

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE SWISS ABROAD

S W I S S

REVIEW

APRIL 2007 / NO. 2



Red-and-white
to the core?

100 years of Knorr

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Brussels and Berne lock horns over taxation

SWITZERLAND EXERTS A MAGNETIC INFLUENCE on rich individuals and powerful companies. According to a survey by the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO), no fewer than 500 foreign firms a year settle in Switzerland, including household names like Google, Ebay, Kraft Foods and Albany. They are attracted by not only the low corporation taxes levied in Switzerland but also the excellent infrastructure and good supply of qualified personnel. Together these companies pay CHF 3 billion a year in taxes into state coffers. Countless multimillionaires and billionaires also want to come and live in Switzerland and thus benefit from flat-rate taxation.

French singer Johnny Hallyday recently created quite a stir in his native country, where his fiscally-motivated move to Gstaad was seen as a betrayal of his homeland. The ageing rock star is in good company. English pop star James Blunt and many other showbiz personalities also officially live in Switzerland. A Greek shipping magnate is building a chalet in Gstaad for CHF 100 million, while other billionaires invest a stately CHF 20, 30 or 40 million in their luxury alpine accommodation. The boom may be good for the local building industry, but it's bad news for the locals, who can hardly afford flats in Verbier, St. Moritz and Gstaad any more. Restaurant employees, for example, can't possibly pay CHF 2500 a month for a small, two-and-a-half room flat, so they have no choice but to leave the luxury resorts and move into the valleys. And the wealth gap between the well off and those on more modest incomes is growing ever wider.

The unseemly rivalry between the cantons over rich taxpayers doesn't only ruffle the feathers of eurocrats in Brussels; it also annoys many Swiss people. Sixty-six percent of those polled in a representative online survey by Perspektive Schweiz wanted the cantons to be prevented from competing for people earning more than CHF 300,000.

The European Commission is particularly unhappy with the tax breaks used to lure foreign holding and other companies to Switzerland. The EU claims that such fiscal practices distort competition and contravene the free trade agreement signed by Switzerland and the EU in 1972. The European Commission thinks that tax privileges of this kind constitute a breach of the spirit of the bilateral relations between Switzerland and the EU.

Switzerland has reacted to the allegations with unusual vehemence, categorically rejecting negotiations on the issue, and reminding its critics that it is free to set its own fiscal policies. Indeed, Finance Minister Hans-Rudolf Merz argues against making any concessions whatsoever to the EU since this would erode Swiss sovereignty. Merz says there is no room for manoeuvre on the matter and points to the sometimes substantial differences in taxation in the various EU Member States. This has prompted Economiesuisse and all the popular parties in Switzerland to condemn the demands from Brussels as legally untenable, economically and financially damaging, and politically incorrect, while nearly all the media have rallied round the federal councillor, urging him to remain firm and unyielding in the face of pressure from the EU. An editorial in NZZ newspaper bore the headline "EU acts in bad taste". The tax row has therefore created a rare show of solidarity in Switzerland and cost the EU much of the sympathy it enjoyed in many quarters.

So are Switzerland and the EU heading for their first major spat? Only time will tell what moves the two sides will make given their differing interests. After all, the issue is about not only a lot of money, but also the sovereignty of the cantons themselves.

HEINZ ECKERT, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



Heinz Eckert

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Cover photo: "Swissness" is cool: Among the sea of flags outside the UN offices in Geneva. Photo: Keystone

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Seit 150 Jahren in der Schweiz daheim und in der Welt zuhause.

Alpentunnels, Eisenbahnlinien, Brücken: Vieles von dem, was wir heute als selbstverständlich erachten, ist im 19. Jahrhundert geschaffen worden. Auch Swiss Life. Vor 150 Jahren gründete der Thurgauer Conrad Widmer die Schweizerische Rentenanstalt, den ersten Lebensversicherer mit Schweizer Wurzeln. Daraus ist im Jahr 2004 Swiss Life geworden. Seit Jahrzehnten Marktführerin, versichert Swiss Life heute allein in der Schweiz eine Million Menschen. Swiss Life ist als einer der führenden europäischen Vorsorgeanbieter auch in Frankreich, Deutschland, den Benelux-Ländern und Liechtenstein zu Hause. 9000 Mitarbeitende gewinnen das Vertrauen der Kunden Tag für Tag aufs neue. Und machen dabei keinen Unterschied, ob es den Kunden um private Altersvorsorge oder die Verwaltung grosser institutioneller Vermögen geht.

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Generalagent Swiss Life, Meilen

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Employment Opportunities

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Thank you

It was very interesting to read about the history of the Swiss chocolate industry, but I was a bit disappointed that it didn't cover the events of recent times. We were shocked the other day to read on the box of our Toblerone chocolates that Tobler AG is now a subsidiary of the Phillip Morris cigarette company! Globalisation versus tradition? Chockies for the highest bidder? We do appreciate the "Swiss Review", thank you!

ANNAMARIA MAGNUS, TASMANIA

Homesick heart

How lovely that you chose a Christmas tale by Minu. My "homesick heart" laughed with joy, and I was happy (and a little proud) that it was written by



"en Bebbi". I miss Minu here in Finland. I think about him every year at Christmas while I'm hanging up his red velvet hearts.

E. HUNZINGER-LYHDE,
FINLAND

Congratulations

Thank you so much for keeping me in touch with what is going on in my country. My husband and I read your issue "from A to Z". I especially love your article about chocolate. I will give this issue to my American friends and neighbours to read. Few people here know that Switzerland makes other brands of chocolate beside Nestlé and Lindt. Thank you! I wanted to congratulate Mrs. Calmy-



Rey for becoming the next President of the Confederation. I am sure she will take wise charge - long life to her! Thank you again for keeping me in touch with my country that I miss so much. Hopefully my husband

and I will be back home soon, especially for me (but my husband, who is American, loves the food and the countryside of Switzerland).

MICHELE WHITEAKER,
LEXINGTON, KENTUCKY, USA

Keep it clean

A page in the 6/06 edition is headed "Review of the Year 2006". On that page there is a short story entitled "Christoph Blocher slips up repeatedly". If it is your intention to give your view on how politicians are doing, please tell me, and I will let you know that I am not interested in receiving your publication. May I suggest you keep it clean and do not go that way? There is plenty of nasty stuff to write about Federal Councillors operating to the left of centre.

PETER SCHAAD, LONDON,
GREAT BRITAIN

Who knows best?

On your Mailbag page in issue 6/06, A. Brandenburg from Canada warned the Swiss about Christoph Blocher and the SVP. They think they know better than the other parties, she said. My question to her is: do the other parties know better? Has A. Brandenburg been taken in by the media, nearly all of which oppose Christoph Blocher? In my opinion, Mr Blocher and the SVP aspire to more down-to-earth, sincere and more sensible policies, and are keen to keep Switzerland as independent as possible for as long as possible.

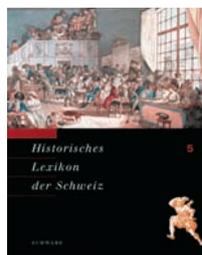
B. WACHTER, KANDY, SRI LANKA

Five volumes have already been published, a total of thirteen are planned. Once the country's most ambitious humanities project ever is completed, some 36,000 articles on people, families, places and specialist subjects will provide a comprehensive overview of the history of Switzerland from the Old Stone Age to the present day. The first volume of the Historical Dictionary of Switzerland appeared with identical content in the country's three official languages - German, French and Italian - in 2002. The encyclopaedia gives all regions of Switzerland appropriate coverage using a fixed key.

The Historical Dictionary of Switzerland has been an ongoing project since 1988, and aims to present the status quo of knowledge about the history of Switzerland in the form of an encyclopaedia. The work is produced by the Helvetisches Lexikon der Schweiz foundation, which operates under the patronage of the Swiss Academy of Humanities and Social Sciences and the Swiss Historical Society. The project is funded by the state from tax revenues. The editorial board consists of about 30 people, although more than 2500 writers are involved in the production of this mammoth work. The editor-in-chief is Marco Jorio.

Thanks to modern graphic design, the encyclopaedia is as attractive a reference work as it is well laid-out. About 20 percent of the space is reserved for images, which are backed up and complemented by appropriate texts. Numerous graphs, maps and tables visually illustrate and expand on the presented information.

