

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE SWISS ABROAD

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REVIEW

JANUARY 2010 / NO. 1



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Spatial planning – urban sprawl continues unchecked

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“Swiss Review” has a contented readership

THE READERS OF “SWISS REVIEW” are happy with our efforts and read our news from home eagerly and with great interest. That is the conclusion drawn by the survey we conducted together with Switzerland Tourism on our homepage www.revue.ch

80% of the Swiss abroad who took part in the online survey said they read every issue of “Swiss Review” from cover to cover. 70% felt the information contained in “Swiss Review” prepared them “well” to “very well” for elections and referenda. The same number indicated that the image of Switzerland conveyed by “Swiss Review” was completely in line with their own perceptions, and they felt that reading our magazine enabled them to form their own opinions about Switzerland. The outcome was similar with regard to the diversity of topics covered by “Swiss Review”. Over two thirds of those surveyed said that no area was given too little attention. However, everyone said they would like to see more of everything... more sport, more culture, more politics and more business news. “Swiss Review” is regarded as the most important service provided by the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad and the most important source of information for Swiss people abroad. 70% of those surveyed said they were enrolled on an electoral register and regularly took part in referenda and elections.

The survey also provided information on the travel habits of the Swiss abroad, which is of interest to our partner organisation, Switzerland Tourism. The vast majority of Swiss abroad mainly visit their old homeland at warmer times of the year and combine their stay with a family visit. The main draws for tourists are the natural countryside and cultural events. Visitors seek peace, relaxation and reinvigoration.

Despite the positive feedback from our readers, only four issues of “Swiss Review” will be published again this year for cost reasons.



Heinz Eckert

The main article in this issue of “Swiss Review” concerns spatial planning. Editor Rolf Ribi discovered some astonishing figures during his research. Unrestrained development is continuing in Switzerland despite the economic downturn. Switzerland loses 1 square metre of countryside every second. That amounts to 7.4 hectares a day, which equates to an area the size of the Rütli meadow.

The projections are even higher in the Federal Council’s 2005 Spatial Planning Report: 32,700 hectares of land in Switzerland will be lost to urban development over the next 12 years, which corresponds to an area larger than the Canton of Schaffhausen.

The Federal Statistical Office estimates that the population of Switzerland will reach 8.4 million by 2030 if the level of immigration remains as high as it has been since the introduction of the free movement of persons. If we exclude the mountains, forests and lakes, this leaves a settlement area of 280,000 hectares, or 7% of the country’s surface area, in which to live. From Lake Geneva to Lake Constance, Switzerland is becoming a densely populated metropolis. Switzerland’s Central Plateau is already one of the most densely populated areas in Europe.

These figures make unpleasant reading and can hardly be seen as good news. This is a thought-provoking problem, and experts fear it may be almost impossible to resolve.

HEINZ ECKERT, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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Cover photo: Ski racer Carlo Janka is already being compared to Pirmin Zurbriggen and Jean-Claude Killy, and is a big medal hope for the Winter Olympics in Vancouver. Photo: Keystone

IMPRINT: “Swiss Review”, the magazine for the Swiss abroad, is in its 37th year of publication and is published in German, French, Italian, English and Spanish in 14 regional editions. It has a total circulation of 416 000. Regional news appears four times a year.

■ EDITORS: Heinz Eckert (EC), Editor-in-Chief; Rolf Ribi (RR); René Lenzin (RL); Alain Wey (AW); Jean-François Lichtenstern (JFL), responsible for “Notes from Parliament”. Service for the Swiss Abroad, DFA, CH-3003 Berne Translation: CLS Communication AG ■ POSTAL ADDRESS: Publisher, editorial office, advertising: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, CH-3006 Berne, Tel.: +41 31 356 61 10, Fax: +41 31 356 61 01, Postal account (Swiss National Giro): 30-6768-9. Internet: www.revue.ch ■ E-MAIL: revue@aso.ch ■ PRINT: Zollikofer AG, CH-9001 St.Gallen. ■ CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Please advise your local embassy or consulate. Do not write to Berne. ■ All Swiss abroad who are registered with a Swiss representation receive the magazine free of charge. Anyone else can subscribe to the magazine for an annual fee (Switzerland: CHF 25 / abroad: CHF 40). Subscribers are sent the magazine direct from Berne. Copy deadline for this edition: 23.11.09

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EINE RESIDENZ DER TERTIANUM-GRUPPE

Ashamed

Today, after yesterday's disastrous referendum on the construction of minarets, there is one more reason to be ashamed of being Swiss. But at least I had the consolation that the Bundestag member for my Bavarian constituency, CSU Secretary General Alexander Dobrindt, spoke out strongly against following the Swiss example. He was even optimistic as to the negative outcome of such a referendum in Germany, if such an eventuality arose.

I wrote to him the following: "This time I do not have any concern to voice but would like instead to congratulate you on your position as to whether we should follow the Swiss example of opposing the construction of minarets, and to thank you for your clear and courageous words. As a world citizen who holds dual nationality, if I could not get by without an emotional identification with one particular nation state, then once again I would be ashamed to be Swiss at this moment. The result of Sunday's referendum represents a step backwards in civilisation, in the 'One World' which is slowly being achieved in spite of all the obstacles that still exist, mostly in people's minds. I do not entirely share your confidence that a similar vote in Germany would have a different outcome from that in Switzerland. And even the majority of Swiss politicians were against such a change to the constitution. But it is at least reassuring that a constitutional change need not necessarily be pushed through simply because so many people have voted in favour of it. Fortunately, there are still some hurdles that will hopefully be high enough to pre-

vent such an ignoble restriction on religious freedom from becoming embedded in the Swiss constitution.

M. de Coulon, Schabsoien, Germany

One-sided

Many thanks for the most recent edition of "Swiss Review". Like many readers I am delighted that this publication exists and it is a pleasure to receive it on a regular basis.

I was pleased to see that the editorial took such a prominent stance on Swiss culture and would like to make a few comments on Heinz Eckert's article. The significant investment in culture is indeed something our country can be proud of, something which helps us to maintain our identity. But I was somewhat disappointed at the one-sided description of Switzerland's flourishing cultural scene. Apart from the mention of a few open-air festivals, the examples given were of high-brow culture accessible to only a relatively small section of the population. It is not surprising that Presence Switzerland should be more interested in these examples, as it is their job to promote Swiss culture (and its image) abroad rather than to stimulate a cultural dialogue. But Swiss culture is so much more rich and diverse than was portrayed in this article. Pro Helvetia, for example, promotes a wide range of different cultural activities. And these are by no means all enormously expensive events (which are portrayed in the article as a prerequisite for world-class culture). What is important – particularly for foreign cultural policy – is to promote and share a diversity of culture that goes beyond the expensive and elite cul-

With more than 20 years in the business and 15 albums under their belts, The Young Gods have become an international benchmark in electro-industrial rock and sound experimentation. The group, originally from Fribourg but now based in Geneva, produces highly original work and never ceases to amaze the public and its wide fan base all over the world. After revisiting the music of the film documentary "Woodstock" (1970) in 2005 and 2009, the quartet laid itself bare by reinterpreting part of its repertoire in an acoustic version on the album "Knock on Wood". It produced a psychedelic brand of folk blues where two guitars are used with a sitar over vibrant percussion. All of this is augmented by Franz Treichler's captivating voice, the timbre and nuances of which seem haunted by Jim Morrison. There is no hesitation in giving a "Young Gods" interpretation of some anthology tracks, such as "Freedom" by Richie Havens, "If Six Was Nine" by Jimi Hendrix and "Everything In Its Right Place" by Radiohead.

Swiss Gods

This highly successful Swiss band formed in 1985. The following year, it was already performing in London and went on to turn out albums like clockwork. It even dedicated an album to composer Kurt Weill in 1990. The appeal of The Young Gods lies in their status as pioneers of industrial rock, where heavy guitar riffs are played over extraordinary sampling (repetitive sound loops). With its album "TV Sky" in 1992 and its cosmic blues rock, the band caused a frenzy on the electric scene. U2 and its producers acknowledged their admiration of the Swiss band. The Gods took North America by storm and set off on a global tour, the creativity of which is immortalised on the album "Live Sky Tour", recorded in Australia in 1993. The new millennium saw the band broaden its horizons to embark on adventures, such as the "Amazonia Ambient Project" with the famous anthropologist Jeremy Narby ("the cosmic serpent") and the purely electronic album "Music For Artificial Clouds", inspired by the group's performance at Expo 02. The Young Gods sample everything from the sound of an emptying sink to a drop of water falling into a pool.

What have Franz Treichler, Al Comet, Bernard Trontin and Vincent Hänni got in store for us in 2010? We will find out in the course of the year with an album described as rock, electro and acoustic. The group is in top form having finished the year 2009 performing with Richie Haven, the legendary guitarist who opened the Woodstock Festival in 1969. To discover the world of The Young Gods, simply enter the group's name into a video-sharing site, such as youtube or dailymotion, and let the adventure begin.

ALAIN WEY



tural consumption of Swiss people living in Switzerland. The choice of the term 'cultural superpower' in the article's conclusion is somewhat unfortunate: culture is, after all, also a means of overcoming hegemonial power structures and going beyond pure representation. The aim of foreign cultural policy must be nothing less. A problem arises when culture is instrumentalised and marketed like any other export. What we need is not only an audience that pays, but also one that participates – at home and abroad.

Y. Regenass, Hildesheim, Germany

A great pity

We are returning to Switzerland after spending 17 years in Germany. During this time "Swiss Review" has always been a welcome and stimulating companion. It would be a great pity if it were only to be published electronically in the future. Many of us sit at a computer all day long and constantly have to read e-mail attachments for professional purposes. But if you want to or need to study a text more closely, the only option is to print it out. On the whole, this does not save any money, at least not for the 'consumer', only – as in so many cases – for the producer.

I used to enjoy reading "Swiss Review" on the sofa in the evenings, or over Sunday breakfast. Somehow I cannot picture myself propping up my laptop on the sofa or the breakfast table in order to read "Swiss Review" in an electronic format to save somebody money.

Switzerland has an obligation to keep its citizens abroad informed. Meeting this obligation ought to be

more important to the country than saving money by fobbing us off with an electronic version of the magazine.

B. Hauser-Schäublin, Göttingen, Germany

Help the environment

Many thanks for "Swiss Review". The electronic version saves paper and that can only be good for the environment. I have just downloaded a 276-page document on the latest legislative changes of the Spanish Interior Ministry onto my computer in a matter of seconds. By contrast,

"SWISS REVIEW": BY POST OR E-MAIL?

All Swiss citizens living abroad whose e-mail address is known to their Swiss representations will receive "Swiss Review" by e-mail only from this year onwards. **Anybody who would still like to receive the printed version should let us know via www.swissabroad.ch.** Please also notify us of any changes to your postal or e-mail address via this website. That way, you will continue to receive "Swiss Review" as before.

the Swiss Central Compensation Office has sent me a letter and a form by post from Geneva which I must have certified and stamped by the Spanish authorities before posting back to Switzerland, simply to confirm that I am still alive and still entitled to my modest pension. I dread to think how much postage and paper the whole process will cost.

F. Leisinger, Marbella, Spain

Frustrated

I get so frustrated when they always talk about the rich Americans who hide their money in Switzerland. I can assure you, the rich will find a way to get out of this mess. It's the little people who pay for everything.

Our situation is that we are a Swiss family who have lived all over the world the last few

years, at the moment residing in the USA, on a Green Card. We have 2 boys, aged 19 and 16 who go to school here. They have had UBS bank accounts since they were born. Grandparents put money for birthdays, Christmases, etc. in those accounts. My husband and I had 2 accounts, one a savings account and one a current account, which we had for over 30 years. And we have also carried a mortgage with UBS for over 20 years because we have a small apartment in Switzerland which is

16 year-old has CHF 50,000 in a bank account? I am really frustrated and very mad at the way UBS has handled the whole situation.

G. Blackburne, Savannah, USA

Loss of perspective

As members of the "Fifth Switzerland", we always read your magazine with interest. Unfortunately two articles in no. 4 seemed to lose all sense of perspective, distorting the reality in our beloved country: a) there is no substance in the "Swiss cultural wealth" article, for all its arrogant boasting with cold data, figures and expressions; the world knows that these events are to an extent financed using money from the same banks that have impoverished many of the world's citizens during this crisis; b) the "Switzerland is aging" article is overloaded with statistics and shows a photo of some of those pretentious few Swiss grandmothers who like to show off their precious jewellery. This is an insult to Swiss women, who are in general modest.

M. Ledergerber, Quito, Ecuador

As good as Appenzeller cheese

You may have heard this many times before, but all of my family look forward to receiving each issue of "Swiss Review", even my children, aged 11 and 12, who have already travelled to Switzerland, where they have had some wonderful holidays. So please keep sending it. There's nothing we like more – apart from Appenzeller cheese. Greetings from the vast expanses of the Argentinean Pampas.

G. Vidallé Baumgartner, Rosario, Argentina

How the modern day came into being

The photographs in the Herzog Collection, currently on display in the Swiss National Museum in Zurich, vividly document the emergence of modern-day Switzerland. The collection portrays the country's development from an agricultural economy into an industrialised nation between 1840 and the present era. The images depict not only public life but also the private lives of individuals and span more than a century. www.landesmuseum.ch



Ploughing with horses and cattle... (top left)

...and with a traction engine (left centre). Both pictures from circa 1915.

