

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE SWISS ABROAD

S W I S S

REVIEW

APRIL 2012 / NO.2



FIFA

For the Game. For the World.

**FIFA: headquarters in Zurich
and image problems**

**The Swiss National Bank and
politicians**

**A Valais-born director and his
film about pilgrims in Nepal**



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Ursula Deplazes

Researcher from Graubünden, living in Rome



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The Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Swiss abroad

FEDERAL COUNCILLOR DIDIER BURKHALTER gave one of his first interviews since his move to the Department of Foreign Affairs at the start of the year to “Swiss Review”. By doing so, the new Minister of Foreign Affairs gave a clear indication that the Swiss abroad, whose numbers are growing all the time, are important to him. Federal Councillor Burkhalter told us in the interview that he really loves discovering new countries and has a “good feel for differences”. He says that he wants to gain a better understanding of the issues and problems facing his over 700,000 compatriots abroad. His position on the new law being called for with regard to the Swiss abroad is already clear. He supports it unreservedly and believes such a law would establish “the foundations for an integral policy on the Swiss abroad”. This is extremely welcome news for Swiss people living outside Switzerland. The Swiss abroad will also have the opportunity to meet Federal Councillor Burkhalter in person at the Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Lausanne in August.

The main article in this issue concerns FIFA, world football’s governing body. FIFA is often very directly associated with Switzerland, partly because it is led by Sepp Blatter, who is Swiss, and partly because it has been based in Zurich for decades. This is detrimental to our nation in light of the conduct of many FIFA officials. The federation’s financial affairs – it generates billions in revenues, provides hardly any services, pays



Barbara Engel

very little tax and is seen as a sanctuary for corruption – are increasingly coming in for criticism from Swiss politicians. An anti-corruption campaign launched by FIFA last November has failed to prove convincing.

While this issue was going to print, a highly contentious debate was taking place in Switzerland over the procurement of new fighter jets for the armed forces. The complaint raised is that the Federal Council, in particular Ueli Maurer as head of the Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS), overlooked negative evaluation reports when selecting the Swedish Gripen aircraft. The fighter jets were denounced as “cheap”, their quality and capabilities doubted. The question as to whether the aircraft ordered in November are “optimal” for Switzerland, as the DDPS claims, or unfit for purpose, as critics argue, is bound to remain a topic of debate for some time yet. “Swiss Review” will take a more in-depth look at the subject of the Swiss armed forces in a later issue. However, we will not just examine one controversial decision but will instead consider the army and its objectives and challenges in the 21st century in broader terms.

I would finally like to urge you to sign our petition to the Federal Council for e-voting to be introduced as quickly as possible. Being able to vote via the Internet is extremely important for Swiss citizens abroad (details on page 16)

BARBARA ENGEL

5	Mailbag
5	Books: A close look at development aid
7	Images: The 1950s – photographs and analyses
8	FIFA – headquartered in Zurich, rich and non-transparent
12	An interview with the new Minister of Foreign Affairs
14	How the Hildebrand affair unfolded
16	Closer to home with e-voting
	<i>Regional news</i>
17	Referenda
18	Conflict of interests over the Swiss asylum system
19	The Swiss banks would manage comfortably without illicit earnings
20	50 years of press photography
22	A journey with a Hindu pilgrim in Nepal
25	OSA news
28	Notes from Parliament
30	Little gems

Cover page: FIFA President Sepp Blatter after his re-election last June at Zurich’s Hallenstadion. Photo: Alessandro Della Bella / Keystone

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Democratic voting?

I wonder whether electronic voting, even though very practical, really allows us to maintain a system of free and democratic voting or, in other words, voting without manipulation and outside influence? My question arises after the recent holding of the first free elections in Tunisia where this issue was raised.

AMEL CHEIKHROUHOU,
ENNASR, TUNISIA

Fitting for the 21st century

I believe that Internet voting is an ideal solution for the Swiss abroad. We are in the 21st century! Depending on the circumstances, it is difficult to vote by post – limited personnel in the embassies and lack of proximity. The issue of organisation remains but we surely have enough talented IT people to make this work.

MICHEL PIGUET,
PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC

E-voting – a huge step forward

Internet voting is a huge step forward for us expats. We can express our opinion in just a few clicks. This is important because we keep watch whilst far away from Switzerland! We observe and analyse the events that take place before our eyes and when our compatriots have doubts about international issues, we are there to provide answers on various topics, such as the European Union, the benefits and drawbacks of free movement and the dangers of such a policy.

P. VOGEL, FRANCE

The FDFA should raise the issue

It is practically impossible for the Swiss living in Brazil to vote because mail only arrives a few days before voting/elections – if all goes well – or even worse afterwards as a result of

strike action, like at the last elections. Brazil should sign the Wassenaar Arrangement so that the Swiss in Brazil can vote via the Internet. The FDFA should make a request to Itamaraty, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

HERBERT HIRSCHI, BRAZIL

Well done

Dear editorial team, many members of our club have said that “Swiss Review” is now much more modern, interesting and outward-looking. A particularly critical Swiss lady, who was previously a writer herself and is not a member of the club, also says that she now really enjoys reading “Swiss Review”. Many thanks for your good work and for keeping us so well informed.

MARIA BRABETZ,
CLUB SUISSE PORTO, PORTUGAL

Reasons for poverty

I wish to point out the following concerning the article entitled “Swiss solidarity faces an acid test” in the November 2011 issue of “Swiss Review”. I have lived in Brazil for over 20 years where I am a voluntary worker. I spent a year working on the “Monte Azul” regeneration project in a slum district (favela) of São Paulo where I was able to gain a better understanding of the reasons for poverty. This insight led me to set up the children’s charity ARCO in São Paulo with my ex-wife, a Brazilian. During the set-up phase, we also approached the FDFA via the Swiss embassy to present our project and seek support. Our tuition project was approved (10,000 US dollars) and the school for children with special educational requirements is still operating today.

I am convinced that the main reason for poverty is related to the local school system. The

Desire to help and adventure

THOSE WHO TRAVEL EXTENSIVELY have many tales to tell. This is certainly true of the five Swiss women and seven Swiss men who report on their humanitarian aid work in the anthology “Die andere Seite der Welt” (The Other Side of the World). Some were involved in emergency relief aid, some in development aid, and others in both. They all share a desire to help combined with a spirit of adventure. The third key quality they possess is the ability to negotiate in foreign cultures.

Lengthy interviews have produced recollections and observations in the first person, often about perilous situations, even if sometimes “only” on journalistic assignments (Al Imfeld before his time as a development missionary, Andrea König after working for the ICRC). Just under half of the portraits are about former ICRC delegates. Naturally, these Red Cross deployments often involved trouble spots. The interviews are part of an “oral history” project but they are presented uncritically and only with the necessary supplementary information.

Besides their adventures, this easy-to-read book, which is also suitable for young people, also provides great insight into the motivation of the workers, their approach and their relationship with local people and the head office in Switzerland. The latter appears sometimes to lack understanding of the situation on the ground but at the same time proves invaluable during crises. “Today you spend half the day reading e-mails from Berne with your back turned to the country”, says the agronomist Martin Menzi recalling the “golden days” when he was a largely independent project manager several decades ago in India.

The account of the former ICRC delegate Antonella Notari is touching on a personal level, not just but certainly in part because her partner was fatally wounded before her eyes in Somalia. The reports of Notari’s ICRC colleagues, Carlos Bauverd, Beat von Däniken and Jacques Moreillon, also contain some extraordinary, disconcerting accounts, above all about prison visits. The two oldest contributors, Verena Fiechter, employed by the Basel Mission, and Anna Wicki, known as Sister Maria-Paula of the Baldegg Convent, recall their long-term humanitarian aid work as hospital managers in Africa. Both were given honorary native

names, though a male nurse did tell the nun once when she got annoyed at all the chaos around them: “Mama, you cannot be like us, you have different chromosomes.” She took comfort from this.

Two other new publications look at Swiss development policy from very different perspectives. “Gemeinsam unterwegs. Eine Zeitreise durch 60 Jahre Entwicklungszusammenarbeit Schweiz-Nepal” (Travelling Together – a Journey through 60 Years of Development Cooperation between Switzerland and Nepal), written by Rolf Wilhelm, the former deputy director of the SDC, and other experts, is a portrayal and collection of material set out in chronological and thematic order. It was published by Haupt-Verlag, which also has another quasi official-sounding title by several authors in its portfolio: “Im Dienst der Menschheit – Meilensteine der Schweizer Entwicklungszusammenarbeit” (Serving Mankind – Milestones in Swiss Development Cooperation).

DANIEL GOLDSTEIN



THOMAS GULL, DOMINIK SCHNETZER: “Die andere Seite der Welt. Was Schweizerinnen und Schweizer im humanitären Einsatz erlebt haben”, hier+jetzt, Baden 2011, 272 pages, CHF 42

state schools in poor countries are unfortunately very weak. The rich (including foreigners) send their children to private schools (such as the Swiss schools), creating class division. We social workers know that the growing poverty is mainly explained by the capitalist system. The excessively wealthy today have so much money that they financially support politicians who are elected by a manipulated people (democracy). In return, they get poor employment laws, low minimum wages, etc. and rich shareholders who are becoming increasingly prosperous.

FRITZ MAUTI, BRAZIL

Information and PR

Congratulations to Professor Imhof for his comments on the degradation of the mainstream media, where information has been replaced by sophisticated PR, and a relentless stream of commercial publicity. Free newspapers are the lesser evil compared to free radio and television so prevalent in the Anglo-Saxon world. Here in Australia people spend as much time watching mindless and noisy advertisements as they do watching the mostly manipulated information and enter-

tainment programmes. People who live in countries where they have to pay a licence fee for their radio and TV services are actually lucky; they avoid a fair amount of brainwashing and stress.

With respect to opinion-forming by a political party, the amount spent by the SVP is actually a very small sum compared to the huge amounts invested by the promoters of globalisation, who for the past 20 years have conditioned Westerners to abandon their moral values, to welcome intransigent foreigners in our midst, and to devote our life to the service of an economy dedicated to unrestrained greed.

FRANZ SCHENK,
OSBORNE PARK, AUSTRALIA

Swiss traditions under threat

With regard to the article about Swiss traditions in the January edition of "Swiss Review", becoming a Swiss watchmaker is a tradition that goes back centuries. In our family, my son belongs to the fourth generation of watchmakers. Unfortunately, this trade and tradition is on its way to extinction. Sadly, this is because of the practices and greed of major Swiss watch companies.

The practices of over sixty Swiss watch companies towards watchmakers and consumers are unacceptable and shameful. By restricting the sale of their parts to the owners of their watches and to independent watchmakers, companies like Swatch and Richemont have become the sole provider of servicing and repair for their brands. Consumers are now at the mercy of their service centres. Competition that keeps quality and price in check is therefore obsolete.

These Swiss watch companies act as the owner of the watches they have sold. They refuse to make the parts needed for proper regular servicing of their watches available to owners and the watchmakers of their choosing.

In the US, a few years ago there were approximately fourteen thousand watchmakers. Today, approximately five thousand remain. This Swiss watch cartel ruse is simple: they claim they want to protect the brand's name and their clients. Making sure that highly qualified watchmakers are no longer able to service or repair their watches is an oxymoron. It does not offer protection of any kind. Fortunately, these

companies are under investigation for alleged anti-competitive and anti-trust violations.

ANDRÉ FLEURY,
SAN RAFAEL, CALIFORNIA

More information about the attitude of this cartel is available at: www.andre-fleury.com

Happy and grateful

I am extremely grateful to still receive the printed version of "Swiss Review". I keep the issues for at least a year. I am delighted to say that "Swiss Review" is now better laid out and more reader-friendly. Congratulations!

KLARA BROGLI,
TAMIL NADU, INDIA

Top quality

January 2012 No. 1 of "Swiss Review" – another top-quality issue. Balanced, enriching and diverse! I would also like to thank you for allowing me to receive the printed version of "Swiss Review". I would not want to read it on a screen.

DR. JOHANNES KOCH,
COLOMBO, SRI LANKA

Editorial note: Any Swiss citizen abroad can order the printed version of "Swiss Review" at www.swissabroad.ch

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Between consumerism and Cold War

The 1950s, when today's generation of grandparents enjoyed their youth, is often looked back on as an idyllic time of innocence, but also a somewhat staid period. It is also regarded as an era of awakening and new beginnings. Cars like the Renault Heck, TV sets, record players, petticoats and rock 'n' roll all featured heavily in the 1950s, but so too did anti-communism and institutions like the Church, school and the army. In the book "Schöner leben, mehr haben" (Living the good life, having more), images and insightful essays are combined to produce a diverse picture that sometimes makes you smile and sometimes makes you cringe.

