

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE SWISS ABROAD

S W I S S

REVIEW

FEBRUARY 2013 / NO. 1



**Meret Oppenheim –
homage to mark
100th birthday**

**Poor prognosis for
Swiss healthcare system**

**Luc Hoffmann –
a life dedicated
to conservation**





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Fragile international relationships

UELI MAURER TAKES OVER THE PRESIDENCY OF SWITZERLAND THIS YEAR. Parliament half-heartedly elected the Head of the Federal Department of Defence to the office in December. Even Maurer himself does not appear particularly enthralled by the honour and responsibilities of serving as President of Switzerland. He asked colleagues close to him whether there was any way of forgoing office. Ueli Maurer, who, together with his Swiss People's Party, advocates a policy of isolationism in foreign affairs, is now Switzerland's figurehead in the international arena. The question of whether that is beneficial to our nation has to be raised. This is especially valid in view of the fact that Switzerland's relations with the international community are fragile and we increasingly find ourselves in the pillory on the world stage due to the disgraceful conduct of our banks, our tax policy and for showing a lack of solidarity, to name but a few reasons. Maurer nevertheless seems to have a degree of insight into the different issues although he has asked foreign minister Didier Burkhalter to represent Switzerland in his place at various meetings abroad. You can read more about Ueli Maurer's profile and career in the article on page 14.



One issue of major concern to Switzerland's people and politicians is the healthcare system. Costs are continuing to rise, which is explained by a range of factors. Any proposal put forward to curb spending has to date been fought tooth and nail by one faction or another – doctors, insurance companies or the pharmaceutical industry – and with a high degree of success. In contrast to his predecessors Didier Burkhalter and Pascal Couchepin, Federal Councillor Alain Berset, who has been Head of the Federal Department of Home Affairs for over a year now, appears to be intent on finding solutions and does not shy away from conflict. Our focal article on page eight provides an insight into the problems facing Switzerland's healthcare system and the solutions proposed, as well as a fascinating interview on the ethical aspects of possible cutbacks in medical services.

Finally, I would like to say an official farewell to René Lenzin as a member of the editorial team. He has worked for "Swiss Review" for 20 years, initially as the managing editor and later as the Swiss political affairs editor. René Lenzin accepted a new position on the home affairs desk at the Zurich "Tages-Anzeiger" last year, which will require all his journalistic energy. We wish to thank him for everything he has done for "Swiss Review". He will most certainly be missed by the editorial team. Lenzin's successor is Jürg Müller, a well-known and prominent journalist who possesses an in-depth knowledge of Swiss federal politics. He was a journalist on the Bernese "Bund" newspaper until three years ago and now works as a freelance journalist and lecturer. We are delighted to welcome our new colleague onto the editorial team. He has made his debut in this issue with his profile of Swiss President Ueli Maurer.

BARBARA ENGEL

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Cover image:
Meret Oppenheim, international figurehead of Swiss art, photographed by Peter Friedli.
Source reference: SIK-ISEA Zurich

IMPRINT: "Swiss Review", the magazine for the Swiss abroad, is in its 40th year of publication and is published in German, French, Italian, English and Spanish in 14 regional editions. It has a total circulation of 400000, including 140000 electronic copies. Regional news appears four times a year.

The ordering parties are fully responsible for the content of advertisements and promotional inserts. These contents do not necessarily represent the opinion of either the editorial office or the publisher.

■ EDITORS: Barbara Engel (BE), Editor-in-Chief; Marc Lettau (MUL); Jürg Müller (JM); Alain Wey (AW); Jean-François Lichtenstern (JFL), responsible for "Notes from Parliament", Relations with the Swiss Abroad, FDFA, 3003 Berne, Switzerland. Translation: CLS Communication AG ■ LAYOUT: Herzog Design, Zurich ■ POSTAL ADDRESS: Publisher, editorial office, advertising: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, 3006 Berne, Tel.: +41313566110, Fax: +41313566101, Postal account (Swiss National Giro): 30-6768-9. ■ E-MAIL: revue@aso.ch ■ PRINT: Vogt-Schild Druck AG, 4552 Derendingen. ■ CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Please advise your local embassy or consulate. Do not write to Berne. ■ All Swiss abroad who are registered with a Swiss representation receive the magazine free of charge. Anyone else can subscribe to the magazine for an annual fee (Switzerland: CHF 30 / abroad: CHF 50). Subscribers are sent the magazine direct from Berne. ■ INTERNET: www.revue.ch

Copy deadline for this edition: 10.12.2012

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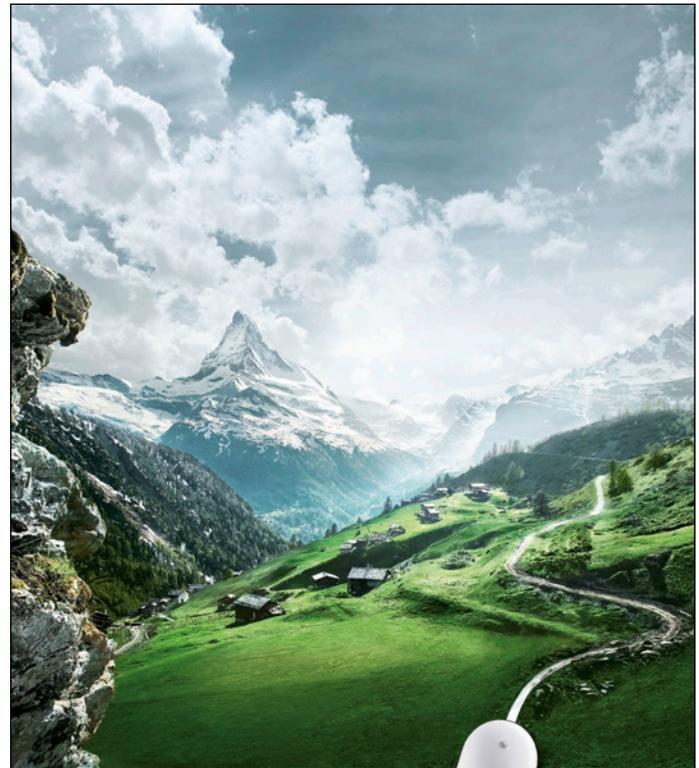
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Great shame

To my great surprise, there was no mention of the 20th anniversary of Switzerland's rejection of accession to the EU in the December 2012 issue of "Swiss Review". The vote held on 6 December 1992 was a momentous event in our nation's history. I believe that this 'no' has had detrimental consequences for our country. It forces us into bilateral agreements that are costing us dear and which we are compelled to sign. They prevent us from participating in Europe's development and from contributing our wealth of experience in the cohabitation of diverse ethnic and linguistic groups. We are obliged to take European laws into account in our legislation but have no say in European legislation. Switzerland is in fact a passive member of Europe and this is a great shame.

MAX PLATTNER,
LUCINGES, FRANCE

A network of pilgrimage routes

I have also walked 900 kilometres along the Way of St James and would like to point something out. The Way of St James is not the only pilgrimage route. There is an entire network that stretches across Europe, including through Germany and Switzerland. Many of these routes are not very well developed and you can walk the entire day without seeing another soul and only meet other pilgrims in the evening at your accommodation, which is hopefully available. Many volunteers keep these routes and lodgings in good condition and expressly welcome leisure-time pilgrims. Many a pilgrim has not just found himself or herself, but has also made new or first encounters with God and faith.

VIVIAN FRÖHLICH-KLEINSCHMIDT,
AURICH, GERMANY

Alternative pilgrimages

I enjoyed reading the article on pilgrimages in the December issue of "Swiss Review". I have been living in Sweden for two years as a Swiss abroad. As a born Catholic theologian, I have taken on the task of raising the profile of the pilgrimage routes and destinations of the north in German-speaking Europe. When you talk about pilgrimage destinations in Central Europe everyone thinks of Santiago de Compostela (which really is very overcrowded). Few people are familiar with Trondheim in Norway or Vadstena in Sweden despite the fact that Trondheim was the third most important pilgrimage destination in Europe in the Middle Ages.

Pilgrimages here in the north are calmer and less commercial. The vastness of the countries is ideally suited to pilgrimages.

SIBYLLE HARDEGGER,
UPPSALA, SWEDEN

Persona non grata

Swiss abroad face insurmountable hurdles in securing housing, employment and a decent standard of living when returning to Switzerland to stay and live here. Unfortunately, they do not get any support from the communes they originally came from. It seems as though they are not welcome. But at election time they are told that they are fully fledged citizens with the same duties and rights as everyone else, which unfortunately is not the case. A communal official told my daughter when she returned to Switzerland that she should have stayed where she was! What is that supposed to mean? It means you are a persona non grata!

ANONYMOUS, BY E-MAIL

LOVE COMES. LOVE GOES. And anyone who invites seventeen authors to write about love sees love come and go in many different ways, blossoming and foundering, sometimes growing slowly and sometimes lasting forever. In "Amami – Liebe mich", the carefully produced publication by the recently established "Abendstern Edizioni" publishing house in Ticino, the authors do not simply attempt to explain love. They provide accounts of it. They relate the most intimate of all emotions. They explore what love does to us and what we do with love – and how we also sometimes mistreat it.

The seventeen accounts, many written especially for the anthology, include the angry, rebellious love of two teenagers (by Martin R. Dean), calculating,

feigned compassion for a dying person (by Charles Lewinsky) and tender affections that outlast death, as in Daniel de Roulet's tale where an elderly widower tries to scatter the ashes of his deceased love in the wind only for the wind to blow them back in his face: "I feel your ashes on my lips but dare not lick them. Is that not your farewell kiss?"

Containing just under 200 pages, the book reveals subtle inner reflections from the complex realm of love experienced by people living in Switzerland. But what actually makes "Liebesgeschichten aus der Schweiz" (Love stories from Switzerland), which is the book's subtitle, a Swiss book? All the authors are obviously of Swiss nationality. But, that aside, they are all very different. They speak different languages, use contrasting writing styles, represent different generations and, in some cases, have dissimilar temperaments. Yet, the compilation of literary gems produces a cohesive picture of lovers in a very small country, which, despite its size, still breaks down into different living environments and linguistic regions held together not least by love. Or, at any rate, they remain fatefully entwined through love stories.

From that perspective, the book is also something it does not set out to be – a declaration of love to Switzerland. In any case, the role played by the small publishing house is

to be commended. It is contributing to new emotional ties by bringing together in one work authors who write in Italian, such as Giovanni Orelli, German-speaking writers like Anne Cueno, Eveline Hasler, Pedro Lenz and Peter Stamm, authors with their roots in the Romansh region, including Oscar Peer, and literary talents from French-speaking Switzerland, such as Sylviane Chatelain and Daniel de

Roulet, thus counteracting the trend where one Swiss linguistic region barely recognises the literature produced in the other Swiss languages. The book is therefore also an affectionate contribution to the miracle of this tiny nation with its many national languages, but above all it simply contains stirring literature.

MARC LETTAU



"AMAMI – LIEBE MICH", 17 Liebesgeschichten aus der Schweiz; Abendstern Edizioni, 2012; 195 pages; paperback; available in German and Italian; CHF 25; EUR 20.