Pack horses on the Faulhorn, 1900 – 1910 (above)



The Sulzer foundry in Winterthur, 1919



The carpentry workshop of the C. F. Bally shoe factory in Schönenwerd, circa 1900

My beloved Switzerland, where have you gone?

Spatial planning is becoming a political issue in Switzerland. The Swiss are getting increasingly concerned about overdevelopment and urban sprawl in their homeland. New popular initiatives now aim to curb development. Little will change while responsibility for spatial planning primarily lies with the cantons and communes. A federalist approach to spatial planning comes at a high cost. By Rolf Ribi

The figures are irrefutable yet hard to believe – the Swiss countryside is declining at a rate of almost 1 square metre every second. That equates to 7.4 hectares a day, which is more than the entire Rütli meadow, or 2,700 hectares a year, an area the size of Lake Brienz. Over a 12-year period, the total reaches 32,700 hectares, larger than the Canton of Schaffhausen. This figure appears in the Federal Council's 2005 Spatial Development Report and remains valid today.

Wherever you look in Switzerland towering cranes in urban areas and villages and extensive works on the nation's roads are testament to ongoing hectic construction work in spite of the economic downturn. Currently the most impressive examples are Berne's new ultramodern Westside district, created by well-known architect Daniel Libeskind, and Zurich West, the recently built, attractive neighbourhood with its high-rise buildings of up to 126 metres in height in the former industrial quarter. There are also the state-of-the-art headquarters of dozens of global companies along the sweep of Lake Geneva between the cities of Geneva and Montreux with its high levels of immigration from abroad.

Constant construction work over years, and indeed decades, in urban and rural areas comes at a cost – the loss of countryside and progressive urban sprawl within Switzerland. The *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* reports of “anger at the large-scale Americanisation of little Switzerland”. A headline in the critical magazine “*Beobachter*” even reads “Farewell to our beloved homeland!”

Could Switzerland soon become overcrowded? The country's population today stands at an unprecedented 7.7 million, which is upwards of 100,000 more people than a year ago. The Federal Statistical Office estimates that the population will reach 8.4 million by 2030. The agreement on the free movement of persons with the Euro-

pean Union means immigration will remain high for the time being. But the fact remains that Switzerland's total surface area is small at 4.1 million hectares. If we exclude the nation's lakes, mountains and glaciers, this leaves settlement space of 280,000 hectares (just 7% of the country's surface area) for 8 million people. Switzerland's Central Plateau is today already one of the most densely populated areas in Europe.

National Councillor Peter Spuhler of the Swiss People's Party (SVP) says: “The level of immigration is clearly too high. Switzerland is not currently able to sustain more than 8 million people. It is a question of the burden on the social state, our infrastructure, our roads, public transport and house building. We have reached our limits.”

Urban sprawl in rural areas

The worst consequence of the decades of development and overexploitation of the countryside is urban sprawl on a once much revered landscape. Of course, there are still picturesque villages and towns in the countryside with traditional houses, cultivated fields, vineyards and church steeples. But such typically Swiss scenery is increasingly being replaced by modern developments. Every village now has new housing estates and its own industrial park, every town has shopping malls, car showrooms and leisure facilities, and no tourist destination is complete without infrastructure buildings and empty second homes. New motorways, expressways and high-performance regional railway networks are increasingly transforming the countryside into a giant agglomeration stretching from Lake Constance to Lake Geneva.

Lukas Bühlmann, Director of the Swiss Spatial Planning Association warns of a “gradual disfigurement of the landscape”, a development like that found in the suburbs of large cities in the USA and France. Raimund Rodewald of the Swiss Landscape

Conservation Foundation says: “When landscapes are transformed like this, they lose their aesthetic quality, their familiarity and their recreational value.”

Specific causes

How could this be allowed to happen? What are the reasons for the loss of countryside and the urban sprawl? There are specific causes, including the failure of spatial planning policy. The almost 8 million people living in tiny Switzerland require more and more settlement space. The figure today already stands at an average of 400 square metres of space per person. Developed areas have been growing at a significantly faster rate than the population for years. Raimund Rodewald explains: “At some point you reach the limit of sustainability.”

It is not just the population that is on the increase, our expectations in terms of prosperity are also growing. Today, one person demands almost 50 square metres of living space, whereas 50 years ago people managed with half that amount. A typically Swiss aspiration, the dream of owning your own home in the country, is also a factor. A third of settlement growth nationwide is accounted for by single-family homes, which total more than 10,000 new units a year. The political communes make the land available because they want to attract good taxpayers and create new jobs. Architecture critic Benedikt Loderer says: “The single-family home is the surest way of creating urban sprawl in Switzerland.”

Another factor

Berne (Brünnen): What was once an area of grassland and farmland with a small wood, between the motorway and the railway line, is now home to the Westside shopping centre, opened in 2008. In the background are the residential neighbourhoods of Gäbelbach, Holenacker and Tscharnergut.

which has significantly influenced spatial development in recent decades is the increase in traffic on the roads and railways as a result of commuting between home and the workplace and greater mobility during leisure time. Federal government's Spatial Development Report writes: "The rise in traffic has gone hand in hand with increasing noise and air pollution and continued impairment of the countryside." According to the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, the numerous motorways built in Switzerland over the past five decades (three of which alone link Berne with French-speaking Switzerland) "have transformed the country to an extent that nobody anticipated". Rapid transport links made of asphalt and concrete stimulate the economies of adjacent communes and regions, trigger new planning proposals and create even more commuters. Public transport has also facilitated urban sprawl through attractive inter-

city railway and tram networks. The Spatial Development Report states: "Spatial planning has failed to coordinate settlement development and transport planning."

A significant factor in the urban development of the countryside is the large reserves of building land in the communes. Almost three quarters of all building zones, amounting to 220,000 hectares, have already been extensively built on, while the remaining quarter is generally developed but not extensively. The unused building land represents a huge construction reserve and could meet the spatial requirements of a further 2.5 million people (if it were not located in peripheral areas). The Spatial Planning Act in fact stipulates that the communes should keep such reserves at low levels and should plan for a maximum of 15 years. But many communes continue to do the exact opposite. They stockpile huge reserves of building land, in

particular in rural cantons. However, additional building zones are also often approved still, even near to urban areas, to ensure further growth.

The constitution and the situation on the ground

When 1 square metre of countryside is being lost every second, when urban sprawl is clearly continuing and "when so much land is being used it is as though there were a second Switzerland" (*Tages-Anzeiger*), the question must be raised as to the position of spatial planning in the constitution and in law. Following the rejection of the "socialist" land initiative in 1967, the Swiss people and the cantons approved the new constitutional article on spatial planning in 1969. Article 75, which continues to apply today, states: "The Confederation shall lay down principles on spatial planning. These principles shall be



binding on the Cantons and serve to ensure the appropriate and economic use of the land and its properly ordered settlement. The Confederation shall encourage and coordinate the efforts of the Cantons." The 1979 Spatial Planning Act was only approved in a referendum at the second attempt, as the first draft was rejected as too "centralistic". Federal government's strategies and sectoral plans, cantonal structural plans and communal land use plans have since made up the federalist concept of spatial planning policy in Switzerland.

What conclusions have been reached on Swiss spatial planning policy? "Spatial development in recent decades cannot be considered sustainable as defined by the Federal Constitution" is the basic verdict reached by the Federal Council in its Spatial Development Report. The constitutional objectives of spatial planning, namely economical use and ordered settlement of the land, "have still not been achieved 30 years after the Spatial Planning Act entered into force", says Stephan Scheidegger, chief legal officer at the federal office concerned.

Conservationist Hans Weiss does not believe that spatial planning has failed. He says: "Switzerland would look very different were it not for spatial planning. The landscape has not been ruined by urban sprawl where spatial planning has been taken seriously at communal, cantonal and federal levels." Raimund

Rodewald of the Swiss Landscape Conservation Foundation commends the constitutional objective of economical land management. However, he is critical of the fact that federal government hands over responsibility for implementation of the objective to the cantons, which in turn pass it on to the 2,700 communes. He says: "The passive approach of the cantons and communes has caused an obvious spatial planning disaster." The widely condemned malaise with regard to the implementation of spatial planning can be easily explained: the communes insist on their communal autonomy and create new building zones to ensure their growth; the cantons point to their sovereignty and usually allow the communes to grant consent; and federal government affords the cantons a lot of freedom in the approval of structural plans.

New popular initiatives

Growing discontent amongst the Swiss people about urban sprawl in Switzerland is highlighted by three popular initiatives. Spatial planning is set to become a political issue in the near future. An event in the small farming village of Galmitz in Fribourg is partially responsible for a shift in opinion. Raimund Rodewald believes what happened there three years ago was a milestone in the history of conservationism in Switzerland. Amgen, a Californian biotech company, wanted to construct a major production fa-

cility there on a 55-hectare site in the countryside area of "Grosses Moos". The Canton of Fribourg's rapid decision to grant planning permission for the area clearly contravened federal law and the cantonal structural plan approved by the Federal Council. But the Federal Office for Spatial Development (as it is now known) did nothing to prevent the planned rezoning. Galmitz has since symbolised the latest failing in the history of spatial planning.

The Helvetia Nostra Foundation, led by environmentalist Franz Weber, now hopes to counter intensive development in Switzerland, having proposed two popular initiatives. Weber has withdrawn the "Against excessive construction of developments which are detrimental to the environment and the countryside" initiative, signed by 106,000 people, as it aims to achieve the same goals as the environmental associations' countryside initiative. The second popular initiative put forward by the highly-regarded environmental campaigner, Franz Weber, concerns an old unresolved issue - that of infrequently used second homes in many tourist destinations. The "End to the unrestricted construction of second homes" initiative, which has received 108,000 signatures, aims to restrict the proportion of such properties to a maximum of 20% of all housing. The Federal Council fears an effective halt on construction in significant tourist regions, and



Pontresina (left): The top view, which is of the wooded area with footpath and signpost in Laret, in the eastern part of the village, was captured in 1999. The construction of the protection barrier has now destroyed the character of the landscape (below).

Castasegna (right): The top pictures were taken in 1996 and show the village of Castasegna in Grisons, with the river Mera and the old stone bridge. The pictures below show the village three years later with the new bypass and avalanche screen.

says the initiative is unilaterally aimed at individual communes, therefore preventing all-embracing regulation. Parliament has backed the government despite the fact that second homes have long since blighted traditional local scenery.

Well-received popular initiative

The "Space for people and nature" initiative, known as the countryside initiative, was launched by 16 environmental associations, led by Pro Natura and the Swiss Landscape Conservation Foundation, and submitted in 2008 with 110,000 signatures. This initiative calls for an amendment to Article 75 of the Federal Constitution. It wants federal government and the cantons to implement spatial planning objectives together rather than the cantons and communes unilaterally. It plans to strengthen federal government, enabling it to lay down principles and adopt resolutions to ensure high-quality inward settlement development (high-density development) and to restrict development in non-settlement areas. And, most significantly, the total area of the building zones should not be increased for 20 years. The moratorium on building zones is the bone of contention.

The Federal Council must take a position on the popular initiative by February 2010. It roundly rejects the countryside initiative and points to the ongoing revision of the Spatial Planning Act. Maria Lezzi from the Federal

Office for Spatial Development does not support a moratorium. She says: "We are focusing on clearer planning principles and minimum content in cantonal structural plans, more specific definition of building zones, new planning permission guidelines and firmer sanctions."

Spatial planners in Berne were alarmed at the environmentalists' countryside initiative. The Federal Council put forward an indirect counterproposal to the well-received popular initiative in the form of a new Spatial Development Act, the key elements of which are that the cantons must specifically set out in their structural plans how they will manage inward settlement development and improve settlement quality. The excessively large building zones must be adjusted within five years. Owners of undeveloped building land must allow development of their plots, otherwise the communes will obtain a right of purchase on them. Areas outside the building zones (for agriculture, conservation and recreation) will be redefined as countryside zones (and no longer agricultural zones).

The price of federalism

This proposal for a new Spatial Development Act was given a rough ride in the consultation process. The cantonal heads of planning see it as a threat to the "cantons' fundamental responsibility for spatial planning". The farmers fear for their farmland and fertile arable

land in the new countryside zones. And the draft proposal, with its 87 articles, which do not provide for a limitation on building zones at national level, has been generally criticised as far too extensive. Lukas Bühlmann of the Spatial Planning Association said: "Politically, we must forget this complete revision of the law". A partial revision of the law is now being drafted in the Federal Palace as a response to the countryside initiative.

"Federal government must be able to oblige the cantons to bring their plans into line with the objectives of national planning and it must be given the authority to coordinate the plans of individual cantons with one another" - this was part of the Federal Council's dispatch to the Federal Assembly in August 1967. More than 40 years later, federal government and the cantons are still at loggerheads over control over spatial planning policy, while in the meantime overdevelopment and urban sprawl continue. A federalist approach to spatial planning comes at a high cost.

DOCUMENTATION

2005 Spatial Development Report, published by the Federal Office for Spatial Development, Berne 2005. www.bbl.admin.ch/bundespublikationen
Martina Koll-Schretzenmayr: *Gelungen - Misslungen? Die Geschichte der Raumplanung Schweiz*, Zurich 2008. The Neue Zürcher Zeitung publishing house. www.nzz-libro.ch
Documentation centre www.doku-zug.ch



Switzerland in female hands

Economics Minister Doris Leuthard will be President of the Confederation for 2010. As the National Council and Council of States are also presided over by women, Switzerland's three most senior offices will be held by women this year.