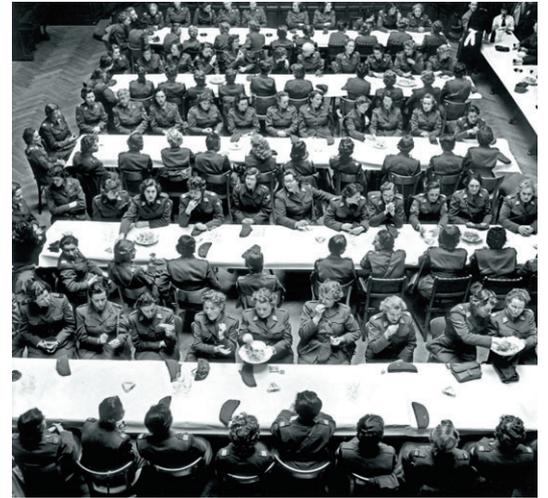
"Schöner leben, mehr haben", edited by Thomas Buomberger and Peter Pfunder; 267 pages; ISBN: 978-3-85791-649-6; price: around CHF 48



Photos (clockwise):
Renault Heck 4CV, advertisement
circa 1964, photograph
by Max Roth

Members of the Women's
Auxiliary Service in
Geneva in 1953, photograph
by Monique Jacot

Wild rock 'n' roll nights in Biel,
circa 1956, photograph by
Christian Staub



The perfect happy couple, circa
1958, photograph by Max Roth
(no title)

Italian guest workers at Zu-
rich station, circa 1950, photo-
graph by Christian Staub



Billion-dollar colossus spiralling out of control

World football's governing body, FIFA, the world's largest sporting federation, is regarded as a sanctuary for bribery and corruption. This also casts a shadow over Switzerland and Zurich, where FIFA is headquartered. A professor of law is now drawing up proposals for new structures and more transparent management. But the people who will ultimately decide on the reforms are precisely those who caused the failings in the first place.

By Jean François Tanda



Joseph Blatter, FIFA President, and Mark Pieth, professor of law, at the press conference on the anti-corruption measures on 30 November 2011

Joseph “Sepp” Blatter agitatedly drums his fingers on the table. He pays no attention to the flurry of photographers’ flashlights going off. The FIFA President sent out the invitations to the press conference but his place in the auditorium at FIFA headquarters in Zurich is occupied. It is 30 November 2011 and Blatter’s seat is taken by Mark Pieth, the Basel-based professor of law, who is the founder and head of the “Basel Institute on Governance” (BIG). BIG has produced an advisory report for FIFA on good governance and compliance. This is believed to have cost 120,000 Swiss francs. Blatter introduces Pieth as the head of FIFA’s new internal “independent governance committee”. For a daily fee of 5,000 Swiss francs, the lawyer is to ensure the improvement of management and transparency within FIFA. The money will go to BIG and the University of Basel, while Pieth himself will not earn anything.

Pieth is essentially the navigator and fire officer aboard the FIFA steamship, which captain Blatter wants to steer back to calmer waters, so he says. FIFA has predominantly made negative headlines for many years. It

has become synonymous with underhand practices, bribery and corruption, and, because FIFA is headquartered in Zurich, Switzerland is also in the firing line.

Fourteen years after Blatter took over the helm at the world’s largest sports federation, FIFA’s image has reached a low point. Four of the senior management body’s 24 members have left FIFA over the past year and a half due to allegations of bribery and corruption. Six others are facing judicial inquiries in their native countries on suspicion of corruption but still sit on FIFA’s Executive Committee for the time being.

Swiss politicians grow concerned

Headlines worldwide about affairs and scandals at FIFA are also a cause of concern for politicians in Switzerland. The nation has come in for criticism internationally for turning a blind eye to the shady dealings of football officials for years. But politicians are now starting to ask questions. They want to know more about FIFA’s business practices and are working on amendments to the law.

Politicians were alarmed by an article that appeared in the “Tages-Anzeiger” newspa-

per in October 2010. Parliament had to accept with consternation that Switzerland lacks the legal basis to clamp down on the practices of FIFA officials. International sports associations like FIFA are not subject to Swiss anti-corruption legislation. This legal loophole has provided countless FIFA officials with protection from the judicial authorities. That is now set to change. On 17 January 2012, the National Council’s Committee for Legal Affairs approved a parliamentary initiative under which corruption at sports associations would be declared a criminal offence liable to public prosecution. Professor of law Pieth is calling for the officials of FIFA and within other sports to be given the same legal status as representatives of other international organisations. The judicial authorities would then have to investigate any suspicion of corruption officially.

FIFA is a heavyweight among the international federations. Every male, female and junior footballer, but also every football match in the world, is governed by FIFA’s regime except for fun tournaments and matches in alternative leagues. When accepting their licence, all footballers recognise the authority of FIFA and agree to refrain from going to ordinary courts over football-related disputes. FIFA sanctions anyone who does not adhere to these rules. FIFA has monopolised a human cultural asset – and exploits it for commercial purposes.

Mr Blatter in court

Football’s governing body was once an organisation that arranged the football World Cup every four years. Today, FIFA is a billion-dollar business. It generates annual revenues of over a billion US dollars (2010: 1.3 billion) through the sale of television and marketing rights for football World Cup tournaments. Companies vie with one another to become official FIFA partners. Football’s World Cup is the most-watched TV programme in the world. According to FIFA, over 700 million viewers tuned in to



FIFA President Joseph "Sepp" Blatter as a "First Class Grand Commander" at the Royal Pahang Palace in Kuala Lumpur in March 2011

watch the final between Spain and the Netherlands on 11 July 2010. FIFA sponsors are guaranteed a presence on TV screens around the world.

Advertising space at World Cups is extremely sought after. FIFA ruthlessly exploits this during contractual negotiations. In 2006, two US credit card companies, VISA and MasterCard, competed for advertising space around the pitch. MasterCard had been one of FIFA's sponsorship partners for many years but this was to count for nothing. FIFA held secret negotiations with VISA and even informed it of MasterCard's offers. This is not hearsay. It is stated in the court records of the US judicial authorities.

MasterCard took FIFA to court. The MasterCard vs. FIFA court hearing in New York was an unpleasant experience for Joseph Blatter. The judge treated him like the president of any association under Swiss law and not, as he is accustomed to, like a president who is driven to state receptions in limousines with police escorts and who shakes hands with heads of state.

FIFA contested the jurisdiction of the US court and wanted the case to be heard at a court of arbitration in Zurich, but was unsuccessful. At the trial, the US judge charged FIFA and its negotiation delegations with repeated dishonesty during contractual nego-

tiations with MasterCard. FIFA finally had to agree to a settlement and paid MasterCard compensation of 90 million US dollars, around half of what it received from VISA for the four-year sponsorship deal. FIFA dismissed its head of negotiations on account of the court case, but six months later Blatter reinstated him and made him his number two. General Secretary Jérôme Valcke is today the most important person at FIFA besides Blatter.

It was not by coincidence that the US court adjudged FIFA to be an association under Swiss law. FIFA, which was founded in 1904, is still an association from a legal perspective despite billion-dollar revenues, million-dollar profits and its global significance. It is therefore no different legally to a bowling club or carnival organisation committee. In 2010, FIFA posted net profit of over 200 million US dollars but still wishes to be regarded as a charitable organisation. According to its own figures, it spends 70% of its income on development projects in its member states. FIFA has 208 members, which is more than the UN with 194 member states.

Criticism from politicians in Zurich

FIFA (Fédération Internationale de Football Association) has been headquartered in Zurich since 1932 when it moved from Paris

to Switzerland. It has been based at the "Home of FIFA" for five years on the Zürichberg mountain, next to the zoo. The FIFA headquarters is a magnificent building designed by leading architect Thilla Theus. The floors in the entrance hall have a marble covering, and a candelabra containing Swarovski crystals hangs in the conference room – at 18.3 metres this is of exactly the same diameter as the centre circle on a football pitch. The entrance to the underground car park with 270 spaces looks like a motorway tunnel.

Since FIFA is entered in the commercial register as an association it benefits from a reduced tax rate despite its billions in assets. Instead of corporate income tax at 8.5%, which is what public limited companies pay to the fiscal authority, FIFA only pays a rate of 4.25%. According to its 2010 annual report, it paid just 893,000 US dollars in income tax on net profit of over 200 million US dollars. The members of the "management bodies" received 32.6 million US dollars in "remuneration payable short-term". This category includes salaries and bonuses that are payable in full within twelve months of the balance sheet date. Those on FIFA's "management bodies" include the ten FIFA directors and the members of the 24-strong Executive Committee.



Special entrance for officials at FIFA's headquarters in Zurich

A growing number of politicians in the canton of Zurich are showing concern about goings-on at FIFA. They want the world football federation to be taxed like a public limited company. A petition calling for this has been signed by over 10,000 people in Switzerland. FIFA rejects the calls, highlighting its economic importance to Zurich. FIFA claims that six million Swiss francs a year are generated for the city thanks to overnight stays for FIFA events. FIFA also estimates that restaurants and shops benefit from a further one million Swiss francs in personal spending by visitors. Partner companies providing 100 jobs also ultimately depend on it. FIFA itself employs 360 staff in Zurich, all of whom pay normal tax rates according to FIFA. However, these figures and arguments have failed to silence the critics.

Hidden camera

This critical attitude, which sometimes goes as far as abhorrence, is explained by one key event. A few weeks before the 24 members of FIFA's Executive Committee were to award the football World Cups in 2018 and 2022 on 2 December 2010, two of the decision-makers fell into a trap set up by British journalists. Reporters from the "Sunday Times" posed as representatives of the US

2022 bid. They met with two FIFA officials who did not hesitate to demand millions in return for voting for the USA. The meeting was filmed with a hidden camera so the whole world could see how corrupt the practices of FIFA representatives were. The world football federation had previously always refuted claims that its members were corrupt, arguing that there had never been any convictions.

The next thunderbolt struck at the awarding of the World Cup on 2 December 2010. The bids of Russia and Qatar were accepted over the favourites England and the USA. The selection of Qatar in particular provoked global outrage. According to FIFA's internal evaluation committee, Qatar had submitted the weakest bid of all nine candidates for the 2018 and 2022 World Cups. The FIFA inspectors were critical of temperatures of over 40° Celsius during the World Cup, which would pose a health risk for footballers as well as the "FIFA family" and fans. Of the 12 football stadiums that the desert state presented in its bid, only three actually existed and all of these require expansion. The other nine stadiums have yet to be constructed. The railway network presented by Qatar also only exists on paper.

Poor scores and a lack of infrastructure clearly did not dissuade FIFA's decision-

making body, the Executive Committee. In a secret ballot, the desert state fell short of an absolute majority by just one vote in the first round of voting. An outcome was reached in the fourth round, with Qatar receiving 14 votes and the favourite, the USA, 8. Rumours that Qatar bought FIFA votes refuse to go away. Qatar obviously denies this.

Qatar's most prominent football representative, Mohammad Bin Hammam, once a FIFA Vice-President, has been expelled from FIFA. He dared to challenge Blatter in the contest for FIFA presidency. He is also suspected of attempting to buy votes here. After Bin Hammam's elimination, Blatter was the only candidate to stand on 1 June 2011 and was elected FIFA President for another four years. Bin Hammam is now waiting for a judgement from the International Court of Arbitration for Sport, where he challenged his expulsion after FIFA twice pronounced him guilty.

Jack Warner has also been expelled from the FIFA management. The official from Trinidad and Tobago had progressed from being a modest history teacher to a millionaire thanks to his position at FIFA. But then he tried to help Bin Hammam win the election, having previously always supported Blatter. This change of sides cost him his job



A view of the reception area at the "Home of FIFA" in Zurich

at FIFA. As revenge, he immediately presented documents proving that he had received FIFA TV rights from Blatter on several previous occasions for the nominal price of one dollar as payment in return for supporting him.