The encyclopaedia spans all of human history from Man's first appearance in the region to the present day. All periods of history are addressed, although not necessarily in equal measure. The more recent the event, the more space it is given. Some 10 percent of the text deals with prehistory and ancient history, 20 percent is devoted to the Middle Ages, 30 percent to the modern age and the remaining 40 percent covers the 19th, 20th and early 21st Centuries. According to the encyclopaedia's editors, modern historiography has in recent decades shifted away from simply cataloguing political events and their players to presenting in its place an "histoire totale" that considers all aspects of society. Interest in more general structures and processes as well as the everyday lives of all sections of society has increased sharply, they say. This development is taken into account in the choice of material.



The Historical Dictionary of Switzerland is the first reference book on Swiss history since Victor Attinger's Historico-Biographical Encyclopaedia of the 1920s and 1930s.

It is a real pleasure leafing through the pages of the Historical Dictionary of Switzerland, looking at the images, reading the texts and learning about Switzerland in such an exciting

and clear manner. A version of the encyclopaedia has also been on the Internet since 1998, but who wants such information electronically when it's available in such a wonderful printed form? The Historical Dictionary of Switzerland is a delight for all lovers of beautiful books. www.hls.ch

HEINZ ECKERT

One volume is published every year, and costs CHF 298. Orders for the German edition: www.schwabe.ch / Orders for the French edition: www.editions-attinger.ch / Orders for the Italian edition: www.editore.ch

Annual Report 2006

In 2006, the Cooperative Society Solidarity Fund for Swiss Nationals Abroad was able to support several distressed families in Africa and the Middle East with lump-sum compensations. Moreover, Soliswiss reconstituted itself and founded a subsidiary that operates as a modern financial services company in the domains of insurance brokerage and asset management.

The year 2006 was a very challenging one for the entire organisation. Soliswiss would therefore like to express its sincere gratitude to its staff members and governing bodies as well as to the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs FDFA. All of them demonstrated an extraordinary commitment and safely steered the Cooperative Society through very stormy waters.

Change in chairmanship

Special acknowledgement is due to the unfaltering dedication of Ulrich Pfister who presided over the Cooperative Society from 1994 to 2006 before passing the helm to Barbara Rigassi when he retired. During his tenure, he opened up new perspectives for the Cooperative Society Solidarity Fund for Swiss Nationals Abroad and also advanced the cause of the Swiss expats in the Council of the Swiss Abroad. We wish him an active and rich new period of his life.

Restructured in depth

In the year under review, a number of tightened supervisory regulations made it unavoidable to fundamentally restructure the organisation. Formally speaking, the Cooperative Society has merely founded a new subsidiary. But within, it acquired a new mandate, a fresh team, and strong partners ena-

bling it to break new ground. Soliswiss Ltd., wholly owned by the Cooperative Society, provides competitive banking and insurance services geared to financial security. The purpose of the Cooperative Society is still to offer financial protection to Swiss nationals abroad in case of loss of livelihood due to political events.

Life-long membership a popular option

How have the members responded to the realignment? By the end of 2006, four fifths of all members personally individually approved in writing the changes adopted by the 2006 General Assembly and renewed their membership for 2007. The organisation's management is pleased to notice that the overwhelming majority of members has remained loyal to the Solidarity Fund. The reassuring course of business indicates that the new instruments are meeting with widespread acceptance. In the period under report, 430 members joined the Solidarity Fund, and many others switched to life-long membership.

Excellent cooperation with the FDFA

In 2006, the Cooperative Society was able to assist many families from the crisis regions in Canada, Zimbabwe, Iraq, and

Lebanon. Additional applications from Bolivia and Colombia were still under consideration by the end of the year. Being sponsored exclusively by private individuals, the Cooperative Society depends on active support by the FDFA and the missions and liaison offices in the affected regions in order to effectively handle the incoming applications for assistance.

Marketing measures in Switzerland

Swiss citizens who decide to move abroad usually plan their emigration well ahead. To make relocation easier and offer social and financial security, Soliswiss paid visits to most Swiss towns with more than 5000 inhabitants. Their registry offices are now able to inform those who wish to emigrate about the financial services provided by Soliswiss.

Financially independent

Soliswiss is prospering, and this is reflected in the business figures: the total sum of provisions and reserves for lump-sum compensations and financial assistance currently amounts to CHF 16.2 million. Thanks to this high amount of net assets, the Cooperative Society will probably not need to make use of the Federal default guarantee.

Cost-intensive restructuring

The Cooperative Society entrusted Soliswiss Ltd. with the labor-intensive closure of the savings accounts. Among the expenditures due to restructuring, this represents the largest single burden of the restructuring process on the Cooperative So-

ciety's account. In the year under review, the costs amounted to CHF 2.4 million. Soliswiss is obligated to regularly report to the Swiss Federal Banking Commission (EBK) on the course of the restructuring process. Ernst & Young AG was appointed by the General Assembly as the auditor in charge of monitoring the restructuring process on behalf of the EBK. Additionally, a respected law firm based in Basel is providing valuable services in adapting the legal framework.

Active joint-stock company

Soliswiss Ltd. started business operations in July and closed the year with a balanced result. In the abridged financial year, the insurance brokerage division earned CHF 0.6 million in commissions from health and life insurance, thus generating a solid basis for further growth. Since the shift of savings-account funds to asset management mandates only began in November, the asset management division generated slightly less than CHF 0.2 million.

With the major realignment in financial 2006, Soliswiss has come back to its roots. The two original objectives established in 1958, lump-sum compensation and savings back home, have been reaffirmed on the basis of the currently effective legislation.

Soliswiss – Living abroad with Swiss security.

Dr. Felix Bossert
CEO

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The village chronicler. Trained watchmaker Arnold Zwahlen (b. 1916) began taking snapshots of life at his unit while a soldier on active service. In his spare time, he photographically documented the people, culture and lifestyle of his native Loèche. Zwahlen's pictures provide fascinating insight into life in the Alps after the Second World War. "Le Photographe du Village/Der Dorffotograf" (French/German), published by Benteli, CH-3084 Wabern – Berne, CHF 78. www.benteliverlag.ch



Village blacksmith Jules Mathieu, around 1947



On the Varneralp, around 1945



The break, spring 1940



Walter Sewer and family, around 1952



A local bowling match at the "Alpenrösli" in Loèche, around 1955



Raclette

Red-and-white to the core?

What image do the Swiss have of their country?

How pronounced is the Swiss identity? And how proud are the Swiss of their homeland? We look at a representative poll and ask famous personalities about the Helvetian zeitgeist. By Rolf Ribi

When the Swiss national squad faced the team from Ukraine in Cologne on 26 June 2006 during the FIFA World Cup, 50,000 delighted Swiss fans waving red-and-white flags sang their national anthem, "Trittst im Morgenrot daher". The entire country was gripped by unprecedented euphoria and filled with pride. Henceforth, young Swiss men and women not only wore red t-shirts emblazoned with a white cross, but also thought it cool to do so. "Swissness" is also a winning formula in the world of business, and the country's political parties are using such iconic symbols as the Swiss cross and the Matterhorn in their campaigns for the next election. These newfound national sentiments beg the question as to what the Swiss people feel deep down inside.

Berne-based market research company Gfs has attempted to dissect the Swiss identity, or rather the image people have of their country. Its latest survey, conducted in late 2006, asked questions like, "Are the Swiss proud of their country, their politicians and their economy?", "What does 'Switzerland' mean to you?", "What do you think are the country's strengths and weaknesses?", "What is your relation to the state, and what does it do?", "What should be reformed?", and "What – if anything – poses a threat to the Swiss identity?"

"The Swiss have developed an objective, sober stance towards their country," says former public law professor Georg Müller. He believes that "reverence for one's homeland" has little bearing nowadays. "We feel bound to our community, our canton and our country because we are involved in shaping the political will." Former Federal Councillor Adolf Ogi, now a UN special advisor on sports for development and peace, says, "I note that people are generally more at ease with their Swiss identity. Young Swiss people in particular feel very much part of their country." Former law professor Suzette Sandoz is "not sure whether the Swiss have strong ties to their country nowadays".

She says the Swiss identity "hardly exists anymore" in big cities in particular. Former Federal Councillor Rudolf Friedrich is critical of developments. "A significant proportion of our citizens primarily feel bound to their country because they expect it to provide services and personal benefits," he says.