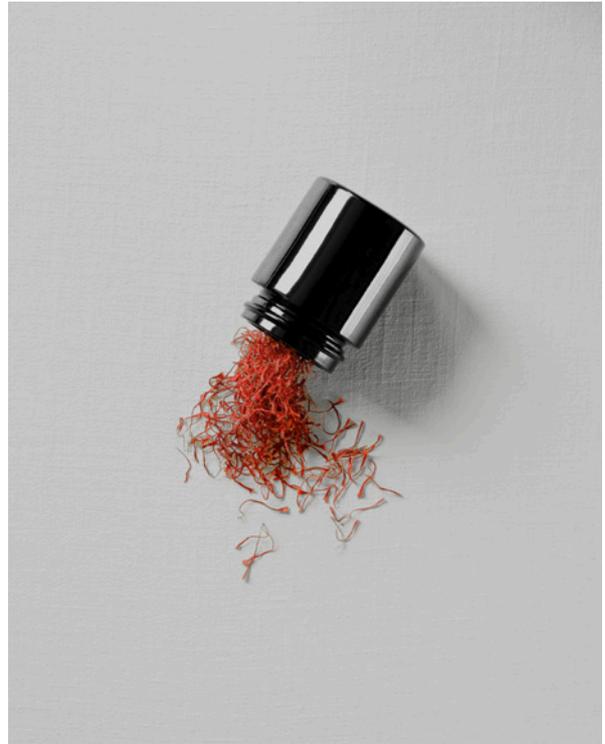
Alpine delicacies

What does our homeland taste like? What are the flavours and aromas of the alpine region? The book "Das kulinarische Erbe der Alpen" (The culinary legacy of the Alps) provides many pos-

sible answers – but only visually, unfortunately. The journalist Dominik Flammer and the photographer Sylvan Müller have spent years researching and collecting rarities, from the "Ackerbohne" bean to the "Zuger Röteli" fish. The book does not focus on luxury products but instead on those delicacies and specialities that are only found in small quantities and are therefore



Silvia Bossard from Althäusern in the Reuss Valley grows Aargau saffron



Pierangelo Re is a rice miller in Albano Verellese, Piedmont, Italy



not on sale at every deli counter in the world. Examples include pike liver, Lake Constance caviar and bacon seasoned with herbs in chestnut wood containers. It also features exceptional people – the farmers, growers, amateur biologists, hunters and collectors who have achieved outstanding things thanks to their tremendous commitment and, in some cases, their obstinacy.



"Das kulinarische Erbe der Alpen"; Dominik Flammer and Sylvan Müller; AT Verlag, Aarau; volume: 368 pages, weight: 2,645 g; price: CHF 98



Angela Tognetti makes Formaggio d'Alpe Monda cheese in Monte Carrasso, Ticino



Johannes Gruber, a beekeeper in St. Magdalena, Austria, produces buckwheat honey



Healthcare – always a work in progress

Switzerland provides its citizens with a very high standard of medical care. Everyone is covered by mandatory insurance, there are few bottlenecks and medical professionals deliver outstanding services. Despite this, the Swiss healthcare system is ill-equipped for the future. For instance, who is going to provide care for the 220,000 dementia patients anticipated by 2030?

By Seraina Gross

The Swiss healthcare system is a reflection of Switzerland itself – good quality but expensive. “The Swiss healthcare system is one of the best in the OECD”, according to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and the World Health Organization (WHO) in 2011. The verdict was: “The population has access to local healthcare services, a wide range of service providers and insurance companies and extensive coverage of basic medical services and medicines.” High life expectancy is an indication of the outstanding quality of the healthcare system. People live longer in Switzerland than in almost any other country in the world. In 2011, a 50-year-old man could expect to reach the age of 83 and a 50-year-old woman had another 35.9 years ahead of her on average.

But quality comes at a price. In 2009, healthcare expenditure stood at 11.4 % of gross domestic product. By international comparison, that puts Switzerland on a par with Canada in seventh place among OECD countries. The number-one spot, by a clear margin, is occupied by the USA at 17.4 %. The Federal Statistical Office calculated Switzerland’s healthcare expenditure at CHF 62.5 billion in 2010. With a population of just under eight million, that is the equivalent of CHF 661 per capita per month.

The burden of premiums is increasing

High health insurance premiums are therefore a constant political issue. The Swiss people have a significant burden to bear despite the relatively moderate rates of increase in recent years. Those insured have spent an average of CHF 353.10 per month on health insurance since January. The inhabitants of Nidwalden have paid the least (CHF 172.10), while the people of Basel have had to dig deepest into their pockets to find CHF 461.40. According to the OECD, a middle-class family with two children spent 9.8 % of their household budget on premiums in 2007, compared to 7.6 % in 1998. This does not include the costs that patients

have to bear themselves in the event of illness. 10 % of treatment costs are paid by patients, though only up to an amount of CHF 700 per year. Each insured person must also cover treatment costs of CHF 300 to CHF 2,500 at the beginning of each year, depending on the insurance model, before the health insurance fund is liable to pay.

Even in wealthy Switzerland far from everyone is able to pay their premiums themselves. Low-income households are therefore entitled to financial support. Almost one in three of those insured now makes use of premium reductions. These subsidies cost federal and cantonal government four billion Swiss francs in 2010.

More market or more state control?

The Swiss healthcare system is still in good shape for now. But the future prospects are less bright. There are increasing signs that Switzerland is unfit to meet the great challenges of the future. Switzerland is one of the most rapidly ageing societies in the world. The OECD and WHO have been warning that reforms are necessary for years. But Switzerland struggles with reforms. Politicians have made little headway since the introduc-

tion of mandatory health insurance in 1996.

There are various reasons for the impasse in healthcare policy. One is the lack of consensus on one key issue. What does the healthcare system need? More market or more state control? The predominantly conservative Parliament tends to favour competitive models, but the Swiss people are clearly sceptical, as evidenced by the defeat of the managed-care bill drawn up by Parliament last June. In contrast, there is a reasonable chance that the Social Democratic Party (SP) initiative for a unified health insurance fund will be approved by the Swiss people. Political failings have also played a part. In recent years, politicians have not succeeded in establishing an effective distribution of risks between the health insurance funds. Only the insured party’s



High-tech, state-of-the-art medicine is extremely expensive

age and gender are taken into account, not their state of health. As a result, competition between the health insurance funds is primarily limited to going after the “good risks” – the young and healthy. That does not generate savings for anyone. On the contrary, every change of insurance fund produces costs, and the money for advertising health insurance funds also has to come from somewhere.

The political gridlock is a consequence of the many individual interest groups, which include doctors, the health insurance funds, the pharmaceutical industry and patients, to name but a few. In no other policy area are so many different players involved in consultation as in healthcare. The two main interest groups, the health insurance funds and the doctors, have even had a voice in Parliament in recent years. The funds have been represented in the Council of States in the form of Christoffel Brändli (SVP) from Grisons as president of the health insurers' association Santésuisse and Eugen David (CVP) from St. Gallen as president of Switzerland's largest health insurance fund, Helsana. The president of the Swiss Medical Association, Jacques de Haller (SP)

from Geneva, has given the doctors a voice in the National Council.

Shared responsibility

Shared responsibility for the healthcare system has also proven an obstacle to reform. Health insurance is a federal issue, while healthcare provision is a matter for the cantons. They decide, for example, on hospital provision. However, only around half the costs incurred in the hospitals are covered by the cantons. The remainder is paid for by health insurance. Shared responsibility has produced a situation of “muddling through”, according to observers such as the ethicist Ruth Baumann-Hölzle from Zurich (see interview). The verdict of the OECD and WHO on the Swiss decision-making mechanisms is not quite as harsh. They even consider the “local flexibility” of the 26 cantons to be one of the system's strengths. The role of direct democracy is also viewed positively: “The uniquely high degree of direct political involvement at all levels of government provides Swiss citizens with the opportunity to have an impact on the direction of healthcare policy.” Both organisations nevertheless warn that “differences between the cantons in terms of funding and access (...) may mask disparities”.

Healthcare has brought little good fortune for the Federal Councillors responsible for it in recent years. Pascal Couchepin, a volatile Free Democrat from Valais, found it difficult to perform the task of ensuring a balance of interests. Neuchâtel's Didier Burkhalter, another Free Democrat, left the Department of Home Af-

airs after just two years to return to the Department of Foreign Affairs without really getting to grips with healthcare policy.

airs after just two years to return to the Department of Foreign Affairs without really getting to grips with healthcare policy.

Alain Berset's first steps

Alain Berset, a Social Democrat from Fribourg, has now been responsible for the constant work in progress that is healthcare for over a year. The Federal Councillor, who is just 40 years old, is regarded as a quick-thinker and a courageous pragmatist. It is still too early to assess whether he will be able to resolve the major issues. The first projects he has initiated nonetheless appear to be heading in the right direction. Berset is finally dealing with the issue of the lack of general practitioners. Rural regions have been affected by this for some time. GPs have for years struggled to find successors for their practices before entering retirement. As a result, retirement often means the closure of the practice.

However, in more recent times, people in urban areas and regions close to cities can also consider themselves fortunate to find a good general practitioner. There are six GPs for every 10,000 inhabitants on average in Switzerland. By comparison, there are 16 in France. Experts say that Switzerland trains around 400 fewer GPs each year than it actually needs. The Swiss Health Observatory, a politically neutral organisation, estimates that Switzerland will be without a third of the GPs it requires by 2030.

300 more doctors per year

Three hundred extra doctors are now to be trained each year from the 2018/2019 academic year onwards. The number of graduates at Switzerland's five medical schools (Zurich, Berne, Basel, Geneva and Lausanne) is to be increased gradually to 1100 per academic year by then. Even the establishment of new medical schools is under discussion. It is not yet clear who will bear the costs, amounting to CHF 56 million a year, for training the extra doctors. The training of doctors, as with most educational matters, is in fact the responsibility of the cantons. However, federal government is also expected to make a contribution this time. Only, federal government is hardly likely to write out a blank cheque for the cantons. If it is to make a contribution to funding, it may well also want to have a say.

The training of extra doctors alone does not resolve the issue, as too few doctors are



Far too few young doctors want to become general practitioners today – the job is stressful and poorly paid

opting to train as general practitioners. The shortfall in doctors actually only affects the basic care providers or, in other words, general practitioners, internists and paediatricians. There is no shortage of specialists. On the contrary, Switzerland has too many. The Federal Council therefore decided once again at the end of last year to restrict the licensing of specialist doctors. From April, the cantons are to be allowed to refuse specialist doctors a practice licence if they believe that the demand is not there. The Federal Council has thus responded to the sharp increase in specialist practices following the expiry of the first medical licensing moratorium at the

end of 2011. However, nobody is really satisfied with this solution. The licensing restrictions will therefore only apply for three years. This period of time is to be used to bolster the ranks of general practitioners. Federal Councillor Alain Berset's GP master plan enables prospective general practitioners to join local practices as junior doctors. They have until now primarily undertaken their junior doctor training in hospitals like the specialists. A key factor will nonetheless be whether efforts to make a career as a GP more financially attractive succeed. GPs in Switzerland earn much less than specialist doctors. The Swiss Medical Association cal-

culated the average income of GPs, subject to old-age and survivors' insurance contributions, at CHF 197,500 in 2009. By contrast, a neurosurgeon earned more than twice that amount at CHF 414,650, an eye specialist received CHF 345,150 and a gynaecologist CHF 236,000.

300,000 Alzheimer's patients by 2050

With the bolstering of GP ranks, the reintroduction of the licensing moratorium and the improvement in the distribution of risks between the health insurance funds, Federal Councillor Berset is pursuing a policy of small steps after the failure of large-scale re-

"The question of allocation should not be delegated to the sickbed"

Ruth Baumann-Hölzle is one of Switzerland's leading experts on ethical issues relating to healthcare. She is vehemently opposed to individual patients being refused medical treatment on cost-saving grounds. She instead argues that the services themselves need to be scrutinised.

Interview by Seraina Gross

"SWISS REVIEW": *The maxim that you cannot put a price on health has long applied in Switzerland. Is that still the case today in view of the costs of CHF 661 per person per month?*

RUTH BAUMANN-HÖLZLE: That maxim has never held true. Every service has always come at a cost. This attitude has nonetheless resulted in a failure in Switzerland to address the issue of the financial limitations of the healthcare system. But Switzerland too must tackle the question of how much to spend on healthcare.