By René Lenzin

Doris Leuthard has risen rapidly through the ranks in her political career. She was elected as a Federal Councillor just 10 years after entering Aargau's cantonal parliament. She was elected successor to Joseph Deiss on 14 June 2006 by the Federal Assembly, and she took over the leadership of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs on 1 August of the same year. The 46-year-old Christian Democrat (CVP) is the fifth woman in national government and the youngest President of the Confederation in the past 70 years.

Voters in Aargau first elected Leuthard to the National Council in 1999. Just two years later she became Vice President of the CVP Switzerland, and in 2004 she took over the party leadership. The CVP had previously lost votes constantly and, in December 2003, had to surrender one

of its two Federal Council seats to the Swiss People's Party (SVP). As leader, Leuthard hardly turned the CVP around, but she did manage to stem the loss of votes. Leuthard was a fresh, media-savvy politician looking to put the party back on the road to success with a social-liberal image.

Leuthard had an uneventful start as Economics Minister. But the financial and economic crises, the negative impact of which on Switzerland she (too) long disputed, spelt a more difficult period for her. She had to get a revision of in-deficit unemployment insurance through Parliament at a time of rising unemployment. By pressing for lower import prices and the free trade of agricultural goods, she also incurred the wrath of many farmers. Enraged farmers in French-speaking Switzer-

land threw boots at her last October. Leuthard is regarded as a competent but rather risk-averse politician. The qualified lawyer is married with no children.

The Federal Assembly elected Moritz Leuenberger (63) as Vice President of the Federal Council for 2010. The Social Democrat from Zurich, who was elected to national government in 1995, may become President of the Confederation for the third time in 2011.

After Ruth Dreifuss (1999) and Micheline Calmy-Rey (2007), Doris Leuthard is only the third woman to be elected as President of the Confederation. Women have presided over both chambers of Parliament on a slightly more frequent basis. Women will be in charge of both the National Council and the Council of States in 2010. As Switzerland's most senior-ranking lady, 32-year-old Pascale Bruderer, a Social Democrat from Aargau, will lead the National Council, and Erika Forster, a 65-year-old Free Democrat from St. Gallen, will take charge of the Council of States. This means Switzerland's three most senior offices will be held by women for the first time in the Confederation's history.

Federal government to regulate research on humans

Three proposals will be voted on in a referendum on 7 March: a constitutional article on research on humans, a popular initiative for cantonal animal protection lawyers and an amendment to the calculation of pension fund annuities. By René Lenzin

Research on humans is not currently regulated at federal level. The introduction of a new article in the Federal Constitution and a Research on Humans Act would explicitly give federal government responsibility for the entire field of research on humans in the healthcare sector. The provisions have two objectives: they aim, on the one hand, to protect the dignity and privacy of people involved in research and, on the other, to take into account the freedom of research and the importance of research to healthcare and society. The key principles for research on humans are that the persons concerned receive sufficient information on the research and give their consent, that the risk-benefit ratio for the research is not disproportionate and that the research is relevant and of a high stand-

ard. The National Council approved the constitutional article by 114 votes to 61, and the Council of States by 40 votes to 0.

Through a popular initiative, Swiss Animal Protection is calling for federal government to regulate the legal protection of animals as sentient beings and for the cantons to employ animal protection lawyers. These should aid mistreated animals *ex officio* in criminal proceedings. The Federal Council and a parliamentary majority rejected the initiative on the grounds that current legislation is sufficient and the cantons are already able to appoint animal lawyers voluntarily. The National Council opposed the proposal by 130 votes to 50, and the Council of States by 30 votes to 6.

As the second pillar of Swiss old-age pension provision, the pension funds operate on the basis of the funding principle. The constituted capital is converted into the annual annuity using the so-called conversion factor. This factor was already reduced from 7.2% to 6.8% under the first revision of the Pension Funds Act, making the annual annuity CHF 6,800 instead of CHF 7,200 for every CHF 100,000 in capital. Now, before the transitional period for this change has even ended, the Federal Council and a parliamentary majority are proposing a further reduction of the conversion factor to 6.4%. Their aim with this is to address the aging of society and lower anticipated returns on savings capital. The left and the trade unions called a referendum in opposition to the proposal. They are not against the reduction in principle, but consider it to be premature and are calling for higher contributions to prevent pension cuts. The National Council approved the proposal by 126 votes to 62, and the Council of States by 35 votes to 1.

No to minarets – Yes to arms exports

The Swiss people and cantons have voted in favour of a ban on minarets by a surprisingly clear margin. However, they have rejected the initiative opposing arms exports. And finally, they have decided that jet-fuel duty should in future be used for the benefit of air traffic.

By René Lenzin

There were long faces after the Swiss federal referendum on 29 November. Despite opposition to the ban on minarets from the Federal Council, most political parties and associations as well as the national churches, 57.5% of voters and 22 of the 26 cantons supported the proposal. The clear winning margin came as even more of a shock as surveys conducted before the ballot indicated that the ban would be narrowly defeated. Only the Swiss People's Party and the Federal Democratic Union welcomed the verdict. They were the only parties in the Federal Assembly to have supported the ban.

The popular initiative for the banning of minarets was an issue that mattered to many Swiss people. 53% of those entitled to vote went to the polls, which represents a strong turnout. Generally, fewer than half the electorate vote in referenda. Only the cantons of Basel-Stadt, Geneva, Neuchâtel and Vaud voted against the initiative. There was no significant divide between German-speaking and French-speaking Switzerland as the three predominantly Catholic French-speaking cantons of Fribourg, Jura and Valais backed the initiative. Support for the

ban was particularly strong in the rural areas of central and eastern Switzerland as well as in Ticino. It is evident that the minaret ban won a lot of support in areas where there are disproportionately low numbers of foreigners and Muslims.

Ban on arms exports suffers overwhelming defeat

68.2% of voters rejected the Group for a Switzerland without an Army's popular initiative to ban arms exports. Not a single canton voted in favour. The initiative won most of its support in Geneva (48.2% in favour), Basel-Stadt (46.9% in favour) and Vaud (40.5% in favour). It picked up its least votes in Nidwalden (88% against), Uri (84.4% against) and Obwalden (80.9% against). Both supporters and opponents of the proposal said the economic crisis and fears over job losses had impacted on the result. The Federal Council and the conservative parties had warned prior to the referendum that a yes vote would put 5,000 to 10,000 jobs at risk.

Jet-fuel duty to be used for aviation

Two thirds of revenues from jet-fuel duty will in future be spent on air transport and not on roads. 65% of voters and all the cantons approved the constitutional amendment required. Federal government collects over CHF 60 million in jet-fuel duty each year. A third goes directly into the federal coffers. The remainder will now be used to improve the technical safety of air traffic, environmental conservation and the protection of air passengers against terrorist attacks. Precisely where the money will be spent must be decided by the Federal Council and Parliament at the legislative level.

Comment

A storm to clear the air

At the end of November the Swiss people voted on two popular initiatives for which the drafters were more interested in making a symbolic statement than any real political impact. The world would not become a better place if Switzerland were to decide to stop exporting weapons. And banning minarets is not going to resolve a single concrete issue relating to social co-existence with the Muslim minority. Why then were the ballot results produced by Swiss voters so at odds?

The decision to reject the ban on arms exports is easily explained. As previous referenda have shown, this proposal does not have majority support, and even less so in a time of economic difficulty when many jobs are already in jeopardy. The approval of a ban on minarets by a surprisingly clear margin is more difficult to account for. It should not be seen as an affront to Albanian neighbours or Turkish work colleagues, with whom Swiss people get on pretty well in everyday life and who are often not devout Muslims. It is much more the expression of a combination of specific and obscure fears. Fear of encroaching Islamisation, of a religion that is unfamiliar and has negative connotations for many people, such as the oppression of women, the burka, circumcision, the preaching of religious hatred and terrorism. The support for the ban on minarets can be interpreted as the Swiss people making a statement that they are not comfortable with developments taking place.

The initiative poses problems for Switzerland. It violates the constitutional article concerning freedom of worship and the European Convention on Human Rights. It is damaging to Switzerland's image as a tolerant constitutional state. It may also have negative repercussions for Swiss companies doing business in Muslim countries. Nevertheless, the government and Parliament must accept this majority decision. The will of the people must be taken into account, and not just through a PR campaign aimed at damage limitation abroad.

It would be a gross misjudgement to attribute the problem to direct democracy, as some commentators have done at home and abroad. Direct democracy will, of course, result in uncomfortable or even contradictory decisions from time to time. However, it generally produces well-judged, achievable policies that are in touch with the people. It also serves as an excellent early-warning system. It is better to have a storm to clear the air in a peaceful referendum than a constant build-up of tension, which eventually erupts in blazing suburbs.

RENÉ LENZIN

FURTHER INFORMATION

■ Official response from the government:

www.admin.ch (Aktuell/Volksabstimmung vom 29.11.2009) in German

www.ejpd.admin.ch (Documentation/Votes)

■ More information on the issue from Swissinfo:

www.swissinfo.ch/eng (Specials/Minaret Debate)



Pandemic influenza (H1N1) 2009 Influenza vaccination for Swiss nationals abroad

Following the announcement by the Federal Office of Health on 18 September 2009 that the Swiss population would be vaccinated against pandemic influenza H1N1/2009, that this would be organised by the cantons and that the costs would be jointly borne by the Confederation, the cantons and the health insurance companies, numerous enquiries were received from Swiss nationals abroad asking their representations about the possibility of receiving free vaccinations.

If Swiss nationals abroad can be vaccinated in their country of residence against pandemic influenza H1N1/2009, they should do this there at their own expense (or according to the local provisions). Swiss nationals living abroad who cannot be vaccinated in their country of residence are entitled to travel to Switzerland at their own expense and receive a free vaccination at one of the army vaccination centres listed below:

Berne

Kaserne Bern, Krankenabteilung, 3000 Bern 22,
Tel. +41 31 324 44 47

Liestal

Kaserne Liestal, Krankenabteilung, Kasernenstrasse 13,
4410 Liestal, Tel. +41 61 926 75 55

Geneva

Caserne des Vernets, Infirmerie,
Quai des Vernets, 1211 Genève 26,
Tel. +41 79 781 55 25

Chur

Kaserne Chur, Krankenabteilung,
7000 Chur, Tel. +41 81 258 22 82

Zurich

Kaserne Kloten, Krankenabteilung,
8302 Kloten, Tel. +41 44 815 95 00

Monte Ceneri

Piazza d'armi, infermeria/CMR,
6802 Rivera/Monte Ceneri,
Tel. +41 91 935 80 50

The time and date of the vaccination should be agreed in advance by telephone with the vaccination centre concerned. At the time of the vaccination in the army vaccination centres, anyone wishing to be vaccinated must present their Swiss passport and their vaccination certificate and must provide plausible reasons as to why they cannot be vaccinated against H1N1/2009 in their country of residence.

People in risk groups will not have access to the army vaccination centres. These include pregnant women, women who have recently given birth, people with chronic illnesses and anyone living in the same household as those with chronic illnesses, as well as children aged under 18. These people must be vaccinated against pandemic influenza H1N1/2009 by a doctor of their choice. In such cases, the costs of the vaccine will be borne by the Confedera-

tion. If these people do not have health insurance cover in Switzerland, the doctor in question may charge them for the treatment. The people concerned will then have to discuss with their foreign health insurer whether the costs of such treatment can be reimbursed.

The Swiss passport of the future

Today, around 70 countries only issue passports containing electronically recorded data - the electronic passport. Switzerland has been operating an electronic passport pilot project since 2006. This electronic passport will now be introduced definitively. The Federal Council and Parliament hope this will ensure the freedom of Swiss citizens to travel and improve the security of identity documents.

Today, some 70 countries, including all of Switzerland's neighbours, are taking advantage of the benefits of electronically readable data, and are now only issuing electronic passports. This figure is set to rise to more than 90 by the end of 2009. Switzerland has been issuing electronic passports, known as Passport 06, since September 2006 as part of a fixed-term pilot project. The definitive introduction of the electronic passport (Passport 10) has required an amendment to the law on identity documents. In line with the international directives in force, this amendment enables the photograph and, from the age of 12, the fingerprint of two fingers to be recorded on a microchip in Swiss passports in addition to the holder's usual personal data. The definitive introduction of

the electronic passport will ensure Swiss citizens' freedom to travel. It will enable them to continue to travel to the USA or pass through it in transit without having to purchase a visa, which costs more than Passport 10. The USA only grants visa exemptions for citizens of countries that issue electronic passports.

Securing achievements

Thanks to the definitive introduction of the electronic passport, Switzerland will be able to continue its collaboration with its partner states in the Schengen area. Switzerland will therefore secure its recent achievements, in particular close cooperation between judicial and police authorities with their dense network set up to combat criminality, the clarification of asylum regulations to counter multiple applications and, most significantly, easier movement of travellers across borders. Electronic data also enables better protection of the Swiss passport against misuse. Obtaining a passport fraudulently and using a stolen or lost passport will indeed become much more difficult because the photograph and fingerprints can be read electronically, enabling the identity of the person presenting the passport to be checked both at border controls and when applying for a new passport. If Switzerland had failed to take advantage of this opportunity, the Swiss passport may have become a more frequent target of misuse and forgery in the future.



Biometric data is nothing new

Switzerland is endeavouring to permanently bring its passport into line with the latest innovations in order to combat forgery and to ensure its citizens' freedom to travel. Since its introduction in 1915, the Swiss passport has been regularly updated to keep up with the latest developments in technology. Biometric data, such as the facial image and hair and eye colour, have always been used. They enable an identity document to be unequivocally issued to its legitimate holder.

