

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE SWISS ABROAD

SWISS

REVIEW

DECEMBER 2006 / NO. 6



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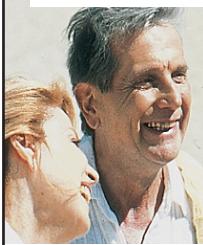
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## Little big Switzerland

**I**N FEBRUARY 2005, SWISS STATE SECRETARY FOR THE ECONOMY JEAN-DANIEL GERBER uttered a gloomy prophecy to journalists: unless Switzerland pushed through far-reaching economic reforms immediately, it would fall further and further behind other European nations and eventually end up at the bottom of the league in about 25 years. Gerber's forecast provoked a media frenzy, and the tabloids declared that Switzerland was already on the road to becoming the poor man of Europe.

Yet as 2006 draws to a close, Switzerland does not look much like a poor man. On the contrary, the Swiss economy is booming even without reform, and good news is coming in thick and fast. Thanks to a robust global economy, foreign trade is at a permanent high. As a result, by August exports had climbed 14.1 percent to CHF 13,186 billion.

The economic research unit of the Federal Institute of Technology (KOF) in Zurich predicts growth of 2.6 percent for the year as a whole and 2.1 in 2007. According to the experts at KOF, unemployment will fall from the expected level of 3.4 percent this year to 3.0 next year. They even believe it will shrink to 2.8 percent in 2008. It is particularly encouraging that conditions on the Swiss labour market have also improved further. Last September, the number of people out of work fell for the first time in six years. Another survey found that no fewer than six of Europe's 100 biggest companies have their headquarters in Switzerland: Glencore, Nestlé, Novartis, Roche, ABB and Adecco. That puts little Switzerland in fourth place. Only Germany, Britain and France host more major corporate HQs. But that's not all: A study by the World Economic Forum has found that Switzerland is ranked first on the list of the world's most competitive countries. It's unlikely that the economy will be a central topic in the 2007 elections.

The parties have been noisily manoeuvring into the electioneering starting blocks since autumn, though so far no key topics whatsoever have emerged. At present they are still arguing amongst themselves, although here too the focus is on the SVP and the question of whether its federal councillor Christoph Blocher will be re-elected by the CVP and FDP for another four years at the end of 2007. The media are so obsessed by Blocher that FDP President Fulvio Pelli had to ask journalists interviewing him if he could for once be permitted to speak about other issues.

Political analyst Claude Longchamps believes that we will experience a new kind of election campaign in 2007; one that is waged primarily against the federal councillors rather than the party leaders. He believes that because the federal government is packed with political heavyweights, attention will focus and political capital will be made on the performance of the federal councillors.

As yet, however, no-one dares predict whether there will be a cabinet reshuffle, whether Christoph Blocher will be permitted to govern for another four years, or whether the Greens will be able to steal a seat from the Liberal Democrats. Whatever the case, it is safe to assume that little will change at the forthcoming elections, since our political system leaves little scope for major upheavals.

HEINZ ECKERT, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Heinz Eckert



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Swiss chocolate  
Photo: Chocosuisse, Union of  
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**Election results**

Just like Jeanny Karth wrote in the "Swiss Review" 5/06, I too always read your publication with interest and pleasure. Thanks to you, I know what is going on in Switzerland because the French press is more than succinct on the matter! Your editorial says as much too.

But one piece of information is missing: election results. Couldn't you at least publish federal results, if not necessarily the cantonal ones? As a former resident of La Chaux-de-Fonds, I subscribed to L'Impartial for a long time, but that's rather expensive.

FRANÇIS RUEFF,  
AIX-EN-PROVENCE, FRANCE

**Which energy will be best for Switzerland?**

Energy is a very topical issue again at the moment because we have to meet the extra demands, and the apostles of nuclear power are sensing a change of fortunes in the air. Thank you for choosing to address this issue. What you did not mention was power sources such as warm water collectors and geothermal energy.

1. Heat energy helps replace some or all the electrical energy used by water boilers and heating systems. It is almost absurd to use electricity to heat water. Oil- and electricity-powered water heaters can be found in nearly every household. As far as I know, warm water collector technology is relatively well-developed and could be used immediately. It only has one weakness: It isn't always available.

2. Geothermal energy has the advantage over other alternative energy sources like wind and solar power in that it is

permanently available. In this, Basel is brave enough to take on a pioneering role. And if you mark all the thermal springs in Switzerland on a map, it's surprising that this field has not been developed further long before now. My question is: Why not? Instead of spending millions more on nuclear power, it would make more sense to invest in geothermal energy. Switzerland could play a leading role in this field!

ERNST KLAHRE-PARKER, ILKESTON,  
DERBYSHIRE, UK

**Top-class**

I have received the "Swiss Review" for several years, as I am a Swiss citizen in South Africa. Your publication is top-class, the articles most interesting and the photography excellent. My compliments to you and your staff.

J. V. SANDFORD,  
MARGATE, SOUTH AFRICA

**Federal Councillor Blocher**

Congratulations to Christophe Darbellay on his election as the new CVP president. Let's hope he can convince the Liberals to kick out Federal Councillor Blocher at the next general election and that he meets the same fate as Ruth Metzler. In my opinion, he hasn't the necessary stature to be in the regional government. He wants to be in government and in opposition, and unfortunately that isn't possible. However, I hope that SVP President Ueli Maurer isn't elected in his place. Maurer and Blocher think that only their visions are the right ones and only they can make everything better. Switzerland beware!

ALOIS BRANDENBERG,  
DELTA BC, CANADA

Roger Federer is currently the most famous Swiss athlete in the big, wide world of sport. In his home country, he has already been voted Sportsman of the Year and named Swiss Citizen of the Year. Last year, he received the Laureus Award as World Sportsman of the Year. This year he picked up the "sporting Oscar" for a second time. Twenty-five-year-old Federer has been the world's Number One tennis player since 2004 – fully 150 weeks. Earlier this year, the tennis pro from Basel won three of the four Grand Slam tournaments (the Australian, French, British and US Open: the most important competitions on the circuit). That takes his tally of Grand Slam titles to nine, just five short of the all-time record held by America's Pete Sampras.

Yet Roger Federer's road to the pinnacle of world tennis was long and dotted with setbacks and bitter defeats. Sports writer René Stauffer has been following Federer's career since 1996. His Federer biography, entitled "Das Tennis Genie" (The Tennis Genius), recounts the young but talented player's often arduous path to tennis stardom, describes his family background and sporting influences, and paints a thoroughly readable picture of the athlete and the man.

Roger Federer showed his talent at an early age, winning the Swiss junior championships at 17 and the junior Wimbledon tournament at 18. That proved an ideal springboard to the professional circuit, and it wasn't long before he had won his first title in a "major" tournament. In July 2001, he sensationally beat his idol, Pete Sampras, in the last 16 at Wimbledon (though he couldn't clinch the championship). In 2003, he set himself the target of winning his first Grand Slam title. After failing yet again in Paris, Federer finally got hold of his long sought-after trophy at Wimbledon when he beat Mark Philippoussis in the final. He broke down in tears at the victory ceremony. The year 2004 was bathed in glory: Federer won another three Grand Slams and finally became the Number One in the world of tennis. His triumphal success continued in 2005, with seven of the last eleven Grand Slam tournaments under his belt and only the French Open at Roland Garros still proving elusive. Now, at the end of 2006, the Swiss tennis star is the undisputed leader of the ATP professional rankings, having won three of the "big four" championships, most recently after a memorable battle against Andy Roddick in New York.



modest and dependable.

René Stauffer's biography appears fair and genuine, though it would have been nice to learn about Federer's relationship to fellow Swiss tennis stars Martina Hingis and Patty Schnyder. And his heavily-stressed charity work with children in South Africa is somewhat modest for a star who has so far netted 20 million dollars in prize money.