No coming to terms with the past

Mark Pieth, the Basel-based professor of law, now has the task of drawing up new governance rules for FIFA. He has indicated that he has no intention of shedding light on the past in the process. He will just look to the future. Though, there are a few matters from the past that will need to be resolved. The FIFA corruption file held by the judicial authorities in the canton of Zug provides evidence of dubious practices. This relates to an order for the withdrawal of prosecution issued by the public prosecutor's office after FIFA and two of its representatives together paid 5.5 million Swiss francs as compensation in 2010 after criminal proceedings. A special investigator had previously conducted an investigation against FIFA for improper business practices and misappropriation. He established that two FIFA officials had been pocketing kickbacks from a former business partner for years. It would appear that the FIFA leadership overlooked this practice and

never demanded the repayment of the money that it in fact was due from the two officials. Five media organisations, including the "Handelszeitung" and the "Beobachter" in Switzerland and the BBC in the UK, are currently attempting to gain access to this file. Both FIFA and the two officials are seeking to prevent this through their lawyers and in court – without success so far, but they have won time with their objections. The Federal Supreme Court will rule on the case soon.

Given that FIFA reformer Pieth has – at least officially – shown little interest in the corruption cases of the past, the anti-corruption organisation Transparency International (TI) has refused to cooperate with him. His reform programme risks being left in tatters. This is not just because, in addition to TI, several journalists approached have also refused to cooperate, but also because Pieth will ultimately have to present his reform proposals to the men who would be the first to be affected directly by more rigorous governance rules. If they happen to reject or dilute his proposals, Pieth has said that he will leave the FIFA ship protesting loudly. This could then signal the demise of captain Blatter.

JEAN FRANÇOIS TANDA is a lawyer and editor at the "Handelszeitung" in Zurich

SPORTS FEDERATIONS LOVE SWITZERLAND

Around 60 international sports federations have their headquarters in Switzerland owing to the liberal association law and proximity to the umbrella organisation, the International Olympic Committee (IOC). In addition to FIFA, these include the world Olympic federations for rowing (FISA), baseball (IBAF), basketball (FIBA), boxing (AIBA), cycling (UCI), horse riding (FEI), fencing (FIE), gymnastics (FIG), handball (IHF), hockey (FIH), wrestling (FILA), swimming (FINA), table tennis (ITTF), archery (FITA), volleyball (FIVB), ice hockey (IIHF), skating (ISU) and skiing (FIS).

The officials of several of these federations have also made a lot of money or become implicated in shady dealings. For example, investigations have been conducted against Hassan Moustafa, President of the International Handball Federation (IHF), René Fasel, President of the International Ice Hockey Federation, and Rubén Acosta, President of the International Volleyball Association.

“I love discovering new countries”

Federal Councillor Didier Burkhalter became the Minister of Foreign Affairs at the start of the year and is therefore a figure of great interest to the Swiss abroad. In an interview, he tells us about his relationship with the world abroad, outlines the challenges facing Switzerland, explains his negotiation tactics with the EU and reveals what he reads at bedtime.

Interview by Barbara Engel

“SWISS REVIEW”: *Federal Councillor, you moved to the Department of Foreign Affairs at the start of 2012 after just two years as head of the Department of Home Affairs. What were your reasons for switching to the FDFA?*

DIDIER BURKHALTER: The Federal Council believes that, in its current makeup and with the current distribution of departments, it has formed a good team to represent the interests and values of Switzerland abroad. I have been interested in Swiss foreign policy ever since I entered federal politics. I was a member of the Security Committee for several years, which deals with foreign policy issues among other things. I firmly believe that Switzerland can play an important role on the international stage. The presidency of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2014 will give us the opportunity to further develop one of the main strategies of our foreign policy – commitment to promoting stability in Europe and its neighbouring regions. We anticipate major challenges in European policy over the coming years.

You have spent your entire professional career in politics. What would be your dream job outside politics?

That is something I haven't really considered. But if I had several lives, I would like to have been a writer and a reporter – I could then have really let my imagination run free. But a dream job would have to be a career I could share with my wife.

When the party asked you to stand for election to the Federal Council in 2009 did you have any doubts about whether this was the right move?

Anyone asked to stand for the Federal Council must consider the potential impact on their own life and that of their family.

You have to ask yourself what you can offer your country and its people. I reflected upon this and decided to take up the challenge. Once the decision has been made, there is no room for doubts. Though you should always remain humble.

You give travelling as one of your interests on your official CV. Which country would be your dream destination for a private trip?

It's true. I love discovering new countries, their landscapes, peoples, mentalities and cultures. I think I've got a good feel for differences. While there are many places I like, I really enjoy visiting Brittany, especially for its wildness. The power of the ocean puts everything into perspective. I also like spending time on Lake Neuchâtel. It is much smaller but still very impressive. I don't actually believe that dream destinations exist. The important thing is being happy whether it's here or elsewhere.

And where do you holiday now that you're a Federal Councillor?

Mainly in Switzerland and Austria, which is where my wife is from. This is a country I like very much. Switzerland and Austria have a lot in common, which is why relations between the two countries are so good. As Austria has pursued a different path to Switzerland in terms of European integration, it is important that we maintain good relations with Vienna – Austria is a good advocate for our interests in the EU.

Around 700 000 Swiss citizens abroad see you as the chief patron of the Swiss community abroad. Have you ever been a Swiss citizen abroad yourself?

No, but the travel involved in my new position will provide me with the opportunity



to gain a better insight into the issues important to the Swiss abroad.

You visited the Swiss school in Brazil two years ago as the Minister of Home Affairs and appeared very impressed.

Simply being around children brings me lots of joy. I was really impressed by the visit to the Swiss school in São Paulo. My delegation, my wife and I were given a fantastic reception there. I think the Swiss schools abroad can be seen as a kind of instrument of our foreign policy. Although many of the pupils do not hold a Swiss passport, they discover our country and culture there. I have no doubt that this experience shapes their lives and their perception of Switzerland.

One of the most important areas of Swiss foreign policy is EU relations. Brussels believes that certain rules must apply equally to everyone in the EU single market. This will require pragmatic discussions within Swiss political circles. How do you hope to achieve that?

“Yes, I support a law for the Swiss abroad”



PROFILE

Didier Burkhalter was born in Neuchâtel on 17 April 1960. After secondary school, he studied Economics in his home town. In 1991, he was elected onto the city of Neuchâtel's executive body as an FDP representative. He was the city president three times (1994, 1998, 2001). On 16 September 2009, the Federal Assembly elected him as Pascal Couchepin's successor on the Federal Council. He ran the Department of Home Affairs (FDHA) from November 2009 until the end of 2011. On 1 January 2012, he moved to the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) as Micheline Calmy-Rey's successor. Didier Burkhalter is married and has three grown-up sons.

Federal Councillor Burkhalter with his wife Friedrun at last year's Zurich film festival

You said it yourself, through pragmatic discussions. The Federal Council wants to define a roadmap together with the EU to find solutions to unresolved issues that are acceptable to both parties. The priority is electricity and energy as negotiations are at a very advanced stage here. The Federal Council is also seeking solutions within this framework to the so-called institutional issues. These include the issue of adjusting the bilateral agreements to developments in EU law. The Federal Council does not wish to conduct discussions on institutional issues abstractly but rather specifically using the electricity/energy dossier. I am sure discussions can be conducted purposely by adopting this approach and that the interests of both sides can be harmonised. Any automatic adoption of laws is certainly out of the question for the Federal Council.

Do you have a timeframe in mind or could the negotiations take years?

Time requirements and deadlines can never be accurately predicted during negotiations. We clearly want to come to an agreement with the EU on the next steps

as quickly as possible. That is why we set out Switzerland's position in a letter to the EU shortly after the Federal Council resolution.

The Swiss abroad would like to see a federal law on Swiss citizens abroad because responsibility for the various sub-areas that affect them is spread across all the departments. A parliamentary initiative for such a law has been signed by 31 Council of States members. Are you in favour of such a law?

Yes, I support a law for the Swiss abroad. It could lay the foundations for an integral policy on the Swiss abroad whereby one department would take overall control. The FDFA has long recognised the need for action in this respect. It is for this reason that last year it created the Consular Directorate, which includes a helpline, among other things. Further steps in this direction are currently being examined.

In view of the constant increase in the number of Swiss abroad, the Federal Council stated in a report in 2010 that it was time to formulate a uniform, coherent policy on the Swiss

abroad. What do you consider to be the priorities for such a policy?

As far as I am concerned, it is primarily about understanding the concerns and needs of Swiss citizens living abroad. Only by doing so can the Federal Council draw up a coherent policy that takes account of their requirements. The existing draft law contains some interesting proposals, such as systematically taking advantage of the network of relationships between the Swiss abroad to raise Switzerland's profile internationally.

The cost-cutting measures affecting consular services caused outrage among the Swiss abroad last year. Are further cost-cutting measures and consulate closures – which is what concerns people most – on the agenda?

Yes, but the concentration of consular services into Regional Centres allows us to release funding for other requirements, such as the new representations in Doha and Bangalore. (Editorial note: details on the closure of consulates on page 28)

As the Minister of Home Affairs you were also responsible for culture. What music do you most enjoy listening to?

I like songs with an authentic sound which convey a sense that they are relating something experienced. Bruce Springsteen's songs have been among my favourites for years, in particular the track "The River". I also like soundtracks, music that paints pictures without needing a screen.

And what book is currently on your bedside table?

You are very inquisitive! But just this once I'll answer your question: a thriller by David Baldacci and "Conversations with Myself" by Nelson Mandela. "The Art of War" by Sun Tzu, a book that provides valuable insights into the avoidance of conflict, is also always within easy reach. And various reports on forthcoming Federal Council meetings are always there.

The interview was conducted in writing.

How the story of a forced resignation unfolded

Few events in Switzerland in recent years have attracted as much international attention as the forced resignation of Philipp Hildebrand, the Chairman of the Swiss National Bank, at the beginning of January. The details of the affair have yet to fully emerge but one thing is already clear – the list of losers is long.

By Barbara Engel

The man had committed no legal transgressions but had to go anyway because he was unable to prove his innocence. That was on 9 January 2012, when Philipp Hildebrand stood before the media in the Federal Palace and declared that, in light of the ongoing public debate about financial transactions in his accounts, “I have come to the conclusion that it is impossible to provide conclusive evidence that my wife ordered the foreign exchange transactions without my knowledge on 15 August. I give you my word of honour that this is the truth.” And Hildebrand then said what most Swiss people did not actually want to hear: “Bearing in mind the current difficulties that we face as a nation and in view of my responsibility to the office and the institution of the Swiss National Bank, I have decided to stand down with immediate effect.”

Speculation, debate, silence

Flashback: The Bank Council of the Swiss National Bank (SNB) issued an unusual statement on 23 December 2011. The bank announced that rumours suggesting that the wife of Philipp Hildebrand, the Chairman of the National Bank, had carried out insider trading were being examined. No further details were given. This naturally resulted in speculation about the insider trading and a “dollar deal” in some Swiss media, but question marks hung over all the reports and they brought no clarification.

The next chapter began on 1 January 2012. Several Sunday newspapers reported that Christoph Blocher, National Councillor for the Swiss People’s Party (SVP), was behind the accusations against the Chairman of the National Bank. This was, of course, put to Blocher, who declined to comment: “There is a time to speak and a time to remain silent. On this matter, now is a time for me to remain silent”, he said into media microphones and departed with a revealing smile.

Philipp Hildebrand’s wife then made a voluntary statement announcing that she, Kashya Hildebrand, had bought dollars without her husband’s knowledge. As a former investment banker, as a gallery owner and as a holder of dual US-Swiss citizenship, it was not unusual for her to conduct such financial transactions autonomously, she said.

Three days later, the “Weltwoche” branded this a lie. It claimed Mr Hildebrand had made the foreign exchange purchases himself. The publication did not provide any evidence to support this claim, but nevertheless labelled Hildebrand “a liar and a crook”. This set the hounding in motion.

The protagonists

In addition to Philipp and Kashya Hildebrand, SVP National Councillor and former Federal Councillor Christoph Blocher, and the two “Weltwoche” editors – Roger Köppel and Urs-Paul Engeler – a few other figures played important roles in this affair. These included an IT worker at Bank Sarasin and his friend Hermann Lei, a lawyer and SVP cantonal councillor in Thurgau, as well as Micheline Calmy-Rey, then President of the Confederation.

It would appear that the financial activities of the Hildebrand family were a matter of interest sometimes to the employees of Bank Sarasin, even a topic during coffee breaks. Rumours of foreign currency speculation and dollar deals did the rounds. But why the said IT worker copied the Hildebrands’ account statements one day, smuggled them out of the bank and handed them to his lawyer friend, Hermann Lei, remains unclear. What has been established is that Lei passed on the stolen bank data directly to Christoph Blocher, who then informed Swiss President Calmy-Rey about the Hildebrands’ “illegal bank transactions”. But he did not just inform Calmy-Rey as the documents also found their way to the “Weltwoche”. The upshot of this was not

just the departure of the Chairman of the National Bank, Philipp Hildebrand, as mentioned at the beginning, but also epic and, in some cases, insincere debate about law and ethics, about what is allowed and what is prohibited, and about lies and morals.