The identity card will remain without a microchip

The revision of the law on identity documents creates the legal basis required to electronically record biometric data in Swiss identity documents (Art. 2, Para. 2bis). In Art. 2, Para. 2ter, the Federal Council defines the types of identity documents that are to be equipped with microchips. However, this provision, which will be implemented on 1 March 2010, only concerns the Swiss passport and Swiss travel documents for foreigners. The identity card will therefore continue to be issued in its current form, i.e. without a microchip, until further notice. It is as yet unclear whether an identity card with a microchip will be issued at some point in time and, should this be the case, whether an identity card without a microchip could be established in parallel to one with a chip. It will not be possible to submit a proposal aimed at upgrading the identity card to the Federal Council until all the relevant conditions and issues have been examined.

The electronic passport in the Schengen area

Maximum data protection

The data contained in the new electronic passport is protected through the application of international standards to ensure any manipulation or copying (cloning) is identified at control points. Provided all the standards are applied when the documents are produced and checked, there will be no security gaps. Switzerland is implementing all these standards correctly. In areas where it is able to, it is adopting data protection standards which are even more rigorous than the international standards. Moreover, there is a new procedure ensuring extremely tight security for fingerprints, as other countries require authorisation from Switzerland before they are able to read the data. The Federal Council only grants authorisation to countries where the level of data protection is equivalent to that in Switzerland. It may also grant authorisation to other organisations that check people's identities in the public interest (e.g. airline companies). The Federal Council withdraws data reading authorisation if Switzerland's data protection requirements are not met.

A simple procedure at a reasonable cost

The federal decree enables the introduction of an efficient new procedure for issuing identity documents which is particularly beneficial to families. In contrast to Passport o6, only one visit to the representation is required. This procedure enables the continuation of the combined offer, where a preferential rate is granted when an electronic passport and an identity card are

applied at the same time. The Federal Council has decided on the following prices for electronic passports: CHF 140 for adult passports valid for 10 years (CHF 148 for the combined offer, i.e. the electronic passport and identity card) and CHF 60 for 5-year passports for children and young people (CHF 68 for the combined offer).

An information system to counter misuse

In order to issue and manage identity documents quickly and securely, it is vital to have access to certain information. It is necessary to be able to determine who has received what document and what data is contained in it. The information system for identity documents (ISA) has been used for this purpose since 2003. The personal data and photograph of identity document holders are recorded in ISA, which will also contain two fingerprints in the future. The EC regulation on identity documents does not require data to be recorded centrally. The requirements set out by the federal decree go further than those of the EC regulation in order to ensure greater security. While the recording of data in the passport is primarily intended for foreign authorities responsible for border control, the Swiss benefit from centralised recording in ISA as it protects their identity from misuse and provides a reliable and efficient procedure for issuing identity documents. Indeed, the data contained in ISA can be reused when issuing new identity documents in order to quickly and reliably verify that the person making the application is the legitimate holder of the identity document. This makes the issue of Swiss identity documents more secure. However, the use of ISA for the purposes of police investigations is prohibited in Switzerland and abroad. Foreign authorities have no access to ISA or the data recorded there.

Further information is available online at www.passeportsuisse.ch and www.fedpol.admin.ch as well as on the websites of the representations.

FDFA: New Head of Consular Protection

The FDFA's Political Affairs Division VI, part of the Directorate of Political Affairs headed by State Secretary Michael Ambühl, looks after the interests of Swiss nationals resident abroad. Headed by Ambassador Markus Börlin, the division covers the following organisations: the Service for the Swiss Abroad, the Information for Travellers and Crisis Management agency and the Consular Protection section. At the beginning

Advertisement





of September 2009, Andreas Maager took over as head of this section, replacing Ernst Steinmann who has been posted to St. Petersburg as Swiss Consul General.

Andreas Maager was born in his hometown of St. Gallen in 1959 and spent his formative years there, graduating with a commercial business diploma from St. Gallen Verkehrsschule. In 1977, he joined the Swiss civil service as a technical customs officer before moving to the FDFA at the beginning of 1984 to embark on a consular career. An initial internship in Dijon/France was followed by postings to The Hague/The Netherlands, Riad/Saudi Arabia, Annecy/France and Houston/USA. In October 1997, he was posted as Third Secretary to the embassy in Dakar/Senegal, where for the first time he assumed the office of head of the chancellery. He subsequently performed the same function at the Swiss EU Mission in Brussels/Belgium from the summer of 2000 to spring 2004. From April 2004 to the summer of 2009, Andreas Maager was Counsellor at the embassy in Abu Dhabi/UAE before returning to Berne to head up the Consular Protection section. Andreas Maager is married with three grown-up children.

The Consular Protection section looks after the interests of Swiss nationals who are resident abroad and have suffered an accident or become the victim of theft or violent crime, for example. The section also extends consular protection to Swiss nationals incarcerated abroad and helps to settle the affairs of Swiss citizens who have died abroad. In certain cases, the Consular Protection section also deals with child kidnappings (if this involves states that are not signatories to the Hague Convention) and occasionally assists in residency inquiries. Every year, the team of six deal with roughly 800 cases, and the situations they handle are becoming increasingly complex.

The new “Advice for Swiss Abroad” is out!

The number of Swiss who take the plunge and live abroad – whether for a short time or with the firm intention of leaving Switzerland for good – is growing year by year. For those prepared to take this step, there are a great many obstacles and questions to be resolved. How do I exercise my political rights from abroad, and can I continue to vote in Switzerland?



Andreas Maager, new head of the Consular Protection section



Whom do I contact when I need a new Swiss passport? I am contemplating studying in Switzerland but I would like to check out the available options beforehand – where should I go for help? Which media report comprehensively on Swiss affairs and can be accessed from abroad?

The answers to these and many other questions about living abroad are contained in the new “Advice for Swiss Abroad”. Not only will it provide you with the information you are seeking, it also forms a bridge to your original home country, Switzerland. Each chapter also provides additional links for the relevant topic.

“Advice for Swiss Abroad” was last printed in 2002. Due to the sustained high level of demand, coupled with numerous changes since 2002, we have decided to publish a new edition.

“Advice for Swiss Abroad” is available in German, French and Italian and can be ordered from the Federal Office for Buildings and Logistics (FBL), Sale of Publications, CH-3003 Berne, www.bundespublikationen.ch

NEW POPULAR INITIATIVES AND REFERENDA

By the time of going to press, the following new popular initiatives had been launched since the last edition:

- “Pädophile sollen nicht mehr mit Kindern arbeiten dürfen” (Paedophiles should no longer be allowed to work with children), initiative committee: Marche Blanche; deadline for collection of signatures: 20.04.2011
- “1:12 – für gerechte Löhne” (1:12 – for fair pay), initiative committee: JUSO JungsozialistInnen Schweiz; deadline for collection of signatures: 06.04.2011
- “Ja zur Hausarztmedizin” (Yes to family medicine), initiative committee: Eidgenössische Volksinitiative ‘Ja zur Hausarztmedizin’; deadline for collection of signatures: 29.03.2011

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

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History of Switzerland retold

The Swiss National Museum has taken advantage of the renovation of its historic building in Zurich to give its permanent exhibitions a facelift. The new-look museum presents the complete history of Switzerland in a modern and attractive style without any sentimentality. By Heinz Eckert



The 'Wheel of Myths' from the History of Switzerland

The Swiss National Museum, which is dedicated to the history of Switzerland, has become a piece of history in its own right. The large building behind Zurich's main station, reminiscent of a fairytale castle, was built in 1898 by architect Gustav Gull in a historicising late medieval style. Once slated for demolition, it now ranks as a national historic monument and has been extensively renovated.

In a sense, the renovation of the historic building has also restored the museum's original function. Director Andreas Spillmann wanted the new concept for the permanent exhibitions to revive the institution's original role as a museum of history as well as arts and crafts. Consequently, the refurbished 'station wing' – housing the 'Hall of Pillars' on the ground floor and the 'Hall of Fame' on the upper floor – is now home to two new-look permanent exhibitions on the main themes of history as well as arts and crafts.

The permanent exhibition 'History of Switzerland' focuses on settlement and migration, religious and intellectual history, political history, and economic development from the Stone Age to the present day. The first part of the exhibition, entitled 'No one has been here all the time', lays the historical foundations. By examining migration and settlement patterns it explains how Switzerland's topography has influenced its demographic development, showing how much the country has been influenced – and continues to be influenced – by migrants, often fleeing political or religious persecution.

The second part of the exhibition, 'Faith, diligence and order', looks at the religious and intellectual history of the country, and examines the change in attitudes towards religion: from the omnipresence of God and the unity of faith through the Reformation to the relativisation of religion during the Enlightenment. Visitors can see precious

medieval artefacts including chalices, statues of saints and sacred objects from the convent of St.Katharinenthal. From the Reformation and Counter-Reformation there are sculptures from the iconoclastic period and portraits of the reformers Zwingli and Calvin, while the numerous objects relating to the Catholic reaction include a 16th-century monstrance. The exhibition then moves on to the Enlightenment, with furnishings from a living room, and the educational reform of the 19th century.

The third part, 'Through conflict to concordance', is housed in the Hall of Fame and portrays the political history of modern Switzerland. It explains the Swiss consociational system of government, how it came into being, and the origins of today's federal state. The main feature in the centre of the room is the 9-metre-high 'Wheel of Myths', which references a number of perennial national myths including Heidi, the Federal Charter (the supposed founding document of the Swiss Confederation), an alphorn and a crossbow. The historical narrative also includes the women's and workers' rights movements, Switzerland's role in the two world wars, and the move away from the isolation in which the country found itself at the end of the Second World War.

Finally, the fourth part of the exhibition, 'Switzerland becomes rich abroad', tells the story of the country's economic development. Luxury watches, quality textiles, the impressive range of products manufactured by the chemical industry and masterpieces of mechanical engineering all bear witness to Switzerland's tremendous and successful economic growth. The exhibition also takes a look at Switzerland as a financial centre and the tourist attraction of the Alps, which have always ranked highly on the list of key Swiss 'exports'.

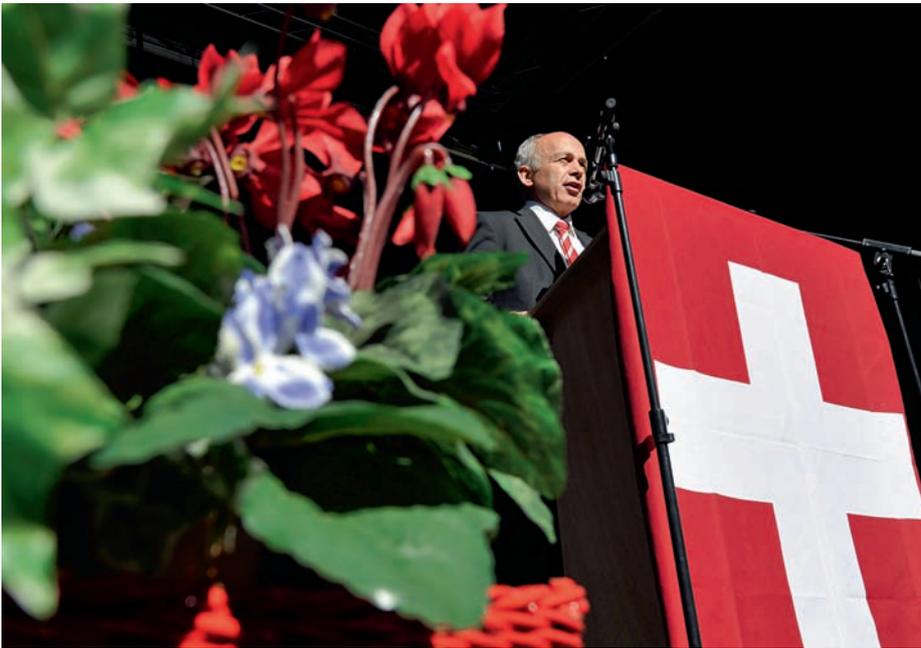
The journey through Swiss history ends with a 'Salon de réflexion' where news items from all over the world and an object of the month remind visitors that, far from being an abstract subject considered in isolation, history is a living thing that is still being written – all over the world, including Switzerland.

The museum in Zurich houses the largest collection of cultural artefacts in Switzerland. The permanent exhibition includes around one million exhibits of national significance from all eras of history.

www.landesmuseum.ch

Maurer: “Now I have the dream job in politics”

As head of the Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport, Federal Councillor Ueli Maurer is in charge of not just the largest but probably also the most difficult department in the Federal Palace. At the top of his list of problems is a shortage of money to equip the army so it can do its job properly. But what is that job anyway, critics of the military want to know. Ueli Maurer talks to “Swiss Review” about his first year in office. Interview by Heinz Eckert



Speaking at the Foire du Valais in Martigny: Federal Councillor Maurer enjoys public appearances and likes meeting members of the public.

“SWISS REVIEW”: *Has your life changed a lot since being elected to the Federal Council?*

FEDERAL COUNCILLOR UELI MAURER: When I was President of the SVP (Swiss People’s Party), I was already involved in a whole range of issues and I was constantly exposed to public scrutiny. As a member of the national government I have to deal with matters in more depth. Now, of course, I spend a great deal of time in my office in the Federal Palace and live near Berne during the week. Politics has always fascinated me, and now I have a dream job in politics.

What was the biggest change?

I have my own staff and a large secretariat, who all assist me. I head a department of around 12,000 people and I hold political responsibility for an army of 120,000 active personnel. The scope of the job is entirely different from anything I have done

before. As a member of the national government I am also involved in the affairs of the other six departments.