ROLF RIBI

René Stauffer: *Das Tennis-Genie. Eine Roger Federer-Biografie*. Published by Pendo, Munich and Zurich 2006. 271 pages, CHF 36 / EUR 19.90.

# Hugo the Donkey

A CHRISTMAS TALE FROM THE BOOK "ETWAS ANDERE WEIHNACHTSGESCHICHTEN"  
(CHRISTMAS STORIES WITH A DIFFERENCE) BY MINU,  
PUBLISHED BY OPINIO.

OF COURSE THE TREE ALWAYS WAS THE PRETTIEST part of Christmas, but for us the crib was just as important. And most important of all was Hugo, the crib donkey.

Hugo is part of a very strange family story, and Christmas without Hugo would be like Christmas Eve without piles of presents: a disaster.

Hugo was mother's creation. Aunt Martha had given us her Nativity scene, making a great deal of fuss about her generosity and issuing dire warnings to "Take care: it's an heirloom from the Baroque period." To which my Great-Aunt Finni retorted: "Since when did they have rubber in Baroque times?"

That was a recipe for a Yuletide row, but it's only the preface to my story. Our rubber Holy Family from Nazareth was missing one essential item: the donkey. Because we'd heard so much at Sunday school about the gentle donkey in the stable, we were deeply disappointed. "Where's the donkey?" we cried when the crib we'd inherited from Aunt Martha made its first appearance in front of the Christmas tree. "Christmas isn't Christmas without a crib donkey!" I blurted. Rosie only added insult to injury: "This Joseph looks odd too. He's in a bad mood."

Whereupon Aunt Martha called us an "ungrateful lot" and threatened to strike the entire family from her will. But Mother saved the day with a fervent, "Si-i-lent night!" When everyone had joined in, she whispered to us, "I'm sure Father Christmas will bring you a donkey next year."

And so it was: Early on the morning of 24 December, the doorbell rang. Rosie ran to the front door, but no-one was there: just a package in white paper tied with a big, red bow.

"Well, well. What could this be?" Mother asked in feigned surprise, clasping her hands together.  
"Let the children open it," Father replied. And that's when we unwrapped the tissue paper to reveal Hugo the donkey.

Many years later, Mother told us how she'd hunted all round town for a Nativity donkey. Alas, in vain. There had been owls and Baby Jesuses, the Virgin Mary in all sorts of poses and Joseph with or without his staff, but no donkey. In desperation she had finally bought a lump of clay. She looked at us and grinned: "You know how hopelessly uncreative I am. Even in kindergarten I was no good

at crocheting and painting coat hangers. But this time I just had to do it – for your sake. So it was a case of knead and pray!"

The outcome was predictable. Hugo was a cross between a pregnant elephant and a squashed VW Golf. But that's precisely what we liked about him. We stood him alongside the Holy Family, and suddenly Rosie cried, "You won't believe me, but I swear that foul-tempered rubber Joseph smiled for a second when he saw Hugo!"

After that, Hugo would arrive every year in a white package tied with a red bow. Even after we had grown up, we'd always phone Mother on Christmas Eve morning and ask, "Has Hugo arrived?"

"In white tissue paper with a red bow," Mother would reply. And only when the donkey was standing beside Joseph was it truly Christmas.

Then came the day when Mother departed and we didn't feel like celebrating Christmas anymore. My father sold the house and sent me the box with all the Christmas baubles. It wasn't until many years later that he said, "I think we should decorate a tree again like in Mother's day. You've got everything, even the crib."

So I decked out the whole house in tinsel and glitter. In the sitting room we decorated a Christmas tree and set up the crib.

That was when I noticed that Hugo was missing!

I quizzed the entire family, but no-one knew where he was. Hugo had been Mother's business; her creation. The rest of us only ever saw him in the white package with the red bow or under the tree.

The moment came when the guests waited in the front room to be allowed to enter the Christmas room. Sadly lighting the candles on the tree all by myself, I suddenly spied something: There was Hugo in all his ugliness peeking out from under the branches.

"Linda!" I cried excitedly towards the kitchen. She hurried over grumpily because she had been busy with the roast, and shouted at me, "What about that silly donkey? Of course I put it there. The doorbell rang early this morning, I ran to the door, but there was no-one around, only this white package with a red bow. So I unpacked it, found this donkey inside, and put it by the tree."

With that, she hurried back to her cooking.

I looked at the crib. Hugo stood next to ill-tempered Joseph, and I got the distinct impression that Joseph briefly smiled.



Hanspeter Hammel (alias Minu) is a columnist and author, and lives in Basel and Rome.

**In the Alps.** This is the title of an exhibition at the Zurich Kunsthaus dedicated to how scientists, artists and laymen depicted the Alps during their transformation from a place of natural beauty to a cultural site. Some 300 works are on display from the 17th Century to the present, encompassing everything from votive tablets and cartographical models to advertising images, art and early tourist snapshots. [www.kunsthaus.ch](http://www.kunsthaus.ch)



Hiroyuki Masuyama: Matterhorn, 2004



Atlas der Schweiz 2004, interactive DVD



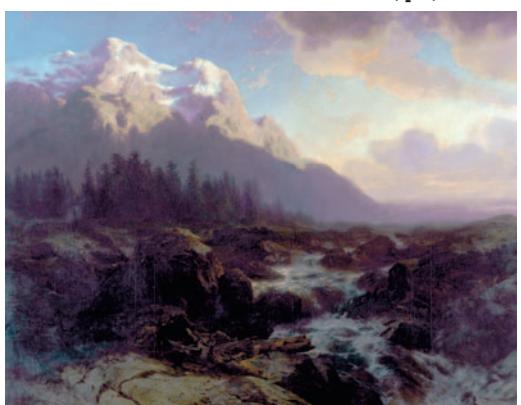
Armin Linke: Model of the Alps



Leo Fabrizio: Gütsch, p.9, 2002



John Ruskin: Mount Pilatus, Lucerne, 1854



Alexandre Calame: Rosenlau Valley and the Wetterhorn, 1856



Johann Heinrich Wüest: Viamala, 1784



Caspar Wolf: Panorama of the Grindelwald glacier and the Wetterhorn, Mettenberg and Eiger, around 1774

## How Swiss chocolate conquered the world

Mention Switzerland abroad, and the person you're talking to may start dreaming of mouth-watering chocolate. As the symbol of a globally unique tradition, our country is inevitably associated with chocolate. We took a look at the unparalleled development of Swiss chocolatiers.

By Alain Wey.

Chocolate: manna from heaven that found ideal conditions on the banks of Swiss rivers and lakes in which to unfold its unique qualities. If there is one thing that represents Switzerland in the eyes of the world, it must be chocolate. Was it fate or coincidence that the abbreviation for Switzerland (CH) and the word "chocolate" start with the same two letters? Such mystical connections will probably remain concealed forever. Yet at first there was nothing to suggest that Swiss chocolatiers were destined to tread a special path. Thanks to the matchless quality of their products, inventive curiosity

and groundbreaking innovations, they honed the manufacture of chocolate to perfection. Today chocolate "made in Switzerland" dominates foreign markets, and export volumes have risen sharply since 2003. We tell the memorable story of Swiss chocolatiers.

