiss products. Fashion and accessories, food and drinks, interior design and, of course, lots to keep the little ones



happy. For example, there are hand-made products from the Poschiavo weaving company and a tube amplifier called Colotube, which, according to the description, produces “heavenly sounds that only a few chosen people can hear on Earth”. There is also the entire range of tea towels by Meyer-Mayor as well as clothing by Swiss designers including Andrea Hinnen, Christa de Carouge



and Aziza Zina. And don't miss the legendary Elgg snails in a jar, which are advertised as “snail meat, extremely rich in protein, processed by hand”. Some products can be purchased directly from bestswiss, though there are also links from the website to all the product providers. And anyone not wanting to buy can simply feast their eyes on the offering..

BE

www.bestswiss.ch

Bulletins

E-voting set to be extended

The Federal Council has taken another step towards universal e-voting. Cantons meeting the newly issued security standards can allow up to 50% of the electorate to take part in referenda and elections electronically. There is nevertheless increasing scepticism in Parliament over the security risks. The National Council will debate the issue shortly.

Council of States approves the law on Swiss schools abroad

The Education Act for Swiss Citizens Abroad has been endorsed by the Council of States. This will give the 17 Swiss schools abroad greater commercial freedom and more planning security in future. The law also allows the model of dual education to be exported and enables support for vocational training abroad. Government funding will now no longer depend on the number of Swiss pupils but instead on the total number of pupils and on multilingualism. Investment subsidies for the establishment of new Swiss schools can now also be distributed.

Opposed to agreement with France

The National Council resoundingly rejected the new inheritance tax agreement with France in mid-December. The revised inheritance tax agreement aims to allow France to tax real estate in Switzerland inherited by persons living in France. The Council of States must now reach its verdict on the agreement.

Lack of transparency

Switzerland is not doing enough to ensure greater transparency

and less corruption. This is the conclusion reached by the monitoring body GRECO (Group of States against Corruption) set up by the Council of Europe in 1999. GRECO is particularly critical of the lack of transparency in Switzerland with regard to the funding of political parties.

High office at the UN

Switzerland's Pierre Krähenbühl took up a senior position at the UN at the beginning of January. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appointed him Commissioner-General of UNRWA (the United Nations Relief and Works Agency), the UN aid organisation for Palestinian refugees. The agency, founded in 1949, today provides over five million registered Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories with medical care, social institutions, school education and emergency aid. Before joining the UN, Krähenbühl spent over ten years as Director of Operations at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Still no equal pay

Large disparities in pay between men and women still exist in the private sector, according to a new study. The average salary gap stands at 23.6%. The differences cannot be explained objectively in 37.6% of cases. The study therefore points to discrimination. The salary gap has only narrowed slightly in recent years. The Federal Council has announced that the government would consider measures to enforce the pay equality enshrined in the federal constitution.

Quotes

"Switzerland and the world are not strangers. Like the lake and the sky, they meet at the horizon."

Federal Councillor Didier Burkhalter, speaking at the celebrations following his election as Swiss President

"Pride is the emotional certainty of our own greatness. Vanity is the emotional certainty that others perceive it in us, or at least attribute it to us."

Fernando Pessoa (1888–1935), Portuguese poet

"They busy themselves in all piety and propriety with milking cows, making cheese, being chaste and yodelling."

Friedrich Engels (1820–1895), German philosopher and revolutionary, about the Swiss

"Everything in Switzerland is better and more beautiful."

Adolf Muschg, Swiss writer and professor of literature

"Where there is no money, there are no Swiss."

Wilhelm Busch (1832–1908), German poet and illustrator

"Public opinion reigns in society because stupidity reigns amongst the stupid."

Nicolas Chamfort (1741–1794), French writer

"A man who does not know the truth is just an idiot, but a man who knows the truth and calls it a lie is a crook!"

Bertolt Brecht (1898–1956), German dramatist and lyricist



Eight Chinese ski instructors completed a training course in Switzerland in December. Those responsible for Swiss winter tourism are focusing heavily on Asia as a major growth market in the search for new visitors. The reasoning behind training the ski instructors is to enable Chinese visitors to take lessons in their own language and to improve understanding among the Swiss of Chinese winter tourists. The eight Chinese ski instructors will be deployed in Zermatt, Verbier, Grindelwald, Gstaad, Davos, St. Moritz, Villars and Engelberg. They will then promote Swiss skiing holidays in China because, according to Switzerland Tourism, people there are "often completely unaware of what is on offer during the winter". Chinese winter tourists currently account for "only" around 100,000 overnight hotel stays in Switzerland. The total number of overnight stays in Swiss hotels for winter tourism stands at around 7.5 million.



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