Of Swiss pride

"Are you proud to be Swiss?" the pollsters asked. Twenty-one percent of respondents said they were "very proud", 54 percent "somewhat proud". In other words, three-quarters of the Swiss take pride in their country, but more than a fifth are not proud of it. "Strong national pride is not very widespread in Switzerland," says Gfs Project Manager Lukas Golder. There are also regional differences. For instance, people in the central cantons of Aargau, Thurgau and Zurich identify less with their country than those in the southern cantons of Grisons, Ticino and Valais.

The pollsters wanted to tease out which parts of the political system and economy this pride was associated with. "What aspects of Swiss politics are you particularly proud

of?" they asked. The most frequent responses were self-determination and independence, neutrality, the coexistence of the different language groups, the Swiss Constitution, civic rights such as initiatives and referenda, and cantonal involvement in federal decision-making. In other words, independence and neutrality were seen as the decisive political elements, factors that 92 percent of respondents were either quite or very proud of. The vast majority was also proud of the coexistence of the different language groups. The Constitution, civic rights and federalism were also mentioned, but not by the majority.

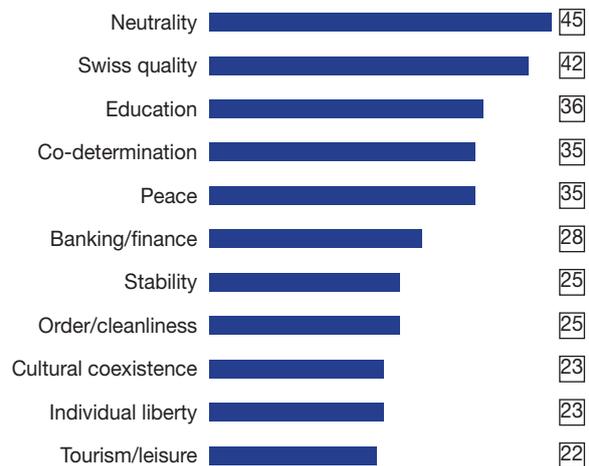
There has been a significant drop in faith in consociationalism, the cooperation between the major political forces in the Swiss Government. Whereas 79 percent of respondents were proud of consociationalism in 2004, this has now fallen to 63 percent. This difference represents almost three-quarters of a million people. "Of all the elements of our political system, consociationalism has lost by far the most ground in terms of national identity," says Lukas Golder. The polarisation at the left and right fringes of the political spectrum obviously has its price, namely decreasing recognition of the merits of consociationalism.

The participants in the survey were asked what aspects of the Swiss economy they were particularly proud of. Most people first mentioned Switzerland's international reputation for quality. This was followed by the watch-making industry, research, strong Swiss brands operating abroad, the country's

Switzerland's strengths (2006)

Which Swiss strengths have been discussed or written about recently?

(Multiple responses possible)



flourishing small and medium-sized companies, and the engineering and pharmaceutical sectors. Swiss banking and finance were also listed as strengths of the Swiss economy, although fully 16 percent of respondents said they weren't proud of them, and 19 percent were not at all proud of Swiss banking secrecy.

The poll also found that the Swiss are proud of the difference between their economy and that of other countries. Seventeen percent of those polled thought the Swiss economy compared very favourably with other economies, while a further 69 percent thought it compared quite well. And increasing numbers of the Swiss are proud of this difference.

"Yes, I'm proud to be Swiss," former Federal Councillor Adolf Ogi enthuses. He says Switzerland is a beautiful country with a high standard of living and well-oiled democratic processes. "The Swiss have always been proud of their country," says Professor Georg Müller, pointing to the small state, the different language regions and cultures, the country's independence and prosperity. And yet, "The sober Swiss don't usually express this national pride." Jakob "Köbi" Kuhn, the coach of the Swiss national football squad, professes his allegiance less reservedly. "I love Switzerland," he says. "I am proud to represent my country in my chosen sport," although he adds, "If my home was in another country, I'd love it too."

Writer Adolf Muschg stresses that because Switzerland is a confederation rather than "merely a nation like any other", the Swiss prima-

rily focus on smaller units like their community and their canton. "That doesn't foster national pride, which has never really been a natural phenomenon," he says. What is more, "Switzerland serves as a pleasant reminder that the 'nation' is a recent product of history and certainly not a fortunate creation." Former Federal Councillor Rudolf Friedrich says, "Why should I be proud of something that is not of my doing? I am not proud, but immensely grateful to be able to live and work in a peaceful and liberal country." Indeed, he condemns "damned national pride, with its arrogance and scant regard for others". Professor Suzette Sandoz from Vaud voices similar sentiments. "I am more appreciative than proud because I am genuinely proud of my father, my parents and grandparents, all of whom were true and honest patriots." In any case, she adds, "National pride is a feeling expressed by war generations".

What Switzerland means

The question about what Switzerland means at a personal level provided a clearer picture of subjective Swiss perceptions of their country. The most popular responses were security and freedom (21%), neutrality (20%), a sense of order and precision (19%), the countryside, liberty and freedom of expression, prosperity, money and luxury, and cleanliness. The primary image of a safe and peaceful country has existed and persisted for several years. Second-placed neutrality proved particularly important to the Swiss last year.

When the market researchers asked respondents to name the three factors that best

described Switzerland, they got the following overall results: Security and freedom topped the list, followed by neutrality, liberty and freedom of expression, democracy and co-determination, cleanliness, a sense of order and precision, prosperity, money and luxury, and finally the countryside. Solidarity was rarely mentioned, the terms "home" and "homeland" even less often.

The strengths and weaknesses

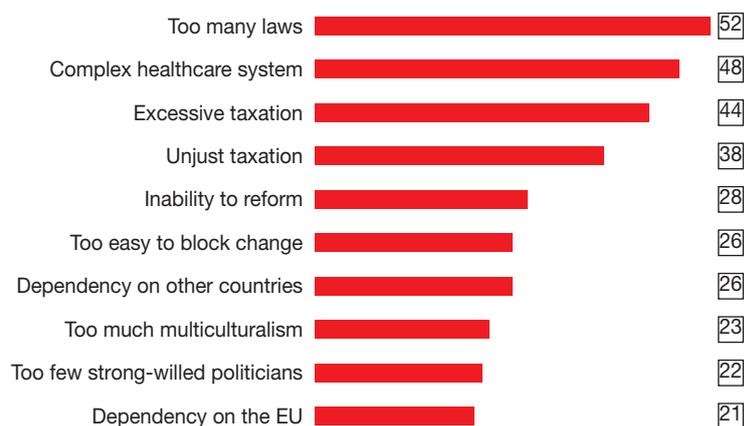
The respondents were also asked what they considered to be the country's strengths. One political factor was named above all others: neutrality. Unfortunately, the survey did not analyse whether this was a passive neutral attitude (of the kind that Federal Councillor Blocher wants) or an active, peace-promoting attitude by a neutral country (of the kind to which Federal President Calmy-Rey prescribes). Quality and education were named as Switzerland's primary strengths, followed by political co-determination and peace. Tellingly, finance and banking were named more often than political concepts such as individual liberty, humanitarian traditions and even collective bargaining. Switzerland's other perceived strengths include its health service and pharmaceutical industry, agriculture and watch-making industry.

So what did the representative sample of Switzerland's citizenry consider the country's greatest weaknesses? Interestingly enough, most of the issues raised point the finger directly at the state itself: too many laws, an over-complicated healthcare system, excessive taxation, inadequate fiscal justice, and an inability to reform. Other named weaknesses included Switzerland's dependency on other countries, specifically the European Union, too much multiculturalism, and a shortage of strong-willed politicians. Switzerland's deliberate political isolation was also mentioned: its lack of openness towards other countries and the decision not to join the European Union. "The participants were keen to blame the politicians for Switzerland's weaknesses, focussing on key elements of the state, like taxation and legislation," says Lukas Golder.