What is the answer?

I'm not in a position to put that into figures for you. What is important is to look at healthcare costs in relation to other social costs, such as spending on education. Education needs to be improved, not just at university level but basic schooling as well. We know that there is a direct correlation between the standard of education and the state of health. The higher the



Ruth Baumann-Hölzle

standard of someone's education, the better their state of health or, in other words, poverty and poor education result in ill health.

Switzerland has one of the best healthcare systems in the world. But what are its shortcomings?

We have good basic care and guarantee access to top medical services. Shortcomings exist in the distribution of resources, which is unfair.

In what way?

We have both over-treatment and a shortage of care services. There are patients who are over-treated and others who do not receive the care they actually require. We know, for example, that lots of unnecessary operations are carried out in Switzerland. There is good money to be earned from operations. The

issue of over-treatment primarily exists among those who are privately insured. This is because the treatment of privately insured patients is extremely lucrative.

Which patients do not receive sufficient care?

This is the case for patients who primarily require nursing care rather than medical care. These are multi-morbid patients suffering from several illnesses and patients for whom the medical treatment options have been exhausted. As a general rule, it is true that the higher the level of care required, the higher the risk of rationing. An issue also exists with people suffering from rare diseases. Too little research is carried out here still. The pharmaceutical industry has made some effort in this respect in recent years, but not enough.

The "reformiert" newspaper, a Reformed Church publication, recently conducted a survey on the issue of rationing. A narrow majority were in favour of refusing alcoholics a liver transplant. What is your view on that?

I am strongly opposed to addressing the issue of rationing in terms of individual patients or patient groups. I absolutely reject that. That puts us in the middle of a debate about whether or not a life is worth saving. Such a debate is

"That puts us in the middle of a debate about whether or not a life is worth saving"

forms in recent years. Whether he succeeds in tackling one of the greatest challenges of the future – the increase in the number of



The proportion of elderly people in the population is rising all the time

beneath human dignity and history shows where that leads: to a loss of humanity.

But doesn't Switzerland have to address the issue of rationing?

Yes, but not in terms of individual patients or individual patient groups. It is a question of how we set priorities. We must avoid focussing on whether or not alcoholics should be granted liver transplants. We must instead assess whether the cost-benefit ratio of the services currently paid for by the health insurer is right. Does a new cancer drug launched on the market really justify the additional costs incurred compared to existing treatment? Top-quality research is required to determine this. Switzerland lacks such cutting-edge research, which is one of the Swiss healthcare system's greatest shortcomings.

What do you think about the QALY (Quality Adjusted Life Years) concept where an amount is agreed for the cost of an additional year in good health?

There are currently no real alternatives to QALY as a measure for assessing the effectiveness of medical services. However, QALY should not be used to assess the value of a person. The question of allocation should not be delegated to the sickbed. On the other hand, it is vital that we apply the concept of QALY to the cost-benefit analysis of services.

Even at the risk that expensive services are excluded from health insurance cover?

patients needing care and of the chronically ill – will prove decisive. The Swiss Alzheimer's Association estimates that there will be 220,000 dementia patients by 2030, with that figure set to reach 300,000 by 2050. Tens of thousands of German, Polish and French nursing staff are already working in Switzerland. They are in short supply in their home countries, just like the thousands of foreign doctors working in Swiss hospitals and practices. The OECD and WHO are calling for a national nursing staff plan.

The two international organisations are also critical of the lack of healthcare policy data available in Switzerland. Information

No, if a service is efficient then it can also be expensive because its cost-benefit ratio is right. By contrast, the cost-benefit ratio of a cheap but ineffective service will be poor.

This means that agreement would be reached on the services to be covered by health insurance and if they are included in the list, then they would be made available to everyone.

Exactly. I like to compare it to a library. The decision on whether a book will be made available to users is made at the time of purchase. Once the book is on the shelf, you do not suddenly turn around and tell someone that they cannot borrow it now. We must look at the make-up of the healthcare "library". I strongly believe that there are tremendous savings to be made here.

But would that also mean assessing who earns what from the services?

The issue of margins is also an ethical one. We know that the margins are extremely high in some cases. The prices for medicines, implants and hospital beds, for example, are very high in Switzerland. Wheelchairs for which the Swiss social insurance schemes pay several thousand Swiss francs can be purchased online for a fraction of the price. Health insurance pre-

on the effectiveness of treatments is vital to "knowledge-based" policy, say the OECD and WHO. They are addressing the lack of transparency here, a point that is constantly raised in Switzerland as well. This lack of transparency means that debates on healthcare policy are always a bit of a fumble in the dark. It would be good to know, and frankly it is very important that we know, exactly what we are getting for the large sums of money that we spend on healthcare.

SERATINA GROSS is a correspondent for the "Basler Zeitung" in French-speaking Switzerland and a freelance journalist.

miums have also gone up by more than the rate of inflation in recent years.

Why aren't services subjected to close scrutiny?

Because there is no will for transparency as this would reveal the interests of the various players. Hardly any other area of politics is so dominated by strong individual interests and intense lobbying on the scale found in healthcare.

Focussing on a more fundamental question, what is the purpose of a healthcare system? There is often talk about a healthcare market in the political debate.

The healthcare system is not simply a market because a healthcare service is only an elastic commodity to a limited extent. A treatment is not like a car where you can decide for yourself whether you want to buy one and, if so, what model. If you are in an emergency ward suffering from a bilious attack, then you are no longer the one making the decision; others make it on your behalf.

Is making money from healthcare unethical?

No, the players involved in healthcare should, of course, earn money and be remunerated appropriately. But turning a profit is not the healthcare system's *raison d'être*. The priority must be to provide care for sick people.

"The lack of cutting-edge research is one of the Swiss healthcare system's greatest shortcomings"

A temple to sustainability

The new Environment Arena in Spreitenbach cost 45 million Swiss francs and was paid for by the Zurich-based construction entrepreneur Walter Schmid. It primarily deals with the issue of how the energy turnaround can be achieved. The message from Spreitenbach is that this is feasible without dispensing with luxury items. A look at the world of eco-shopping.

By Reto Wissmann

It is situated in a business park surrounded by giant shopping malls, retail outlets and furniture stores where growth, prosperity and the apparently limitless availability of resources are celebrated. But those behind the Environment Arena have something very different in mind – they are aiming to provide a “world of experience for energy and environmental issues” and to achieve a “milestone in environmental commitment”. When the futuristic building was officially opened at the end of August, Doris Leuthard, Federal Councillor for the Environment, Transport, Energy and Communications, proclaimed: “Reconciliation between ecology and economy has finally been achieved.” The media acclaimed the project as “a centre of expertise for tomorrow’s world” and a “new star in ecology’s sky”.

Even the structure itself is absolutely captivating. The external design with its black shimmering roof symbolises a giant diamond. The entire building site operated on a CO₂-neutral basis during the construction stage – a world first for such a large-scale

project, according to its creators. Solar panels were assembled on portable buildings and a wind turbine erected on the crane. The excavators and trucks ran on biodiesel and natural gas. A photovoltaic plant has been installed in the Environment Arena’s roof, which is expected to generate 40 % more energy than the building consumes. However, this figure does not include the exhibitions held on the site. Solar power is also used for heating and air conditioning, and leftover food from the restaurant does not end up in the refuse but is instead converted into biogas by an on-site fermenter. The arena profiles itself as a model structure for large plus-energy buildings.

Toboggan power plant

Inside, around 100 companies are currently displaying their eco-friendly products at 40 interactive exhibitions. There is also an events arena for up to 4,000 visitors. The Swiss Solar Awards, attended by the then Swiss President, Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf, were hosted here in October. The Environ-

ment Arena’s slogan is “Nachhaltigkeit zum Anfassen und Erleben” (sustainability made real and tangible). Visitors can get behind the wheel of the latest electric cars, communicate with people on the floor below via video conference, generate their own electricity on a toboggan or learn how packaging can be recycled at the drinks machine. The impact of modern window insulation technology on room temperature can be experienced firsthand and a comparison made between energy loss in old and new buildings at a house built within the main structure. Visitors also discover how organic meat and organic cotton are produced in a replica supermarket.

“Our aim is to ensure people are better informed about environmental technologies”, explains the head of marketing at the Environment Arena. It is not idealistic visions of the future that are on display here but products that are ready for the market. While many things will be familiar, there are still plenty of interesting discoveries to be made, such as a hybrid collector, which produces electricity and heats up water simultane-



Federal Councillor Doris Leuthard with Walter Schmid, the founder of the Environment Arena, at the grand opening and, pictured right, the building in Spreitenbach from above

ously, or a full-surface induction hob that only gets hot under the pan base. Visitors will enjoy not being approached immediately by salespeople and being able to look at and test out the exhibited items in peace. The displays are largely self-explanatory and nothing is sold. The advertising of the participating companies nevertheless has a strong presence. The German weekly newspaper "Die Zeit" very aptly described the Environment Arena as a "mixture of trade fair and technorama".

Revenue from the sale of Kompogas

Walter Schmid constructed the Environment Arena without any public funding. The Zurich-based businessman became well-known in the 1990s as the founder of the company Kompogas and the inventor of systems that produce biogas from green waste. Schmid has a good track record in demonstrating his pioneering spirit for environmental issues with geothermal drilling and the construction of Minergie houses. He has since sold Kompogas to the energy group Axpo and invested 45 million Swiss francs of the proceeds in the Environment Arena. He is financing its operation through revenue from exhibition and sponsorship partners, which include many international corporations. Though, visitors also make a contribution, with adult entry tickets costing eight francs. 300,000 visitors a year are anticipated. However, according to its media spokesperson, the arena is only currently

attracting 300 to 400 visitors on the four days a week that it is open.

The new style is met with scepticism

"Energy saving must become an experience", declared Walter Schmid at the opening ceremony. He firmly believes that an energy turnaround is achievable without sacrifice. This outlook and conviction are omnipresent in the exhibitions. An energy-saving tumble drier, for instance, is available, while there is no mention of drying washing in the open air, which also saves a lot of energy. There is also no talk of switching to public transport at the Environment Arena, while the display of electric and hybrid vehicles takes up half a floor. The fact that tap water in Switzerland is on a par with bottled water is not highlighted anywhere either. The focus is instead on promoting PET recycling. The message is that every issue can be resolved by technology and that there is no need for changes in behaviour. Environmental organisations say politicians also like this standpoint as it is more appealing than calling for restrictions. Federal Councillor Leuthard believes that the Environment Arena has achieved a small miracle by making "the energy turnaround tangible".

Jürg Buri, Director of the Swiss Energy Foundation, has mixed feelings about the Environment Arena. He agrees that Walter Schmid has noble intentions. Buri remarks: "He is a progressive and successful individual who believes in sustainability." There is abso-

lutely nothing wrong with making money from environmental technologies, he says. However, if the "energy turnaround palace" is leading people to believe that climate change can be kept at bay solely with new technologies and without any change to behavioural patterns, then "the wool is being pulled over their eyes".

Environmentalists and climate protection campaigners have long distanced themselves from their image of cantankerous, woolly-sock-wearing advocates of community composting. Walter Schmid has certainly set new standards with his Environment Arena. His creation can barely be distinguished from the bright lights of unbridled commercialism in terms of aesthetics and size. "We are not used to people thinking big rather than small when it comes to the environment", replies Buri from the Energy Foundation when questioned about the new style. It remains to be seen whether it can make a broader spectrum of the public aware of conscientious consumption. A married couple from Berne who came to Spreitenbach just to visit the Environment Arena say: "It's great that it's not just aimed at highly committed environmentalists."