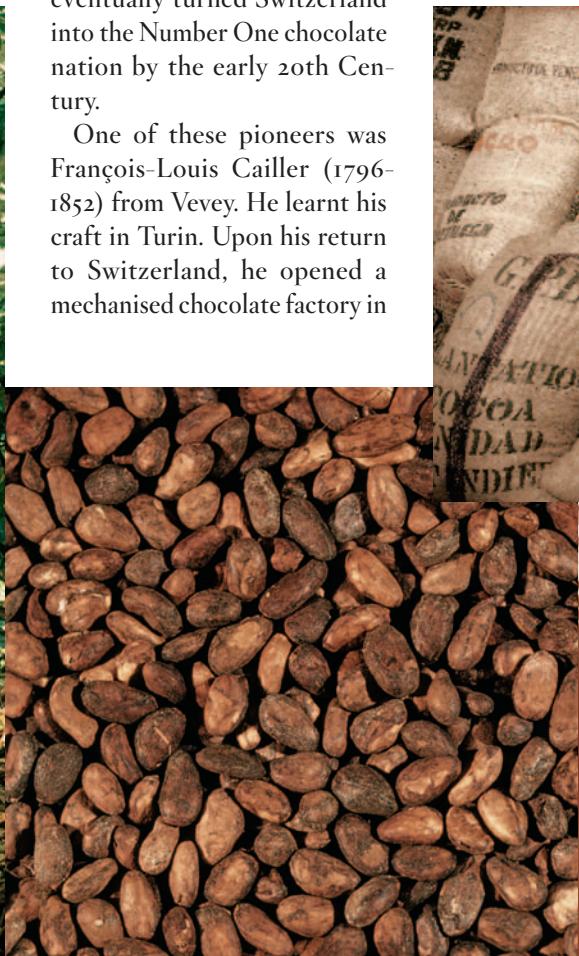
The first cocoa bean was brought to Europe from South America in the 16th Century, but it took several hundred years before the first chocolate bar was produced. The delicacy first conquered Europe's royal households in the form of a drink mixed with honey and herbs. It was then discovered by confectioners,

who used it in their creations. In the 18th Century, Italy became a centre of confectionery and chocolate-making, drawing practitioners from around Europe. Many chocolatiers from the Ticino (Val Blenio) and the Grisons who had learnt their trade in Turin, Milan and Venice left home to work abroad in the 19th Century, founding strongly family-oriented manufacturing businesses in Amsterdam, Stockholm, Frankfurt, Hamburg, Strasbourg, Nice, Paris, London, St. Petersburg, Copenhagen and elsewhere. Their know-how flowed back to Switzerland's chocolate pioneers, who gradually began opening the first factories and eventually turned Switzerland into the Number One chocolate nation by the early 20th Century.

One of these pioneers was François-Louis Cailler (1796–1852) from Vevey. He learnt his craft in Turin. Upon his return to Switzerland, he opened a mechanised chocolate factory in



The cocoa from which Swiss chocolate is made comes from South America and Africa.



Corsier-sur-Vevey in 1819. Although commercial success was a long time in coming, the young Cailler created the basis for industrial-scale production (the rotary grater for cocoa beans) and offered sixteen different sorts of chocolate with a variety of additional ingredients, including cinnamon and vanilla. Jacques Foulquier (1799–1865) began manually producing chocolate in Geneva in 1826. His son-in-law and successor, Jean-Samuel Favarger, gave the brand that is still famous today its name. Demand grew, and by 1832 the canton of Vaud alone boasted some 32 manual chocolate-making businesses. The first steamships began operating, bringing yet more consumers. Tourism flourished. During the reign of Queen Victoria, the horror stories that Lord Byron, the poet Shelley and his wife Mary (the author of "Frankenstein") wrote on Lake Geneva in 1816 attracted the first English tourists.

Having trained as a confectioner under his brother in Berne, Philippe Suchard (1797–1884) from Boudry in the canton of

Neuchâtel travelled to the United States in 1824, where he met many Swiss émigrés. In 1826, back in Neuchâtel, he opened a chocolate factory that became famous far beyond the country's borders. But the pioneering spirit that drove Philippe Suchard was not confined solely to chocolate. It was he who introduced steamships

to Lake Neuchâtel and Lake Thun. He was also interested in shipping along the River Rhine, traded in silk and macaroni, and was even involved in iron-ore mining in the US. A look at the industry in 1883 shows that Suchard accounted for 50 percent of the chocolate produced in Switzerland.

In 1831, Charles Amédée Kohler (1790–1874), a wholesale grocer who also sold cocoa, decided it made more sense to open his own chocolate factory than to continue supplying confectioners with the raw material. Just like Cailler and Suchard, he constantly sought to refine the existing range of chocolates. His most important creation was nut chocolate. The family-run firm trained several famous apprentices, including Rudolf Lindt (in 1872–1875) and Robert Frey (1880–1883).

Daniel Peter (1836–1919), a son-in-law of F.-L. Cailler and a close friend of Henri Nestlé, founded the Peter-Cailler company in 1867. In 1875, he succeeded in mixing cocoa paste with condensed milk, thereby creating the world's first milk

chocolate, which he dubbed "Gala Peter". The result was so successful that the entire industry switched to this production method from 1880 onwards. Daniel Peter therefore played a pivotal role in helping Swiss chocolate reach the supremacy it enjoys today. Although chemist and pharmacist Henri Nestlé (1814–1890) did not produce chocolate himself, his company was responsible for the global marketing of Peter's milk chocolate from 1904.

The first chocolate factory in German-speaking Switzerland opened in 1845. Inspired by the experiments of Cailler and Suchard, Rudolf Sprüngli-Amman (1816–1897) developed a manufacturing process that enabled him to refine chocolate. Aquilino Maestrani (1814–1880) was the most important figure in chocolate-making in eastern Switzerland. Like his father, a chocolatier from Lugano, Maestrani spent time in Lombardy (Milan) and later Nuremberg learning the fine art of chocolate manufacturing. In 1850, he opened a factory in Lucerne, which he then moved to St. Gallen in 1859.



Even today's industrial production follows the same traditional stages employed by craftsmen.

Rudolf Lindt (1855–1909) opened a chocolate factory in Berne in 1879. A born tinkerer, Lindt constantly improved his mixing and grating machines until he had developed a method for producing a soft-melting chocolate, which he called “chocolat surfin”. It was the first chocolate that melted in the mouth, and signalled the birth of modern chocolate. Also in Berne, Jean Tobler (1830–1905) ran a confectionery shop in which he sold his own specialties alongside chocolate made by producers like Lindt. In 1899, he founded the Tobler chocolate factory. We have his son Theodor to thank for inventing Toblerone, the most famous of all Swiss chocolates, in 1908.

The years 1890–1920 were the heyday of Switzerland's chocolate industry, as it earned a reputation far beyond our country's borders. Tourism was booming, and members of the international high society, who spent their holidays in Switzerland, became the world's ambassadors for Swiss chocolate. Rudolf Lindt, for example, aimed his advertising at exclusive girls' finishing schools in western Switzerland, where Europe's *crème de la crème* gathered. This was an era of phenomenal growth rates. From 1888 to 1910, the number of chocolate producers rose from 13 to 23, and the number of people employed by the industry jumped from 528 to 5547. Whereas about 13 tonnes of chocolate were produced in 1905, this had already risen to 40,000 tonnes (three-quarters of which was exported) by 1918. Switzerland thus became something of a chocolate superpower, and by 1912 it had cornered 55 percent of the world's chocolate export market.

Export figures fell during the Depression years of the 1920s and 1930s, and it was only after the end of the Second World War that the Swiss chocolate industry recovered and took off again. In the 1950s, sales were still at around 26,000 tonnes, compared with 160,000 tonnes today. International competition forced the Swiss chocolate industry to streamline its production while at the same time sticking to and further improving the tried-and-tested recipes on which Swiss chocolate had built its excellent reputation.