There is a long list of questions relating to this affair. What drove the bank IT worker to copy bank statements and violate banking confidentiality? Why did Christoph Blocher take this “evidence” to the President of the Confederation and not to the Bank Council, the responsible supervisory authority? Are the standards that apply to the Chairman of the SNB different to those for ordinary people or politicians? Or is it sufficient for him to also adhere to the applicable regulations and laws? This matter also raises questions like: Should illegal measures be used to uncover suspected wrongdoing on the basis of the maxim that the end justifies the means? In other words, is it legitimate to violate banking confidentiality to make public possible transgressions by the chairman of the central bank?

An unusual figure

The National Bank affair is not over yet. The Control Committees of the National Council and Council of States will attempt to get to the root of the matter. The courts may well deal with



these events, too. However, even they are unlikely to find satisfactory answers to many of the questions.

That said, one thing is already clear: Philipp Hildebrand is a controversial figure because he is something of an exception in many respects. As far as we know,



Philipp Hildebrand

he never lied but he did display “an astonishing lack of good judgement about the appropriateness of certain private financial transactions”, as the “Neue Zürcher Zeitung” put it. The suspicion that this matter was just a welcome pretext to persecute him is frequently voiced. The SVP had

been gunning for Hildebrand for some time. In 2008, he played a major role in the rescue of UBS and subsequently argued forcefully and successfully for stricter regulations and higher equity capital provisions for Swiss banks. Note the “too-big-to-fail” bill. Hildebrand also incurred the wrath of the SVP with his robust support for a billion-franc loan from Switzerland to the International Monetary Fund. His monetary policy also went down badly with the SVP leadership. Various means were therefore used to try to restrict the independence of the SNB and to hand greater influence to politicians or the people. Two examples: in June 2011, SVP National Councillor Hans Kaufmann tabled a motion calling for the Federal Council to amend the National Bank Law so that the quota of equity capital and currency reserves would amount to at least 40% of total assets. Three months later, the SVP launched the popular initiative “Save our Swiss gold”. Experts see both as disciplinary measures but nevertheless also as steps that could have disastrous consequences for the Swiss economy. For example, both proposals would severely restrict the scope for interven-

tion to set minimum exchange rates, a practice currently implemented by the SNB.

“Dirty political affair”

Under its current mandate, the National Bank is obliged to ensure price stability in the country and to consider economic development. The role of the SNB is very similar to that of other national and central banks in this respect. Experience shows that institutions can only fulfil this mandate if monetary policy decisions are made independently and are not influenced by short-term political considerations. Philipp Hildebrand vehemently defended the SNB’s independence. He was consequently increasingly portrayed by SVP politicians as an enemy of the real Switzerland and of the Swiss people.

“One of the dirtiest political affairs in recent Swiss history, which only produced losers” was how the business magazine “Bilanz” described the Hildebrand affair. The losers include the National Bank and banking confidentiality, but also Christoph Blocher and the media. The Hildebrand affair has undoubtedly damaged the reputation and standing of the SNB on the international stage. Nobody will put their faith in banking confidentiality and discretion – once the trump cards of Swiss banks – if low-ranking employees can easily copy and remove client bank details. As mentioned above, the losers also include Christoph Blocher. The former Federal Councillor, still a major figure in the SVP, was exposed as a liar by his repeatedly contradictory statements about his meeting with, and the information passed to, the Swiss President and he is under suspicion of misusing stolen bank data for a conspiracy. “Weltwoche” also played an ignominious part in the affair. It has been known as the SVP’s media mouthpiece for years, and it reached new depths with its unfounded accusations against Hildebrand.

The affair has also undermined many people’s confidence in politicians and business leaders, who immediately ran for cover when the mudslinging against Hildebrand started. Few people publicly stood by the previously much-acclaimed head of the SNB. Public statements were only issued once he had resigned from office. The words of Johann Schneider-Ammann, the Minister of Economic Affairs, sum up the mood well: “I deeply regret that it has come to this.”

Home is far away – except online

More and more Swiss citizens are living abroad and they are playing an increasingly important role in foreign policy. Internet voting is the key to being heard by politicians in Switzerland and to ensuring that issues are represented successfully.

By Tim Guldemann

I have the impression that Switzerland treats the Swiss abroad like an aunt living overseas. She is seldom thought of, and the attitude towards her is even one of indifference. But as soon as she gets in touch or even imposes herself, people are eager to assure her of how fond they are of her. I have already outlined this view of mine once before, in the German regional section of last November's "Swiss Review".

Assurances only rarely lead to action in life. That is a well-known fact. And yet we are so proud of them, whether it is Chevrolet or Corbusier, Renée Zellweger or Bruno Ganz. More than one in ten Swiss men and one in ten Swiss women live abroad. They make a huge contribution to how our nation is perceived on the international stage and to its prosperity, but they have little influence over Swiss politics. This is also the result of a national incongruity – our economy operates globally, our culture is cosmopolitan and our elite are citizens of the world. By contrast, our politicians think locally or, at best, nationally.

Anyone who wants anything from this political system has to push hard for it. This applies to the Swiss abroad in particular. To raise the issues that concern them in Switzerland, they need to play a more active role, and the best way to do that is in elections and referenda. This is how they can get their voice heard.

Constant drips wear away the stone

The number of Swiss abroad entered on the electoral roll has doubled since the end of the 1990s. The figure today stands at 143,000 eligible voters, which is over a quarter of all adult Swiss abroad. This increase is encouraging. However, three out of four persons entitled to vote, and as many as five out of six in North and South America, are relinquishing their voting right. This means that those entitled to vote abroad only make up 2.5% of the electorate, which does not pose enough of a threat to local politicians. But if this pro-



Tim Guldemann is the Swiss ambassador in Berlin

portion were to rise to almost 8% – as is currently the case in Geneva – the politicians would have to prick up their ears and the parties would have to take notice. This is where the potential lies.

Postal voting is not very appealing. The vote may arrive late or it may not even arrive at all. This acts as a deterrent. Switzerland seems far away. Internet voting is different – casting a vote at the click of a mouse is easy, attractive and effective.

The Internet is changing politics more rapidly and more profoundly than we ever anticipated. Firstly, a second public sphere is developing alongside conventional print and electronic media. Anyone can actively participate in it. This debate is increasingly influencing political life and attracting new players, like the Pirate Party in Germany. Secondly, the Internet is creating completely new opportunities for dialogue between citizens and the state. This is resulting in new prospects for citizen participation in decision-making. However, many parliamentary democracies are not yet ready to embrace this despite growing demands from citizen movements to have their say.

This is not the case in Switzerland. Owing to its direct democracy, our nation has a unique foundation in place to play a pioneering role in this field internationally.

Our e-government platform already facilitates cooperation with the authorities. E-voting, together with the new forms of political debate on electronic networks, will produce lasting changes to our political system. This will create great opportunities for the Swiss abroad to participate in domestic Swiss politics.

The mills are grinding slowly

Parliament has called upon the Federal Council gradually to introduce e-voting. Federal government and the cantons have developed a joint initiative to achieve this. The primary target group is the Swiss abroad. Thirteen cantons are working on electronic voting. This opportunity was already available in four cantons for the National Council elections last autumn. It was also available in 12 cantons for the referendum on 11 March. The response is encouraging, with half of those able to use the system taking advantage of it immediately. However, the mills are grinding slowly because the system sometimes requires major changes to the administration of the cantonal electoral roll. Some cantons, such as Vaud for example, have still not made much progress.

The Federal Chancellery has set itself the goal of enabling the majority of Swiss abroad who are eligible to vote to take part in parliamentary elections electronically in 2015. The more the Swiss abroad actively support this project, the faster it will be achieved and the greater the chances will be that they can influence the result of the 2015 elections in their favour.

The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA)

has launched a petition calling on the Federal Council to introduce e-voting as quickly and as broadly as possible.

You can also sign this petition!

www.petiton.aso.ch



Higher charges for a free choice of doctor?

People wishing to see specialist consultants directly will pay higher patient contributions. A referendum on this model will be held in Switzerland on 17 June. The Swiss people will also decide on a greater say over state treaties and on a home ownership savings scheme.

By René Lenzin

There is widespread agreement over the principle: Managed Care models increase the quality of healthcare and curb cost increases. Such models are designed to keep medical care in its entirety, from diagnosis to treatment, in the same hands. Complex cases are still dealt with by consultants with specialist training but the case is coordinated by a general practitioner or a group practice known as a health medical organisation (HMO). The model aims to place greater financial responsibility on doctors and to avoid any duplication of treatment.

However, people have had little incentive in the past to take out insurance with an HMO. The Federal Council and Parliament now want to change that. They plan to promote the integrated medical care networks by introducing differentiated patient contributions. People who join such networks, thereby relinquishing their free choice of doctor, will continue to bear 10% of the costs themselves up to a maximum of 500 Swiss francs a year. Those who do not take out HMO insurance will pay 15% of the costs themselves in future up to an annual amount of 1000 Swiss francs.

The National Council approved the Managed Care bill by 133 votes to 46 and the Council of States by 28 votes to 6. The medical association FMH, patient organisations and left-wing political parties were subsequently successful in calling for a referendum. They are opposed to the partial abolition of the free choice of doctor and the partial increase in patient contributions.

Greater participation in foreign policy

The popular initiative "Strengthening the rights of the people in foreign policy (decision on state treaties by the people!)" is calling for a significant extension to mandatory referenda for international treaties. The text of the initiative requires all treaties that oblige Switzerland to adopt laws resulting from them to be subject to a mandatory referendum. It should also be made mandatory for treaties to be put before the peo-

ple if they involve a one-off expenditure of over a billion Swiss francs or a new recurrent expenditure of over 100 million Swiss francs.

The Federal Council and Parliament believe the initiative goes too far. After a moderate Federal Council counterproposal was defeated in the Council of States, the initiative alone is now going to a referendum. The National Council rejected it by 139 votes to 56 and the Council of States by 36 votes to 6. Only the Swiss People's Party (SVP) supported the initiative.

A second proposal on home ownership savings schemes

After the Swiss people and the cantons rejected the home ownership savings scheme initiative on 11 March (see text on the right), a similar proposal is now going to a referendum on 17 June. The popular initiative "Home ownership through purchase savings scheme", launched by the Swiss Association of Homeowners, is calling for home ownership savings deposits of up to 10,000 Swiss francs a year for the first-time purchase of owner-occupied residential property to be made tax-deductible for a period of up to ten years. The allowance would be twice as high for married couples. In contrast to the initiative that was defeated in March, federal government and the cantons would be obliged to introduce these allowances.

The Federal Council opposes the initiative. As the National Council and Council of States could not reach agreement on a common position, the initiative will go to a referendum without a recommendation from Parliament.

Second homes will be restricted

On 11 March, the Swiss people and the cantons approved an initiative placing a 20% limit on second homes.

Popular initiatives have a major hurdle to overcome: winning the majority support of both the Swiss people and the cantons. For the initiative launched by environmental campaigner Franz Weber to limit second homes to 20% in every commune, the biggest worry was not securing majority support from the cantons, as is usually the case, but achieving such support among the Swiss people. In the end, the margin between those in favour and those against was fewer than 30,000 votes. 50.6% voted "Yes" and 49.4% "No". The initiative won support in 13.5 cantons and was rejected in 9.5. The referendum map shows a kind of alpine divide. Most touristic and mountainous cantons opposed the proposal, while it won approval in the Mittelland and Jura regions. All the communes where the proportion of second homes is already above 20% will now have to impose a construction ban. However, the campaigners have indicated that they will accept exceptions to the 20% rule for structurally weak mountain villages.

Rejection of six-week holiday entitlement

There were no surprises among the other four referenda held on 11 March. 87% of voters and all the cantons approved a new constitutional basis for casinos, lotteries, sports betting and skill games. On the other hand, the reintroduction of price fixing for books was opposed with 56% of voters against it. This means that book stores will still be able to structure their prices freely. A majority of voters in French-speaking Switzerland supported price fixing, while their German-speaking and Italian-speaking counterparts rejected it. The popular initiative of the trade union *Travailsuisse* advocating "six weeks of holiday for everyone" fell well short of approval, rejected by 66.5% of voters. A popular initiative aiming to allow the cantons to introduce tax-privileged savings schemes for home ownership was also unsuccessful, opposed by 56% of voters. The Swiss people and the cantons will have to vote on a similar proposal on 17 June 2012 (see text on the left).