Asked to name Switzerland's strengths, Professor Suzette Sandoz listed direct democracy and consociationalism, freedom of expression and the ability to engage in political dialogue. She said the country's weaknesses were the sale of major Swiss companies to foreign buyers, wor-

Switzerland's weaknesses (2006)

Which Swiss weaknesses have been discussed or written about recently?
(Multiple responses possible)



ries about Switzerland's image abroad, and the loss of a sense of mutual responsibility and obligation. Former Federal Councillor Rudolf Friedrich said the main strengths were domestic stability and a powerful economy based on the combined efforts of tens of thousands of people. The greatest weakness in his eyes is that the country is "constantly trying to catch up with international developments, for instance with regard to the European Union and the army, even though small states like ours can no longer defend themselves autonomously." Adolf Muschg praises the fact that Switzerland has been a "European country" since as far back as the 18th and 19th Centuries, and that its late medieval structure created the foundation for "a small state with common-sense social policies and great cosmopolitan potential". However, the former literature professor considers its pragmatism a weakness. "Switzerland always acts on a case-by-case basis and therefore appears lacklustre and unimaginative," he bemoans.

Former magistrate Adolf Ogi stresses "the important role our small country plays on the international stage thanks to immense efforts by the Swiss in humanitarian and other fields". He thinks Swiss companies must remain innovative and competitive and place their faith in typically Swiss values like quality, reliability and precision. The much-travelled Swiss film director Marc Forster says apolitically, "When you arrive [in Switzerland], you get the impression that the air is simply much better than anywhere else in the world. Everything is so clean, the people are well-dressed, the buildings look freshly painted. Everywhere else in the world things look so worn out."

No urgent demands for reform

If Switzerland's weaknesses were seen as being primarily political, the politicians would have to sit up and listen. Nonetheless, as Lukas Golder explains, "In spite of the catalogue of weaknesses and potential threats, there were no clear demands for reform." Indeed, fewer than half of those polled were completely or even partly in favour of reforming the political system, and only 15 percent firmly believed that the political system needed a thorough overhaul.

Even so, when the respondents were presented with a list of current political objectives, their political "agenda" was easy to spot, namely securing the old age and survivors' pension scheme (deemed very important by 80% of respondents), increasing economic growth, minimising price rises in the healthcare system, keeping state expenditure in check and combating crime, followed by other aims like promoting education, cutting red tape, securing employment, improving conditions for working parents and stabilising greenhouse gas emissions.

Switzerland's companies fared somewhat better than the country's politicians in terms of perceived weaknesses and the need for reform, but a majority of the representative sample wanted more jobs and more vocational training places and thought major companies paid too little tax. Small and medium-sized companies were judged considerably less harshly. Respondents praised the benefits they brought the country as a whole, and acknowledged their fiscal input more than that of the "big players".

Ambiguity over the role of the state

The market researchers from Berne also enquired about what the state did for individual citizens, and conversely, what they contributed to the state. A narrow majority of those polled considered that the state provided too little, and felt let down by it. On the other hand, almost a third said they got the impression that the state did too much for the general public.

The responses to the question about individual contributions towards the state and the country in general make sobering reading. Nearly half of the Swiss men and women in the survey believed that they themselves did far too much; a clearly individualist standpoint. Kennedy's famous remark "Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country" obviously has little bearing in Switzerland.

Threats to the identity

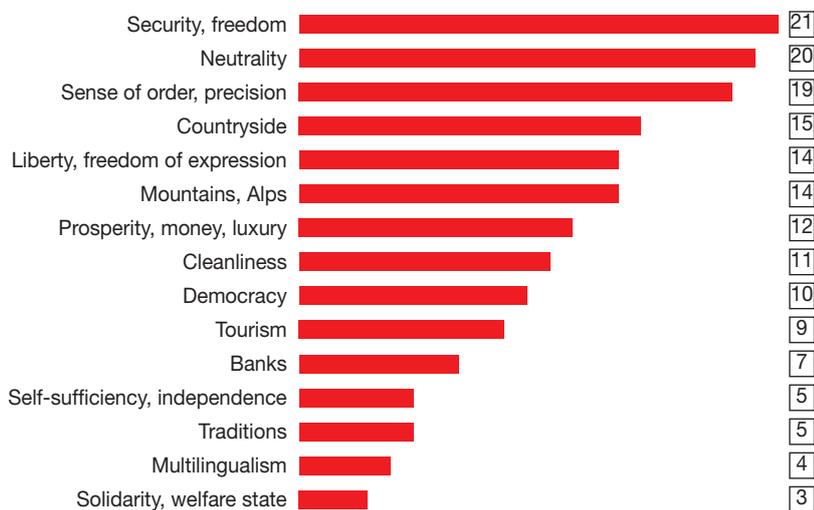
According to the findings of the survey, immigration is seen as the greatest threat to the Swiss identity. No fewer than 74 percent of respondents put this issue top of their list of concerns, and the figure is rising. The other issues perceived by the majority of those polled as threatening the Swiss identity were opening Switzerland up to the outside world, increasing egotism among the Swiss, sluggish political reform and political polarisation brought on by right-wing and left-wing parties.

The survey says nothing about what the Swiss abroad think about their country, their homeland. So does the answer lie in the maxim "If you want to understand your homeland better, go abroad"? Or perhaps Peter Haffner, the US correspondent of Tages-Anzeiger magazine, was right when he wrote, "The Swiss abroad are living proof that time travel is possible. They have frozen their homeland in their minds at the point at which they left it."

Source:
The survey on the Swiss identity quoted in the above article was carried out by the Gfs market research company of Berne on behalf of Credit Suisse (www.credit-suisse.com/emagazine)

Three things that "Switzerland" means

State three things that you personally associate with Switzerland



© gfs.bern, Sorgenbarometer, August 2006 (n = 1010)

Based on written responses

New National Bank and National Park coins

The Swiss National Bank celebrates its 100th anniversary this year. To commemorate the centenary, the federal mint – Swissmint – has produced a gold and a silver coin modelled on past and present banknotes. By contrast, the first of a new special-issue set of coins in the Swiss National Park series features an ibex. All the coins have been produced in a strictly limited edition.



100 years of the Swiss National Bank 2007, gold coin. Nominal value: CHF 50

100 years of the Swiss National Bank 2007, silver coin. Nominal value: CHF 20

Swiss National Park, ibex 2007, bimetallic coin. Nominal value: CHF 10

The new special-issue sets are dedicated to two of the country's most important institutions: the Swiss National Bank (SNB) and the Swiss National Park (SNP), the former as the custodian of the Swiss franc, the latter as a protected habitat for flora and fauna.

The double issue of a gold and a silver coin on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the National Bank underlines its significance for the country's welfare. The SNB first took up its role as independent central bank in 1907. Since then, it has sought to keep prices stable while taking economic changes into account, a basic condition for the development of the economy, for growth and prosperity. In addition, the National Bank supplies the market with banknotes, is responsible for distributing coins and is one of the main bodies responsible for underpinning the payments system. The Swiss National Bank has offices in Berne and Zurich.

The backs of the CHF 50 gold coin and CHF 20 silver coin depict artworks from two centuries. The silver coin depicts part of the current CHF 20 banknote containing the portrait of the Swiss composer Arthur Honegger (1892–1955) as drawn by the Genevan

artist Roger Pfund. For the gold coin, Swissmint chose "The woodcutter" by Ferdinand Hodler (1853–1918), one of the artist's most famous works. "The woodcutter" formed part of a set commissioned by the National Bank from 1908, when Hodler was asked to design Switzerland's first set of banknotes. The image of the woodcutter was created for the CHF 50 note.

The bimetallic ibex coin is the first of a four-part series of coins that Swissmint will be issuing in honour of the Swiss National Park, and depicting selected wild animals native to Alpine regions. The National Park is the oldest park of its kind in the Alps, and is located in the Engadine and the Münstertal valley in the canton of Grisons. Since it was established in 1914, it has provided a unique refuge for local flora and fauna in an area of 170 square kilometres at an altitude of between 1400 and 3100 metres above mean sea level. Strict conservation regulations have earned the park international fame. The ibex is seen as the king of the wild animals of the Alps on account of its massive physique and mighty horns. Due to a misguided belief in the medicinal properties of various ibex prepara-

tions, the animal was hunted almost to extinction hundreds of years ago, and only survived in the Italian Gran Paradiso massif. It was from there that 100 young ibex were smuggled into Switzerland and resettled in the National Park in 1920. Today, somewhere between 300 and 450 ibex inhabit the park.

The special CHF 10 coin was designed by Grisons artist Gian Vonzun. The other coins in the four-part Swiss National Park series showing typical Alpine animals will be issued between 2008 and 2010. To symbolise our country's multilingualism, the term "Swiss National Park" is engraved in one of the four official languages on the outermost ring. As the first in the series, the ibex coin carries the Rhaeto-Romanic inscription "Parc Naziunal Svizzer".