The Environment Arena may well enliven the debate on climate change and sustainability in Switzerland. What the outcome will be is unclear. Somewhere in the halls of the Environment Arena, the expression "saying is one thing, doing is quite another" can be read.

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A new role for a figure who polarises opinion

Rising from humble beginnings to become president – Ueli Maurer, President of the Swiss Confederation in 2013, has had an extraordinary career, though he has yet to replicate the huge success he enjoyed as President of the Swiss People's Party in his position as Minister of Defence.

By Jürg Müller

Few Swiss politicians have been lampooned as much as Ueli Maurer. For many years, the media, politicians and satirists portrayed him as a buffoon who did little more than take orders from Christoph Blocher, the father figure of the Swiss People's Party. Yet he has been one of Switzerland's most successful party leaders ever. Maurer was the man who turned the Swiss People's Party (SVP) into the best-supported political party in the country between 1996 and 2008.

He is full of energy, with a proven ability to learn. Even at a young age, his teacher in Hinwil, Zurich, recognised his qualities and recommended him for grammar school. But he came from the poorest family in the village and his parents had no interest in higher education. So, Ueli Maurer completed a commercial apprenticeship and subsequently obtained federal accountancy qualifications. Now he is the President of Switzerland and the figurehead of the nation.

His election on 5 December last year was not entirely plain sailing. Andy Tschümperlin, head of the Swiss Social Democratic Party (SP) faction, launched an attack to disrupt Maurer's campaign in summer 2012. Tschümperlin proclaimed that anyone who did not respect their political opponents was not electable. But the condemnation of the Defence Minister was nothing more than a story for the 'silly season'. Even the SP dutifully backed Maurer for election in the end. Nevertheless, the election was a lacklustre affair, with Maurer only receiving 148 out of 202 votes.

Major turmoil

Ueli Maurer still polarises opinion today, just as he did when he was party leader. He has not performed exceptionally well in his first four years of office as Federal Councillor and Head of the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DDPS). It is unfair to keep on judging him on the statement he made upon taking up

office when he declared that he wanted to create "the best army in the world". But his achievements have been unremarkable even if we ignore the high bar he set. The notorious critics on the left accuse Maurer of lacking clear ideas, and experts reproach him for clinging onto a nostalgic, traditionalist view of the army. Hans-Ulrich Ernst, for example, the former Secretary General of the Federal Military Department, regularly voices his trenchant opposition to the current procurement of fighter jets. There is no sign of the furore over the new fighter jets abating. The Federal Council has already approved the transaction, and the National Council and Council of States will have their say this year, as in all likelihood will the Swiss people after that. Great scepticism exists and not just on the left. The evaluation of the Swedish Gripen, about which there are technical concerns, went badly for Maurer. The Defence Minister made himself vulnerable by publicly making contradictory statements (see "Swiss Review", issue 5/2012).

Ueli Maurer's term of office has so far seen a catalogue of setbacks in other areas, too. Maurer had to improve the "Security Policy Report", which is submitted every ten years, several times before it was granted Federal Council approval. In spring 2012, the army had to concede that it did not know whether 27,000 former servicemen had handed in their weapons because 27,000 data records had gone missing. And, in autumn 2012, a scandal erupted in the Federal Intelligence Service. An employee had been copying hard disks containing secret data over a long period of time. This incident also caused tremendous damage to the credibility of the Swiss secret service internationally. There were calls for the axe to fall, but Maurer stood by the head of the intelligence service, Markus Seiler.

Courteous and well-informed

But there is another side to Ueli Maurer – that of the politician willing to take tough

action. He severely restricted the lavish use of chauffeur-driven limousines by senior army officials. With the help of former Swisscom boss Jens Alder, he also brought order to the IT department of the DDPS, which had apparently been in a terrible state. Maurer has also continually proven himself to be a clever tactician. With the army loans issue, for example, he publicly conveyed his complaints in a highly effective way without going over the top. This approach might well see him achieve his objectives.

Those close to him say that Maurer is courteous and obliging. He relies on a very small circle of trusted confidants to run the DDPS. At the top of the list is the head of the army, André Blattmann, whom Maurer has known since his youth. Maurer is also regarded as being extremely well-informed. He does not generally require speaking notes – summaries produced by his staff – and even refrains from using them when addressing extensive and complex issues. One insider describes his attitude towards national government and his personal involvement as "committed and extremely loyal". He appears to have managed the change of role from brash party leader to Federal Councillor supremely well.

Maurer actually slips up less frequently and less publicly than Christoph Blocher did during his time on the Federal Council.



He manages the balancing act between party politician and Federal Councillor extremely well. However – in contrast to his predecessor, Samuel Schmid – he also avoids keeping his party at a distance or even entering into confrontation with it. Maurer adopts a subtle approach when putting party opinion above that of the Federal Council. In a public speech made last November, for instance, he unambiguously distanced himself in terms of substance from the Federal Council's official policy on Europe but chose his words carefully. He harshly criticised the EU itself. He compared it with the Holy Alliance of 1815 when the monarchies of Europe joined forces against the libertarian efforts of bourgeois and nationalist groups.

A history of outbursts

The EU is undoubtedly the new Swiss President's number one enemy. He sometimes adopts the wrong tone here. In summer 2012, he fired a shot across the bows at Brussels and the EU-friendly factions in Switzerland. "Nobody in their right mind would still want to join the EU today", he ranted. Such gaffes and rhetoric were characteristic of Ueli Maurer during his term as party president. One such example was when Maurer pronounced Samuel Schmid "as good as clinically dead" to the Swiss People's Party when

Schmid, the remaining SVP Federal Councillor, swore himself in against the will of the party following the deselection of Federal Councillor Christoph Blocher in 2007.

Ueli Maurer is said to have been rather shy as a child. He won respect through sporting achievement, particularly in climbing, ski jumping and cycling – he reached the rank of major in a bicycle infantry battalion. The Minister for Defence and Sport has retained his interest in sport. At the age of 62 and a father of six, he still

usually cycles to Berne from Münsingen, where he lives, in all weathers and often taking a slight detour, which means he covers a distance of 15 to 20 kilometres depending on the route.

Maurer's professional career was very average and unremarkable, as was his political one prior to his election as President of the Swiss People's Party in 1996. He was the director of an agricultural cooperative and later the Zurich Farmers' Association, a local councillor in Hinwil and a member of Zurich's Cantonal Council before being elected to the National Council in 1991. It was not until he became President of the Swiss People's Party that he really shone. His recipe for success in strengthening the party was hard graft and provocation. He toured the whole country, tirelessly visited SVP sections and helped with setting up new party strongholds in parts of the country where the SVP was not very well established. Twelve new cantonal parties and 600 local sections were founded. He shaped the party into a right-wing, conservative group – the party of simple, provocative and populist messages. The poster campaigns launched under Maurer, such as the knife-man poster, which also caused outrage abroad, were extremely contentious.

Almost a Swiss abroad

Maurer now faces a challenge of a very different kind. As President of the Swiss Confederation, qualities are required that the Defence Minister has yet to demonstrate, such as the ability to integrate, clever diplomacy, skilful presentation, a desire to represent and a certain sophistication. His performance may yet prove surprising as nobody can say that Maurer is not worldly wise. As a young man, he hitchhiked his way around Europe. He then went to the USA, following in the footsteps of his grandfather who worked as a gold-digger in Alaska. And even the beginnings of the enduring love story between Ueli and Anne-Claude lie beyond Swiss borders. He met his wife-to-be at an airport on a trip to the USA. And the Maurers almost became Swiss abroad. In 1992, they considered emigrating to Canada where they planned to establish a life for themselves as farmers.

FATCA agreement: Switzerland – USA

In early December 2012, Switzerland and the USA concluded an agreement to facilitate implementation of the US tax legislation FATCA. Swiss abroad with bank accounts in Switzerland are also affected by FATCA.

With the "Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act" (FATCA), the USA is aiming to ensure that all income obtained by persons liable to taxation in the USA through accounts held abroad can actually be taxed in the USA. FATCA essentially requires financial institutions abroad to conclude an agreement with the US tax authorities obliging them to report on identified US accounts.

The agreement provides for simplified procedures for large sections of the Swiss finance industry:

- Social insurance institutions, private pension funds and property and indemnity insurers are exempt from the application of FATCA;
- Collective investment schemes and financial institutions with a primarily local client base are deemed compliant with FATCA, subject to certain criteria, and only have a registration obligation;
- The diligence obligations for identifying US clients, to which the remaining Swiss financial institutions are subject, have been drawn up in such a way as to keep the administrative burden within reasonable limits.

The agreement ensures that accounts held by US persons at Swiss financial institutions are reported to the US tax authorities either with the account holder's consent or by way of administrative assistance through group requests. In the event that consent is not granted, information is not exchanged automatically but instead only on the basis of the administrative assistance provision in the double taxation agreement. US persons also include Swiss abroad residing in the USA and persons in Switzerland with dual Swiss-American nationality.

The agreement is subject to the approval of the Federal Assembly and the optional referendum on treaties.

The agreement is due to enter into force at the beginning of 2014. (SIF)

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

By Charles Linsmayer

From the narrow Val-de-Travers across the rivers and seas of Europe – Cilette Ofaire

"I was a pale little girl brought up by a stepmother who did not enjoy having me, to say the least. If circumstances had allowed me to live according to my natural disposition, I would have spent my entire life squatting by a warm oven shivering and jumping out of my skin each time the sound of an opening door jolted me out of my day-dreams." But circumstances did not permit this stay-at-home existence. Cécile Houriet, who was born in Couvet on 13 January 1891 and graduated from commercial college before becoming a glass painter, fled Val-de-Travers forever in 1914 and married the artist Charles Hofer in Paris. However, he then volunteered to go to war and left her behind starving and freezing by the Seine. As secretary to the author Cuno Hofer, she travelled to Hungary in 1919 and discovered her talent as a diarist. After returning to Paris, she contracted tuberculosis and visited a sanatorium in Leysin, where she produced her first independent publication in 1922, the illustrated series "Joies des pucerons" about Parisian nightlife.

An artistic tour of Europe

Having regained reasonable health, she returned to her husband, who was now living in Hamburg and, together with him, happened upon an idea in 1923 that would define her life. They bought an old houseboat, christened it "San Luca" and sailed in it on rivers and canals to Prague, then on to Amsterdam in the summer and finally Paris, painting pictures all the while, which they sold on the quayside. When "Edition Stock" published her novel about these journeys in 1934, her name appeared above the title "Le San Luca" spelt as the Parisians pronounced it – Ofaire.

The couple had purchased a seaworthy steamboat in England in 1931 that they named "Ismé" and which Cilette

Ofaire – after Charles had run off and she had obtained her captain's licence by teaching herself – put to sea in May 1932. On one of its many adventures (usually without paying passengers!), the "Ismé", captained by Cilette Ofaire and manned in the engine room by an Italian called Ettore, sailed along the coast of Portugal and Spain into the Mediterranean, reaching Ibiza in 1936 where it fell victim to a bombardment during the Spanish Civil War.

A ship as a symbol of freedom

In Sanary-sur-Mer, where she sought refuge, Cilette Ofaire resurrected the ship and her experiences aboard it in the novel "L'Ismé"

based on her comic-style illustrated expedition diary. The Lausanne-based "Guilde du Livre" initially published 4,000 copies of it in 1940. The royalty was 250 francs (6 Swiss cents) per copy!

Cilette Ofaire, who spent the rest of her life as a Swiss abroad, had further books published before she died on 11 December 1964 in her small home in Sanary-sur-Mer at the age of 73: the novel "Silvie Velsey" (1938) and the novellas "L'Étoile et le Poisson" (1949), "Un jour quelconque" (1956) and "Chemins" (1945), the poignant story of a disappointing visit to her home town of Couvet. Her most impressive work was nevertheless the seafaring novel "L'Ismé", which depicted the courage and undaunted spirit of a brave woman in a world dominated by men and, with its warm and compassionate humanity, was received by French people as the symbol of a better, freer world when it appeared in bookshops in occupied Paris in 1943.