The mountain of asylum applications is growing all the time

Switzerland is feeling the impact of the turmoil caused by civil war in Africa and the flipside of the "Arab Spring". The influx of refugees has been very high for months, inflaming the political debate.

By Marc Lettau

The Federal Office for Migration announces new, high figures month after month. Behind these figures are people seeking asylum in Switzerland. The highest number of asylum seekers for ten years arrived in Switzerland in January 2012 – over 2,600 asylum applications were made. The most applications by some distance were made by people from Eritrea, a country ravaged by civil war. Many of them have a chance of being recognised as refugees. The second highest number of applications came from Roma people in Serbia. The likelihood that they will be allowed to remain in Switzerland is practically zero. The prospects of the many young Tunisians seeking asylum, who have left their homeland in search of a better future, seem equally hopeless. The losers in the democratic upheaval in Northern Africa, who are without employment or prospects, are also not regarded as being persecuted or in danger.

Four months rather than four years

This influx of refugees presents a challenge for Switzerland because its asylum system is stretched even without record numbers due to the fact that it is undergoing radical change. The authorities are currently looking at ways of streamlining the unsatisfactorily long asylum process. The verification procedure to determine whether an asylum seeker is to be recognised as a refugee and may stay in Switzerland takes around four years on average. Such long waiting times cause additional misery. For migrants with children of school age, being told they must leave the country after years of waiting means uprooting again. Justice Minister Simonetta Sommaruga (SP) would therefore like to see a procedure that lasts no longer than four months. At the same time, she wants to improve legal protection for asylum seekers. The Swiss People's Party (SVP), in particular, has shown a lack of understanding for this policy and has tackled the issue by proposing numerous measures to tighten asylum law.

Whether asylum applications should in future only be received in Switzerland and not

at Swiss embassies abroad is also being debated. This would result in fewer applications. However, such a step would particularly affect those in seriously threatening situations. The Social Democrats (SP) argue that embassy applications could help stem trafficking in illegal immigrants with the initial sorting of applications being carried out locally. The debate over embassy applications also covers the controversial issue of coming to terms with the past. It only became public last year that thousands of embassy applications from Iraqi citizens were deliberately shelved under Justice Minister Christoph Blocher in contravention of the applicable law.

Who wants asylum seekers?

The influx of asylum seekers causes tension in everyday life as well as in politics. The search for accommodation for asylum seekers is becoming increasingly difficult. The debates over specific refugee centre projects have seen a clash between Switzerland's humanitarian tradition and

a widespread, underlying fear of foreigners. A mixed picture is emerging. Some commune presidents are collectively making the case for a joint refugee centre to relieve hardship, as in Ebnet-Kappel in St. Gallen. In other places, such as Bettwil in the canton of Aargau, communes are opposing all plans for such accommodation with rhetoric shaped by anxiety about foreigners.

The fact that various developments are overlapping is also inflaming the debate. Legal immigration from the European Union, in particular from the eastern EU states, currently stands at a high level. Though, of course, there is no correlation between immigration resulting from the free movement of persons (2011: 75,000 immigrants) and the influx of asylum seekers (2011: 22,500 applications). Asylum policy and development aid are also increasingly interlinked. Conservative parties are calling for countries that do not take back their economic refugees to be punished with the withdrawal of development aid. Admittedly, Justice Minister Sommaruga is willing to negotiate with states that receive aid from Switzerland about the readmission of rejected asylum seekers. In principle, however, the Federal Councillor rejects "general, strict and negative conditionality", as the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) maintains when asked. The call for development aid to be made dependent across the board on the willingness of the country concerned to cooperate on migration policy is "generally counterproductive" and mainly affects "the suffering population and not the uncooperative governments". Nina Schneider, a development aid specialist with the organisation Alliance-Sud, also takes the same view. She explains: "The chances are high that cuts in response to transgressions in asylum policy will affect precisely those poverty-alleviation programmes that help to relieve migratory pressure."



In a refugee centre

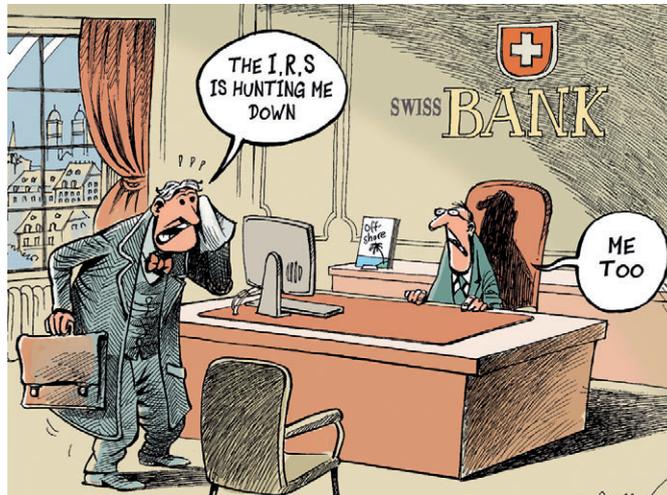
MARC LETTAU is an editor at "Swiss Review"

A more upstanding approach is achievable

Switzerland is in thrall to its banks – but it does not have to be. The economic importance of the financial institutions and, in particular, banking confidentiality is overstated.

By Ralph Pöhner

What does Wegelin have to do with ordinary Swiss citizens? What does any bank on which the US judicial authorities are now clamping down hard? After the controversy surrounding Jewish assets, the subprime UBS crisis and the UBS tax scandal, Switzerland is supposed to bend over backwards for a fourth time because of mistakes made by individuals – individual banks and individual bankers. A shadow has been cast over the whole nation owing to the dispute over the untaxed assets of US clients, and the government feels compelled to run to the aid of the banks.



The message is clear

It does not have to be this way. When industry flagships ABB and Sulzer were teetering on the brink in 2001 and 2002 after American class action lawsuits, the rest of the nation saw the case objectively for what it was, a legal dispute and a business matter for two private companies. Admittedly, the current dispute between the United States of America and Wegelin, Julius Bär and other banks is clearly dominated by a clash of two legal opinions on banking confidentiality. However, with the ratification of the UBS state treaty in summer 2010, Switzerland – the state – sent out the clear message that it no longer wished to tolerate tax evasion.

The fact that this message was ignored by some banks was primarily a management error. Yet, it is now down to Berne's diplomats once again to smooth away these mistakes, and politicians from several parties are calling for a show of solidarity with the banks: it's them or us, America or Switzerland. This case shows how powerful myths can be. In contrast to ABB steam generators and Sulzer hip joints, bank accounts clearly remain a matter of national importance in 2012: Switzerland – forever the nation of watches, cheese and banks? At any rate, the belief

that we largely owe our prosperity to the banks still prevails in 2012.

Economic importance overestimated

This notion is a mistaken one on several levels. It is incorrect historically because the banking industry was just one contributor to the economy even in the legendary days of numbered accounts – the wealth was primarily created elsewhere. In 1980, when Switzerland was the wealthiest nation on earth according to almost every statistic, the banks only contributed 4% to gross domestic product. Their significance has since increased but the banks remain one of many sectors of the economy. They currently employ just under 110,000 people out of a total workforce of 3.4 million. By comparison, the electrical, metal and engineering industries provide employment for around 335,000 people (thanks to ABB and Sulzer, for example). Today, banking contributes 7 or 8% to Switzerland's wealth, and the vast majority of this value creation is accounted for by conventional day-to-day operations: company loans, mortgages, pension plans, fund development, retail client accounts, safekeeping accounts and – yes, that's right – the management of taxed private assets. All of these are services that have never filled any US public prosecutor,

finance minister or development policy NGO with indignation. And they are business areas that hardly threaten to leave half the nation teetering on the edge in the event of a global financial crisis: too small to fail.

Compared with other European countries, the Swiss banking sector does indeed hold special significance. Whereas bank employees account for over 3% of the workforce here, the rate stands at around 1.5% in Austria, the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany. There are two reasons for the importance of the Swiss banks. Firstly, this small nation has two

major banks that are among the global players and, secondly, Switzerland is the world's largest offshore centre. It is the foreign country where people like to put their money. Is banking confidentiality a key factor in this? No. If you believe the claims of the financial sector, this is down to its stability, its position at the heart of Europe, the standard of its banking services and its discretion. These are qualities that would still apply if the banks were to refrain from high-risk, politically controversial areas of business that are damaging to their reputation.

A look at the Netherlands, where the financial industry also contributes 6.5% to GDP, where equally impressive banks are found and where the sector employs as many people as here (around 110,000), provides an indication of what the future may hold. The financial sector there is more upstanding, relatively smaller and, since the clear-up after the financial crisis in 2008, no longer a political issue.

So, is the prosperity of the nation at stake? Hardly. Switzerland would be able to cope if its banks were the most upright in the world. This would irk a few bank managers at most.

RALPH PÖHNER is the co-founder of the financial website finews.ch in Zurich. His article first appeared in "Die Zeit" on 16.2.2012.

Images for eternity

The "C'est la vie" exhibition at the National Museum Zurich is displaying 500 press photographs of important moments in Switzerland's history. A visit to the photo exhibition is just as much a history lesson about Switzerland in the 20th century as it is a journey of personal recollection.

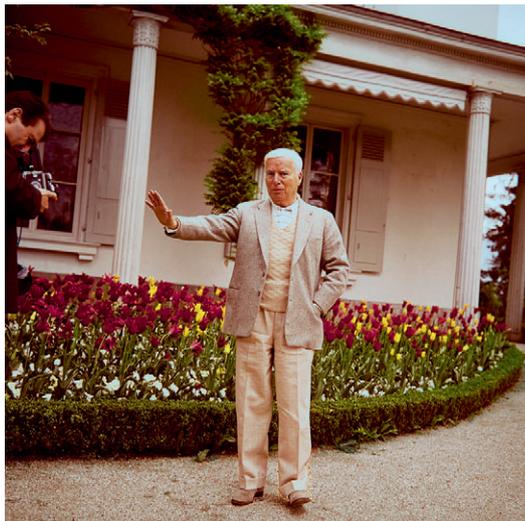
By Manuel Gnos



The Federal Council on its travels in 1996
 Front: Federal Councillors Arnold Koller, Jean-Pascal Delamuraz, Kaspar Villiger, Flavio Cotti, Adolf Ogi, Otto Stich and Ruth Dreifuss.
 Behind: Federal Chancellor François Couchepin and the two Vice-Chancellors, Hanna Muralt and Achille Casanova (from left to right)



Opening of the Gotthard road tunnel on 5 September 1980



Charlie Chaplin, director and actor, in front of his house in Corsier-sur-Vevey, circa 1964





Demonstration by opponents of the planned power station in Kaiser-augst in 1985



Arrival of the Nobel Prize winner Alexander Solschenizyn in Zurich on 15 February 1974. Solschenizyn was expatriated by the Russian government because of his book "The Gulag Archipelago". He migrated to the USA two years later



Swimming lessons for school classes at the Seebad Wollishofen in Zurich in 1943

Photographs that made it into the many illustrated magazines of the 1960s had to go through a protracted process. There were at least a few hours, but normally days or weeks, between the time when photographs were taken and the moment when readers flicked through them in the living room or on the kitchen table. A photographer's work was extremely time-consuming. After returning from an event, he would spend several hours in the dark room developing the film, making an initial selection and enlarging the best negatives. The copies were sent to the photo agencies or editorial desks where the selection was narrowed down before the photos were inserted onto magazine pages, sent off for printing and finally distributed to kiosks and households nationwide.

These days, images appear on news websites just a few seconds after an event in some cases. The agency swiss-image.ch, for example, has developed a procedure where photographs taken of an occasion are simultaneously sent to computers at the agency offices and – depending on the event – automatically uploaded to the Internet. Negative strips and photographic chemicals were definitively consigned to the history books several years ago. Keystone, the leading Swiss photo agency, supplies editorial departments with 3,500 photos a day, around a seventh of which come from Switzerland.

This technical aspect of press photography is part of the "C'est la vie" exhibition in which the National Museum Zurich traces the history of Switzerland in the 20th century. The exhibition is magnificently presented. Metre-high illuminated cabinets are interspersed with series of small-format photographs, while black-and-white images of avalanche accidents follow on from glossy pictures of the coronation of all the winners of the Miss Switzerland title since the Second World War.

The exhibition organisers have not focused on sensational topics and headlines. Instead they present a well-rounded picture of Switzerland since 1940. The material for the exhibition comes from the collections of two photo agencies from French-speaking Switzerland, which the museum obtained several years ago. A selection from this wealth of press photos of major events is now on public display for the first time.