The new special-issue coins are available from selected coin dealers, banks and over the Internet at www.swissmint.ch. The money raised from sales of the coins will be used to fund cultural projects throughout Switzerland.

"Ferd National": a Swiss legend

He is considered the greatest Swiss sportsman of all time.

His ascent from poverty and his success as a racing cyclist made "Ferd National" a sporting hero. A lovely book containing text and wonderful pictures documents the career of now 87-year-old Ferd Kubler, and thus a piece of contemporary Swiss history. By Rolf Ribi

I was still a boy when I plucked up all my courage and wrote to the bicycle manufacturer Tebag asking for Ferd Kubler's autograph. Shortly thereafter, I received in the post a picture of the "Eagle of Adliswil" at full speed, elegantly and personally signed "F. Kubler". I couldn't have been happier, and still possess the photo today.

Without a doubt, the cyclist with the distinctive nose is the most famous Swiss sportsman of the 20th Century – if not all time. When Swiss radio ran a competition to find the favourite sportsman of the century, Kubler finished far ahead of skier Bernhard Russi, Kubler's arch-rival Hugo Koblet and racing driver Clay Regazzoni. In the late Forties and early Fifties, Kubler won nearly all the major cycling races and tours.

But what lies behind the "Kubler phenomenon"? What drove the man who is still asked for his autograph to this day? The first aspect is the young man's rise from an impoverished and miserable childhood to become a celebrated sportsman and later a successful businessman. "We were five children and poor as church mice," he says about his early childhood. "I wanted to escape that poverty as quickly as possible." As a delivery boy for a bakery in Männedorf, he cycled up the Pfannenstil like a madman every day with 30 kilograms of bread on his back. As a delivery boy for the Barth jewelry shop in Zurich, he rode 42 kilometres to and from his home in Marthalen every evening and every morning on a ladies' bi-

cycle. His iron will, his pain-tolerance levels and complete obsession with cycle racing were part of his character. The French later dubbed him "le fou pédalant".

His impressive victories over the "greats" of the time – famous names like Coppi, Bartali, Koblet and Bobet – were the second as-



Ferd Kubler was a great fighter with an iron will

pect of the Kubler phenomenon. Kubler won the Tour de Suisse no fewer than three times: in 1942, 1948 and 1951. In 1947, his 213-kilometre solo from Bellinzona to Sion in Valais, constantly pursued by Italian crack riders Bartali and Coppi, went down in the annals of the Tour's history, and it was this win that turned Kubler into a world-class athlete.

Things didn't go quite so smoothly on the Cols du Vars during the 1949 Tour de France. At the top of the mountain pass, Kubler was

3 minutes 50 ahead and therefore theoretically the leader, but he suffered tyre damage several times on the gravel road coming down. Having repaired his tyre the first time himself, he was convinced that his pump wasn't working properly. The image of a totally frustrated Kubler made all the papers. Although he was never really able to shake off the disappointment at losing that Tour de France, he was to achieve his greatest success in the very same competition a year later. "Hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of people wanted to see this Kubler make his way through Paris to the Parc des Princes," a Swiss journalist wrote.

In 1951 (Sepp Renggli's radio broadcast is still etched in my brain), Ferd Kubler became the world champion. And yet he could

have picked up the title two years earlier, when he joined forces with Van Steenberghe and let the Belgian win simply to prevent Coppi from winning. Kubler finished third the following year, before triumphing in Varese in 1951: After eight-and-a-half gruelling hours in stifling temperatures, Kubler found himself up against three Italians at the finish. Fortunately, the Swiss cyclist was a strong sprinter, and was able to secure himself the rainbow jersey, to the delight of all his countrymen.

For almost two decades, "Ferd National" earned his money as one of the world's best racing cyclists. Yet the transition into normal working life proved remarkably easy for the popular sportsman. The National

insurance company used his portrait and distinctive nose on its posters for eight years, and he became a popular figurehead for the Kreditanstalt bank, which would later sponsor the Tour de Suisse for many years.

Martin Born, Hanspeter Born,
Sepp Renggli:
FERDY KÜBLER – "FERDY NATIONAL".
Published in German
Edited by
Peter Schnyder.
AS-Verlag Buchkonzept AG,
2006, Zurich, CHF 88 / EUR 54.80





Changes affecting the cash disbursement of vested pension benefits

When an employment relationship is terminated, the pension capital that has “accrued” in the employee’s favour must in general be transferred to the pension scheme of the new employer in Switzerland in the form of vested benefits. Pension funds will only pay out these accumulated vested benefits on request and only under certain conditions, for instance if the person becomes self-employed or leaves Switzerland for good.

The agreement on the free movement of labour between Switzerland and EU/EFTA Member States, which came into effect on 1 June 2002, grants Swiss nationals living in EU and EFTA countries the same residence, employment and labour rights as the citizens of EU and EFTA Member States. To this end, the divergent national social security systems in the EU and EFTA have been brought into line with each other.

Mandatory contributions

Transitional provisions have been laid down for occupational pension schemes. Pension scheme participants who take up residence in an EU/EFTA state (except Romania and Bulgaria) where they are subject to mandatory welfare contributions to cover retirement, death or disability may have their vested pension benefits paid out in cash if they leave Switzerland before 1 June 2007. According to the Swiss Federal Law on Occupational Retirement, Survivors’ and Disability Pension Plans (BVG), the vested benefits from statutory minimum pension insurance will no longer be paid out in cash after this date. The vested pension benefits that remain in Switzerland are credited to a vested benefits account or insurance policy and are paid out as a pension or lump sum no earlier than five years before reaching retirement age. Any pension scheme participants who can prove that they are not required to make pension contributions in their new EU/EFTA country of residence may still have their mandatory pension capital paid out in cash after 1 June 2007.

People who leave Switzerland to work on a self-employed basis in an EU/EFTA Member State will not be eligible for cash disbursement of their mandatory vested benefits if they are subject to mandatory pension contributions in their new country of residence. They are therefore subject to the same regulations as the non self-employed.

Non-mandatory pension insurance (Pillar 3a)

Non-mandatory pension insurance is that share of occupational pension contributions that goes beyond the minimum pension insurance laid down by the BVG. This applies to annual incomes of more than CHF 79,560 (from 2007). Non-mandatory pension insurance is not limited, and the accumulated benefits will continue to be paid out in cash.

This regulation also does not apply to accrued Pillar 3a pension capital, which may continue to be paid out in cash when leaving Switzerland for good.

Special regulation for Liechtenstein

People who leave their jobs in Switzerland to take up residence and employment in Liechtenstein will no longer be able to have their

vested mandatory and non-mandatory benefits paid out in cash. Instead, these will be transferred to a local pension fund. This regulation has been in force since 14 August 2002. Further information (in German) can be found at: www.sozialversicherungen.admin.ch/storage/documents/2873/2873_1_de.pdf

No evacuation without valid travel documents

As the war in Lebanon showed, crises can break out completely unexpectedly. If you wait until an emergency arises before renewing your passport, you could lose precious time. At worst, invalid ID papers could even prevent you from being evacuated altogether.

The Israeli attack on Lebanon in July 2006 came completely out of the blue for the Swiss citizens living there, and the Swiss embassy in Beirut found itself swamped with requests for assistance. In the largest such operation since the Second World War, Switzerland evacuated more than 900 people overland to Syria and then by sea to Cyprus in just three weeks. From there they were able to return to Switzerland.

Although the Swiss embassy in Beirut issued temporary passports to people without valid travel documents, not all the Swiss nationals were in the Lebanese capital when the hostilities broke out. Those whose passport had expired had to make their way to Beirut along difficult and sometimes treacherous routes in order to renew their passport and leave the country.

In future crises, the path to the nearest Swiss mission may be cut off completely. We therefore advise all foreign-resident Swiss citizens whose papers will soon or have already run out to apply for a new passport or ID card right away.

Remember that new ID papers may take several weeks to issue. Depending on the country in question and the extent of clarification required, it could take up to 40 working days or more. If a person’s marital status also has to be checked, the procedure may take months in some cases. We therefore recommend that you enquire about the application procedure at the relevant Swiss mission as soon as possible.