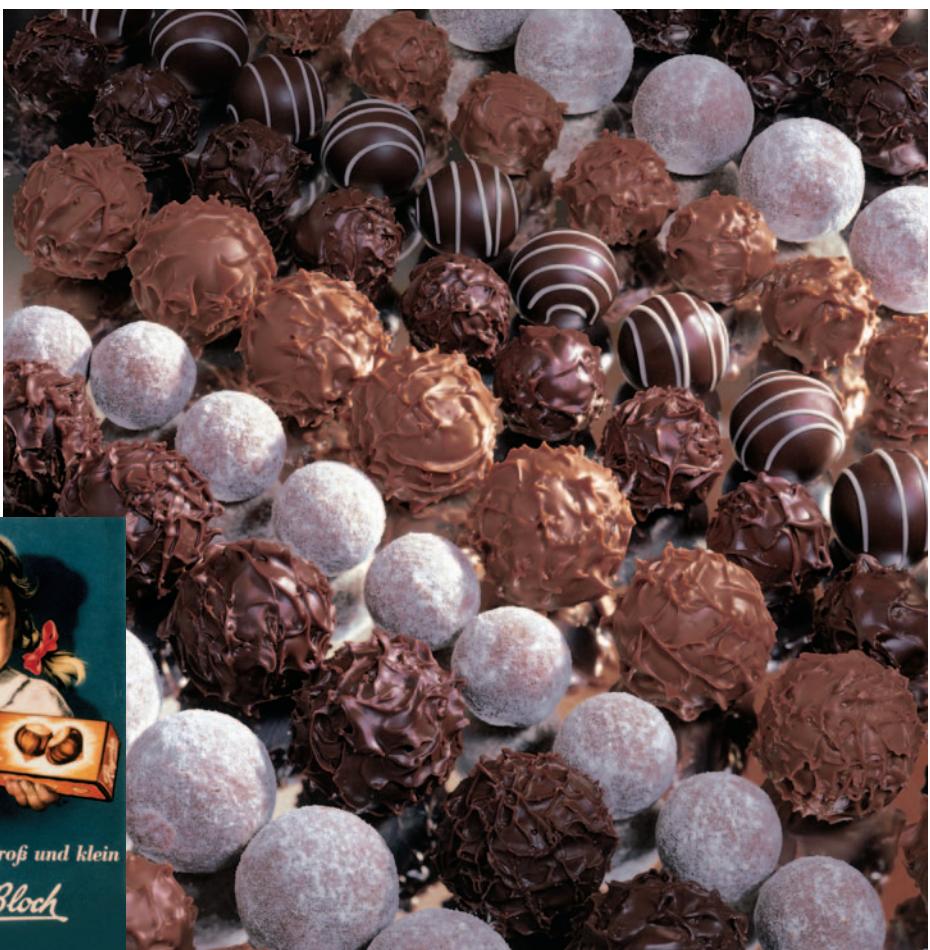
Given the recent uproar over the change in packaging for Cailler and Frigor chocolates and the subsequent slump in sales, Nestlé eventually had to concede that chocolate consumers are a conservative lot. Nestlé has now announced that Cailler chocolates will be sold in their conventional packaging again from January 2007. Tradition remains a key sales factor in the 21st Century. Innovation and new creations are, of course, welcome, but restraint is advisable. After all, why change a winning formula?

### SOME STATISTICS:

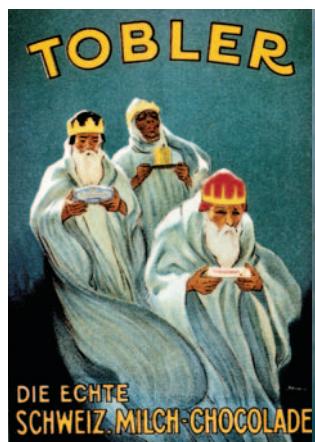
- In 2005, sales by the 18 Swiss chocolate manufacturers rose by 8.2% to 160,000 tonnes. Revenues rose by 7.5% over the previous year to CHF 1.466 billion.\*
- 57% of total Swiss production was exported in 2005.\*
- The 18 companies that make up the Swiss chocolate industry have a combined workforce of 4400.\*
- Only 1% of the worldwide cocoa bean harvest ends up in Switzerland.\*
- Switzerland has 333 confectionery/cake shops.

(Source: Swiss Association of Pastry Chefs and Confectioners; SKCV; \*ChocoSuisse, the Union of Swiss Chocolate Manufacturers

But the story of Swiss chocolate doesn't end there. If, one day in the future, a space explorer light years from Earth offers an extraterrestrial chocolate, what are the odds that it will be real Swiss chocolate?



The result is chocolate that melts in the mouth like no other.



## Voters back Federal Council and parliament

On 26 November, the Swiss electorate approved two moves proposed by their government and parliament – overwhelmingly in the case of national minimums for child benefit, and narrowly in support of controversial new legislation to pay CHF 1 billion to the new members of the European Union.

### "Yes" to aid for the east

As expected, the referendum on cooperation with Eastern European countries was a close call: Only 53.4 percent of voters and 15 cantons approved the new Federal Law on Eastern Europe (BG Ost) in a poll initiated by the SVP and two small right-wing parties. The cantons of western Switzerland and the urban regions of German-speaking Switzerland voted clearly in favour of the act, while the rural regions of central and eastern Switzerland opposed it just as strongly. The largest proportion of "Yes" votes was recorded in Vaud (61.5 percent), Basel City (60.5), Geneva and Jura (both 60.1). The new legislation was rejected most vehemently in the cantons of Glarus (64.6), Ticino (62.9), Schwyz (61.3) and Thurgau (56.7). A cantonal majority was not required, but would have been achieved. The approval rate was slightly lower than that of the 2005 EU referendum on the Schengen and Dublin Accords and the free movement of people. The losers were the SVP, who had almost single-handedly opposed the new act. Indeed, it is the third time in a row that the party has failed to win a poll on Europe. Endorsement of the BG Ost means Switzerland can now

continue to build on its bilateral relations with the EU.

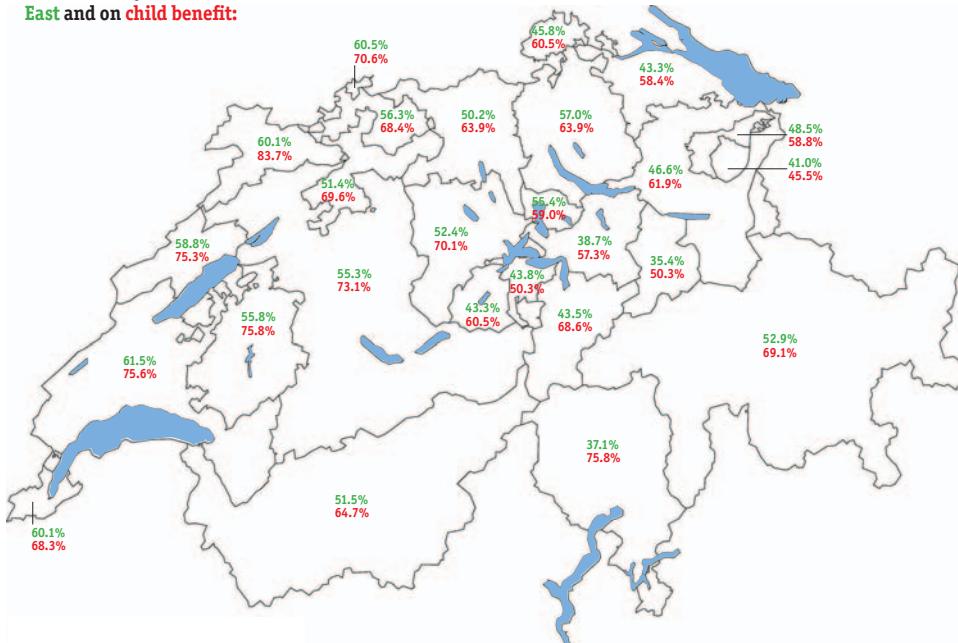
### "Yes" to new family policy

A clear 68 percent of voters approved the Federal Child Benefit Act. All cantons except Appenzell-Innerrhoden endorsed it, most overwhelmingly in the cantons of Jura (83.7 percent), Ticino and Fribourg (both 75.8), Vaud (75.6) and Basel City (70.6). Turnout was 44.4 percent. The referendum was initiated by the Swiss Trade Association. The outcome was also a blow to the Swiss Employers' Association, the SVP and the FDP. The winners were the SP, the CVP, the Greens and the trade unions. The new federal act lays down national minimums for child benefit and support for adolescents in vocational training, and creates uniform qualification conditions. It will increase family allowances in a total of 22 cantons. One million children and adolescents currently receive family allowances. The private sector's contribution towards these benefit payments will increase by CHF 455 million from its present level of CHF 4 billion. So now there is even less scope for any new family-related demands.