History or personal recollection

For a long time, press photographs were the only source from which a reasonably realistic perception of an event could be formed. Moving images have now been around for many years. Nevertheless, photography remains an excellent way of capturing contemporary history. The exhibition at the National Museum Zurich, for example, provides reportage on the first babysitters in 1948 and highlights how controversial this form of childcare was at the time. Images of holidays at a campsite in Lausanne around 1940 are also displayed, making visitors wonder when campsites came into existence and what it would have been like to go on holiday during the Second World War.

In addition to social and historical aspects, the exhibition also reveals a very personal history to observers, that of their own media consumption. It is extremely interesting to observe from what point in time the photos are no longer perceived as a depiction of historical events but instead as a reflection of history that has been experienced personally. This is particularly evident in the chronologically arranged sequences "Bundesrat auf Reisen 1950-2011" (The Federal Council on its Travels 1950-2011) and "Eine Chronik der Schweiz 1940-2011" (A Chronicle of Switzerland 1940-2011).

This chronicle, featuring three or four photos a year, also provides the opportunity to test one's powers of recollection. Or can you easily recall when the following events took place – the flooding of the Grande-Dixence dam, the opening of the road tunnel through the Gotthard, the death of General Guisan, the clampdown on the open drugs scene at the Oberer Letten in Zurich or the triumphant Ski World Cup in Crans Montana? (1957, 1980, 1960, 1995, 1987)

The exhibition pays great attention to traditional photo reportage, partly but not solely because this genre has almost completely disappeared from the media today. This reportage often focused on themes like the everyday life of very ordinary people in Switzerland – farmers in Valais at the asparagus harvest, a day in the life of a simple old lady, a boat trip on Lake Maggiore shortly after the end of the war or the first broadcasts by Swiss television. Anyone looking at these photos today will, above all, be astonished at how much zeitgeist they convey and will wonder whether this will also be true of photographs from their own everyday lives fifty years from now.

The anthropological adventurer with camera in hand

Filmmaker and traveller Gaël Métroz has spent over a year and a half following in the footsteps of a Hindu holy man in India and Nepal. We catch up with the filmmaker from Valais on his return to Switzerland while in the middle of editing his film. A profile.

By Alain Wey

He focuses on far-away cultures, goes in search of the extraordinary and lives the present moment as intensely as possible. Once he has blended into his surroundings, he gets out his camera and becomes the observer who captures the fabric of time. Gaël Métroz is an indiscernible traveller. He leaves the tourist routes behind him and explores the high plateaus of central Asia. A director of documentaries for cinema and television, the Valais-born filmmaker has returned from an 18-month journey in India and Nepal where he followed the pilgrimage of a Hindu holy man, or sadhu. He is currently editing the film in Geneva, with its release in Swiss cinemas scheduled for the autumn. At a café in the city, this anthropological traveller recounts his adventures and epic tales.

From Africa to Asia

"I've been travelling non-stop since the age of 15", says Métroz, who grew up in the mountains and was born near the Great St Bernard Pass. "I set off as soon as I had the money. During my studies, I taught French Literature, Philosophy and Art History. I had found a job and everything had fallen into place. Just as it was about to become permanent, I panicked and bought a one-way ticket to Ethiopia."

Gaël Métroz has since travelled all over the world with his camera and only stops in Switzerland to edit his films before setting off again. "I never decide how long the journey will take and I only return when I have a story for my film", he adds. It may take six months, a year or even longer – the duration is determined by what happens en route. He adopts a spirit of travel that evolves into a certain lifestyle. After visiting Egypt, the Sudan and Ethiopia in 2004, Métroz released the documentary "L'Afrique de Rimbaud" (Rimbaud's Africa). He then undertook a journey following in the footsteps of the writer Nicolas Bouvier who set off from Switzerland and crossed Asia by car in the 1950s. He spent 13 months passing through Turkey, Iran, Paki-

stan, China and India, by train, by bus, on foot and on the back of a camel. He gradually deviated from the route taken by the writer and followed the paths of the nomads. The film "Nomad's Land" came out in the cinemas in 2008 and won several prizes, including best film at the prestigious San Francisco International Film Festival.

"I generally produce my best work in countries that I have not decided to visit", he reveals. "For instance, I was in Iran and I had to cross Pakistan to reach India. It was really hot in 2005. We had to move quickly to reach the more familiar terrain of India. I wandered into the mountains and discovered the Kalash people. I returned to their village several times after that, for the last time in 2009." This anthropological immersion produced the documentary "Kalash, les derniers infidèles du Pakistan" (Kalash – Pakistan's last infidels), which is a vibrant homage to an ethnic group at risk of disappearing under pressure from Pakistan's Muslim population.

In the footsteps of a hermit

"I've wanted to make a film about a sadhu since 2005", he explains. "I had visited Nepal several years beforehand for a very long trek in the mountains. Lots of sadhus made the same journey, but barefoot and without a rucksack. I was enthralled by this completely sparse way of living." Métroz decided to find a sadhu to feature in his film and to follow him to Kumbha Mela, a Hindu religious festival held every 12 years in Haridwar in the north-west of India, bringing together 70 million pilgrims. "I met him at the source of the Ganges in Gangotri in the Himalayas. He was in the middle of moving stones to clear a pathway in front of his cave, and I lent him a hand. I then returned every day to establish a pattern."

The filmmaker, who also speaks Hindi, moved into a neighbouring cave situated 3,500 metres above sea level. The sadhu had been living as a hermit for eight years and

had dreamed of going to Kumbha Mela. "At the same time, he had become solitary and was frightened of returning to the outside world." The Valais-born director offered to accompany him and help him undertake his journey, provided he could also film him. This agreement was to bind the two men together for much longer than they imagined, as a year later they found themselves in the mountains of Nepal. Métroz recalls: "His pilgrimage took us as far as Mustang on the border with Tibet, which is also known as the "forbidden kingdom". I did not set out to make a film about Hinduism – what interested me was the human experience. This man's life became increasingly captivating, because he really changed after leaving his cave. You will have to watch the film to find out what type of new man he became." Putting up with hunger, thirst, cold, altitude, sleeping outdoors and walking for over six hours a day carrying a 30-kilo rucksack – Métroz's adventure was anything but easy. "When you travel with a sadhu, you don't have any food", he says. "You live virtually without any money, you sleep outdoors and you adapt to your companion's daily rhythm." After a journey lasting a year and a half, Gaël Métroz has finally begun the task of editing the 240 hours of film he amassed while he was away – in order to capture the essence of his travels on the silver screen.

The university of life

"Travelling has made me lose my romantic view of the world", explains Métroz. "Paradise lost and the myth of the noble savage are literary ideas that I used to really cherish. Now I've become a much simpler human being, more inquisitive and more willing to listen in a positive way." Each journey has been life-changing. In this respect, the words of Nicolas Bouvier have particular resonance for him: "You think you are making a trip, but soon it is making you – or unmaking you." (The Way of the World). "I am becoming less dumb all the time", he says, smiling. "I set off



Gaël Métroz making the film "Sādhu"



On the Thorong La pass at an altitude of 5,416 metres

Below: The sadhu's camp. The holy fire must stay lit at all times



with lots of questions, and by the time I return here, they have all vanished. My philosophy is no longer found in books. It has become very simple. I live for the present, the here and now. I can no longer do things half-heartedly. I've become extremely single-minded about everything." In other words, he dedicates himself entirely to what he is currently working on and does not allow himself to be distracted by other things. Métroz's films also reveal his fascination with the sparseness of living. "Nomads live like they do because they cannot always carry everything on their backs. It's a way of ensuring minimum weight. And a sadhu's life is even more extreme."

New adventures

Anything but the conventional filmmaker, Gaël Métroz has plenty of other projects under his belt. For example, he has written fictional and non-fictional works, and produced copious travel diaries. However, while he has published some short stories, he has not yet managed to get that big break with a publisher. "The literary gods are still sitting on their clouds scoffing at me", he jokes. Other documentary ideas are in the pipeline, but these will remain on the back-burner until the film "Sādhu" had its cinema release. What, then, does this "observer of lives" ultimately aim to achieve? The answer is as simple as it is complex: "I just want to be a decent person and to try to meet other decent people." Inspiring words.

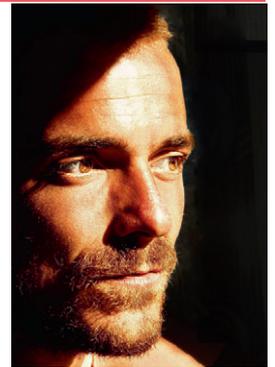
ALAIN WEY is an editor at "Swiss Review"

SPOTLIGHT

Gaël Métroz was born in 1978 in the village of Liddes (1,346 m) to the north of the Great St Bernard Pass. He studied Philosophy, French and Art History at the University of Lausanne. In 2003, he was the first Swiss to win a literary prize at the Concours International de la Nouvelle, and he was awarded the Prix de la Sorge in 2004 for his essay "Mat". As a freelance journalist for print media and television, he works particularly on the Télévision Suisse Romande programme "Passe-moi les jumelles".

Filmography: "L'Afrique de Rimbaud" (Rimbaud's Africa), 52 mins, Elytel, 2005; "Nomad's Land", 90 mins, Tipi'Mages Productions, 2008; "Kalash, les derniers infidèles du Pakistan" (Kalash - Pakistan's last infidels), 52 mins, Tipi'Mages Productions, 2010; "Sādhu", to be released in autumn 2012, 90 mins, Tipi'Mages Productions.

<http://gaelmetroz.wordpress.com/> / www.nomadsland-lefilm.com



Above: The dance of the monks at a monastery in Lo Manthang

Far left: To demonstrate the dominance of his will over his body, this sadhu has held his hand up for the past 17 years

Left: On the high plateau in the former kingdom of Mustang

The whole world in one place

In August 1978, Alphonso Berger, who was 24 at the time, was one of the leaders at a Youth Service hiking camp. The ten-day journey, in which 30 to 40 young Swiss abroad aged 14 to 18 took part, went from Greyerz to Lake Thun.

Alphonso recalls that while the lead-up to the camp had been enjoyable, it had not quite gone to plan. He picked up three young, enthusiastic East Germans at the station in Berne on the day of arrival and the first thing he did was to invite them for a Coca-Cola. One glass became two, and many more followed until they suddenly realised that they had squandered all their money.

On the journey, which began the following day, the group was accompanied by two cooks and a VW army bus. The cooks drove ahead to the accommodation sites in the bus to prepare the food and

get things ready for the enjoyable evenings. The group slept in school buildings, youth hostels and tents.

Alphonso vividly remembers that some of his group experienced snow first-hand for the first time on this hike. The fact that these young Swiss people from abroad all felt a sense of belonging to Switzerland despite having very different backgrounds and coming from all over the world also made a lasting impression on him. “To see these people who were Swiss and yet completely foreign at the same time and to discover they all had a strong Swiss heritage and yet knew little about

the country and could not speak a word of Swiss German was strange but also intriguing”, explains Alphonso. He adds: “I was amazed by the stories about their families’ emigration and found the idea fascinating that they would probably never have met if it had not been for the hiking camp despite their common ‘homeland’.”

Alphonso says that many of them found the hikes challenging. They cursed and swore in the snow and rain, and the team of leaders had to encourage and motivate them. Problems sometimes arose on the mountain stages because some of the group did not have appropriate equipment. Some of them went up into the mountains wearing loafers and unsuitable clothing. Of course, they were all ultimately proud of their achievement. The young Swiss

abroad were particularly impressed with attractions like the Stockhorn and “Schynige Platte”. “They were like all tourists in that way”, recalls Alphonso.

Alphonso remembers how the lunches during the hikes proved a surprise. This was because each day two of the party



Hanspeter Alphonso Berger was born on 21 November 1954. His mother came from Mund in Valais and his father was from the Thun region. One of his grandfathers was Spanish. Berger initially worked for social services in the city of Berne and as a mountain guide. He later studied Chinese medicine in China and Japan.

were allowed to pick the food for that day. They were given money to go shopping. Alphonso says that the meals were sometimes very unbalanced: “The Australians only wanted meat, while others bought vast amounts of chocolate.”

Alphonso found the job as a camp leader through an advertisement: “Tourist guide sought!” read the newspaper announcement. He says: “I had just completed my training as a mountain guide and given up my job as a manager at the youth hostel in Grindelwald and was planning to take a second long trip to China. Working on a short-term project fitted in well.”

Alphonso does not know what has become of the Swiss abroad who took part in his camp. He recollects that one or two couples fell in love but doubts whether these relationships lasted. Maintaining a long-distance relationship is certainly not easy.