Is the job different from how you imagined it?

As a Member of Parliament and Party President I was in close contact with the various heads of the DDPS for years. So I had a fairly good idea of what awaited me.

As head of the Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport, you are in charge of a large and complex department. What are the most urgent problems facing you at the moment?

There are no major problems with the Civil Protection and Sport sectors of the department. But the Defence sector is certainly a challenge. In recent years, our militia army has had to cope with too many reforms in too short a time and military

budgets have been slashed. We now face major problems in logistics and IT, and we are only in a position to fully equip one entire brigade. We are currently undergoing a process of consolidation and correction. In some areas it will take several years to get the army into shape. But I am confident we will succeed.

Does that include the oft-heard demand for greater attention to discipline again in the army?

Discipline is absolutely essential to any army. Unfortunately, we can’t take it for granted the way we once could, because it’s less apparent in civilian life too. Changes in society have a very rapid effect on a militia army. Running a disciplined force is one of the topmost priorities of the Chief of the Armed Forces.

The armed forces cost a lot of money, and the federal government wants to cut costs. How can these two aims be reconciled?

“A lot of money” is relative. Today the army costs Switzerland less than 1% of GNP. Other comparable countries spend more. Politicians and people in general need to have a clear idea of how much security is worth to us. To achieve the improvements I mentioned before we need an extra CHF 500 million per year.

What will the future Swiss army be like?

Different according to circumstances. By that I mean that it must constantly adapt to the changing challenges. Nobody knows today what the security situation will be like 15 or 30 years from now. But what we do know is that it is essential to have good training, modern equipment and the ability to use it, and above all a positive and motivated attitude among citizens in uniform.

What new tasks will fall to the army?

The question we have to ask is: What problems might affect our country? Water issues, migration patterns, energy shortages? We expect to get answers to this question in the new Security Policy Report to be published next autumn.

Will Switzerland always have a militia army? Why not a professional army?

I can’t predict what the situation will be like in 20 years. But at the present time and

in the foreseeable future, the benefits of a militia army are obvious. It is ingrained in our population, because people from all parts of the country and all social backgrounds come together for a few weeks every year, wear the uniform and serve their country. When army personnel aren't needed, then they are at home or doing a civilian job. And when they are needed, we can mobilise tens of thousands in a very short time. A professional army is not only much more expensive, its personnel would also be recruited from just a few walks of life. And how could we keep a professional army occupied all year round?

How much support is there for the army among the Swiss population? Does Switzerland still want its armed forces?

Without a shadow of a doubt. The annual security surveys carried out by ETH Zurich show that around 75% of Swiss people believe our army to be necessary. Whenever the army presents itself to the public, for example at trade fairs or Army Days, thousands of people turn up to find out more about it.

How serious are the cadre recruitment problems?

No more serious than before. On the contrary, the take-up of cadre training is very good. Many employers in trade, commerce and business are willing to send their people to military training because they know it will make them more valuable employees.

What can be done about the growing number of young Swiss who are unfit for military service? Is this a major problem?

Once again, it's a reflection of society as a whole. If people don't get into the exercise habit when they're young, if they're overweight or addicted to smoking, then that's how they'll be when they show up for recruitment. And they'll have problems keeping up during their basic training. I want to see a fitter population in general, and then we would have a fitter army.

There is often debate about the Swiss army being sent on missions abroad. What are your views?

Foreign peacekeeping and disaster relief missions are among the tasks assigned to the army by politicians and the people. But peacekeeping missions in particular cause

controversy and therefore have a negative impact on the army debate. Personally, I am not against foreign deployments. But I would like to see our forces offer abroad something typically Swiss: a 'niche' service that is identified with our country, such as water specialists. A working group is drawing up a set of proposals for me that will also form part of the Security Policy Report.

What is the atmosphere like in the Federal Council? Is it how you imagined it? You often



The head of the Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport meeting troops with Brigadier Daniel Berger. Federal Councillor Maurer is in charge of the largest department in the Federal Palace.

read that the Federal Council is no longer a group of colleagues, but of individuals fighting for themselves. Would you agree?

Parliament elects seven 'alpha animals' to government and these individuals have to work together to get the best outcome for our country. These seven individuals don't have to be friends. But they do have to be colleagues. In my experience the Federal Council functions more smoothly and harmoniously than is often portrayed in the media. We debate and sometimes we argue about the best solution. After a meeting we traditionally have a meal together.

What do you think of the idea of direct election of the Federal Council by the people?

In many ways the idea is an attractive one, but politically it is probably unrealistic. We would risk permanent electioneering and I

would have my doubts as to the possible role of the media.

You often hear that Federal Councillors work 14 hours a day or more. Is this true? If so, is it healthy? Is it even possible to focus and work efficiently for this amount of time?

I very often work those kinds of hours. But I don't see it as a chore. I love the work and I love coming into contact with lots of different people, which is why I often at-

tend smaller meetings too. I'm lucky enough to be healthy and require little sleep. And I get plenty of exercise, mostly cycling, and cross-country skiing in winter.

Do we need a state reform or just more Federal Councillors?

No, I would say fewer. I think we could manage with just five Federal Councillors. The workload would have to be distributed differently.

When will your family be moving nearer to the Federal Palace?

My wife and younger children still live in the Zurich Oberland. They have strong personal ties there. Our oldest children have left home and one of our sons lives in Norway. I have a nice apartment near Berne and I spend the weekends at home with my family.

Harmonisation of the school system hits a brick wall

A school starting age of 4, two years of kindergarten and harmonised educational standards – those are the aims of an agreement made by the cantonal directors of education. But now that a third of the cantons have rejected this concordat it cannot come into force throughout Switzerland. By René Lenzin

On 21 May 2006, things were looking rosy for most Swiss politicians in education. On this date, almost 86% of voters and all the cantons backed the new education article in the Federal Constitution. The aim was to introduce a degree of standardisation into Switzerland's different school systems, which vary from canton to canton. The constitutional text seeks to harmonise the school starting age, the length of compulsory schooling, the duration and targets of the various educational stages, the transitions between stages and the recognition given to the schooling a child has completed.

But now it seems that these provisions will be much harder to implement than the resounding 'yes' vote might have suggested. Because the cantons still have authority over school education, the federal government cannot enforce harmonisation. For such a move to go through, the cantons would have to reach an agreement, known as a 'concordat', between themselves. Only if 18 out of the 26 cantons sign up to the concordat can the federal government declare it binding upon all of them. The cantonal directors of education have reached just such an agreement under the name HarmoS, but it would seem that there are not enough cantons prepared to accept it for a standard school system to be introduced throughout Switzerland.

11 years of compulsory schooling for all

The key elements of HarmoS are:

All children must attend school for 11 years: 2 years of kindergarten, 6 years of primary school and 3 years of secondary school. Pupils will complete each stage at a pace appropriate to their personal abilities and level of maturity. Children will start school after their 4th birthday (with a cut-off date of 31 July).

All children will receive basic education in three languages, mathematics, science, humanities, social sciences, music/art and design, physical education and health.

All children will start a first foreign language no later than the third year of primary school and a second foreign language no later than the fifth year of primary school. Each language region will decide whether to give priority to English or another Swiss language. By the end of their compulsory schooling children should have an equal level of competence in both foreign languages.

Kindergarten: a bone of contention

So far, 11 cantons have signed up to the concordat (see map). This at least satisfies the minimum number required for HarmoS to come into force at all. But in seven cantons, either voters or the parliament have rejected the agreement. In Aargau, the population rejected an education reform in a decision that will defer HarmoS for the foreseeable future, while in Obwalden and Appenzell Innerrhoden local governments have shelved the matter for the time being. So 16 cantons at most will be joining the harmonised system over the next few years – too few to push through the key pillars of HarmoS throughout Switzerland.

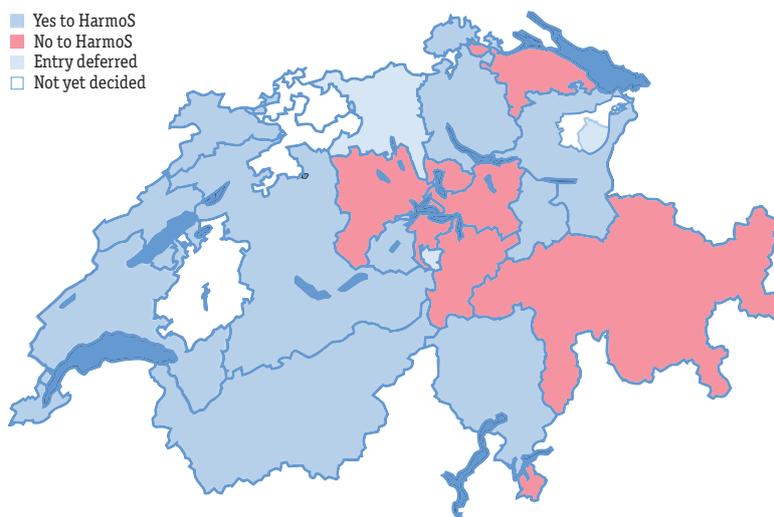
The most controversial point in the referendum was the two-year compulsory kindergarten and the resulting younger school starting age. 86% of Swiss children already attend kindergarten for two years, but in the cantons that rejected harmonisation the first year is either voluntary or non-existent. Lucerne became the first canton to reject HarmoS in September 2008. A good two years previously, 85% of voters in Lucerne had said 'yes' to the education article in the Federal Constitution, but at that time there was no real fight for votes and little debate on concrete issues – in Lucerne or anywhere else.

Next contentious issue: the curriculum

The Swiss People's Party (SVP) has spoken out especially strongly against HarmoS. The party wants to uphold cantonal autonomy and warns that an early school starting age could result in excessive state control over education and upbringing. These arguments hit home in central and eastern Switzerland in particular, not least because the proponents of HarmoS did not get quite so involved in the debate.

Buoyed by its success over HarmoS, the SVP has already announced its next target in the field of education: the standard curriculum for all German-speaking cantons and the concordat for special needs education. These projects are not directly associated with HarmoS, but there is some overlap. For example, the curriculum specifies how the educational standards defined in HarmoS are to be achieved. This is another area where the SVP wants to preserve cantonal autonomy.

In the long term, however, the party will be powerless to avert a certain amount of harmonisation because of the constitutional article mentioned earlier. The article prescribes that if the cantons cannot reach agreement, the federal government must intervene: "If the coordination process does not result in a harmonisation of the school system (...), the federal government shall enact the necessary provisions."



WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM
 NATION OF IMMIGRANTS
 FOUR LANGUAGES
 HOMELAND
 FIFTH SWITZERLAND
 GRÜEZI +41
 WATCHES
 SWISS MADE
 FEDERAL COUNCIL
 BEST BOND-GIRL EVER
 WILLIAM TELL
 HIGH-PRICE ISLAND
 FEDERAL WRESTLING FESTIVAL
 41'285 KM²
 STREET PARADE
 SKIING NAME OF ROGER FEDERER
 SWISS ARMY KNIFE
 SWISS ENGINEERING
 CERN
 MUESLI
 GENEVA CONVENTION
 FONDU
 PUBLIC TRANSPORT PASS
 MOTORWAY VIGNETTE
 POST BUS
 QUALITY
 SNOW
 ORGANIC FARMING
 AGRICULTURAL SUBSIDIES
 CHE
 BANKING CONFIDENTIALITY
 1291
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 ALPINE TRANSIT CLUB
 ST. BERNARD
 CHOCOLATE BOX CLICHÉ
 HEIDI
 COWBELLS
 HOMO FABER
 REGA
 73 PEAKS OVER 4000 M
 NEAT
 MARMOTS
 1/1000 OF THE GLOBAL POPULATION
 BILATERAL AGREEMENTS
 DIRECT DEMOCRACY
 CLUBS
 PEOPLE'S INITIATIVES
 MAGIC FORMULA
 AVS
 CLIMATE CENT
 ANTI-RACISM
 21% FOREIGNERS
 PIONEERING SPIRIT
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Burki on the minaret referendum in «24 heures» (UDC = SVP)

Switzerland's Prix Goncourt winner passes away

Throughout his lifetime, Jacques Chessex, the writer from the Canton of Vaud, produced work which simply could not be ignored. Just as popular in Paris as in Switzerland, the hermit from Ropraz in Vaud passed away at the age of 75 while giving a presentation at the public library in Yverdon. A tribute by Alain Wey

"Jacques Chessex possessed incredible vigour and focussed his energies on his need, desire and obsession for writing and producing literature", says his friend, the poet and journalist Jean-Dominique Humbert. An emblematic figure, Jacques Chessex defined the writer as "someone who elevates literature by giving power or an essentially sacred virtue to language, style and words".* The only Swiss winner of the Prix Goncourt** (in 1973 with "L'Ogre") died at the age of 75 in the pleasant surroundings of a presentation he was giving at the public library in Yverdon. A look back at his life in the company of his poet friend.

God, sex and death

Literature spanning half a century, a hundred books and highly prestigious literary prizes (Schiller, Grand Prix de la langue française, Grand Prix Jean Giono): Jacques Chessex provoked strong feeling. In February 2009, he once again created a scandal by publishing "Un Juif pour l'exemple", which tells of the murder of a Jewish trader

in Payerne (Vaud) in 1942. You either liked or loathed Chessex, but nobody was indifferent to him. As he himself said, he must have possessed "some kind of mystical power" which drew attention to him. Bernard Pivot, the French literary critic, had this to say about him: "Most of his work possesses an uncompromising realism, a dark sensuality and an often rather ferocious lucidity. Jacques Chessex always loved reopening old wounds: he knew exactly what troubled him and exactly what would trouble his readers."*** Summing up the writer translated into over 20 different languages in just a few words, his friend Jean-Dominique Humbert said: "He was a man with the noble ambition of facing up to himself, to literature and to the chapter to be written. A writer who lasted the distance, he possessed the intuition about what he wanted to write at a very young age and retained his desire and passion for writing throughout his life. This was a man obsessed by God, sex and death. This trinity always featured in his work."