Further information on Swiss ID papers can be found in issues 2/06 and 4/06 of the Swiss Review and at www.schweizerpass.ch.

Addresses of foreign missions: www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/refs.html

Swiss Animal Protection (SAP) active at home and abroad

Just like people, animals are also injured and killed in natural disasters and wars. Swiss Animal Protection works closely together with the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) to provide immediate aid wherever it is required. SAP is the most important animal protection organisation in Switzerland, dealing with all aspects of animal welfare.

Last summer’s Middle East conflict is still a painful subject for all those who were caught up in it. The Israeli bombardment of Lebanon forced many foreign nationals – including numerous Swiss citizens – to flee headlong back to their

home countries. Aside from all the human suffering, the departing foreign nationals also feared for the safety of their pets, which they were initially told they had to abandon. However, thanks to the efforts of the DFA, some pets were also evacuated.

Concrete assistance directly on site

Unfortunately, the war in Lebanon is not unique. All around the world, disputes are constantly escalating into violent conflicts, causing chaos and much suffering for people and animals alike. Natural disasters also bring immeasurable misery.

Swiss Animal Protection has therefore set up a disaster fund in order to prepare for such emergencies. By agreement with the DFA and the relevant embassies, it should in future

horses and sheep of nomadic tribesmen from starvation.

Largest Swiss animal-welfare organisation

Founded in 1861, Swiss Animal Protection is the oldest and largest nationwide animal-welfare organisation in Switzerland, with 63 sections and more than a quarter of a million benefactors. Whereas the sections and their animal refuges provide mainly local assistance, the umbrella organisation operates at the national and international level to provide better protection for pets, farm and wild animals. For instance, SAP tries to prevent stressful and unnecessary EU transit transports of live animals from passing through Switzerland.

SAP is currently collecting signatures for its initiative on



be possible, for example, to rescue pets from crisis areas and, if necessary, evacuate them to Switzerland.

To do so, SAP wants to work together with local animal welfare organisations and the WSPA to provide uncomplicated direct aid and, where required, house pets at the section's own quarantine stations in Switzerland. For instance, following a number of extremely harsh winters in Mongolia, SAP provided veterinary aid and sent feed that saved the

use of cantonal animal welfare lawyers with the aim of extending legal representation to animals.

One of SAP's key tasks is to raise public awareness about animal protection issues. In addition, it runs centres that provide owners with expert advice about their animals, produces leaflets and brochures, and publishes Tierreport magazine.

Although SAP also takes on many duties in the public domain, it receives no state funding whatsoever. Its money

comes primarily from private donations and bequests.

Contact address:
Schweizer Tierschutz STS
Dornacherstrasse 101
CH-8008 Basel
Tel.: +41 (0)61 365 9999

www.tierschutz.com
www.protection-animaux.com
www.protezione-animali.com
www.animal-protection.net
sts@tierschutz.com
MARK RISSI, INT. ANIMAL WELFARE DIVISION, SWISS ANIMAL PROTECTION (SAP)

Against a two-tier society in Switzerland

In February 2006, the initiative committee "For a Solidarity Tax" launched a national popular initiative "for a solidarity tax (against a two-tier society, see also Swiss Review 3/06). The initiative seeks to oblige cantons and local authorities to support poor groups in society.

The initiative wants to amend the Swiss Federal Constitution. A new article (128a) is planned requiring cantons and local authorities to protect financially weak sections of society, for instance large families. This they are to achieve by combating the risks and consequences of unemployment and poverty while at the same time subsidising health insurance premiums or waiving them entirely.

In order to fund these measures, the initiative wants the Confederation to levy a progressive solidarity tax based on the annual income of private individuals and the annual net profits of companies. The revenues from this tax would then be divided among the cantons using a formula to be defined by the Confederation. The cantons would be obliged to use this money in a targeted manner to combat and prevent unemployment and poverty, improve education levels among society's poorest citizens and cut health insurance premiums. The initiative is available to be signed until 28 September 2007.

POPULAR INITIATIVES

The following initiative has been launched since the last issue:

■ "Prevention rather than milking the public – For a rethink of the tobacco tax (the tobacco initiative)"; until 12 June 2008.

Signature forms for current initiatives can be downloaded in German, French or Italian from the Federal Chancellery site: www.admin.ch/ch/d/pore/vi/vis_1_3_1_1.html.

FORTHCOMING VOTES

Federal referendum: 17 June 2007

National Council elections: 21 October 2007

RESPONSIBLE FOR THE OFFICIAL DFA INFORMATION PAGES: GABRIELA BRODBECK, SERVICE FOR THE SWISS ABROAD/DFA, CH-3003 BERNE

Advertisement


swissworld.org
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Aromat and Stocki: the taste of Switzerland

Aromat and Stocki are the embodiment of Swiss cuisine. But Knorr products were never reserved for Swiss palates alone. The factory in Thayngen opened its doors one hundred years ago. By Ueli Abt

In the year 2000, the Knorr brand was acquired by the Anglo-Dutch company Unilever. Was this another example of a Swiss brand falling into the hands of a foreign multinational? Feldschlösschen has been taken over by Danes, Ovomaltine was bought by a British firm, while Toblerone and Valser water were snapped up by Americans. And yet the Knorr takeover was different. Knorr was neither a Swiss invention nor was the brand ever Swiss-owned for long, even though Aromat, Knorr bouillon cubes and Stocki are seen as embodying Helvetican cuisine. Knorr is German in origin, and it was never a solely Swiss preserve.

German entrepreneur Carl Heinrich Knorr founded a chicory drying and grinding factory in Heilbronn in 1838. From about 1870 onwards, he started producing powdered peas, lentils and beans. The company grew and was soon delivering across the border to Austria and Switzerland too. In order to circumvent the rising customs duties, Knorr opened a small packaging plant on Swiss soil, in St. Margrethen on Lake Constance, from where it supplied the Swiss market with powdered vegetables and



soup mixes. The first Swiss Knorr factory was set up in centrally-located Thayngen (SH) in 1907, producing soups and bouillon cubes.

In so doing, Knorr had ventured both geographically and commercially into territory previously dominated by Maggi, a Swiss company based in Kempththal that had invented soup mixes in the late 19th Century. Indeed packet soups were long known as "Maggi soups". In 1886, Maggi went a step further, lending its name to a brown seasoning sauce that it marketed as an alternative to salt and pepper.

But then Knorr had a hit with Aromat in 1952. A year later, Knorr gave restaurants in Switzerland 30,000 cruet stands featuring the distinctive yellow, green and red tub

alongside the salt-cellar and pepper-pot. Almost overnight, Aromat became a household name throughout Switzerland. Fondor, an almost identical rival product from Kempththal, never achieved the same level of fame. Although Aromat helped Knorr draw level with Maggi, the brown seasoning couldn't be edged aside completely, and to this day Maggi and Aromat stand side-by-side and on equal terms on our supermarket shelves.

Knorr was not content to confine itself to the German and Swiss markets. It opened a factory in the Austrian town of Wels in 1907, a bouillon plant in Nancy in 1909, and a soup factory in Monza in 1912, and between 1901 and 1932 it set up offices in Paris, Berlin, Wrocław, New York and Antwerp.

The Second World War occasionally brought production at its headquarters in Heilbronn to a standstill. An air strike on Heilbronn in December 1944 destroyed half of the factory. But the War had hardly ended when production began again in May 1945. By September, the company's workforce had already swelled to 650 again. Meanwhile, Knorr's Swiss operations were spun off into a subsidiary.

Knorr's independence was short-lived, since its success increasingly whet the appetites of foreign firms hungry for a tasty morsel. Maizena, a subsidiary of the American Corn Products Company (CPC), became Knorr's majority shareholder in 1958. At about the same time, the last member of the Knorr family left the board of directors in Germany. In 1998, CPC became the con-

Die kluge
Haus-Frau
kauft nur
Knorr-
Suppen-Würfel

1 Würfel für 3-4 Teller 15 Rappen
Über 30 Sorten.

Unübertroffen im Geschmack.



Knorr products began appearing in shops around the world 100 years ago. But to this day, Aromat is still only available in Switzerland.

Knorr
AROMAT

für Ihren Salat

sumer goods company Bestfoods. Two years later, Bestfoods was itself snapped up by Unilever.