### *Comment: Yes and yes*

It was an important referendum. Approval of the federal law on cooperation with the states of **eastern Europe** means Switzerland can continue pursuing its current European policies. Bilateral relations with the European Union are in the long-term interests of the Swiss people and backed by the Swiss business sector. But once again we have witnessed how precarious these bilateral relations can be. A 53 percent approval rate for a bill on Europe is a narrow margin, and could well be overturned by future referenda. Yet Switzerland depends on having good neighbourly relations with Brussels, whether for adapting or ratifying existing agreements or for new accords. As early as next year, the Federal Council and Swiss parliament's European policies will be under debate again, this time over extending the free movement of people to include Romania and Bulgaria. In addition, the people could still reach a more fundamental decision about the freedom of movement of people from European Union Member States. It was therefore wise to provide CHF 1 billion in targeted development aid to the ten youngest members of the EU. Referenda for improvements to **family policies** have an easy time in Switzerland. More than two out of every three voters and nearly all the cantons endorsed the federal bill on family allowances. Families will now receive monthly child benefit of at least CHF 200, and CHF 250 per year per adolescent in vocational training. All parents qualify, whether they work full- or part-time – even (under certain circumstances) if they don't work at all. The slight increase in allowances will be especially welcomed by lower-income families. Approximately CHF 5000 a year for a family of four is no pittance. But money for children and young people in training is one thing; improving the lot of those juggling families with work is quite another. Left-wing parties and the CVP are now calling for nationwide family policies. Having pushed through national regulations on maternity leave, the wish list includes more all-day schools and crèches. Will it then be Christmas all year? ROLF RIBI

"Yes" votes by canton for aid for the East and on child benefit:





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**"Swiss Review" is sent free of charge to all adults who register with a Swiss representation abroad. As a result, households with several adults receive several copies of the magazine, which has a significant effect on our costs.**

"Swiss Review" currently has a circulation of more than

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"Swiss Review" provides information on important political events and developments in Switzerland. Two pages of each copy are devoted to official DFA information. These pages contain important explanations about legislation as well as rights and obligations that directly concern and affect Swiss

nationals living abroad. They also provide data on federal referenda and elections.

"Swiss Review" is produced by the Swiss Abroad Secretariat of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, a part of the Service for the Swiss Abroad of the Federal Department for Foreign Affairs. The Swiss Confederation funds most of the cost of editing, printing and postage.

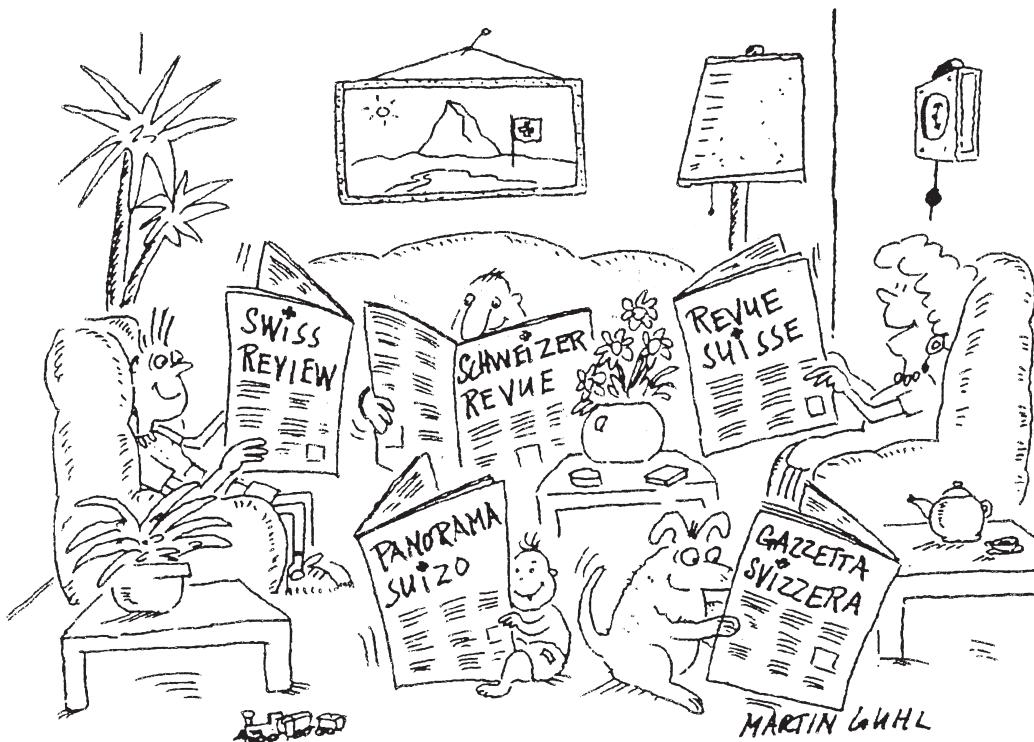
The Swiss expatriate community is growing steadily year by year (2005: 634,216;

2004: 623,057). The circulation of "Swiss Review" has now grown to more than 390,000 copies. While this may be an encouraging statistic, it also entails higher costs. We therefore ask you to renounce personal copies if other people in your household already receive the "Swiss Review". This will help cut down on postage costs.

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## Pensions to rise

**At the end of September 2006, the Federal Council decided to increase old-age, survivor's and disability (AHV/IV) pensions from 1 January 2007 to take account of economic developments. The thresholds for occupational pension schemes will also be adapted.**

The AHV and IV pensions are adapted to changes in the wage and price indices – the so-called "mixed index" – every two years. The last pensions increase came into effect on 1 January 2005. The price index and wage index both rose by 1.0 percent in 2005, and forecasters predict the price index will go up by 1.3 percent and the wage index by 1.7 percent by December 2006. It is this development that has prompted a 2.8 percent

increase in the AHV and IV pensions.

The minimum monthly pension will rise by CHF 30 from CHF 1075 to CHF 1105. The maximum monthly pension will rise by CHF 60 from CHF 2150 to CHF 2210. These adjustments will result in additional expenditure of around CHF 1094 million.

The AHV and IV pensions are not the only things that will rise. Economic developments have also prompted a change to the thresholds for occupational pension schemes. The coordination deduction for occupational schemes will rise to CHF 23,205 from its present level of CHF 22,575, while the entry level for obligatory occupational pension contributions (minimum annual wage) will be increased to CHF 19,890. These changes will also come into force on 1 January 2007.

For more information, visit [www.bsv.admin.ch](http://www.bsv.admin.ch)

## UN4YOUTH: Promoting interest in the UN among young people

The DFA has produced an online manual entitled

**"UN4YOUth" together with a variety of partners. Targeted primarily at young people, teachers and youth organisations, the aim of the manual is to get youngsters interested in all aspects of the United Nations.**

UN4YOUth is an online tool that provides a wide range of ideas and activities to get young people interested in the UN. The online handbook is designed for teaching staff, youth workers, associations,

and anyone who is interested in the UN and would like to learn more about the organisation. A variety of Internet links helps interested parties access information and find out more about the subject.

The Web site shows users how they can get involved



themselves. It also provides links to teaching materials, case studies, workshops and training courses, documentation centres and sources, networks and official sources. Topics covered include the structure and organisation of the UN and the many areas in which it operates: human rights, peace and security, development, the environment, and health. Young people who access the site can learn more about the UN and how to take action themselves.