KEY DATES IN HIS LIFE

1934: Born in Payerne (Vaud)
 1951-1952: Studied at Collège St-Michel in Fribourg
 1952-1960: Degree in literature at the University of Lausanne
 1956: His father commits suicide, a tragedy which never ceased to haunt him
 1963: Schiller Prize for "La Tête ouverte"
 1953 and 1964: Co-founder of the literary reviews "Pays du lac" (Pully) and "Écriture" (Lausanne) in 1964
 1969-1996: French teacher at the Gymnase de la Cité grammar school in Lausanne
 1973: Prix Goncourt for "L'Ogre"
 1992: Mallarmé poetry prize for

"Les Aveugles du seul regard"
 1999: Grand Prix de la langue française
 2005: Goncourt poetry award for "Allegria"
 2007: Grand Prix Jean Giono

SWISS NEUTRALITY

"What has always irritated me is that the concept of Swiss neutrality has tempered hearts and souls and tarnished courage and morality. In this country, any suggestion of being too strong, any emergence of a figure of stature is intolerable to people today. It is remarkable that in a country where mountaineering, the Alps, the peaks and magnificent glaciers are so celebrated, there is so

The writer who recited matins

Jacques Chessex had a sacerdotal view of writing. He would write early in the morning, getting up between 4.30 a.m. and 5.00 a.m. Jean-Dominique Humbert says: "He would start with a poem to awaken himself from his sleep, like a monk reciting matins, before going on to write prose or essays. His daily routine was precisely structured." As a poet, novelist, portraitist, essayist and writer of short stories, Jacques Chessex's work was extremely diverse. His last book "Le dernier crâne de Monsieur de Sade" will be published in January. So what were Chessex's other passions? His friend explains: "Painting, which he practised himself, and music and the blues, as he also played the piano. Naturally, he had a passion for reading. He loved taking walks, strolls and getting away from it all. He enjoyed looking around churches and cemeteries. People would sometimes stop to question him. He jokingly once told me that lots of people had asked him what he was doing. He could be quite quick-witted and would say: "I'm looking for God." The person who had stopped him was more likely to want to call the police than believe there was a metaphysician roaming around churchyards and cemeteries."

much concern about those who stand out." Littérature de Suisse, a documentary broadcast on TSR, 1998

ALWAYS A WRITER

"I happily got through thirty-five years in teaching and I have provided myself with the resources needed to produce my work without having to ask anyone for anything, which is something that should make my critics think. I have overcome difficulties and crossed many rivers, sometimes through fords, sometimes by wading through the mud. I have experienced much heartbreak, such as my father's suicide and the break-up of relationships, but I have

never stopped writing. Bizarrely, I have great confidence in myself today. I believe you improve with age, not go downhill." Le Matin, 2000

* Voix au chapitre, broadcast on TSR on 11 August 1975.

** The Prix Goncourt is the most prestigious prize in French literature and the winning book sells between 300,000 and 900,000 copies.

*** Téléjournal, TSR, 10 October 2009.

“Letting in the unknown”

The door to the Stockmann family home in Dübendorf is open to guests from all over the world. Dozens of young Swiss abroad have been introduced here to everyday life in Switzerland.

A visit to an OSA host family. By Claudio Zemp



Young people are regular guests in this room. Francesca Stockmann, Mirjam Stockmann, Marcio Aggeler and Curdin Spirig in the “Casa Vivaio di Gaia” in Dübendorf.

The Stockmann family has a long tradition of hosting an open house. When Francesca Stockmann (61) moved back into her parents’ home in Dübendorf in 1999, her then 90-year-old father grumbled when they had no visitors for a fortnight. The teacher has hosted at least one Swiss guest from abroad every year for the last almost 20 years. People from all over the world have stayed with her in Dübendorf, including youngsters from Paraguay, Japan, Holland and Guadeloupe. And it is not just Swiss expatriates who enjoy staying in the two guestrooms in Francesca’s “Villa Kunterbunt”. 20-year-old Curdin Spirig, from Engadine, is currently staying with the family. This student at the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich confirms the impression created: “People are always coming and going here!”

The appeal of broadening horizons

Two of them are Francesca’s daughter, Mirjam Stockmann (30), and her husband Marcio Aggeler (27). The recently married couple are a host family themselves. “Our first guest from Australia slept on the sofa in our shared apartment”, recalls Mirjam. Before his arrival, she was worried that the city apartment would not be comfortable enough for their visitor. However, he liked it so much that he continued to call round to see them long after his language course had finished. “He wanted to stay with us”, laughs Marcio.

The couple hosted “Junior” from France last summer. “I have never seen anyone eat so much”, laughs Marcio. The bank employee, who grew up in French-speaking Switzerland, was able to brush up his French with “Junior”. But far from all young Swiss visitors from abroad speak a Swiss national language. “As a host, you need a flair for languages”, confirms Mirjam. Her mother too loves foreign languages. “I find it fascinating speaking different languages”, says Francesca. Her house is a miniature cultural centre. Francesca redecorates her living room several times a year, and organises readings and musical evenings.

An immediate insight into a country and its people

Mirjam knows just how valuable staying with a host family can be. After meeting Marcio six years ago, the couple travelled to Brazil where they stayed with a family. Mirjam believes this was the perfect introduction. She says: “You get to know the country and its people so much more quickly than tourists who go sightseeing from their hotels.” Marcio and Mirjam make their guests part of their own lives. They show them the places to go and take them along when friends invite them over. “You have to spend time with guests as well as providing them with a room”, emphasises Mirjam. The hosts have also enjoyed accompanying Swiss guests from abroad on visits to the Rhine Falls or to Lucerne.

“The guests experience life as we know it”, adds Mirjam. They also have the freedom to discover Switzerland for themselves. Marcio once had to go into the city centre at night to collect a teenager who could not find his way home. These days she no longer worries about guests being shocked by the young couple’s often haphazard everyday routine.

Personal contact with people from all over the world

The Stockmanns are happy to share their private lives with complete strangers. “You let the unknown into your home, but that is the appeal”, says Mirjam with conviction. The guests also play a part in this cultural experiment. Shared Swiss nationality makes contact easier. This at least provides a connection, as Francesca explains: “Having a Swiss background creates a bond, even if it is just through a name that originates from Central Switzerland.” The jovial host has never doubted her decision to receive guests who come from such diverse backgrounds. She says: “An open house provides lots of stories.” One such tale concerns two ladies from New York whom she took in years ago. The big-city ladies turned out to be faith healers who wanted to convert Francesca. The pastor’s widow dealt with their missionary zeal by putting them straight around the kitchen table.

The Stockmanns have no end of stories to tell. Francesca collects the addresses, photos and thank-you letters from her guests. As she enjoys travelling herself, she has taken advantage of contacts made on her own trips abroad. Whether in Australia or Spain, she has been welcomed by Swiss people abroad everywhere. When she retires, Francesca would like to visit Shanghai. She already knows whose door she will be knocking on.

EVERYDAY SWISS LIFE FRESH FROM THE SOURCE

The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) arranges host families for young Swiss people abroad who wish to take advantage of an OSA offer in Switzerland. This is the best way for young people aged between 15 and 25 to experience everyday life in a Swiss family. Around 70 young people are welcomed by host families each year.

Information: OSA Youth Service, Prisca Blindenbacher, +41 31 356 61 00 youth@aso.ch, www.aso.ch



OSA ADVICE

QUESTION:

I am a Swiss citizen living abroad and I did not receive the voting documents for the last ballot. What can I do to make sure this does not happen again?

ANSWER:

In order to exercise their political rights, Swiss citizens abroad must be registered with the Swiss representation responsible for their place of residence. They also have to complete a form to register to exercise political rights. This registration has to be renewed every four years using a form that the polling commune sends out directly to Swiss citizens at least once a year. If the registration is not renewed, the polling commune will remove the voter from the electoral register. However, voters can re-enrol at any time by completing the form for exercising political rights and returning it to the Swiss representation concerned.

If you have not received your voting documents, please first check that you are still registered with your Swiss representation for the purpose of exercising political rights. If you are not, you must complete the registration form for exercising political rights and return it to the Swiss representation. If you are still registered, check with your polling commune to ensure you are properly enrolled on the electoral register. If

you are not properly enrolled, you must re-enrol with your polling commune for the purpose of exercising political rights. If you are properly enrolled, this means the blame for the fact that you have not received your voting documents lies with the postal service, a problem which is unfortunately still all too common, but which should be improved by the introduction of electronic voting.

On a general note, please ensure that you inform your Swiss representation of your change of address if you move house.

The form for registering for political rights is available at:

In French: www.aso.ch/fr/conseils/vivre-a-letranger/droits-politiques/formulaire-dinscription

In German: www.aso.ch/de/beratung/leben-im-ausland/politische-rechte/anmeldeformular

If you encounter problems in exercising your political rights, standard letters relating to various scenarios are available on OSA's website at:

In French: www.aso.ch/fr/conseils/vivre-a-letranger/droits-politiques/difficultes-lors-de-votations

In German: www.aso.ch/de/beratung/leben-im-ausland/politische-rechte/schwierigkeiten-bei-abstimmungen

OSA's legal service provides general information on Swiss law in areas which specifically concern the Swiss abroad.

It does not provide information on foreign law and does not intervene in disputes between private parties.

Offers for young people aged 15 and above

OSA offers attractive opportunities for young Swiss people abroad to discover Switzerland. The new summer brochure featuring various holiday and educational programmes for young people will be out in the coming days. There are also still places available for the winter sports camp for young adults and the Easter camp in Valais. Contact us for details.

The Swiss Alps are covered with snow, the slopes of the ski resorts are in excellent condition, and OSA's ski and snowboard instructors cannot wait to teach you the latest winter sports techniques.

There are still some places available for the winter sports camp from 27 February to 6 March 2010.

The Easter camp for young people aged 14 and above will be held in the sports and holiday centre in Fiesch. Young Swiss from all over the world will meet up in the hometown of star skier Daniel Albrecht, from 3 to 11 April 2010. The famous alpine panorama of the Aletsch region, with views of Switzerland's largest glacier and the Matterhorn, is the ideal location for spending sunny days on snow-covered mountains. The accommodation centre in Fiesch offers lots of alternatives to winter sports. You can enjoy use of an indoor swimming pool, climbing walls, indoor sports halls and outdoor facilities.

88TH CONGRESS OF THE SWISS ABROAD: 20 TO 22 AUGUST 2010, OLMA MESSE ST.GALLEN

I am interested in the next Congress of the Swiss Abroad. In spring 2010, please send me the registration documents for the 88th Congress of the Swiss Abroad (20 to 22 August 2010 in St.Gallen) to the following address:

Surname/first name: _____

Address: _____

City/postcode/country: _____

E-mail: _____

Please write clearly in block capitals and return the completed form to:
Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA), Communications Department, Congress Organisation, Alpenstrasse 26, CH-3006 Berne. To save on postage and time, you can also contact us directly by e-mail: communication@aso.ch
The latest information on the forthcoming congress will also appear regularly at www.aso.ch/de/angebote/auslandschweizer-kongress. It is worth visiting our website from time to time.

OFFERS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 15 AND ABOVE

The holiday and educational offers of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) are aimed at young Swiss people abroad aged 15 and over. Information on OSA's offers for young people can be obtained from the **OSA Youth Service**:

Telephone: +41 31 356 61 00
youth@aso.ch, www.aso.ch

You can also register for offers for young people on the website.



Take advantage of OSA's educational programmes to find out lots of important information about Switzerland.

OSA will explain how the Swiss education system works, and give you the opportunity to visit Switzerland's top schools and universities and to make useful contacts.

There are many more offers to choose from besides those mentioned here. Visit our website now at www.aso.ch to find the right option for you. We look forward to your visit.

As usual, information on the offers mentioned is available from

*Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Youth Service*
Tel: +41 (0)31 356 61 00
Fax: +41 (0)31 356 61 01
youth@aso.ch
www.aso.ch

Camps for children aged 8 to 14

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

Programme

At our camps you will have the opportunity to see the sights, to discover lakes, mountains, rivers and magnificent scenery, to go on short hikes and

perhaps enjoy city visits. Some of the days are also spent at the camp, where you can enjoy games, sport and a variety of workshops.

You will also be given the chance to learn lots of interesting things about Switzerland. We look at the Swiss languages, Swiss songs, Swiss recipes and typically Swiss games and sports.

The interaction between participants, which rises above all barriers of language, culture and nationality, is an opportunity to enjoy unforgettable experiences and to forge lots of new friendships.

Prices

The prices of the offers are quoted in the list below. The Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad would like all Swiss children abroad to have at least one opportunity to enjoy a holiday in Switzerland. This is why a fund for reduced contributions has been set up. An application form can be requested with your registration.

Travel/meeting point

The meeting point is arranged for around midday at Zurich airport. Travel to and from Zurich airport is organised and paid for by parents.

Leaders

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

Registration

Exact details of the individual holiday camps and the registration form will be available from Monday, 15 February 2010 at www.aso.ch (Offers/Offers for Children and Young People). We

would also be pleased to send you our information brochure by post on request. The registration deadline is 15 March 2010.