Quotation

"Having a small boat, crossing the oceans aboard it and feeling like a free citizen of the world – that is not enough to make you wise. For that above all you need a heart capable of loving, a soul that can still feel wonder and a conscience that constantly and vigilantly reminds you that you are one person among many and have a connection with the universe."

(From "Nachruf auf Georg Dibbern", 1959)

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CHARLES LINSMAYER is a literary scholar and journalist in Zurich

“Freedom is not gifted, you have to earn it”

She was a rebellious child from a good home and a multitalented artist who defies categorisation. Meret Oppenheim enjoyed international success but remained true to her Basel dialect. The “grande dame” of Swiss modern art would have celebrated her 100th birthday this year, which provides a good opportunity to look back at her life.

By Alice Henkes



Oppenheim's famous “Portrait with Tattoo” from 1980

Meret Oppenheim was just 18 when she left Basel for Paris in May 1932 determined to become an artist. Her friend Irène Zurkinden, who also made a career in art, accompanied her on this great journey. They took a bottle of Pernod with them, which they drank for courage. On arriving, they headed straight for the famous Parisian cafés, which were the gateway to the art world at the time.

Who was this girl with such zest for life? Meret Oppenheim was born on 6 October 1913 in Berlin-Charlottenburg. Her father, Erich Alfons, was a German doctor and her mother, Eva Wenger, was Swiss. Meret lived with her grandparents in Delémont during the First World War before alternating between southern Germany, where her father had a medical practice, and Basel. She became a border

crosser at a young age, distinctively speaking the Basel dialect, which she retained her entire life.

She was named after the beautiful young Meret who did not want to pray in Gottfried Keller's novel “Der Grüne Heinrich”. Meret Oppenheim soon demonstrated that she too was a headstrong character. At the age of 16, she drew the nonsensical formula X=hare. This original renunciation of mathematics, which she detested, is regarded as the artist's first surrealist work. Meret Oppenheim received encouragement from an early age, especially from her grandmother, Lisa Wenger. This author of children's books was the first woman to attend the Academy of Art in Düsseldorf during her youth. Her grandfather, Theo Wenger, who was interested in art, and her aunt, Ruth Wenger, who was briefly married to the

writer Hermann Hesse, also encouraged Meret's creative talents.

Sharp observer and the silly goose

Only her father was unimpressed by his daughter's dreams of becoming an artist. “Women have never achieved anything in art”, was his view. Nevertheless, he allowed his eldest child to gain an education in art. Meret wanted to move to Paris to join the surrealists, the most innovative and audacious artistic movement of the 1930s. She enrolled at the Academie de la Grande Chaumière, which she only attended occasionally. She preferred to teach herself. Her first oil painting “Sitzende Figur mit verschränkten Fingern” (Sitting Figure with Folded Hands) from 1933 depicts a silent listener in an imaginary circle and represents the outlook of the artist who is interested in the creations of others but always remains a loner.

Through the Swiss sculptor Alberto Giacometti she became acquainted with André Breton's circle. Breton, the intellectual of the surrealist movement, preached the overthrow of all values and was intrigued by the hidden landscapes of the soul. That appealed to the rebellious young woman, but she had no desire to subject herself to the dogmas of surrealism entirely. As the only female artist in the surrealist circle, she sought the freedom to follow her own path. She tackled female subjects in her early work. “Ma gouvernante, my nurse, mein Kindermädchen” (1936) shows a pair of upturned white pumps on a silver tray. Paper frills adorn the heels. This piece brings to mind a roast chicken or a “silly goose”.

It was this determined young Swiss woman of all people who produced surrealism's cult object, the fur teacup, at the age of 23. The idea was born in a Parisian café in 1936. Meret Oppenheim was wearing a fur-coated bangle that she had designed herself. Picasso inspired her to cover other objects with fur. She then produced “Déjeuner en fourrure”, which was purchased by the Mu-



“Evening Gown with Bra-Strap Necklace” from 1968



“Centaur on the Seabed” from 1932

seum of Modern Art in New York in the same year.

Success and self-doubt

She could have simply continued to enjoy success as the artist who covered objects, but she wanted to keep her horizons open and to experiment. Man Ray immortalised this androgynous beauty in a series of famous nude photographs. Meret Oppenheim became the idol of the surrealist movement. She took famous artists like Picasso and Max Ernst as her lovers. But the rapid superficial success of the fur teacup and the nude photographs culminated in a feeling of low self-esteem. She suffered a

creative crisis, which lasted until 1954. She continued to work but without achieving any inner satisfaction. The oil painting “Die Steinfrau” (Stone Woman) from 1938, which shows a female figure made from stones, dramatically expresses this sense of paralysis.

In 1937, she returned to Basel, where she attended the School of Art for two years and restored furniture to earn a living. Her parents could no longer support her. Her father was unable to work in Germany because he was half-Jewish and could not work in Switzerland because he was a German. But she soon got back in touch with old friends in Basel and, in 1945, she met

the businessman Wolfgang La Roche, whom she married four years later. The couple moved to Berne and later to Thun and Oberhofen. They stayed together until Wolfgang La Roche’s death in 1967.

An avant-gardist once again

Over a year passed before Meret Oppenheim established contact with the Bernese art scene through Arnold Rüdlinger, a dedicated art gallery director. It was primarily young Bernese artists who saw the “grande dame” of Swiss art as a role model. In 1956, Daniel Spoerri asked her to design the costumes for his staging of Picasso’s comedy “Desire Caught by the Tail”. Meret Oppenheim was once again part of the artistic avant-garde in her early 40s. And, with her new-found creativity, she could hold her own against younger artists.

She had a studio in Berne from 1954. Her work, which is so full of humour, irony and eroticism and is drawn from her rich emotional life, cannot be pigeonholed as any particular style or technique. The carved chair “Läbchuecheglushti” (1967) is provocative with a grotesque face in the backrest sticking out a long red velvet tongue. The oil painting “Ein Abend im Jahr 1910” (An Evening in 1910) from 1972 is reminiscent of Emil Nolde with its expansive painting style. As a more mature artist, she

ANNIVERSARY EXHIBITIONS

The Swiss artist Meret Oppenheim earned herself a place in international art history. The enduring power of her highly distinctive work is revealed by various exhibitions to mark the artist’s 100th birthday:

MERET OPPENHEIM. Bank Austria Forum, Vienna. 21.03 to 14.07. The first major retrospective of the artist in Austria will then be exhibited in Berlin: Martin Gropius Bau, Berlin 16.08 to 01.12.

ÜBER DEN BÄUMEN. Sprengel Museum, Hanover. 20.02 to 05.05. First major exhibition on the artist’s drawings.

MERETS FUNKEN. Kunstmuseum Bern. Until 10.02. The exhibition outlines the impact of Meret Oppenheim’s work on contemporary Swiss artists.

Work by the artist also features in thematic exhibitions:

THE SUPERSURREALISM. Moderna Museet Malmö, until 20.01.

GNADENLOS. Künstlerinnen und das Komische. Städtische Museen Heilbronn, until 24.02.



“Fur Teacup” from 1923



“An Evening in 1910” from 1972

dealt with the work she had produced in her own youth in a critical and ironic way. The “Eichhörnchen” (Squirrel) from 1969, a beer glass with a bushy fur tail, satirised the famous fur teacup. She sprayed a tattoo on her self-portrait using stencils in the “Portrait mit Tätowierung” (Portrait with Tattoo) from 1980, clearly claiming sovereignty over her own image.

At home in Ticino

Meret Oppenheim focussed frequently on the cloud, that fluffy, ephemeral phenomenon in the sky in which human imagination has been building castles for centuries. She produced well-defined clouds in oil on canvas, in pen and ink, and in the timelessly beautiful bronze work “Sechs Wolken auf einer Brücke” (Six Clouds on a Bridge) from 1975. She continued the theme of femininity

in work such as “Handschuhen” (1985), gloves embroidered with veins.

The Moderna Museet in Stockholm held a Meret Oppenheim retrospective in 1967. This launched her second international career, which is still continuing. She was awarded the City of Basel Art Prize in 1975 and expressed her gratitude with a much-quoted speech about the enduring weak position of women in art. In 1982, she was invited to “documenta 7” in Kassel. A series of poems playing on words was published by Suhrkamp-Verlag shortly afterwards. The world was discovering Meret Oppenheim.

It was only in Berne that her later work was met with incomprehension for a long time. Her fountain sparked controversy when it was displayed in Waisenhausplatz in 1983. But although Berne did not make life easy for her, she demonstrated great generosity towards



The controversial Oppenheim Fountain in Berne

the city. She left a third of her work to the Kunstmuseum Bern. This means that Berne has the artist’s greatest body of work, which has featured in various exhibitions even since her death in 1985. Leading museums throughout the world, such as the Guggenheim Museum in New York, the Museum of Modern Art in Chicago, the Henje Onstad Art Centre in Oslo and the Aargauer Kunsthaus in Aarau, have held retrospective exhibitions on the “grande dame” of Swiss art.

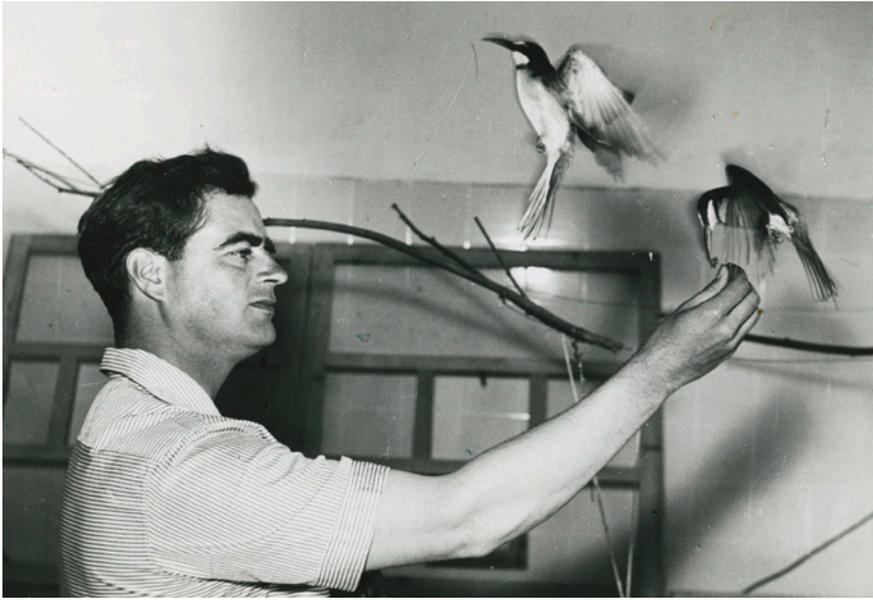
Meret Oppenheim made her breakthrough in Paris as a young girl. She went on long motorbike trips with her husband. But this maverick felt most at home in Carona. The Casa Costanza, the family home in Ticino, was a place of comfort throughout Meret Oppenheim’s lifetime. She spent unforgettable summers there as a child with her grandparents. When she was at school, she always had a picture of the house on her desk “as a symbol of great anticipation”, as she wrote to her grandmother. The house above Lake Lugano was a convivial meeting place for family and friends and a place of refuge for her parents during the war. At the end of the 1960s, Meret Oppenheim had Casa Costanza redeveloped and turned it into one giant work of art with furniture and lamps she had designed herself, and it has remained like that to this day.