The online UN4YOUth manual was initiated by the DFA in association with the Swiss National Youth Council (SAJV), the Swiss education server (educa.ch), the United Nations Association Switzerland and the World Federation of United Nations Associations. Ever since Switzerland joined the UN, the Federal Council has sought to involve the population in actively shaping the country's UN policies. With this in mind, the DFA supports UN-related activi-

## PEOPLE'S INITIATIVES

No new initiatives have been launched since the last issue.

- Signature forms for current initiatives can be downloaded from [www.admin.ch/ch/d/pore/vi/vis\\_1\\_3\\_1\\_1.html](http://www.admin.ch/ch/d/pore/vi/vis_1_3_1_1.html).

## VOTING

Date of next referendum in 2007:

11 March 2007

insurance premiums. It wants the Swiss health insurance scheme to be funded both by insurance contributions and from federal sources. The federal part would be covered by net revenues from tobacco and alcohol tax and the tax on casino operators.

The Swiss health insurance scheme is currently financed by a combination of per-capita premiums with individual reductions and contributions from public-sector budgets. Special taxes are not envisaged for funding purposes.

However, the initiative wants to change the system in precisely this direction. It calls for federal contributions to the Swiss health insurance scheme to be covered according to the causation principle, by drawing on revenues from tobacco and alcohol tax and the tax on casinos. This would mean that these revenues would no longer flow into the old-age and survivor's pension scheme, as is currently the case.

The initiative can be signed until 24 July 2007.

## For sensible funding of healthcare policy

**In 2005, an inter-party initiative committee launched a federal people's initiative entitled "For sensible funding of healthcare policy" (see Issue 2/06).**

The initiative calls for an amendment to Article 117 of the Swiss Federal Constitution with the aim of lowering health

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## Relating and explaining the construct of Switzerland

The Swiss National Museum hit the headlines last spring when its long-standing director, Andres Furger, was forced out of his job following disagreement with the Federal Office for Culture over the Musée Suisse group. Andreas Spillmann, who has been appointed as Furger's interim replacement, talks to "Swiss Review" about the work of the National Museum.



### **ANDREAS SPILLMANN**

Forty-six-year-old Andreas Spillmann first trained as an actor at Otto Falckenberg Schule in Munich before studying and graduating in economics in Zurich. After a spell as a freelance consultant, Spillmann was appointed

the city of Basel's cultural representative. In 2002, he became first the commercial and later also the artistic director of the Zurich Schauspielhaus theatre. He has been the interim director of the Musée Suisse group since the summer of 2006.

**SWISS REVIEW:** *The National Museum in Zurich is bursting at the seams. How far advanced are the expansion plans?*

**ANDREAS SPILLMANN:** Basel-based architects Christ & Gantenbein will be ready to present the final construction project including the building costs to the construction commission in the spring. We're making good headway. The construction bill will be tabled in parliament in 2008, as planned.

*Every canton has its own historical museum, so do many local authorities. Do we really need a national museum?*

Absolutely. Since the Swiss National Museum was founded, most cities have entrusted their cultural history exhibits to us. Incidentally, few cities can afford a large historical museum.

*In what way are the cantonal museums in Geneva, Berne and Basel different to a national museum?*

As early as the 19th Century, cross-border trading in art prompted the justified concern that Switzerland was in danger of losing the most valuable items of its cultural history. This led to the foundation of the National Museum, which was commissioned to collect, preserve and exhibit Swiss cultural assets. Of course the municipal museums have a similar remit, albeit restricted to their city's history.

*Does the National Museum collaborate with the cantonal history museums? Are attempts made to avoid duplication?*

Yes to both questions. We work together by discussing our collection policies and lending each other exhibits. On the other hand, this isn't always successful, which sometimes leads to duplication.

*Does the National Museum also need to act as a centre of excellence for other museums; a benchmark for collecting, preserving and exhibiting national treasures?*

Yes. Thanks to the National Museum's new collection centre in Affoltern, we will be able to support cantonal, municipal

and private museums even better than before.

*What with?*

With our preservation research, with preventative preservation techniques and by lending out our exhibits.

*The National Museum already has more than a million different objects. Where do they come from, and how many are added every year?*

We get about a thousand new objects a year, either as gifts or purchased by us.

*What role does coincidence play in collecting? And what criteria are used to decide what future generations will be interested in seeing?*

Of course we collect systematically and define so-called "threshold" objects that are based on a new technology or design, for example. But coincidence always plays a big part. It is both friend and foe.

*How old are the youngest objects that the National Museum collects?*

Not very old. Indeed very contemporary. For instance new textiles, household equipment and securities or bank notes that are still in circulation. Numismatists don't only collect pretty coins.

*Should everyday items like household or sports goods find their way into a national museum?*

Of course. Our visitors would love to see "everyday" things from the Reformation, the Renaissance and the Middle Ages too. Unfortunately, we can't offer that anymore. Back then, "everyday" items weren't yet seen as being of cultural historical value.

*The Federal Office for Culture promotes a national museum policy for its historic collections. What are the guidelines for this, and what objectives are they designed to meet?*

It's less a case of guidelines than a joint search for coherent solutions to the country's aforementioned collection policy, as well as about the question of whether there is any point in maintaining a 19th-Century organisational form, and what tasks the state should assign its federal museums. Rather than generating official guidelines per se, such deliberations are intended wherever possible to formulate coherent federal cultural policies for the future.

*Some people expect the National Museum to promote our national identity. How can a museum meet this demand?*

"Promoting" the identity of Switzerland is, I think, a very challenging demand, perhaps too great a task.

*I mean, the National Museum is supposed to tell the nation's story. But which story should it tell?*

Among other things, stories that describe and explain the "construct of Switzerland" rather than rushing into deconstruction: stories about the high-quality production of luxury goods, stories about immigrants like Nietzsche and Wagner, stories about civil liberty and direct democracy in a monarchic environment, stories about thrift and armed neutrality during the Thirty Years' War.

*Many people consider the National Museum archaic. Is this a fair impression? How have visitor numbers developed in recent years?*

Historical museums – even those with high visitor numbers – can quickly develop a certain antiquated air. The Swiss National Museum is no exception. That means we have to work even harder to constantly breathe new life into our permanent exhibition and ensure we choose topical issues and approaches for our special exhibitions.

*How interested are young people in the National Museum? Does this extend beyond the obligatory?*

We probably have a somewhat easier task than art museums, for example, as regards young people. In their eyes, history is about telling stories. We therefore want to refurbish the west tower this winter, putting in the National Museum's weapons and armour collection, which younger audiences sorely miss.

INTERVIEW BY HEINZ ECKERT

## THE SWISS NATIONAL MUSEUM

The Swiss National Museum in Zurich brings together eight Swiss cultural history museums spread right across the country.

The Musée Suisse group has the largest and most important collection of items of cultural history in Switzerland. It comprises about a million objects of national significance from various periods, from ancient and early history to the 21st Century. In addition to collecting, preserving and exhibiting important objects, the National Museum's cultural remit includes conducting general research and providing information about Swiss art and cultural history. With its storage facility and specialist and photographic libraries, the Swiss National Museum has positioned itself as a specialist institution.

The eight museums of the Musée Suisse group are a national and international window on the culture and history of life in Switzerland. As museums for cultural history, their permanent and temporary exhibitions and special events address trends and developments in what is now Switzerland, from ancient and early history to the present day. In so doing, they are bound by a broad understanding of culture that blends history, applied and fine arts as well as historical lifestyles into an overview of cultural history.

The following eight institutions belong to the Musée Suisse group:

- Swiss National Museum, Zurich
- Musée National Suisse, Chateau de Prangins
- Schlossdomäne Wildegg AG

■ Forum of Swiss History, Schwyz  
 ■ Museum of Musical Automatons, Seewen  
 ■ Bärengasse Museum, Zurich  
 ■ Zur Meisen Guild House, Zurich  
 ■ Swiss Customs Museum, Cantine di Gandria (TI)

The Swiss Confederation not only supports the eight institutions that make up the Musée Suisse group, but owns a total of 15 museums itself. The state also supports another 70 museums, for which no fewer than five departments and eleven federal offices are responsible. Because there is strictly speaking no museum policy, parliament has commissioned the Federal Council to draw up a binding strategy by 2007.