SIMONE RINER



Photos from the 1978 camp. Do you recognise yourself in any of the photos? If so, let us know! sjas@aso.ch

HIKING CAMPS TODAY

The Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad still organises hiking camps today. They are called “Swiss Journey” and “Bernese Oberland Adventure”. Climbing is currently also often part of the itinerary but otherwise much has remained the same. The expectations and ideas of the participants are still very different but everyone ultimately enjoys the group experience and exchange with other people.



OSA advice

Can Swiss abroad take out health insurance in Switzerland?

The following article applies only to Swiss persons resident in a country outside the European Union or European Free Trade Association.

As a rule, compulsory health insurance in Switzerland is available only to persons who are domiciled in Switzerland or who work there. This is in line with the territorial principle under which laws apply to a specific territory. This generally means that Swiss abroad cannot take out compulsory health insurance in Switzerland. However, health insurers have the opportunity (but not the obligation) to offer health insurance products to Swiss abroad. If a health insurer offers this type of product, the insurance policy will be concluded on a private basis. Other options open to Swiss abroad are either to take out insurance in their country of residence or to take out an international insurance policy. The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad keeps a list of insurers offering services to Swiss abroad. The list is available on the OSA website (see link below) or may be requested from OSA.

There are exceptions for persons who work for a Swiss employer abroad (seconded staff) and are still in principle covered by the Swiss social insurance system.

For persons domiciled in a Member State of the EU/EFTA, the Agreement on the Free Movement of Persons dictates which country is responsible for health insurance matters.

Link: www.aso.ch > Consultation > Living abroad > Social insurance > Health insurance > Health insurance outside EU/EFTA or Health insurance within EU/EFTA States.

SARAH MASTANTUONI, Head of the Legal Department

OSA's Legal Department provides general legal information on Swiss law and specifically in areas that concern the Swiss abroad. It does not provide information on foreign law and does not intervene in disputes between private parties.

Summertime in Switzerland

The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) is offering plenty of variety, adventure and fun this summer at its holiday camps for young people in Valais and the Bernese Oberland. OSA is giving young Swiss people abroad the chance to put together their own interesting and informative educational holiday.

OSA is expecting over 120 young people to attend the summer camps in Lenk alone this summer. The Youth Service is organising activity holidays with participants from over 30 countries. The OSA team will provide the opportunity to learn new sports or to improve particular disciplines. The camp leaders will also offer alternatives for those who are not quite so energetic.

A charitable summer camp is being held for the fourth time in Saas Balen (Valais) where young Swiss abroad will carry out maintenance work in the community.

OSA will be providing young people with a particularly intense experience on its adventure trips through the Bernese Oberland. This project is aimed at participants who want to help shape the camp and learn new things in the process. The young people will enjoy a very special outdoor experience.

Journey of discovery

A new OSA offer is a two-week stay with a Swiss host family with a personalised project for the participants. OSA is offering a programme featuring various themed excursions. Young people will be able to experience Switzerland's diversity by going off by themselves on trips that revolve around themes like water, architecture and transport and then publishing online reports on them. This stay can be combined with elements of the Training in Switzerland programme. OSA will provide individual advice and support for young people who are interested.

Learning a language made easy

Swiss abroad will have an opportunity to learn German or French on the two-

week language courses. The young people will attend language classes in the mornings, and OSA will offer excursions and a fringe programme on a number of afternoons.

Finally, we will also prepare young people for the Congress of the Swiss Abroad to be held in Lausanne in August. The theme of the 2012 Congress is "Mobility and Innovation: Switzerland in Times of International Challenges".

We hope to see large numbers of Swiss abroad enjoying our offers for young people in 2012.

Further information on the offers mentioned is available from:

*Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Youth Service*

Tel: +41 (0)31 356 61 00

youth@aso.ch

www.aso.ch

Summer camps for children aged 8 to 14

In July and August 2012, Swiss children abroad will be able to spend two weeks at our summer camps having a great time with 30 to 50 children from all over the world while, at the same time, discovering Switzerland and its culture.

There are still some places available on our holiday camps. The exact details and the registration form can be found at www.sjas.ch > Our forthcoming activities. We are also happy to post you our information brochure on request. This contains an overview of our offers. The Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad would like to give all Swiss children abroad at least one opportunity to discover Switzerland in this way. We therefore offer reduced rates in legitimate cases. We would be pleased to provide you with further information.

*Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad
(FYSA)*

Alpenstrasse 26

3006 Berne

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sjas@aso.ch, www.sjas.ch

Help with educational matters

Switzerland's education system enjoys a very good reputation. However, courses are very demanding and often require a high level of personal input. This applies to both traditional vocational training and university-level education. The Association Promoting Education for Young Swiss Abroad (AJAS) provides advice, support and assistance.

An increasing number of foreign students are enrolling at Swiss universities and with good reason – the quality of the education provided is highly regarded. AJAS aims to encourage young Swiss abroad to find out about and take advantage of educational opportunities in their native country. Studying in Switzerland is easier for Swiss abroad than for foreign students in many respects, in terms, for example, of the language, work permits, acceptance by the local population and grants. However, moving to Switzerland, searching for accommodation



and places on courses, and dealing with the authorities, etc. are a challenge for all young people from abroad.

AJAS has been promoting the education of young Swiss abroad for 50 years now. We give advice to over 650 people a year from every continent.

Young people or their parents should ideally contact AJAS as early as possible so that we can provide them with information about the range of educational opportunities available in Switzerland. We draw their attention not only to the special opportunities, but also to the difficulties that may arise. AJAS aims to provide young Swiss abroad and their parents with comprehen-

sive information before they decide to embark on education in Switzerland. If they then opt to come to Switzerland, AJAS is on hand locally to provide support, especially with administrative matters. We know from experience that most students settle in quickly and are soon able to organise themselves.

If you, as a resident abroad, are interested in educational opportunities in your native Switzerland, please do not hesitate to contact us. We, Silvia Hirsig and Fiona Scheidegger, will be delighted to advise you and provide you with information to help you make your decision. You can contact us at:

*AJAS, Alpenstrasse 26
CH-3006 Berne
Silvia Hirsig, Advisor
Tel. +41 (0)31 356 61 04
Fiona Scheidegger, Director
Tel. +41 (0)31 356 61 22
E-mail: ajas@aso.ch*

We will, of course, be attending the Congress of the Swiss Abroad, which will take place in Lausanne from 17 to 19 August 2012.

90th Congress of the Swiss Abroad: 17 to 19 August 2012

At the 90th Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Lausanne participants will debate Mobility and Innovation: Switzerland in Times of International Challenges. Among other speakers, Federal Councillor Didier Burkhalter and Kurt Wüthrich, winner of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 2002, will honour us with their presence.

More on the topic and the latest information on the 2012 Congress can be found at: www.aso.ch/en/offers/congress-of-the-swiss-abroad/2012.

Put the Congress dates in your diary today. We look forward to seeing you!



Please send me the registration documents in spring 2012 for the 90th Congress of the Swiss Abroad (17 to 19 August 2012 in Lausanne).

My address is:

Surname:	First name:
Address:	
Country:	Postcode/city:
E-mail:	

Please write clearly in block capitals

Send the completed form to: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, Communications & Marketing, Alpenstrasse 26, CH-3006 Berne, Fax: +41 (0)31 356 61 01 or e-mail us at communication@aso.ch.

Four new regional consular centres

As reported in “Swiss Review” last June, the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) opened eight Regional Consular Centres (R-CC) in 2011 in Bucharest, The Hague, Pristina, Pretoria, Riga, Santo Domingo, Stockholm and Vienna. Owing to highly promising experiences there, the FDFA decided to establish a further four Regional Consular Centres in spring 2012:

- Iberian Peninsula: Madrid for Spain (excluding Barcelona) and Portugal
- London for the United Kingdom and Ireland
- South-East Asia: Bangkok for Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Malaysia
- Buenos Aires for Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay

The consular sections of the following embassies will be closed as a result of the opening of these Regional Consular Centres:

- Lisbon
- Dublin
- Kuala Lumpur
- Montevideo
- Asuncion

The detailed timetable for these operations had not been finalised at the time of going to press. All registered Swiss abroad affected will be informed directly by the representation responsible for them.

The FDFA is aware that the regional service will mean a longer journey and travel time for some of our visitors. We will therefore endeavour to keep the number of people affected to a minimum. In total, the Regional Consular Centres serve around 4% of the Swiss community abroad. Many consular matters can also be dealt with by post or electronically these days. We have found that our fellow citizens have made increasing use of these methods to communicate with our representations in recent years. Attendance in person is only required for a few matters, such as the recording of biometric data for ID documents.

In addition to the Regional Consular Centres, the FDFA is also implementing the following support measures to maintain its high level of public service:

- Setup of a consular helpline in Berne (Phone: +41 800 24-7-365), which will oper-

ate 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year from 1 May 2012 onwards;

- The opportunity to have biometric data for ID documents recorded at any representation, including Regional Consular Centre, or at any cantonal data collection centre in Switzerland (ID documents themselves have to be applied for at the representation responsible);
- Mobile devices may be used, depending on local circumstances, to record biometric data in connection with major events held outside Switzerland for the Swiss abroad (e.g. consular conferences, OSA regional conferences, etc.);
- The FDFA will also take advantage of possible cooperation with other Schengen states regarding visas and will hold regular exchanges with other ministries of foreign affairs that also deal with the issue of regional consular centres;

This restructuring and the related supporting measures will allow us to serve you, the Swiss abroad, as an expert contact at all times.

703,640 Swiss citizens live abroad

The latest statistics on the Swiss abroad show that the number of Swiss citizens living outside Switzerland rose by 8,517 persons or 1.23% last year. At the end of 2011, a total of 703,640 Swiss citizens were registered abroad. This figure equates to around 10% of all Swiss citizens.

Of the Swiss citizens registered abroad, the majority, 61.85% or 435,203, live in Europe – 420,653 of them in the EU. The largest Swiss community abroad by far – 183,754 – is to be found in France. This corresponds to 26.11% of all Swiss abroad. France is followed by Germany with 79,050 Swiss citizens (11.23%) and the USA with 75,637 (10.75%).

Just a single Swiss citizen is registered in each of the states of São Tomé and Príncipe, Micronesia and Kiribati.

545,844 Swiss abroad are eligible to vote in referenda and elections. 143,288 (26.25%) of these have been entered on an electoral roll in order to exercise their right to take part in elections and referenda in Switzerland. Compared with the previous year, this group has increased significantly more than the total number of Swiss abroad with a rise of 5.45%.

The statistical data on the Swiss abroad is now produced centrally by the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) in Berne rather than by the embassies and consulates, which has resulted in greater accuracy.

Link: www.aso.ch > Information > Statistics

Appointments at the FDFA

At its meeting on 11 January 2012, the Federal Council appointed Mr Yves Rossier as the new State Secretary at the FDFA and Mr Benno Bättig as the new Secretary-General.

Yves Rossier, born in 1960, is a citizen of La Brillaz in the canton of Fribourg. He was the Director of the Federal Social Insurance Office at the FDHA from February 2004. He was previously responsible for setting up the Federal Gaming Board (ESBK), which he then ran for around four years. Yves Rossier actually began his career with the FDFA: he joined the FDFA/FDEA Integration Office in 1990 as a research assistant and, after passing an open competition, completed diplomatic training in 1993 at Political Affairs Division II before moving to the FDEA as an advisor to Federal Councillors Delamuraz and Couchepin.

Besides his mother tongue, French, Yves Rossier also speaks German and English. He holds a Degree in Law from the University of Fribourg. He went on to study European Law at the College of Europe in Bruges and was an Assistant to the Chair for International Private Law at the Faculty of Law of the University of Fribourg before completing a Master of Laws Degree at McGill University in Montreal. Yves Rossier is married and has five children.

Benno Bättig is 45 years old and a citizen of Willisau in the canton of Lucerne. He holds a Degree in Economics from the University of Fribourg and is a Master of Business Administration. Before moving to the private sector in 2007, he was a Personal Assistant to the Head of the FDHA from 2003 to 2007. He previously worked at the FDEA, where he held various positions in Switzerland and abroad, including Deputy Head of the Economic and Financial Affairs Division at the Swiss embassy in Washington from 1999 to 2002. Benno Bättig is married and has two children.

The Federal Council

This year, the official photograph of the Federal Council was taken in front of the monumental painting “Spring” from the “Four Seasons” series by the artist Franz

Gertsch at the request of Swiss President Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf. This backdrop is intended to symbolise the start of the new legislature and a new beginning.