Today, Knorr products are available in more than 100 countries. In spite of this globalisation, Knorr is still perceived as typically Swiss in Switzerland, partly thanks to Knorrli, the mascot dreamt up for a domestic ad campaign. Knorrli briefly enjoyed international fame, but only achieved lasting popularity in Switzerland. According to Knorr, he has a 98-percent recognition rate among the Swiss. In Germany, the company used Knorri – an ox standing on its hind legs and holding a wooden spoon in its right “hand” – in its advertising in the 1960s. Knorri’s sidekick was Stocki, a potato sporting a beret, who advertised potato starch of the same name.

Over here, “Swissness” has been part of the brand image since 2004. Knorrli, who had been shunted to the back of the packet, was brought back to the front, where Knorr’s graphic designers furnished him with a Swiss cross. The packaging also explicitly stress the “Swiss quality” of the product. However, not all the ingredients used at the factory in Thayngen are of Swiss origin, and Unilever remains tight-lipped about how many of its raw materials are imported. Interestingly enough, the packets and sachets that Thayngen sends abroad contain no reference to Swiss quality. It seems that the company does not want to draw attention to the fact that Knorr products aren’t only produced in Switzerland.



GLOBAL MARKETS, LOCAL TASTES

The foods sold under the Knorr brand in more than 100 countries taste different in each. Glance beyond our borders and you’ll see that Knorr isn’t identical everywhere. Although they are sold in Germany, you won’t find products like fatty broth, pea meal sausage or lentil stew in Swiss shops. In Austria, Knorr has a range of desserts like Kaiserschmarren that it sells collectively under the name “Sweety”, products for which Unilever spokeswoman Anne Zwyssig claims there is no market in Switzerland.

By contrast, you can’t buy the Grisons speciality barley soup or Basle gruel in Germany. Both countries also have local variations on similar products. Swiss “Hüttenlunch” is called “Hüttenschmaus” in Germany, and the Swiss are offered cheese “Spätzli” with ham, the Germans Swabian cheese “Spätzle” with fried onions. Zwyssig says that the two countries even have widely different tastes with regard to identical varieties: “Our gravies and cream sauces differ significantly from those of our German neighbours. The Swiss prefer spicier sauces, whereas the Germans like their food rather sweeter.” (ua)

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SR 2/07

Insurance



The battle over what constitutes “real” raclette cheese

Only in Valais has raclette cheese been produced in the same way for centuries from unpasteurised milk. And yet the Valaisans have been fighting for years to protect “their” cheese from industrial imitations. The row has now reached the Swiss Federal Court. By Philippe Welti

October on the Simplon, and the mountain summer is drawing to a close. It is cool, and heavy autumn fog hangs over the pass at nearly 2000 metres. Here and there, cows are still grazing in the luscious Alpine meadows. The slopes on the southern side of the pass are sheer. Italy is closer than the Rhone valley. Brig, the nearest Swiss town, lies more than 30 kilometres away on the other side of the pass. Few people traversing the Alps here along winding roads take the time to stop and look around Simplon village perched on a terrace high above the valley.

As early as the 17th Century, cheese from Simplon was being traded by Kaspar Jodok von Stockalper, the man who built the castle of the same name in Brig. Today it is sold

by the local Alpine dairy cooperative, which enjoys an excellent reputation far beyond these narrow valleys. The cooperative supplies the entire region to Brig and Gondo with milk, cheese and butter. Everyone knows everyone else, and everyone knows the cooperative’s 12 dairy farmers, whose 120 cows produce the milk they bring to the co-op. For years, the people of Simplon have lived on tourism, transport and farming. There is no industrial activity. By contrast, Simplon’s traditions are alive and well – especially those related to cheese-making.

In his dairy, Felix Arnold produces raclette cheese from unpasteurised full-fat milk to a recipe that has survived unchanged for more than a thousand years. Fifty-year-

old Arnold is proud of his handiwork. Cheese is his life. Every year, he produces 65 tonnes of raclette cheese and 35 tonnes of tomme. He thinks little of the cheese that industrial dairy conglomerates outside Valais churn out from pasteurised semi-skimmed milk. “Unpasteurised milk is a natural product that gives the cheese its unique character,” he says. This unmistakable flavour comes from the spicy Alpine plants that the cows eat, he explains. And whereas the cheaper, industrially-produced cheese of the major distributors tastes exactly the same all year round, the taste of his raclette cheese reflects the vegetation growing in the different seasons.

To experience this variety first hand, try a spot of cheese-tasting at the Chateau de Villa in Sierre run by a foundation promoting Valais specialities. On your culinary journey through Lower and Upper Valais, you’ll discover that none of the five raclette cheeses on offer taste quite the same. One of them is made by Felix Arnold. The Valaisans are proud of the diversity of their raclette cheeses, and they are convinced that real raclette cheese comes from Valais.



SWISS RACLETTE

■ The cheese-makers in Valais produce some 2000 tonnes of raclette cheese a year. A further 11,000 tonnes are produced under various names by Swiss dairy companies. Despite this, an extra 1000 tonnes of raclette cheese have to be imported every year to meet domestic demand.

Here’s where you can buy it:
Sennereigenossenschaft
CH-3907 Simplon-Dorf
Cheese shop: Open daily from
8am-noon and 4pm-6pm.



Which is the “real” raclette cheese? Will there soon be an *appellation d’origine contrôlée*? The Federal Court must now rule on the matter



85th Congress of the Swiss Abroad, Geneva, 17–19 August 2007

United and committed: the Swiss on humanitarian missions

The 85th Congress of the Swiss Abroad will be devoted entirely to Switzerland's active involvement in humanitarian aid worldwide. The event will provide a behind-the-scenes look at the humanitarian work that goes on in Geneva.

The programme of the 2007 congress, which will focus on humanitarian Switzerland, is currently being finalised. In addition to Swiss Federal President Micheline Calmy-Rey and ICRC President Jakob Kellenberger, we will have the great honour of welcoming Tim Aline Rebeaud to the plenary session on Saturday 18 August. Ms Rebeaud is the founder of the Maison Chance and Centre Envol homes for orphans and disabled children in Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh City.

There will also be a panel debate in which Walter Fust,



Geneva, the city hosting the Congress of the Swiss Abroad

the director-general of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC); Peter Brey, the general secretary of Terre des Hommes Switzerland; and Isabelle Segui-Bitz, the president of Médecins Sans Frontières, will discuss the topic "Humanitarian aid: Partner or competitor?" A representative of the United Nations will also take

part in the debate, which will analyse the relationships between the different organisations involved in providing humanitarian aid. The discussion will be chaired by Swiss Solidarity Head of Communication Roland Jeanneret. Issues under debate will include how aid organisations work together to provide assistance efficiently, and whether they complement one another or compete like companies in the free market.

After visits to the offices of the UN and the ICRC, planned for Saturday afternoon, participants will be invited to attend discussion groups on a variety of topics related to humanitarian aid and involving the relevant organisations. This will be followed by an evening of entertainment aboard the "Lausanne" on Lake Geneva. Finally, on Sunday, the charming side of Geneva will be presented to the guests from the Fifth Switzerland, with visits to landmarks like the Cité Calvin and the Chateau de

Penthe, which houses the Museum of the Swiss Abroad.

Further information on the Congress: www.aso.ch

Super deals for young Swiss abroad

This year, as every year, there's plenty to discover in Switzerland. The youth offers of the Organisation for the Swiss Abroad (OSA) are as attractive as always, and yet often surprisingly new. So how about a trip to Switzerland? It would be a shame to miss the opportunity.

Aside from its traditional youth offers, the OSA's programme of events for 2007 includes two attractive new projects for young Swiss abroad. In August, there will be a *seminar* in Geneva entitled "United and committed: the Swiss on humanitarian missions". The seminar will familiarise young people with Switzerland's humanitarian

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tradition, and they will be able to visit the offices of the ICRC, UN and NGOs. Together with Terre des Hommes, we'll be organising a street campaign on children's rights. At the weekend, the young people will be actively involved in debating this issue and will have a chance to meet and talk to Swiss Federal President Calmy-Rey at the Congress of the Swiss Abroad.

In October, the OSA plans to run a workshop on the Swiss general elections. Young people will be introduced to the political system in Switzerland, analyse the election campaign and visit political parties and politicians. They will therefore gain first-hand experience of the Federal Council and Upper Chamber elections and valuable insight into direct democracy.