Summer camps 2010

Sat. 3.7. – Fri. 16.7.10: Les Mosses (VD) for 36 children aged 8 to 11, price: CHF 900

Sat. 3.7. – Fri. 16.7.10: Scuol (GR) for 36 children aged 11 to 14, price: CHF 900

Sat. 17.7. – Fri. 30.7.10: Les Mosses (VD) for 36 children aged 8 to 11, price: CHF 900

Mon. 19.7. – Fri. 30.7.10: Tent camp in Château-d'Oex (VD) for 30 children aged 11 to 14, price: CHF 600

Wed. 21.7. – Fri. 30.7.10: Swisstrip for 20 young people aged 12 to 16, price: CHF 950

Sat. 31.7. – Fri. 13.8.10: Rueun (GR) for 36 children aged 8 to 11, price: CHF 900

Sat. 31.7. – Fri. 13.8.10: Sports camp in Obersaxen (GR) for 48 children aged 12 to 16, price: CHF 950

Sat. 7.8. – Fri. 20.8.10: Engelberg (OW) for 40 children aged 8 to 14, price: CHF 900

Sat. 7.8. – Fri. 20.8.10: Flumserberg (SG) for 36 children aged 11 to 14, price: CHF 900

Please contact the office in Berne for further information:

*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
www.aso.ch (Offers)*

CAMPS FOR CHILDREN AGED 8 TO 14

The camps for young Swiss people abroad aged 8 to 14 are organised by the **Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad (FYSA)**. Information on these camps can be obtained from FYSA:

Telephone: +41 31 356 61 16
sjas@aso.ch, www.aso.ch

You can also register for offers for young people on the website.

ORGANISATION OF THE SWISS ABROAD

Our services:

- 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)

Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, CH-3006 Berne, Phone +41 31 356 6100, Fax +41 31 356 6101, info@aso.ch, www.aso.ch

Switzerland has its sights set on 13 medals

The 21st Winter Olympics will take place in Vancouver from 12 to 28 February 2010. How well is Switzerland expected to perform in Canada? Will we achieve the same medal haul as in Turin in 2006? Alain Wey takes a look at Switzerland's prospects



Carlo Janka

Is Switzerland set to bring home a record number of medals from the Vancouver Olympics? Will Canada bring us as much luck as it did in Calgary in 1988, when Switzerland returned with fifteen medals? Such an ambitious target is not merely a flight of fancy as the outlook has seldom been so good. The Swiss Ski Association has its sights set on thirteen medals (see interview with Urs Lehmann). These games will turn February into a winter sports extravaganza throughout Switzerland. We talk to the Swiss team's officials to get the inside track on our chances.

Predictions of the Swiss Olympic Organisation

The Swiss Olympic Organisation was aiming for eight medals at the Turin Olympics in 2006, but exceeded its goal by six (see honours list). This was a significantly better return than at previous Olympics in Salt Lake City (11), and particularly in Nagano (7). "Judging by the results in all disciplines last winter, we are on track to pick up the same number of medals as in Turin", predicts Gian Gilli, head of elite sport at the Swiss Olympic Organisation and Head Coach of the Swiss delegation in Vancouver. He explains: "Of course, it will also depend on the injury sit-



Dario Cologna

uation, but we have the potential to repeat our exploits of 2006. The athletes have to get through the winter without injury, because if we lose an athlete capable of winning two medals, we would have to lower our expectations." The Swiss master of ceremonies believes talk about the Olympics is superfluous. He says: "The athletes must peak at the right time. That is the problem with the Olympics; you only get one shot at it every four years. If the athletes get it right on the day, they will be amongst the medal winners." He believes Switzerland has good medal prospects in alpine skiing, bobsleigh, cross-country skiing – with Ammann, Küttel and Cologna – snowboarding and freestyle skiing. He adds: "There are lots of athletes with the potential to take a place on the podium. The final selection for the team will be announced on 2 February 2010."

Focus on snowboarding

The Swiss snowboarding team has a maximum of 18 places available for the flight to Vancouver, divided into three disciplines – the half-pipe (HP), snowboard cross (SBX) and parallel giant slalom (PGS). In the half-pipe, Zurich's Iouri Podladtchikov has been close to breaking American supremacy for the past two seasons. He achieved second place at the World Cup opener in New Zealand. The novice Christian Haller from Grisons, Swiss champion at Zermatt last September,

and his sister, Ursina Haller, are also in with a chance. However, it is in women's snowboard cross that the Swiss team has the best chance of winning medals with Tanja Frieden (Olympic champion in 2006), Sandra Frei (2nd at the 2007 World Championships), Mellie Francon (3rd at the 2009 World Championships) and Olivia Nobs (2nd at the 2009 World Championships). In PGS, competition within the men's team will be very intense with experienced competitors like Simon Schoch, Roland Haldi, Heinz Inniger, Marc Iselin and the return of two-time Olympic champion, Philipp Schoch.

Curling, bobsleigh and ice skating

The curling event will be fiercely contested.

"Both teams are aiming for a medal", says Jürg Leuenberger of Swiss Curling. The team led by Mirjam Ott from Davos (Grisons) has already won two silver medals, one at the Salt Lake City Olympics in 2002 and one in Turin in 2006. Its honours list includes European Championship titles in 1996 and 2008 and 3rd place in the 2008



Lara Gut

World Championships. Jürg Leuenberger says: "The women have medal aspirations, but winning gold will be tough because of strong competition from the Canadians and the Chinese." In the men's event, the team captained by Ralph Stöckli of Club Basel Regio finished 5th at the Turin Olympics, 3rd at the 2003 World Championships and 4th in 2007 and 2009. Leuenberger explains: "The main contenders will be Canada, Norway, Scotland – the current world



Simon Ammann

champions representing Great Britain – and Germany.” There are also hopes of success in the bobsleigh with teams led by the pilots, Ivo Rüegg and Beat Hefti. The return of Stéphane Lambiel augurs well in the figure skating. It remains to be seen whether he can compete with a new generation of skaters. Whatever happens, the Games promise to be a magnificent spectacle and will hopefully bring us a good medal haul.

Urs Lehmann, President of the Swiss Ski Association: “Thirteen medals”

“SWISS REVIEW”: *What are your goals for the Vancouver Olympics?*

URS LEHMANN: We have eight disciplines at the Swiss Ski Association, and seven of them will be represented at the Games. Only telemark will not make the trip. Based on an analysis of results in previous years, we are aiming for thirteen medals.

In which disciplines has Switzerland got the best medal prospects?

We have our sights set on six medals in alpine skiing, four in men’s and two in women’s. We were the top nation in the 2009 World Championships for the first time in 20 years. In the women’s events, even though Lara Gut is unlikely to make it, skiers like Fabienne Suter, Dominique Gislin, Fränzy Aufdenblatten and Nadia Styger have the potential to win two medals. Right from the first race of the season, the men proved that they will be in the reckoning with Didier Cuche’s 1st place finish and Carlo Janka coming 3rd. Both are world champions. Didier Défago, winner of the downhill at Wengen and Kitzbühel last season, is also expected to do well.

What about snowboarding?

The team won four medals at the World Championships – Fraenzi Mägert-Kohli and Patrizia Kummer in alpine and Mellie Franco and Olivia Nobs in snowboard cross. But we are hoping for three medals this year – two from the women in snowboard cross and one in alpine, even though that will be a tall order with the Americans.

And what about the new freestyle discipline – ski cross?

Switzerland generally tends to do well when a new discipline is introduced. We believe we have a chance with Michael Schmid and Andreas Steffen. The women also won World Cup races last year. However, it is difficult to predict as it is not yet an established sport like snowboarding or alpine skiing. In freestyle skiing, there is, of course, the Olympic champion, Evelyne Leu, and a very talented young men’s team, four of whom finished in the top 10 of the overall World Cup rankings, including Andreas Isoz and Thomas Lambert. We also hope to win a medal in freestyle skiing.

And the ski jump?

Simon Ammann and Andreas Küttel both won medals at the 2009 World Championships (1st and 3rd). We believe Ammann, in particular, has a good chance of being amongst the medallists. He finished 2nd in the overall World Cup rankings in 2009 and is a consistent, high-level performer.

Cross-country skiing?

We have medal aspirations here for the first time in a long while. Dario Cologna, who finished first in the 2009 overall rankings, and the relay team are expected to do well. And not forgetting Curdin Perl and Toni Livers, who remain in Cologna’s shadow, but who have achieved the same results as him in training.

14 MEDALS AT THE WINTER OLYMPICS IN TURIN IN 2006:

5 gold, 4 silver and 5 bronze medals in addition to 24 top 8 finishes.

- Evelyne Leu, freestyle skiing, gold.
- Tanja Frieden, snowboard cross, gold.
- Daniela Meuli, snowboard PGS, gold.
- Philippe Schoch, snowboard PGS, gold.
- Maya Pedersen-Bieri, skeleton, gold.
- Mirjam Ott and her team, curling, silver.
- Martina Schild, downhill skiing, silver.
- Stéphane Lambiel, individual ice skating, silver.
- Simon Schoch, snowboard PGS, silver.
- Martin Annen and his team, two-man and four-man bobsleigh, bronze.
- Ambrosi Hoffmann, super G, bronze.
- Bruno Kernén, downhill skiing, bronze.

- Gregor Stähli, skeleton, bronze.

SIX MEDALS AT THE 2009 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS IN VAL D’ISÈRE (FRANCE):

- Didier Cuche, gold in the super G, silver in the downhill.
- Carlo Janka, gold in the giant slalom, bronze in the downhill.
- Lara Gut, silver in the downhill and super combined.



Urs Lehmann

The host city: Vancouver, nestled between the USA and Alaska

“The best games ever!” – the Canadians are pulling out all the stops to deliver a magnificent and memorable event. The Olympic Village in Vancouver will host competitors and officials from the ice sports as well as snowboarding and freestyle skiing. The other disciplines will stay in Whistler Village in the Coast Mountains, some 120 kilometres from Vancouver. Describing the host city and its surroundings almost feels like writing travel diaries in the style of Jack London. Countless bays, headlands, fjords and islands are found along the Pacific Ocean coastline. Majestic, snow-covered peaks rise above the sea, and emerald lakes are nestled between the mountains. The trees, which are as wide as medieval towers, underline just how well-preserved the natural environment is. With a region of such outstanding beauty and Canadian hospitality, what more could you want from the Olympic Games?



Didier Cuche

A culinary tour of Switzerland

What tickles your taste buds? Plain in Pigna, Maluns or the famous Aargauer Rüeblitorte? Or maybe a Berner Platte, Papet Vaudois or Fondue Moitié-Moitié? Any Swiss expatriate is sure to yearn for some hearty Swiss cooking now and again. And a new cookbook from Betty Bossi is guaranteed to help satisfy appetites for authentic Swiss food. **By Heinz Eckert**

It's thanks to Betty Bossi that Swiss cooking is well and truly back in fashion. 53 years of experience and a genuine love for Swiss cuisine have prompted the company to compile a comprehensive collection of recipes for Switzerland's finest and most popular dishes. Spanning more than 300 pages, it is the first book from the company to be published in English as well. Swiss cooking can hold its head up high in the illustrious company of the world-famous culinary traditions of Italy, Asia or France.

By launching "The Swiss Cookbook", Betty Bossi wants not only to preserve Switzerland's culinary heritage but also to actively contribute to the future development of Swiss cooking. This original, beautifully illustrated and comprehensive reference work features all the essential regional specialities together with new interpretations of classic dishes and fascinating, entertaining cookery tips. All the recipes

share a long tradition and reveal a passion for detail and a love of fresh seasonal produce. But as Switzerland's foremost cook, Betty Bossi is intending to take Swiss specialities to a wider international audience. "The Swiss Cookbook" is the first cookbook from the company to appear in English as well as German and French. It's a book for Swiss at home, home-sick Swiss abroad, lovers of Switzerland and gourmets everywhere. In short, it's for the whole world.

If you were to ask what Switzerland's national dish was, most people would probably say fondue or raclette. And what about the most popular sweet treat? Chocolate, I hear you say. But Betty Bossi's "The Swiss Cookbook" broadens our horizons and proves that Switzerland has much more to offer than just chocolate and cheese. The country not only has four language regions but four different culinary traditions as well, with every part of

the country proudly preserving its own specialities.

The new Swiss cookbook is divided into four regions: Romandy; Solothurn, Berne and Valais; Northern and Eastern Switzerland; and Central Switzerland, Grisons and Ticino. The recipes are also divided into three categories: a recipe with one Swiss cross is of the type "New Swiss cooking with fresh Swiss produce", two crosses indicates a "New interpretation of a Swiss classic", and three crosses symbolises a "Swiss classic".

As you would expect, the "classics" include the likes of Äplermagronen with Apfelschnitzen (Alpine macaroni with sliced apple) and Zürcher Geschnetzeltes (chopped veal with mushrooms and cream). But Betty Bossi also throws in a few surprises, such as "Hagu-Hans-Gotlett" (pork cutlets with dried fruit) and "Ziberlihoger-Lisi-Filet" (pork medallions in a cream sauce). And no one would guess from its name what "Sii" is: a sweet dish made with bread, sultanas and red wine.

The book is packed with delicious ideas and surprises, although a few recipes do make you chuckle. Asparagus samosas, salmon sashimi, stuffed quail with horseradish, and crème brûlée are undoubtedly mouth-watering, though they can hardly be described as authentically Swiss.