ALICE HENKES is a journalist and curator living in Biel

"Man always wants to take more from the Earth than it is able to give"

As a legendary figure in the world of ecology, Luc Hoffmann has dedicated his entire life to protecting the natural environment. A co-founder of the WWF and pragmatic supporter of wetlands to accommodate the migration of water birds, the ornithologist born in 1923 has sometimes devoted as much as five or ten years to certain projects.

Interview and profile by Alain Wey



Luc Hoffmann feeding bee-eaters in La Tour du Valat in the 1950s

Luc Hoffmann, a utopian? "Most certainly", he replies. He has dedicated his entire life to nature, the Earth and mankind. He is a passionate ornithologist, a scientist on the ground and a negotiator who convinces governments to establish nature reserves and natural parks. He has spent over sixty years in the service of his majesty, which, in his case, is nature. The co-founder of the WWF welcomes us to his home in Montricher, among the hamlets of the canton of Vaud, a few miles from Lake Joux. The ecologist, who began his crusade at the end of the Second World War, is only staying at his Swiss home for several days. "I travel back and forth between here and Camargue", which is the place where the adventure began in 1946, at "La Tour du Valat", a wildlife sanctuary in the south of France. The grandson of the founder of the pharmaceutical company Hoffmann-La Roche has devoted his life to ecology while witnessing the deterioration of the state of the planet. His list of achievements is endless: from protecting wetlands in the migratory paths of birds to safeguarding the Galapagos

Islands and Madagascar. We take a look back at his life's work.

Heir from the Swiss upper classes

Born in Basel on 23 January 1923, Luc was the son of Emanuel Hoffmann, heir to the pharmaceutical giant, and Maja Stehlin, sculptor, painter and patron of the arts. He grew up both in Brussels (1924-1929) and then in Basel with his brother André and his sister Vera. He explains: "My passion for birds goes back to my primary school days and my early childhood. I was also fascinated by plants, flowers and mammals." Tragedy struck the family in 1932. His father was killed in a car accident aged 36 and his elder brother died of leukaemia less than a year later. In 1934, his mother got married again to the famous orchestra conductor Paul Sacher and the family moved to the Basel countryside. During that period, Luc Hoffmann would bring injured animals home that he found on his walks. He recalls: "That did not always go down well at home. My mother encouraged me but my stepfa-

ther did not." He even domesticated a crow that he saved at the age of 16. "I gathered him from a nest. At that time, the farmers looked for nests, tied up the offspring and fed them up to later eat them." He gradually took an interest in ornithology with another enthusiast, going on trips to Alsace. The heir to the Hoffmann-La Roche empire began to diverge from the path set out for him. To keep up appearances, the young man first studied chemistry before focusing on biology when he came of age. "I initially had a sentimental and aesthetic relationship with nature which then became more intellectual and scientific", he reflects. He undertook his compulsory military service between 1943 and 1946 before making his first trip to Camargue.

The avant-gardist enterprise

He remarks: "I had read and heard much about Camargue but I was in the Swiss army and was unable to leave the country. I went to visit it as soon as I could go abroad. I was fascinated by what I saw – a natural environment developing according to its own laws and outside of the constant constraints of man." There were multitudes of birds, horses and bulls. One thing led to another and he purchased the "La Tour du Valat" site (over 10,000,000 m² of land and fens) from a Swiss hunter in 1948 and set up a bird banding station there while studying for his doctorate at the University of Basel. Aged 29 and having obtained his qualifications, he decided to move to the site, where he had a laboratory built. He was supported by a small team of ornithologists and his wife Daria Razumovsky, an Austrian countess whom he married in 1953. He officially opened the "La Tour du Valat" biology station in the following year, an event attended by leading figures from the world of science, such as François Bourlière, a pioneering French ecologist. Luc Hoff-

mann recalls that he was initially considered an enlightened dreamer. His children Vera, Maja, André and Daschenka grew up at “La Tour du Valat” where the number of staff had increased and now included a teacher for the station’s school. He actively collaborates with the “Société nationale de Protection de la Nature” and the “Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS)”. In 1958, he launched the MAR project with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), of which Luc Hoffmann became Vice-President from 1966 to 1969. This organisation was established in 1948 and today brings together over 1,000 NGOs and 80 states. The aim of the project was to step up efforts on the census of water birds and inventories of wetlands throughout the Mediterranean region and Eastern Europe. This long-term project resulted in the International Convention on Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar) in 1971. The ornithologist also became the Director of the International Waterfowl and Wetlands Research Bureau (IWRB), which became Wetlands International, in 1962.

The WWF and safeguarding Mediterranean wetlands

The origins of the foundation of the WWF lie in the journey to East Africa undertaken by the British biologist Julian Huxley, co-founder of IUCN and the first Director General of UNESCO. He alerted the public and the scientific community to the threat of extinction facing wildlife due to intensive hunting. The idea of creating an international body that was sufficiently powerful to preserve nature was put forward. The team he recruited included ornithologists Max Nicholson, Guy Mountfort and Peter Scott (Vice-President of IUCN), who made a direct appeal to Luc Hoffmann, who was then campaigning to raise funds to create a natural park in the Coto de Doñana region of Andalusia with his friend and colleague José Valverde. Luc Hoffmann says: “We really needed some political influence and to find the funds to achieve this. It was at that time that I met the British men who were wanting to establish a non-governmental organisation to protect natural environments of global importance.” He therefore became involved in the creation of the WWF (World Wildlife Fund, which became the World Wide

Fund for Nature) in 1961 in Morges, canton of Vaud. It was the fund-raising carried out by Luc Hoffmann that allowed the organisation to undertake its initial steps. Only later did he reluctantly admit to providing substantial financial support. He explains: “The Coto Doñana became one of the WWF’s first great projects.” But it was not until 1969, after a decade of negotiations, that General Franco officially announced the establishment of the national

Targeting the Mediterranean basin and Africa

Since setting up the station in “La Tour du Valat”, Luc Hoffmann has developed an extensive network of scientific and political relationships. As Vice-President of WWF International (1962–1988) and as head of various national and international organisations and foundations, he has addressed the protection of the natural environment worldwide. The ornithologist has neverthe-



Hoffmann helping to band flamingos in 2002

park, which was the largest in Europe at the time. The first great achievements of the emergent WWF also include the funding of the Charles Darwin Foundation to protect the Galapagos Islands and the IUCN projects, including the extension of the Amboseli park in East Africa. As for the organisation’s famous panda logo: “Peter Scott created it as we know it. The image of the panda helped the growth of the WWF enormously in the early years.” Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, who was one of the first members of the WWF before becoming its President (1981–1996), describes Luc Hoffmann in these words: “Behind his composure and modesty lies a will of iron and tremendous determination. It is difficult to properly estimate his contribution to the development and growth of the WWF, both in terms of advice and financial support, especially since he goes about his business so discretely. His outstanding qualities include his charm and unfailing ability to get along with everyone he meets.”

less never forgotten his major work – the preservation of wild wetlands on the migratory paths of water birds under constant threat of destruction from sewage projects and intensive agriculture. His crusade resulted in the Ramsar convention ratified by 18 nations in 1971. It now has 163 signatory countries with 2,064 sites covering a total area of 1,970,303,208,000 m². Countless anecdotes exist about Luc Hoffmann’s achievements. On the Austrian–Hungarian border, he contributed to the creation of the steppe national park of Neusiedlersee, Seewinkel and Hanság in the 1980s. In communist Hungary under Janos Kadar, he negotiated the establishment of the Hortobágy national park, the greatest expanse of steppes in Europe, in 1963 together with the person behind the project, Antal Festetics. In 1971, the Camargue natural park was set up thanks to financial support from the

“Luc Hoffmann, l’homme qui s’obstine à préserver la Terre”, interviews by Jil Silberstein, Editions Phébus, 2010.

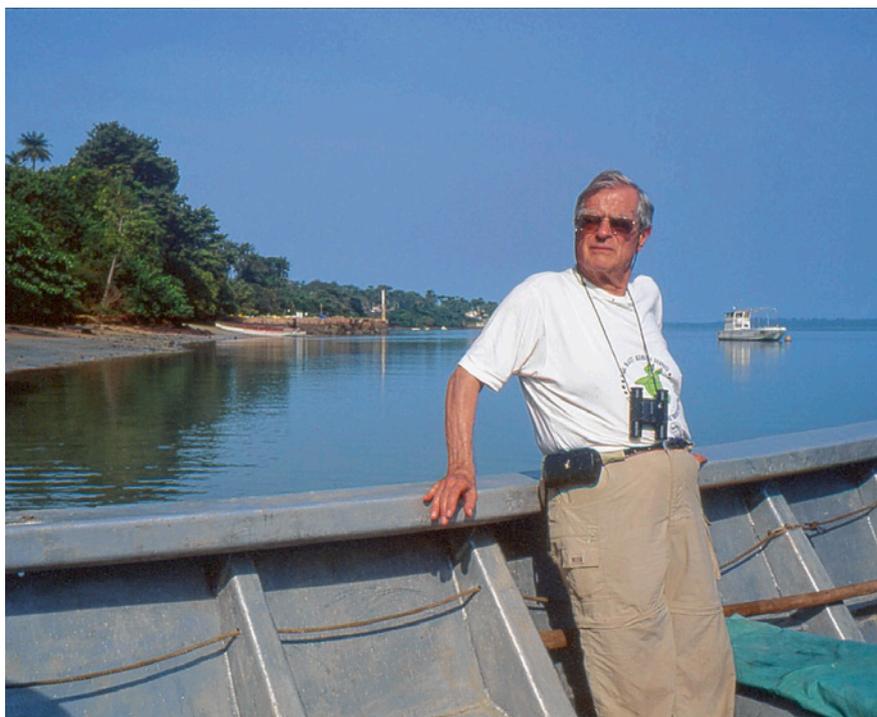
WWF led by Luc Hoffmann, who convinced the French government to allow the purchase of this wilderness under threat from an explosion of human activity. He was also active in Madagascar at the end of the 1960s where he worked with the researcher Jean-Jacques Petter to establish the WWF there and to save the forest and its biodiversity which was rapidly disappearing. In Greece, he contributed to the establishment of the Prespa national park in the 1970s. In the middle of the decade, the naturalist and expert on deserts Théodore Monod was seeking to preserve the biodiversity in the Gulf of Arguin on the coast of Mauritania in West Africa. With the support of the WWF, he succeeded in convincing the Islamist government to set up the Banc d'Arguin national park (12,000 km²) in 1976. However, ten years later, Luc Hoffmann saw the situation in this region deteriorate as a result of overfishing. He then decided to found the Fondation internationale du banc d'Arguin (FIBA) to encourage the government to manage and regulate fishing better and to secure the park's future. The FIBA gave rise to the desire to preserve all the eco-regions on the coast stretching from Mauritania to Sierra Leone, which led to the West African Regional Marine and Coastal Conservation Programme (PRCM) in 2003.

The baton has been passed on but the race continues

The work of Luc Hoffmann is continuing thanks to all his groundwork and the efforts of his children, Maja (aged 56), a patron of contemporary art like her grandmother, Vera Michalski (aged 58), an editor, and André (aged 54), Vice-President of Roche, WWF International and the Tour du Valat Foundation. In 1994, Luc Hoffmann set up the family foundation MAVA (Maja-André-Vera) to support the conservation of nature, through which his children are continuing his work. It is today one of the leading environmental foundations in Europe and a major provider of funding for projects in the alpine region, the Mediterranean basin and the coastal area of West Africa. Head of the organisation since 2010, André Hoffmann is a worthy successor to his father despite the fact that he is an economist rather than a biologist. This is definitely beneficial as far as sustainable development is concerned. "He is extremely committed. He continues to work

based on the same principles that I myself established." Luc Hoffmann's philosophy on ecology: "If you want the world to move in one direction in harmony with nature, you have to engage in dialogue with those who oppose such harmony. The approach that has to be taken to achieve genuine improve-

over nature, he read out his own death sentence. The biosphere can only survive in solidarity. It cannot have a sustainable existence if an animal, such as man, seeks supremacy over all other species. Things cannot continue like that as it will end in disaster." A modest realist, Luc Hoffmann



In the Banc d'Arguin national park on the coast of Mauritania in the 1990s

ment is dialogue and not aggression. I am not a militant but I hope to win people over."