Wildegg Castle



Bärengasse Museum, Zurich



Swiss National Museum, Zurich



Customs Museum, Gandria



Forum of Swiss History, Schwyz



Château de Prangins



Museum of Musical Automatons, Seewen



"Zur Meisen" Guild House, Zurich



## My strongest memories of Switzerland are culinary

**Ladina Berta and Chatrina Bützer recall their childhood experiences at holiday camps organised by the Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad.**

Ladina and Chatrina were typical Swiss expatriate children. Because their father worked for the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, they spent much of their youth travelling around the world. From the ages of 5 and 9 respectively, they travelled from Italy (where they were born) to attend four Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad holiday camps. Today they both live in Berne. Ladina works for the Youth Service of the Organisation for Swiss Abroad. The two sisters vividly remember life at camp.

### *Why and where did your family live abroad?*

LADINA: The whole family travelled a lot because of our father's job. We were born in Italy, spent the early 1960s in Algeria, and later lived in central Africa, Austria and Burundi. That was followed by a short spell in Germany. Each posting lasted two to four years. Our father's last postings were to Thailand, Peru and Argentina, but my sister and I were already married by then, with Chatrina living in Berne and I in New York.

### *From where did you travel to the camps, and how was your journey organised?*

\* Ladina and Chatrina's mother comes from Trieste, while their father's family is from Grisons. Their great-grandfather, a leather import-exporter, emigrated to Italy. That's how their parents met at school. The family often visited Scuol or spent their holidays there.



**Ladina Berta and Chatrina Bützer:** The sisters have happy memories of their holiday camps in Switzerland.

CHATRINA: We went to the camps when we were living in Italy. We went twice to Salvan (VS) and twice to Vercorin (VS). The summer holidays were four months long in Italy, and we were supposed to spend a whole month in Switzerland. We first went to camp in 1955, when we were 5 and 9 respectively and living in Trieste. Throughout our adventurous journey to Switzerland, we both had to wear a label round our neck with our name, address and our destination: just like parcels in the post. An uncle met us at Milan station and helped us change trains. During the trip, I was responsible for my sister, because she was four years younger than me. The ticket inspectors always kept a watchful eye over us and told us when to get off.

### *What were the camp activities back then?*

LADINA: We went on a lot of walks and were always outside,

even in bad weather. We often played in the garden. The camp also had two rabbits that were kept in a hutch in the garden. But these cute bunnies were eventually killed and served at dinner time. Not surprisingly, we didn't want to eat them.

### *What languages were spoken at camp?*

CHATRINA: Lots. Our father sent us to camp to learn French.

### *Did you feel homesick?*

LADINA: I didn't want to go to camp, and cried my eyes out at the station. But two days later, I didn't feel homesick anymore.

### *What was your worst experience?*

CHATRINA: They served porridge for breakfast, and we had to eat it. That was the worst experience.

LADINA: We all had a rest after lunch. One day, I woke up from a deep sleep with the

sneaking suspicion that I was all alone in the house. I distinctly remember how relieved and happy I was to see my sister. The poor thing had had to stay at the house and look after me while all the others went off for a walk.

### *What are your strongest memories of Switzerland?*

CHATRINA: My strongest memories of Switzerland are culinary. I loved potato salad because we never had that at home. Once we went on an outing by coach from Salvan to Martigny, where we went into a Migros store. That's typically Swiss. I also remember the skirt we had to wear on Sundays, together with smart shoes and socks.

LADINA: All the children's wallets were kept in a drawer in the common room. We each had about CHF 3 to buy sweets in the village shop. The money had to last us for the entire month. When you stood in front of the shelf containing all the coloured jars of delicious sweets in the village shop, it felt like being in paradise.

CHATRINA: I used my money to buy a huge pile of Sugus sweets, which I distributed among everyone at camp. You couldn't get chocolate, Sugus or Ovomaltine in Italy. Even tinned peas were only available later.

LADINA: My favourite memory of the camps was the first of August celebrations. I loved the lanterns, bonfires and especially the sparklers.

At the Swiss consulate in Trieste, all they ever did on the Swiss national holiday was grill sausages in the garden.

### *Can these camps help create a more peaceful world?*

LADINA: Camps are a good personal experience. There is probably less focus on the

"peace-building" aspect at camps for younger children, and more emphasis on it at the youth camps (15 years and up). You learn in a playful manner how to get along with everyone, regardless of their language or culture. The camps are special because they create fond memories of your homeland, and therefore form bonds between the children and their fellow countrymen. You learn to be flexible and open-minded. Going to the camps can be a life-enhancing experience. They offer a framework for nurturing independence, personal development, raising awareness and learning how to cope with new, unfamiliar and unexpected situations. It really helped us, at any rate. I'd recommend all children to attend camp.

INTERVIEW: ARIANE ROULET & SIMONE RINER

## Young Swiss Abroad enjoy holidays in Switzerland

**The Swiss Alps are world-famous for their beauty and the many opportunities to engage in sports, relax or simply soak up the scenery. Book through the Youth Service now if you'd like your children to visit this winter.**

Youth Service winter sport camps are extremely popular. After all, group holidays are always lots of fun, especially if it means spending ten days with young people from around the globe. It's a great way to exchange experiences with other Swiss abroad, learn about other kids' home countries, and discover the country of your forefathers. And any

inhibitions about speaking a foreign language are quickly forgotten, because interpersonal contact is what counts. Trained OSA skiing and snowboarding instructors ensure the experience is safe, lively and packed with new achievements, while a varied leisure programme makes for entertainment and a great atmosphere, be it alternative sports, a bit of relaxation or creative activities.

The following camps still have a few places available:

### Winter sports week in Wengen (BE) (3.3.-10.3.2007)

A skiing and snowboarding camp for young adults aged 18 and up in the majestic alpine surroundings of the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau mountains. Wengen is a renowned winter sports resort famous for

the Lauberhorn downhill ski race and the Jungfraujoch train. You can even test your skills on the World Cup piste. The atmosphere is always excellent at this camp.

Price: CHF 800.-

### Easter camp in Fiesch (VS) (7.4.-14.4.2007)

Fancy a week in the snow in spring, when the days start getting longer? The Aletsch region is just what you're looking for. With its indoor halls and outdoor sports grounds, the modern holiday village offers countless sporting opportunities. Plus you can enjoy the spectacular views surrounding this well-known ski resort and hopefully lots of mountain sunshine. This camp is run in two age-groups in association with the FYSA. Ages: 12 and up.

Price: CHF 690.-



Young Swiss Abroad enjoying the snow in Sedrun.



## **University taster**

If you'd like to do something for your education while on holiday, the Youth Service has plenty of offers and accommodation. You'll live with one of our easy-going host families and gain an authentic insight into life in Switzerland. We'll put together a daytime programme tailored to your individual wishes.

But that's only a taster of what the Youth Service has on offer. Contact the OSA directly for more information.

As usual, information and details on youth arrangements are available from:

*Organisation of the Swiss Abroad  
Youth Service*

*Alpenstrasse 26, CH-3006 Berne*

*Tel.: +41 (0)31 356 61 00*

*Fax.: +41 (0)31 356 61 01*

*youth@aso.ch*

*www.aso.ch*

## **Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad summer camp 2007**

**Are you aged 8 to 14? Would you like to spend 14 days in Switzerland and find out more about your home country? The Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad runs summer holiday camps in Switzerland in July and August.**

### **Programme**

During the camps we go sightseeing, discover lakes, mountains, rivers and landscapes, go hiking and perhaps also visit local towns and cities. Some days we simply stay in camp and organise games, sports and a variety of workshops.