The exciting thing about the *summer camps* is that they bring together young people from different countries and cultures. The OSA organises activity holidays, wide-ranging sporting events, project work, excursions, workshops, parties and much else besides. As a result, your children will quickly overcome any inhibitions they might have about trying out a new language. Meeting people in similar situations is both fun and exciting. And there are plenty of opportunities to make new friends.

The dates:

Summer camp 1 in La Punt:
15.7.-27.7.2007
Summer camp 2 in La Punt:
29.7.-10.8.2007
Mobile Switzerland:
the Bernese Oberland:
1.10.-7.10.2007

OSA guide to education in Switzerland

This programme is aimed at young people who are

interested in vocational training in Switzerland or who would simply like to sit in on teaching at a Swiss university or tertiary college. We offer individual advice and explain the education and training available in Switzerland. You'll meet students who will show you their university, you'll live in a guest family and be given a travel pass with which you can explore all of Switzerland in complete freedom.

Language teaching

Swiss abroad can freshen up their German or French in *two-week language courses*, live with an open-minded guest family, experience day-to-day life in Switzerland, and enjoy an attractive programme of leisure activities that ensures the courses are both entertaining and fun to take part in.

So dig out your diary and plan your summer holiday in Switzerland. You won't regret it. Just visit our Web site, www.aso.ch, where you'll find details of all the programmes. You can also get information about the above offers by writing to the Youth Service at youth@aso.ch

OSA receives donation from Swiss abroad artist

Swiss artist zZARA, who lives and works in Spain, has produced a series of five pictures entitled "Yo 2005" especially for the meeting room at OSA headquarters. The work focuses on the presence of the Swiss around the world as well as the Berne-based organisation representing their interests back at home. The artist presented his pictures to the OSA at a private view on

17 November. More information on the artist and his work can be found at www.zzara.com

Dashing through the snow...

What do you do if you're at winter camp, there's hardly any snow outside and the cable-car ride to the pistes is a trip to green slopes? Exactly: you make your own snow.

This was the situation facing the ten camp leaders in Hasliberg Reuti during the winter camp from 27 December 2006 to 5 January 2007. With an autumn storm raging outside, they decided to play their trump card and try out a few tasty recipes in the warm house rather than sending the children out into the wind and rain. The plan of action was hatched over a plate of spaghetti, a sure-fire way to find something for everyone, and one that needs little preparation. The only risk for the organisers is that the young chefs forget to pack their culinary masterpieces in the rush to get ready at the end of the camp or decide to leave them because they won't fit into their suitcase. That's why experienced and forward-thinking camp leaders prefer running cooking workshops at which the finished products can be eaten right away, like that wintertime classic: biscuits prepared, cut out and decorated by the children

themselves. Having weighed out the ingredients, beaten the eggs and marvelled at the amount of chocolate that goes into the mix, the children took great care imaginatively constructing entire houses from their biscuits. Indeed, the children's creativity knew no bounds.

The nicest experience for the young bakers was dusting their typical Swiss chalet in icing sugar until it was submerged in deep, sweet snowdrifts.

Incidentally, Fate was kind to the camp community. It snowed heavily in the first few days of the new year, and the novice skiers and snowboarders were eventually treated to so much powder snow that they are bound to want to come back for more next year.

SIMONE RINER, FOUNDATION FOR YOUNG SWISS ABROAD

"Switzerland - Land of Chocolate"

The title and part of the text of the article printed in our December issue were largely based on the work of the author and journalist Alain J. Bougard, a French-Swiss expert on the history of chocolate, details of whose book you will find below. We understand that he is currently working on a follow-up. "CH comme CHocolat", Alain J. Bougard, Published by Slatkine, Geneva, 09/2001, hardback, 120 pages, French, with many illustrations.

ORGANISATION OF THE SWISS ABROAD

- Legal Department
- Youth Service
- Association for the Promotion of Education for Young Swiss Abroad (AJAS)
- Committee for Swiss Schools Abroad (CSSA)
- Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA)

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Swiss Personality of the Year

Köbi Kuhn was named "Personality of the Year 2006" at the SwissAwards ceremony in January. Last year's winner was Peter Sauber. Receiving his award, the coach of the Swiss national football team confidently announced that he'd gladly swap his trophy for the 2008 European Championship title.

Swissair trial

Five years after the grounding of the Swissair fleet, Switzerland's biggest ever corporate trial took place in Bülach (ZH). Nineteen former managers of the SAirGroup were in the dock, charged with damaging creditors, mismanagement, making false business statements and forging documents following the collapse of the national carrier.

The case was based on 4150 files of evidence and the billions of francs of debt left behind by the bankrupt airline. The defendants included the company's last three chief executives: Mario Corti, Eric Honegger and Philippe Bruggisser. Prosecutors are demanding tough sentences for all the defendants, and prison for Corti. The verdict is expected in the next few months.

Tranquil WEF

This year's World Economic Forum in Davos carried the motto "The shifting power equation" and ended with a vague appeal for hope and peace. But the two major topics under debate – climate change and the Doha round of liberalisation talks at the World Trade Organisation – did not overshadow the delegates' main concern: economic growth. Meanwhile, opponents of the WEF appear to have lost heart. Security costs, which skyrocketed to CHF 13.5 million in



100 years of the Swiss Guide and Scout Movement

2005, didn't even reach the budgeted figure of CHF 8 million.

Pfadi celebrates its centenary

The Swiss Guide and Scout Movement is 100 years old. With 45,000 members and half a million former members, the SGSM is the largest youth organisation in Switzerland. The numerous celebratory events are a testament to the movement's ongoing dynamism and belie the fact that membership has fallen by a quarter in the last decade. The drop in interest is unfortunate given that the values conveyed by the scout movement could do much to counteract the increasing violence among young Swiss.

Presidential Tour de Suisse

Federal President Micheline Calmy-Rey is planning a tour of Switzerland's regions in 2007. The aim will not be to make official speeches, but rather to take part in approximately two-hour debates with ordinary citizens in the same vein as the events held in Monthey (VS) in January and Wil (SG) in February.

Fiscal wrangling

The European Commission considers the fiscal practices of some Swiss cantons "incompatible" with the 1972 free trade agreement. The Commission is particularly concerned about the tax advantages offered to foreign companies considering settling in the cantons of Zug and Schwyz. Because of threats



Skiing world champion Daniel Albrecht with fans

of "retaliatory measures", Switzerland must now negotiate the matter. The Swiss press has criticised the "pressure" from Brussels, and deems the reasoning of the eurocrats "extremely dubious".

Skiing success

The World Ski Championships in Are, Sweden were a great success for the Swiss squad. Following the debacle in the Italian resort of Bormio two years ago, our athletes came home with six medals this time, including a gold won by Daniel Albrecht in the super combined event.

Record turnover

The Swatch Group posted record turnover of more than CHF 5 billion last year. Net profits rose by 12.3%, with the greatest increase being in sales of luxury watches. The group's star product is the Omega watch worn by James Bond.

Women doing well in local politics

At the end of 2006, women occupied almost 30% of the seats on Switzerland's municipal councils. The proportion of female councillors rose steadily from 6% in 1980, stabilising at about a third in 1994. The city of Berne has the highest proportion, at 42.5%. By comparison, women hold 26% of the seats on the National Council.

Golden run

Swiss bobsleigh teams led by Ivo Rüegg won the gold medal

in the four-man event and the silver medal in the two-man event at the FIBT World Championships in St. Moritz. And in ice skating, withdrawal by Stéphane Lambiel didn't deprive Switzerland of a medal at the European Championships in Warsaw. Sarah Meier from Zurich finished second.

Out with the new, in with the old

Nestlé is reintroducing its traditional paper-and-card packaging for the Cailler brand of chocolate. The new design created by star architect Jean Nouvel had a devastating effect on the brand. Sales fell by 2.4% in 2006.

Snowboard World Championships

Swiss athletes had amazing success at the FIS Snowboard World Championships in Arosa (GR). They picked up a total of seven medals, including golds for Manuela Pesko in the half-pipe and Simon Schoch in the parallel slalom.

Building boom

In 2006, more than 32,000 applications for building permits were filed. That's both an all-time record, and 3.4% higher than in 2005. The 30,000 mark has therefore been topped for the third year in succession.

200 years of the combustion engine

The first patent for a combustion engine was registered in Paris on 30 January 1807 by François Isaac de Rivaz from Valais.

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