A look at the 21st century

Luc Hoffmann remarks: "I see regression and signals that have not been heeded in every environmental catastrophe." The collective ecological conscience has grown strongly but, despite all the success achieved by environmental protection groups over sixty years, the condition of the Earth continues to deteriorate. New disturbing problems have emerged and for good reason. "The power relationship between man and nature has not evolved much", observes Luc Hoffmann. "There are more people who are aware of nature but often for anodyne rather than significant reasons. Man always wants to take more from the Earth than it is able to give." Without being fatalistic, the ageing ecologist is simply saying that people are beginning to understand but are turning a deaf ear. "When man declared his supremacy

does not believe that everything he has achieved has brought about fundamental change. He nevertheless remains optimistic. "Man will finally come to realise the direction in which he is heading and will change course. However, that is becoming increasingly expensive and difficult to achieve. The financial estimates for renewable energies show that it is still possible to put things back on track and to live comfortably. Solar power is probably the most effective solution for the future." A word of advice? "More opportunities must be found to work with people rather than against them." A more creative approach is required – politicians should take heed.

More information:

www.tourduvalat.org
www.wwf.ch
www.ramsar.org
www.mava-foundation.org

"I have great expectations in terms of speed!"

The World Downhill Skiing Championships will take place in Schladming, Austria, between 4 and 17 February 2013. Among the Swiss competing, Didier Défago has emerged as the new leader of the men's team after Didier Cuche's retirement and Beat Feuz's prolonged recovery from injury.

Interview by Alain Wey

No matter what anyone says, Swiss downhill skiing has been leaderless since the start of the season. Didier Cuche was just as important in his role as team leader as in terms of results and consistency. Much is now expected of competitors like Didier Défago, Carlo Janka and Beat Feuz, heir apparent in the overall 2012 World Cup rankings. However, the latter is ruled out of action for the entire season following inflammation of his left knee after an operation last spring. As for Carlo Janka, he has yet to find the form that saw him top the overall World Cup rankings and become Olympic champion in 2010. Injury problems have affected his confidence but things only need to click into place for the "iceman" to find his way back onto the podium. Due to these circumstances, the spotlight has now fallen on the senior member of the team, 35-year-old Didier Défago from Valais. The 2010 Olympic downhill champion has repeatedly proven his quality and is also familiar with the harsh reality of injuries. In September 2010, just six months after the Vancouver Olympic Games, he seriously damaged the cruciate ligament in his left knee and required an operation. His recovery forced him to miss the 2011 season. He nevertheless returned to the highest level by picking up his fourth World Cup victory in the Bormio downhill on 29 December 2011. 2013 is of course the year of the World Championships, which will take place from 4 to 17 February in Schladming, Austria.

"SWISS REVIEW": *Like a good wine, you are improving with age, especially with the two victories in the downhill at Wengen and Kitzbühl in 2009.*

DIDIER DÉFAGO: People say that I'm improving. Compared to last year when I was coming back from injury, my goal is now to enhance my performance. I have great expectations in terms of speed!

You must be excited about taking part in the World Championships. You have been compet-

ing in this event since 2001 and have yet to win a medal.

This is definitely a big opportunity that has evaded me. Schladming is a slope that suits me well as it is quite long and physically demanding. It's exactly the type of terrain that I love. Obviously, everything then depends on the weather conditions and the snow.

How will you manage the big day?

I'll use my experience but it's also a question of hitting form at the right time. Training and World Cup competitions have to be managed carefully to arrive with maximum energy. You simply have to keep yourself fresh for the World Championships.

What's life within the camp like without Didier Cuche? What is the new set-up like?

It's working really well. Everyone knows that there can be changes from one year to the next both in terms of trainers and competitors. New equipment has also been imposed on us even though our main ski brand suited us well. Had we kept it, it would have enabled us to get a better idea of our performance during training.

"It's hard to imagine doing anything else"

What strengths does the team possess now?

We are a small team capable of achieving good results. Everything is going well so far



Didier Défago does not see himself as our only great hope

but some team members are only just returning from injury, such as Marc Gisin and Patrick Küng. Our team has also shrunk. We are missing Beat Feuz. At least Carlo Janka is on his way back.

Do you feel as though you have taken over the role of leader within the team?

I don't want to take anyone's place. Everyone is different but it's certainly true that people are looking to me as a leader and for the moment I'm going with it.

You are now one of the few French-speaking Swiss on the men's team.

I am actually the only French-speaking Swiss. But I speak Swiss German fluently. It's been like this for some time. There were

two of us last year when we had Didier Cuche. Justin Murisier should have joined the team this season but unfortunately he suffered another injury.

At the age of 35, how do you see the rest of your career?

It would be wonderful if I could get through the Sochi Olympic Games season in 2014 injury-free. I could then bring my career to an end. For the moment, I'm concentrating on every season by trying to take full advantage of the opportunity to enjoy what I love doing. My goal is to have another two seasons. I'll be almost 37 years of age after Sochi. Even if I remain free of injury, my reflexes will not be the same.

"It's certainly true that people are looking to me as a leader and for the moment I'm going with it"

What are your memories of your gold medal in the downhill at the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Games?

It was incredible. It's hard to take it all in at the time. It took a while to sink in. An injury to my knee six months later gave me plenty of time for reflection. Those memories will remain with me forever. I was overcome with emotion on the evening of the medal ceremony when I saw my brother, who was also in Vancouver.

Apart from the Olympic gold medal, what were your sources of motivation when you were out injured?

I reflected on my victory at home in Wengen. Those are moments you want to relive. I realised that when standing in the finishing zones at some of the courses. I got such an adrenaline rush and experienced such nervous tension when a skier descended the piste that I knew I wanted to come back. The other thing is that I really enjoy what I do. You get the opportunity to travel a great deal and to see lots of countries. And when you're training, there are so many beautiful days and great conditions that you wouldn't change it for anything in the world. It's our life, our world, and it's hard to imagine doing anything else.

Who do you admire?

In sport generally, Roger Federer. I think many sportspeople would like to emulate him. He is extremely impressive in every re-

spect. In skiing, my idols were Pirmin Zurbriggen and the Norwegians Kjetil André Aamodt and Lasse Kjus, who always performed well at World Championships and Olympic Games.

What is your philosophy?

To take each day as it comes. To make the most of life and the present moment. When I'm at home, I manage to detach myself from skiing and to take advantage of the opportunity to spend time with my family. Then when I leave I'm completely focussed on what I'm doing again. I'm 100% committed even though I do not always achieve the results I want. When that happens, you have to be able to analyse your performance and to tell yourself that tomorrow is another day and will present new opportunities!



Didier Défago in action in the Super-G at Beaver Creek in 2010

DÉFAGO – THE INSIDE TRACK

Personal details. Born on 2 October 1977. Height: 1.84 m, weight: 89 kg. Trained as a draughtsman. Married to Sabine, two children: Alexane (aged 5) and Timéo (aged 3).

Early years. Started skiing at 18 months. Didier Défago grew up in the ski resort of Morgins in Valais, near to Portes du Soleil (Switzerland's largest ski area).

World Cup. Made his debut in 1997 in the giant slalom in Tignes. First podium finish with 2nd place in the Super-G at Val Gardena in 2002. He has achieved 13 podium finishes with four victories, including the double in the downhill at Wengen and Kitzbühl in 2009. Best overall ranking: 6th in 2005 and 2009.

Olympic Games. Gold in the downhill in Vancouver in 2010. He has taken part in the Olympic Games since Salt Lake City in 2002.

Wine. A passion of the Valais-born skier. A wine producer has created two blended wines in his honour called "Réserve du champion olympique".

Leisure time. Trout fishing in mountain rivers. Sport in general.

Music. "I enjoy listening to a little bit of everything, from French music, such as Jean-Jacques Goldman, etc., to hard rock like Metallica, AC/DC and Iron Maiden, as well as softer sounds like the violoncellist Nathalie Manser."

OSA advice

I have foreign qualifications and would like to work in Switzerland. Which body do I need to contact to get my qualifications recognised?

The body responsible for the recognition of qualifications varies depending on the type of qualification. Recognition of qualifications is necessary for the regulated professions where a degree, certificate or attestation of competence is required as the legal basis to practise (for example, chiropractors, lawyers, doctors, etc.).

The Federal Office for Professional Education and Technology (OPET) is responsible for the recognition of qualifications with regard to professional training and universities of applied sciences. It publishes a brochure on its website setting out the competent body depending on the profession in question.

As far as university degrees are concerned, the Rectors' Conference of the Swiss Universities (CRUS) also publishes the competent bodies on its website. For non-regulated professions, there is no need in principle to obtain recognition of the foreign qualifications in order to work in Switzerland. It is up to the employer to decide whether to recruit someone holding foreign qualifications. For admission to courses of study in Switzerland with foreign qualifications, you must get in direct contact with the educational institution where you wish to take the particular course.

Further information:

www.bbt.admin.ch > Recognition of foreign qualifications > Agencies responsible for the recognition

www.crus.ch > Recognition/Swiss ENIC

SARAH MASTANTUONI, Head of the Legal Department

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

A springboard into Switzerland

In view of the precarious economic situation in many parts of the world, increasing numbers of young Swiss people abroad – and their parents – are showing an interest in education in Switzerland as the foundation for a future career and as a way of securing a livelihood in later life. The number of enquiries made to the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad's Youth Service about longer educational stays has therefore increased over the course of the past year. Enquiries made to grammar schools, universities, other educational institutions and host families to accept young visitors from abroad for longer than the usual two to four weeks "as an exception" have also risen. The Youth Service is setting up the "Springboard" project in order to take account of the changing requirements of our compatriots abroad.

Following preliminary enquiries and registration, OSA – in collaboration with AJAS, the Association promoting Education for Young Swiss Abroad, and the educational institutions (universities, colleges, secondary schools and training enterprises, etc.) – will aim to provide participants with support and organisational assistance during

the first three to six months of this new chapter in their lives. Acting as a hub, OSA will mediate between guests and hosts, educational institutions and training supervisors and perform organisational tasks. The educational institution or training supervisor will then take on the role of "mentor" in the vocational training and in the professional network.

Hosts, for their part, must be prepared to provide their guests with support during their stay in Switzerland, to help them integrate into everyday life and to provide them with a "social network" and a family environment in their new homes. This is extremely important as many guests will not (yet) have many contacts in Switzerland. Hosts will be remunerated for their services monthly as a contribution towards the costs incurred for food, accommodation and their time commitment.

We would be very pleased to provide you with further details and information on the planned approach as well as about other services provided by the Youth Service. Contact us at youth@aso.ch.

An overview of the offers available in 2013 can be found at www.aso.ch > Offers.

Note: There are still places available for the Easter camp in Davos!

PRISCA BLINDENBACHER / YOUTH SERVICE



A courageous leap can change so much



Young Swiss abroad playing at last year's camp

Summer camps 2013

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

Programme

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

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

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

Language at camp

The people who take advantage of our offers come from all over the world and therefore speak different languages, such as Ger-

man, French, English, Spanish and Italian. The leaders run the programmes in German, French and English. So, the language at each camp does not depend on the language spoken at the camp's location.

Prices

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

Travel/meeting point

The meeting point is at Zurich airport around lunchtime.