SUURE MOCKE (wine-braised beef)
Marinade: approx. 5 days. Preparation time: approx. 1 hr.
Braise for approx. 2 hrs 45 mins.
For 6 persons
1 kg of beef (e.g. eye of round)

Marinade
1.2 litres of light red wine (e.g. Blauburgunder Beerli)
1 dl of red wine vinegar
1 small leek, chopped
1 carrot, chopped
1 small piece of celery, chopped
2 onions, halved
2 sprigs of rosemary
1 cinnamon stick
2 bay leaves and 2 cloves
8 black peppercorns, ground
4 juniper berries, ground

Marinade: bring all the ingredients for the marinade to the boil in a pan and allow to cool. Pour into a glass, porcelain or stainless steel container, place the meat into the marinade, covering it fully in the liquid, if necessary by weighing it down. Cover and leave in a cool place for approx. 5 days, turning the meat every day. Remove the meat and vegetables and dab dry. Bring the marinade to the boil, pour through a fine-mesh sieve and put to one side.

Season the meat with 1½ teaspoons of salt and a pinch of pepper.
Heat 1½ tablespoons of clarified butter in the pan. Brown off the meat for around 8 minutes and remove. Sauté the vegetables and remove. Reduce the heat and add a small amount of clarified butter. Add 2 tablespoons of flour and ½ a tablespoon of sugar, cook until hazelnut brown then remove the pan from the stove. Pour in 5–7 dl of the marinade that has been put to one side and bring to the boil while stirring. Put the meat and vegetables back into the pan. ⅓ of the meat should be covered by the liquid. Cover and simmer on a low heat for approx. 2¾ hours, turning the meat every half an hour. Remove the meat and leave to rest for approx. 10 minutes before carving, keeping it covered. Season the sauce with salt and pepper to taste. Carve the meat and serve with the sauce and vegetables.

ALPINE MACARONI WITH SLICED APPLE

Preparation time: approx. 1 hr
A wide, 2-litre, greased oven-proof baking tin is required.

Preparation: preheat oven to 120°C, preheat baking tin.

ALPINE MACARONI

Cook 500 g of waxy potatoes, diced into 2 cm cubes, and 200 g of alpine macaroni in boiling salted water. Cook the potatoes and macaroni until soft, then drain.

Arrange 200 g of finely grated spicy alpine cheese in layers with the potatoes and macaroni in the prepared baking tin. Top with cheese and keep warm. Wipe out the pan. Heat 2 tablespoons of butter in the same pan.

Brown off 2 thinly sliced onions and 1 clove of crushed garlic and spread over the macaroni. Keep warm.

Bring 3 tablespoons of milk, 3 tablespoons of full cream and 2 pinches of salt to the boil in the same pan and pour over the macaroni. Wipe out the pan.

SLICED APPLE

Heat ½ a tablespoon of butter in the same pan
Add 750 g of sliced red apples
Add 1½ dl of apple wine or cider, 1 cinnamon stick, halved, and approx. 2 tablespoons of sugar. Cover and cook the sliced apples until soft. Remove the lid, reduce the liquid and remove the cinnamon stick.

Serve hot or cold with the alpine macaroni. www.MySwitzerland.com/aso





Hotel Lej da Staz, Lake Staz, St. Moritz

Typically Swiss. Irresistible.

In Switzerland, how do you find typical hotels and places that best express the essence of “Swissness”?

The “Swiss way of life” does not just mean chalets decked with flowers and a good fondue shared among friends. Swiss culture, traditions and innovation have a multitude of faces. Switzerland Tourism has selected more than 250 hotels which best represent a typically Swiss lifestyle. Beside a lake or in the mountains, in the city or in the countryside, top modern or more traditional in style, they all captivate you with their characteristic Swissness. These “Typically Swiss Hotels” can be visited at MySwitzerland.com/aso.

Relive the past

The loveliest way to discover typical Switzerland and its traditions is to journey into the past. For example, by discovering the Open-Air Museum of Rural Dwellings in Ballenberg, which displays more than 100 authentic old houses originating from every region of the country. To travel back in time, visit: MySwitzerland.com/aso.

Network Switzerland

Register on MySwitzerland.com/aso before 31 March 2010 and win a two-night stay at the Wellness & Spa Hotel Ermitage Golf***** in Gstaad.

Gliding with the wind.

Adrenaline in the Engadine: gliding on skis or snowboard over the frozen lake of Silvaplana, letting yourself be carried along by the wind – that’s what we call snowkiting, a sport that gives you wings. A specialist school on the spot will initiate you into the arcane mysteries of the snowkite.



Tip 1

Further information:

MySwitzerland.com
SEARCH 4049 >>

Alpine well-being.

Relax in the heart of the Bernese Alps at the Parkhotel Bellevue & Spa**** in Adelboden. A spa with an area of 1,700 sq.m. renovated in February 2009 and in a unique location above the village: all the benefits you need to recharge your batteries and relax in an exceptional environment.



Tip 2

Further information:

MySwitzerland.com
SEARCH 4010 >>

Typically Swiss.

Typically Swiss, typically romantic: in the heart of a medieval village on the shores of Lake Geneva, the Auberge d’Hermance is one of the “Typically Swiss Hotels”. There are just six bedrooms in this little hotel which blends luxury, intimacy and nostalgic charm.



Tip 3

Further information:

MySwitzerland.com
SEARCH 328371 >>

A collaboration between Switzerland Tourism and the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA)



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Baltisser: "People who vote for the SVP vote for Swiss values"

SVP International was founded in 1992 as a political association for Swiss people abroad. The Committee consists of influential SVP politicians and dedicated Swiss abroad. Together with the General Secretariat it works to promote ties between the Fifth Switzerland and the federal Parliament. In an interview with "Swiss Review", SVP General Secretary Martin Baltisser stresses the importance of Swiss voters abroad. By Heinz Eckert

"SWISS REVIEW": *What do the Swiss abroad mean to you?*

MARTIN BALTISSER: They mean a great deal to me. After all, I was a founding member of SVP International back in 1992. When postal voting was introduced for Swiss abroad, it was immediately clear to us that they should also be given the opportunity to align themselves with a party.

What were the aims behind the foundation of SVP International?

Our objective was, and still is, to forge contacts between Swiss nationals living abroad as well as between them and their home country. SVP International also aims to make an important contribution to protecting the interests of Swiss abroad here in Switzerland. Naturally, we endeavour to include their concerns in Swiss federal politics when preparing responses to consultations or initiatives. The SVP International Committee is made up of dedicated Swiss abroad as well as influential SVP politicians.

Much of the SVP's manifesto does not necessarily reflect the views and interests of Swiss people abroad. The SVP's No to the EU surely can't be in the interests of Swiss nationals living there?

I'm not so sure. Most Swiss abroad join the SVP because they want to see traditional Swiss values defended. We want to

see to it that these values are not abandoned. What's more, a great many Swiss strongly support our European policy because they live in the EU and can see for themselves what EU membership would mean for Switzerland. SVP International represents the interests of the Swiss people, who want a self-assured country where prosperity, security and freedom thrive. They therefore support independence, low taxes, a well-equipped army and police force, and a neutral foreign policy.

Of all the Swiss parties, yours is the most active in terms of the Swiss abroad community. Why?

Because we have the most active Swiss abroad. Also, we afforded the Swiss abroad community the status of a cantonal party from the outset, and fully integrated it into our parent party. That has to be a major factor in our success.

How many members do you have among the Swiss abroad?

It's difficult to say, since we don't keep a central register of members. We estimate that there are several hundred. The hard core of Swiss abroad who also pay mem-

bership fees totals around three hundred. Membership among the Swiss abroad has grown at the same rate as membership at home. There was a veritable wave of new members when Christoph Blocher was voted off the Federal Council.

How do you maintain contact with Swiss abroad?

We mainly use our electronic channels, though we also write to registered members. In future, we plan to introduce communities so that our party allies abroad can have interactive discussions with each other. We also keep our members regularly informed through our newsletters.



Martin Baltisser, General Secretary of the SVP



What does the Council of the Swiss Abroad mean to you?

The Council of the Swiss Abroad in itself is a good institution. Unfortunately, the SVP is extremely under-represented on this council, even though it is by far the strongest party in the Swiss Parliament. That needs to change.

Will a Swiss abroad ever make it onto the National Council?

Since candidates have to put themselves up for election in a canton, that would be very difficult, but by no means impossible. There are certainly some highly eligible candidates around, and for the 2011 elections we will once more campaign with as many lists of Swiss abroad as possible. At present it is the SVP National Councilors who guarantee a link between the Swiss abroad and the federal Parliament.

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■ Researchers at CERN in Geneva can stop agonising. After more than a year of repair work, the **largest particle accelerator** (LHC) ever built has been put back into operation without any hitches. The scientists are aiming to detect traces of the **invisible "dark matter"** believed to make up more than 96% of the universe.

■ The Federal Minister of Economic Affairs, Doris Leuthard, who was elected Swiss President in December, is planning to apply the safeguard clause **to protect the Swiss labour market** from 2010. The Federal Council had decided against using this instrument in May 2009. She told the "NZZ am Sonntag" that the government had to look at ways of making Switzerland a less attractive destination for EU citizens in 2010 and 2011. Last October, unemployment in Switzerland rose to 4%, its highest level for more than four years.

■ **The Competition Commission** (Comco) has imposed a CHF 220 million fine on Swisscom. The operator overcharged its competitors (Sunrise, Tele2, etc.) for high-speed Internet services over several years. This prevented its operator customers from operating their ADSL services profitably.

■ A third of Switzerland's 4.28 million workforce **is employed part-time**. This proportion is almost unparalleled in Europe, where only the Netherlands is ahead of Switzerland with a rate of 48%. This phenomenon mainly concerns women.

■ Roger Federer finished 2009 as **world number 1**, regaining his crown after victory at Wimbledon. He also helped Switzerland to retain its place in the Davis Cup world group



The Swiss U17s football team – all the players are still under 17 years of age – became world champions in Nigeria last November after an outstanding performance. They defeated Brazil, Germany, Italy, Columbia and Nigeria in turn to see Switzerland crowned football world champions for the first time ever. The team was honoured in a reception at the Federal Palace.

"We have pursued a policy that has made us the most competitive nation in the world and the most innovative in Europe. We are still the world's seventh most important financial centre."

Doris Leuthard, President Elect of the Confederation for 2010 and Economics Minister

"I have no problem with Muslim women wearing head scarves. In the more remote valleys of Grisons you will still see older women wearing head scarves."

Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf, Federal Councillor and Justice Minister

"Should Switzerland join the European Union? I wouldn't entertain any illusions. Switzerland is very much in the thick of it and dependent on the EU in all sorts of ways. Everything would have been much easier with the European Economic Area (EEA)."

Joschka Fischer, former German Foreign Minister

"The longer Switzerland maintains a political distance from the rest of Europe, and yet profits from the most important achievements of the EU, the less willing it will be to risk EU accession."

Michael Herman, political scientist

"According to our predictions, unemployment will fall gradually from 2011. Once the economy picks up again Switzerland will return to its traditionally very low rates of unemployment."

Serge Gaillard, head of the Labour Directorate at the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs

"Swiss-based asset management for foreign clients will continue to be very much in demand."

Brady Dougan, American CEO of Credit Suisse

"Why do we have up to 400,000 Muslims in Switzerland, mainly from the Balkans and Turkey? Because we brought them in as workers and then they brought their families."

Rudolf Strahm, commentator and former Price Inspector

"The arrest of film director Roman Polanski may have been legally inevitable, but politically it was senseless."

Martin Senti, editor of the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung", on the worldwide protests following this arrest

by making a decisive contribution in the play-off match against Italy.

■ The vaccination campaign to counter the **H1N1** flu is set to cost almost CHF 130 million and will be met by the federal government. It was launched at the end of September for

persons at risk and then extended to the rest of the population.

■ After Germany, Switzerland is the **most attractive location in the world** for companies according to a study conducted by the consultants Ernst & Young. Of the 700 multi-

national company directors surveyed, 20% would choose Switzerland if they had to relocate their business. In contrast, the Swiss tax system has lost some of its appeal, dropping from 4th position worldwide in 2007 to 11th in 2009.

■ Having retired early from the Federal Council, **Pascal Couchepin** can now dedicate his time to his passion for history. He is to become President of the Foundation of the Swiss School of Archaeology in Greece as well as the Hardt Foundation for the Study of Classical Antiquity in Vandoeuvres (canton of Geneva). He is also responsible for promoting French as the official language of the Winter Olympics in Vancouver.

■ In the first nine months of 2009, the **number of companies going bankrupt** in Switzerland increased by 28.9% to reach a total of 3,872 companies. A dismal record number of 1,387 companies went into liquidation in the third quarter alone.

■ Chemist Michael Grätzel, a professor at the Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne, is one of four people to be awarded the 2009 **Balzan Prize**. He will receive CHF 1 million for inventing a new type of photovoltaic cell which will be used in Bertrand Piccard's "Solar Impulse".

■ **The GaultMillau guide** to Swiss gastronomy has named Andreas Caminada "Chef of the Year". The 32-year-old chef at the Hotel Schauenstein in Fürstenu (Grisons) was previously named "Newcomer of the Year" in 2007. His "magical and audacious" cuisine and a score of 19 out of 20 have seen him enter the exclusive club of "la crème de la crème des cuisiniers", which has eight members in Switzerland, including Philippe Rochat from the canton of Vaud.



Switzerland – a winter wonderland: view from the Gamsberg down to a sea of mist on Lake Walen.