From left to right:

Federal Councillor Johann N. Schneider-Ammann (Department of Economic Affairs – FDEA)

Federal Councillor Didier Burkhalter (Department of Foreign Affairs – FDFA)

Federal Councillor Ueli Maurer (Vice-President, Department of Defence – DDPS)

Swiss President Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf (Department of Finance – FDF)

Federal Councillor Doris Leuthard (Department of the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications – DETEC)

Federal Councillor Simonetta Sommaruga (Department of Justice and Police – FDJP)

Federal Councillor Alain Berset (Department of Home Affairs – FDHA)

Federal Chancellor Corina Casanova

ELECTIONS AND REFERENDA

The following proposals will be put to a vote on 17 June 2012:

- Popular initiative of 23 January 2009 “Eigene vier Wände dank Bausparen” (Home ownership through purchase savings scheme);
- Popular initiative of 11 August 2009 “Für die Stärkung der Volksrechte in der Aussenpolitik (Staatsverträge vors Volk!)” (Strengthening the rights of the people in foreign policy – decision on state treaties by the people!) and
- Amendment of 30 September 2011 to the Swiss Health Insurance Act (KVG) (Managed Care).

Further referendum dates currently unfilled for 2012: 23 September and 25 November.

POPULAR INITIATIVES

The following federal popular initiatives have been launched since the last edition of “Swiss Review” (deadlines for the collection of signatures in brackets):

- “Für eine Verflüssigung des Strassenverkehrs und weniger Stau (Motorrad- und Roller-Initiative)” (For a dilution of road traffic and less congestion – motorbike and scooter initiative) (07.08.2013)

- “Ja zur Wahl- und Stimmkontrolle” (Yes to voting checks) (31.07.2013)
- “JA zum Steuerabzug bei Wahl- und Stimmbeteiligung” (YES to tax relief for participation in elections and referenda) (29.05.2013)

The complete list can be found at www.bk.admin.ch, in German under “Aktuell / Wahlen und Abstimmungen / Hängige Volksinitiativen” (also available in French and Italian).

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Little gems

Saved from falling into disrepair

Its location near the Albula railway line is spectacular, its interior is magnificent and its cuisine is exquisite – and now the Kurhaus Bergün has been named historical hotel of the year. The luxurious grand hotel began welcoming guests in 1906, three years after the opening of the Albula railway line. However, plans to make Bergün an attractive tourist destination as a



high-altitude climatic spa resort failed. After a fire in 1949, the building was converted into a family hostel with apartments and its condition deteriorated significantly. Ten years ago, a group of regular guests, who had been visiting

Bergün for many years, decided to save the building from going to rack and ruin. The property was lovingly restored in small steps. The reasons for the “hotel of the year” award mention the fact that the renovation was carried out in an exemplary fashion in terms of protecting its heritage. The award was presented by ICOMOS Switzerland – an association of heritage conservation experts. The hier-jetzt publishing house has produced a small guide featuring the 2012 award-winning hotels and restaurants. These include the “Hotel Bellevue des Alpes” on the Kleine Scheidegg, the “zum Goldenen Schäfli” restaurant in St. Gallen, the “Harmonie” in Berne and the “Berggasthaus Aescher-Wildkirchli” mountain hotel in Weissbad, Appenzell.

BE

The hotel: Kurhaus Bergün, +41 81 407 22 22; prices: CHF 75 to 100 per person. www.kurhausberguen.ch; the book: “Historische Hotels und Restaurants in der Schweiz 2011”; 86 pages, 131 illustrations, ISBN 978-3-03919-180-2, CHF 14.80, EUR 12.00

From ice hockey player to singer

Few performers enjoy widespread acclaim at their first attempt. Bastian Baker, just 20 years of age, had an immediate hit with his track “Lucky” and his album “Tomorrow May Not Be Better”. This former

semi-professional ice hockey player seized his opportunity and recorded tracks in Paris with support from British and American musicians. His winning brand of pop-folk and his angelic good looks have captured the hearts of young girls and impressed music industry

Music between the covers of a book

The “I Salonisti” ensemble has existed since 1983 and has been world famous since 1997 when film director James Cameron hired the musicians from Berne as the ship’s orchestra for his movie “Titanic”. The five musicians have long since returned to normal everyday life after the love story that attracted an audience of millions. However, standards in terms of quality and creativity have remained

just as high as ever for Piotr Plawner (violin), Lorenz Hasler (violin), Ferenc Szedlák (violoncello), Béla Szedlák (double bass) and André Thomet (piano). A wonderful book has now been published to mark the ensemble’s 30th anniversary with portraits of the musicians, a report on a visit to rehearsals, a musical history review of film and salon music, a tremendous homage to the Hungarian conductor György Mondvay, and much more besides. The book also comes with the DVD “Die Donau” with concert excerpts and text.

BE

I Salonisti, Stämpfli Verlag, 128 pages, paperback with DVD ISBN 978-3-7272-1142-3, CHF 38.00



professionals. Even the French singer Mylène Farmer has been won over. Radio stations and the major festivals have opened their doors to him. The Lausanne-born artist has been performing at Switzerland’s concert venues for less than a year, initially just with his guitar and

then with his band. He hit the ground running in 2012 and performed in front of the entire Swiss nation in January at the broadcast of the Swiss Awards in Zurich and provided the musical entertainment at the Davis Cup in Fribourg in February, watched by Roger Federer. Encouraged by Stanislav Wawrinka, the singer even wrote the Swiss tennis team’s anthem, “We’ll Follow You”, for the event. His most famous track “Lucky” is full of good humour at which you cannot help but smile. Bastian Baker has certainly not finished trying his luck yet!

AW

www.bastianbaker.com



Bulletins

Agreement between federal government and OSA

Close relations have existed for decades between the federal administration, namely the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, and the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA). These relations have now been formalised following the signing of a performance agreement. This sets out OSA services for the Swiss abroad (representing interests, maintaining relations between the Swiss abroad and their homeland, providing information and handling the administration of the Council of the Swiss Abroad) and the services provided by federal government. The agreement is also an important step for the coherent policy on the Swiss abroad that the Federal Council wishes to establish.

Cantonal bank discards clients

The Zürcher Kantonalbank has closed the accounts of all its clients residing in the USA. Its clients received a letter just before the end of the year announcing that they would have to transfer all their assets to another bank by the end of February.

Shaqiri to move to Bayern Munich

Xherdan Shaqiri, the 20-year-old attacking midfielder, will move from FC Basel to Bayern Munich in the summer. Shaqiri, who joined FC Basel in 2001 as a junior player just before his 10th birthday, has been part of the first-team squad since summer 2009. The transfer fee paid by Bayern Munich for Shaqiri has not been disclosed.

5.5 million motor vehicles

There were more motor vehicles on the road in Switzerland in 2011 than ever before. Around 420,900 additional vehicles are now using the roads, with the total number standing at around 5.5 million. This represents a 2.2% rise compared to 2010. Congestion on Swiss roads has increased significantly as a result.

Excluding the Swiss abroad

The government of the canton of Basel-Stadt is calling on Parliament to reject an FDP proposal to introduce the right to vote in Council of States elections for the Swiss abroad. This is despite the fact that in summer 2011 the Federal Council asked the cantons to allow the Swiss abroad to vote in Council of States elections. They are currently entitled to vote in 11 cantons.

Federal Council opposes election by the people

The popular initiative "Election of the Federal Council by the people" is unnecessary, according to a Federal Council decision. It recommends that the electorate should reject the initiative at the ballot box. The reason given is that the election of Federal Councillors by the Federal Assembly is a proven system – the main parties, regions and linguistic groups are represented on the body and it has always succeeded in establishing a basis for Switzerland to be successful in overcoming the challenges of the era concerned.

Quotations

"Switzerland's attempt to remain neutral forever makes me think of a virgin who makes her living in a bordello but wants to stay chaste."

Friedrich Dürrenmatt

"All the parties support concordance, but there is no concordance on what concordance actually is."

Antonio Hodgers, National Councillor for the Swiss Green Party, at the Federal Council election

"I suspect the USA will only offer a deal once the lemon has been completely squeezed."

Economics Professor Peter V. Kunz of the University of Berne on the tax dispute with the USA

"Politicians cannot keep on playing nursemaid to a financial centre out of control."

Fulvio Pelli, outgoing President of the FDP. The Liberals, at his party's Delegate Conference

"Conquered nations must either be made happy or destroyed."

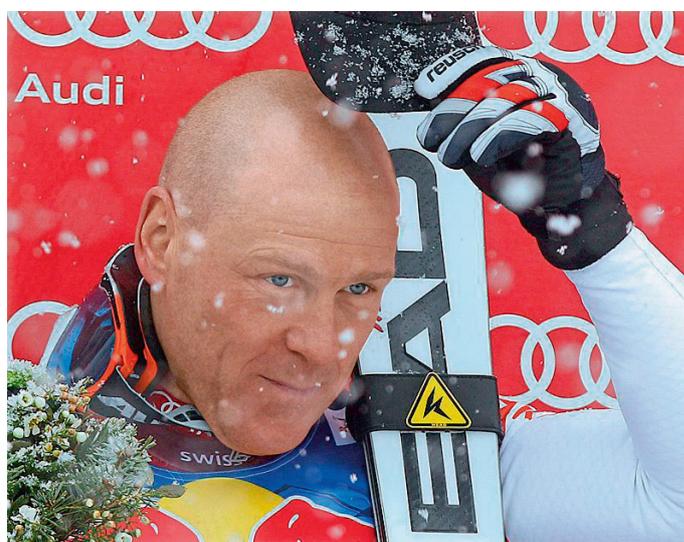
Niccolò Machiavelli

"I have not been elected Federal Councillor for my linguistic abilities."

Alain Berset when asked to answer a question in English at his first appearance before the media

"We want immigration that benefits the nation."

Christian Levrat, President of the Swiss Social Democratic Party



"The day has finally arrived. I will retire from ski racing at the end of this season. This is a very emotional moment for me and a major milestone in my career and my life. I have led a very privileged life as a professional skier over recent years and have enjoyed many wonderful moments. Being a ski racer was and is a dream job. I have been reflecting upon this decision for some time. I am sure I have chosen the

right moment to retire from professional sport", Didier Cuche told his fans on 18 January. Two days later, he won the legendary Kitzbühel downhill for the fifth time in his career. No skier before him has achieved that. "It's like a Hollywood movie script. After announcing my retirement, I could not have imagined such a happy ending. Kitzbühel is definitely my race", Cuche concluded.



Panoramic train of the GoldenPass Line, Bernese Oberland

Palm trees, mountains and lakes.

A treasure on the railway: get on board the GoldenPass to admire some of the most beautiful landscapes in Switzerland.

After departing from Montreux, the train climbs above Lake Geneva. The palm trees on the shores of the great lake soon give way to the conifers of the highlands. Here, you will enter the Pays d'Enhaut region, the home of L'Etivaz cheese, where green areas await you for magnificent hikes. The journey continues to the Bernese Oberland and the Simmen valley with its farms decorated with sculptures. After travelling along the shores of Lake Thun, which nestles at the foot of peaks like the Niederhorn and the Rothorn, the train arrives in Interlaken, from where you can tackle the Jungfrauoch or continue on to Lucerne.

A ringside view

Travelling on board the observation cars of the GoldenPass means you are perfectly positioned to admire the spectacular scenery. If you choose the VIP seats at the front of the train, you will even feel like you are driving this exceptional train.

Network Switzerland

Register at MySwitzerland.com/aso by 30 June 2012 and win 2 nights for 2 people at the Hotel Royal – St. Georges**** in Interlaken.

MySwitzerland.com
Webcode: **A54454**

A taste of the Alps

To taste an authentic product from the region, stop off at Maison de L'Etivaz, where you will learn all about L'Etivaz, an AOC cheese with a fruity flavour produced each summer by craftsmen over a wood fire in around 100 mountain huts.



Tip 1

MySwitzerland.com
Webcode: **A53089**

Spring fragrance

In the Spring, before boarding the GoldenPass, don't forget to climb up to Les Pléiades above Vevey, to admire the thousands of fragrant daffodils covering the fields. You can then return to the plains at top speed with a trottibike.



Tip 2

MySwitzerland.com
Webcode: **A58102**

A view from above

After leaving the GoldenPass in Interlaken, take the train up to Schynige Platte, a mountain that offers a breathtaking view over Lake Brienz and Lake Thun and the famous trio formed by the Eiger, the Mönch and the Jungfrau.



Tip 3

MySwitzerland.com
Webcode: **A42675**

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



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