You'll also have an opportunity to discover some interesting aspects of Switzerland. For instance, we'll be taking a look at the Swiss language, Swiss songs, Swiss recipes, typical Swiss games and traditional sports.

Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad holiday camps offer a chance to mix with young people from different linguistic and cultural regions around the world.

### **Cost**

The camps cost between CHF 800 and 900 per child. The Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad aims to offer as many young Swiss abroad as possible the opportunity to have a holiday in Switzerland at least once. Parents can therefore apply for a reduction in the price of the camp. Application forms can be requested with the registration form.

### **Rendezvous**

The groups always meet at Zurich Airport at around lunchtime.

Parents are responsible for the organisation and cost of the outward journey to Zurich Airport on the first day and the return journey from Zurich Airport on the last day.

### **Staff**

Experienced teams of multilingual camp leaders ensure that everything runs smoothly throughout the fortnight, and provide an interesting and varied range of activities.

### **Registration**

Details of these camps as well as the registration form will be available at [www.aso.ch](http://www.aso.ch) (under "Youth", "Holiday camps for 8-14-year-olds", "Program Summer") from January 2007 onwards. On request, we can also send you our information brochure by post. The deadline for registration is 15 March 2007.

### **Winter camp 2007**

NB: There are still a few places available for the winter camps in Hasliberg (10-17 February

2007) and Fiesch (7-14 April 2007). *Please register soon!*

For more information, contact our staff in Berne, who will be happy to help you:

### *Foundation for Young Swiss*

#### *Abroad*

*Alpenstrasse 26*

*CH-3006 Berne*

*Tel. +41 (0)31 356 61 16*

*Fax +41 (0)31 356 61 01*

*E-mail: [sjas@aso.ch](mailto:sjas@aso.ch)*

*[www.aso.ch](http://www.aso.ch), FYSA*

sociated with it, and Swiss Solidarity has become the aid and charity appeal platform for all Swiss media. To date Swiss Solidarity has raised some CHF 900 million from 115 separate appeals. All the money is used to fund aid projects. Swiss Solidarity covers its own costs through interest earned on as yet unallocated donations.

Projects assessed and approved by Swiss Solidarity are currently managed by 42 accredited and affiliated aid agencies, which are permitted to deduct no more than 10 percent of the allocated project funds. This makes Swiss Solidarity Switzerland's largest and most efficient aid and charity appeal platform. In 1999, the foundation received the International Human Rights Award for its work. Swiss Solidarity currently finances some 300 projects in 46 countries to the tune of CHF 245 million.

About 70 percent of the money raised is used to fund long-term, sustainable reconstruction projects, while emergency aid on the one hand and rehabilitation and temporary relief on the other account for 15 percent each. Swiss Solidarity currently has 16 employees sharing 12 full-time posts. Its headquarter are in Geneva, and it has regional offices in Berne and Lugano.

Under the terms of its statutes, Swiss Solidarity is committed to helping "victims of disaster and people in need, no matter what the causes". In addition to providing disaster relief, Swiss Solidarity has since its inception operated a permanent child support unit (for projects in poor countries) and a welfare unit for families and individuals in Switzerland suffering temporary financial difficulties.

*[www.glaeckskette.ch](http://www.glaeckskette.ch)*

*Post Office a/c no.: 10-15000-6*

## Olympic glory

Switzerland won no fewer than 14 medals at the Winter Olympics in Turin, just one short of its all-time record set in Calgary in 1988.

Switzerland's clutch of five golds, four silvers and five bronzes put it in eighth position overall in the medals table. Swiss Olympic, Switzerland's sports governing body, has therefore decided to change the formula by which it distributes money to winter sports over the next four years. The main beneficiaries of this will be the snowboarders, who fared best in Turin, winning three gold medals.

## Second woman elected to Federal Council

Following the resignation of Joseph Deiss from the Federal Council, Doris Leuthard (CVP) was elected to replace him in June. She now heads the Federal Department of Economic Affairs. There is already much speculation about who will get the "big seven" cabinet posts after the general election in 2007. The "NZZ am Sonntag" newspaper predicts that National Councillor Martine Brunschwig Graf (LPS/GE) could take over from Pascal Couchebin.

## King Roger

The world's Number One men's tennis player outdid himself yet again in 2006. After winning the 43rd tournament of his professional career in Madrid, Roger Federer led the ATP Champions Race with an incredible 1374 points, beating his own record of 1345 points from last year. In 2006, the man from Basel also reached the final of the French Open for the first time, won back the Australian



Open (after winning it for the first time in 2004), successfully defended his Wimbledon and US Open titles, and clinched his first Swiss indoor title in Basel.

## Christoph Blocher slips up repeatedly

In his third year on the Federal Council, Christoph Blocher has once again created waves. His gaffes did not go unnoticed back at home. During an official visit to Ankara in October, Blocher criticised Swiss anti-racism legislation which criminalises genocide denial. And at a session of the National Council's Federal Commission, he made controversial comments on Swiss development aid in Africa, which became public when they were leaked to the press.

## Air pollution at record high

In the first three months of the year, the concentration of dust particles in the air over Switzerland hit new record levels. In the country's cities in particular, concentrations sometimes reached up to four times the maximum permitted value. At the request of Transport Minister Moritz Leuenberger, 12 cantons subsequently introduced 80km/h speed limits on their motorways, thereby cutting air pollution by up to 10%. In September, the cantons agreed a joint concept to combat air pollution, and in October the Department of the Environment tabled a bill on three of the 14 measures proposed by Moritz Leuenberger.



## Crumbling Alps

On 23 June, a 40x50-metre slab of unstable rock in Uri canton was blasted away after six huge boulders in the Gotthard Massif had dislodged and crashed down onto the A2 motorway. Meanwhile in the Bernese Oberland, a 250 metre-long fissure opened up on the eastern flank of the Eiger. Almost 2 million cubic metres of rock now threaten to fall off. An approximately 300,000 cubic metre chunk of rock detached itself in mid-July.

## Global warming

In July, temperatures in Switzerland reached their highest levels in 140 years. According to MeteoSchweiz, temperatures were 4.5–5.5 degrees Celsius above average. Heavy thunderstorms caused numerous rivers to overflow and created mudslides. In the Valais, floodwater from the Dranse ripped up rail lines, derailing a train on the St. Bernard Express. Fortunately, no-one was injured.

## Swiss return from the Lebanon

More than 850 Swiss nationals were able to flee the war in Lebanon with the aid of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. Micheline Calmy-Rey went to great lengths to ensure the Geneva Convention was upheld. In September, the Federal Council agreed to increase its humanitarian aid to Lebanon by CHF 15 million. Switzerland therefore donated a total of CHF 20 million in financial assistance.

## Tunnel accident

On 13 September, a serious accident occurred in the Viamala Tunnel on the A13 motorway in Grisons. Nine people were killed in a fire that broke out after a collision between a coach and a car.

## Next stop: Euro 2008

At the football World Cup Finals in Germany, Switzerland finished top of its group before being knocked out by Ukraine in the second round. In October, Köbi Kuhn announced his intention to step down as the coach of the Swiss national squad after the European Championships in 2008, which will be held in Switzerland and Austria.

## Referenda in 2006

The results: The federal decision to amend the Constitutional articles governing education (coordinating inter-cantonal cooperation on education) was approved; the new Foreigners' Act and amended Asylum Act were approved; the popular initiative on "National Bank profits for the AHV" was rejected; the federal law on cooperation with the states of eastern Europe was approved; and the federal law on family allowances was approved.

## Amazing comeback

Martina Hingis celebrated her big comeback to the WTA Tour in January, and is currently eighth in the world rankings. She is also now Switzerland's Number One tennis player again. In 2006, Hingis won tournaments in Rome and Calcutta, reached the final in Montreal and Tokyo, and made it through to the quarterfinals at both the Australian Open and French Open.

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