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

Leaders

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

Registration

The exact details of the individual holiday camps and the registration form can be found, from Friday, 1 February 2013, at www.sjas.ch. We are also happy to post you our information brochure on request. The deadline for registration is 15 March 2013.

Please contact the office in Berne for further information:

Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad
 Alpenstrasse 26
 CH-3006 Berne
 Tel. +41 (0)31 356 61 16
 Fax +41 (0)31 356 61 01
 E-mail: sjas@aso.ch
www.sjas.ch

Summer camps 2013

Sat. 29.6.–Fri. 12.7.13: Beatenberg (Berne) for 40 children aged 11–14, price: CHF 900

Sat. 29.6.–Fri. 12.7.13: Madetswil (Zurich) for 36 children aged 8–11, price: CHF 900

Wed. 3.7.–Fri. 12.7.13: Swiss trip for 24 children aged 12–16, price: CHF 950

Sat. 13.7.–Fri. 26.7.13: Erlinsbach (Aargau) for 36 children aged 8–11, price: CHF 900

Sat. 13.7.–Fri. 26.7.13: Flond (Grisons) for 42 children aged 11–14, price: CHF 900

Sat. 27.7.–Fri. 9.8.13: Dangio-Torre (Ticino) music camp for 40 children aged 11–14, price: CHF 950

Sat. 27.7.–Fri. 9.8.13: Mont-de-Buttes (Neuchâtel) for 36 children aged 8–11, price: CHF 900

Sat. 10.8.–Fri. 23.8.13: Schüpfheim (Lucerne) for 42 children aged 8–14, price: CHF 900

Sat. 10.8.–Fri. 23.8.13: Bergün (Grisons) for 36 children aged 11–14, price: CHF 900

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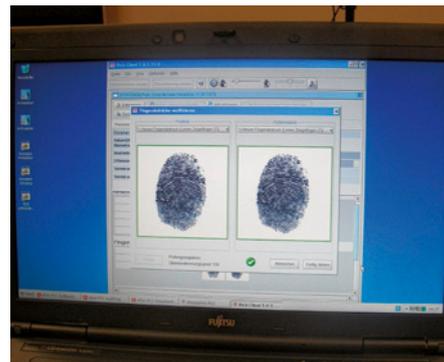
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soliswiss



Swiss citizens having the data required for a new passport recorded by the mobile unit



Electronic equipment goes on tour

The mobile recording of biometric data for new passports has become a success story.

The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) introduced mobile units for recording biometric data around a year ago. The mobile equipment was transported around the world in 2012. It has been used in over 20 countries to date and will have visited four out of five continents by the end of March, with only Asia remaining.

Scores of Swiss citizens worldwide take advantage of this sophisticated service each month. They attend consular drop-in days at the Swiss representations that do not have a permanent consular department and can have their biometric data recorded there and then thanks to the mobile devices. The representations publish the dates of these drop-in days in the local media or write to registered Swiss citizens abroad directly.

Mobile data recording possible anywhere

However, this is not the only opportunity to use the mobile devices. Their compact suit-

case form enables our staff to travel to regions where Switzerland does not have a permanent consular presence. For example, the responsible representation can provide the mobile recording of biometric passport data at meetings of Swiss societies abroad. This service saves any interested Swiss citizens from having to undertake what may be long journeys to the representation.

A mobile unit for recording biometric data will visit the following embassies and consulates general during the course of 2013:

- Barcelona
- The Hague
- Madrid
- New York
- Stockholm
- Vienna
- Buenos Aires
- Lima
- Nairobi
- San José, Costa Rica
- Wellington

The representations will inform their Swiss communities abroad of the exact timetable for the units in due course.

The mobile recording of biometric data complements the Regional Consular Centres, which have taken over the consular services for several countries simultaneously at various locations since 2011. The FDFA's Consular Directorate took the bold step of introducing mobile data recording at the be-

ginning of 2012 to safeguard and extend the range of high-quality services available to citizens abroad.

Additional possibilities

Since the introduction of the Regional Consular Centres, Swiss abroad have also had the opportunity to record their biometric data in all suitably equipped representations and all cantonal passport offices in Switzerland. At the same time, consular drop-in days were introduced and online services for the Swiss abroad were extended.

The reason for these changes was the review of Switzerland's diplomatic and consular network in 2010. This revealed that synergies could be achieved and exploited in individual cases by merging consular services locally.

SWISS CITIZEN SERVICES
CONSULAR DIRECTORATE

Important notice

The FDFA wishes to make all Swiss citizens abroad aware that Swiss passports issued in 2003 will expire in 2013. Please remember to renew your passport as early as possible at the Swiss embassy or consulate general where you are registered. The biometric

data for the new passport can be recorded at any suitably equipped representation or any passport office in Switzerland after you have submitted your passport application. Your Swiss representation will be pleased to provide you with additional information.

Revised federal law on family allowances

On 1 January 2009, the Federal Law on Family Allowances (Bundesgesetz über die Familienzulagen – FamZG) replaced the existing cantonal regulations. Since 2011, every child for whom a family allowance is paid out has been entered in the central family allowance register. An important amendment to the FamZG entered into force on 1 January 2013 to take account of self-employed persons. This law also concerns some of the Swiss community abroad.

The FamZG stipulates minimum monthly allowances per child of CHF 200 or CHF 250 (for children aged 16 to 25 still in education). Several cantons have provided for higher rates in their implementation provisions for the FamZG and have introduced birth and adoption allowances.

The new amendment means that all employers, irrespective of the size of the company, and the previously exempt federal and cantonal administrations with their institutions are now subject to the Family Allowances Law and must join a family compensation fund (Familienausgleichskasse – FAK).

Scope and benefit entitlement

The FamZG is based on old-age and survivors' insurance (AHV) in many respects. Entitlement to family allowances depends on employment or residence in Switzerland with few exceptions. The following are subject to the law:

- Employers liable to make old-age and survivors' insurance contributions;
- Self-employed persons with mandatory old-age and survivors' insurance;
- Staff of employers not obliged to make contributions (e.g. companies abroad).

Such persons must join a family compensation fund and pay contributions on salaries that are subject to old-age and survivors' insurance or on or income from self-employment. The level of contribution varies depending on the canton and compensation fund. The funds check that applications meet the criteria for receiving family allowances, decide on entitlement and cover the benefit payments.

Person with mandatory old-age and survivors' insurance are entitled to benefits:

- Employees with or without employers liable to make contributions;
- Self-employed;
- Persons not in gainful employment (up to a taxable annual income of CHF 42,120).

Who is not entitled to benefits?

Persons with voluntary old-age and survivors' insurance (Swiss citizens abroad outside the EU/EFTA) are unable to voluntarily subject themselves to the FamZG or to join a family compensation fund. Employers abroad cannot join a Swiss family compensation fund even if they are partly financed with money from Switzerland or employ Swiss citizens.

The receipt of a pension from a Swiss social insurance institution (e.g. old-age and survivors' insurance or invalidity insurance) does not provide grounds for entitlement to family allowances irrespective of the nationality of the pension recipient. Nationality is not a criterion for subjection or benefit entitlement. The regulation under which child allowances are paid out abroad, where Switzerland has an obligation under state treaties, applies to Swiss citizens and foreign nationals.

Nationality is a criterion in the following situations:

- Bilateral social insurance agreements take account of nationality insofar as they only apply to citizens of the contracting states.
- In certain special cases, mandatory old-age and survivors' insurance only concerns Swiss citizens.

Family allowances for children abroad (export)

The FamZG was fought to the last with a referendum. Opponents feared that more benefits would be exported abroad. A very restrictive solution was therefore set out in the ordinance on the law: full family allowances for children who live abroad are only paid out where Switzerland is obliged to do so based on a state treaty. This primarily applies to children in EU/EFTA states. Aside from some older treaties (e.g. with Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia), most social insurance agreements do not cover FamZG benefits.

As an exception, the ordinance provides for the global export of benefits for families who have a close relationship with Switzerland and only temporarily reside abroad:

- Swiss citizens working abroad for
 1. federal government;
 2. international organisations with which the Federal Council has concluded a headquarters agreement and which are deemed employers pursuant to article 12 of the Old-Age and Survivors' Insurance Act (AHVG);
 3. private aid organisations that receive significant funding from federal government pursuant to article 11 of the Federal Act on International Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (Bundesgesetz über die internationale Entwicklungszusammenarbeit und humanitäre Hilfe).
- Persons able to continue contributing to mandatory old-age and survivors' insurance because they work abroad for and are paid by an employer headquartered in Switzerland provided this employer gives consent. A five-year period of pre-existing insurance in Switzerland is required for the continuation of mandatory old-age and survivors' insurance.
- Persons (particularly delegates) who are covered by mandatory old-age and survivors' insurance based on an intergovernmental agreement.

Advertisement



Depending on the purchasing power in the destination country, the full family allowances, two thirds or one third are paid out and adjusted by law to the local purchasing power. The employers often make up the difference from their own resources.

MAIA JAGGI,
DEPUTY HEAD OF THE FAMILY AFFAIRS UNIT
FEDERAL DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS (FDHA)
FEDERAL SOCIAL INSURANCE OFFICE (FSIO)

This article sets out the basic principles of the Family Allowances Law but does not contain full specific details.

Information and links on the website of the Federal Social Insurance Office (www.bsv.admin.ch > Topics > Family/family allowances > Family Allowances):

- Fact sheets
- Legal texts
- Publicly accessible part of the family allowance register
- Table setting out the family allowance rates in all cantons
- Guide to the FamZG with detailed provisions on export and purchasing power adjustment
- Details of the cantonal implementation provisions
- Decisions of the Federal Supreme Court and the cantonal insurance courts
- Family allowance statistics
- Documentation on how the FamZG emerged and its amendments.

The old-age and survivors' insurance compensation funds, which often also manage the family compensation funds, provide information on family allowances: www.ahv-iv.ch>Dienstleistungen>Ausgleichskassen (not available in English).

Important

Please inform your embassy or consulate general of your e-mail address and mobile phone number.

Register at www.swissabroad.ch to ensure you do not miss any communications ("Swiss Review", newsletters from your representation, etc.). The latest "Swiss Review" and recent issues can be read and/or printed out at any time via the Review link on the websites of the Swiss representations abroad or directly at www.revue.ch. "Swiss Review" is

sent to all Swiss citizens abroad registered with an embassy or consulate general free of charge either electronically (via e-mail and as an iPad app) or in printed format.

Last but not least

The FDFA's Relations with the Swiss Abroad Division sends you greetings from the Area of the Swiss Abroad in Brunnen on Lake Lucerne. We wish to express our solidarity with the Swiss community abroad through our (please note) working visit to the "meadow of the Swiss Abroad". We have drawn inspiration from the spirit of the place to continue providing you with useful services tailored to your requirements. We wish you every success and happiness in 2013 on behalf of the entire Consular Directorate.

The FDFA's Relations with the Swiss Abroad Division.



Relations with the Swiss Abroad Division of the Consular Directorate, from left to right: Thomas Kalau, Markus Probst, Rütli meadow (in the background), Jean-François Lichtenstern, Stefan Zingg, Stephan Winkler, Simone Flubacher.

ELECTIONS AND REFERENDA

The Federal Council has decided to put the following proposals to the vote on 3 March 2013:

- Federal resolution of 15 June 2012 on family policy;
- Popular initiative of 26 February 2008 "against fat-cat bonuses";
- Amendment of 15 June 2012 to the federal law on spatial planning.

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

Forthcoming referendum dates in 2013: 9 June – 22 September – 24 November

POPULAR INITIATIVES

At the time of going to press, no new federal popular initiatives had been launched since the publication of the last edition of "Swiss Review". The complete list of pending popular initiatives can be found on the Federal Chancellery's website at www.bk.admin.ch under Aktuell > Wahlen und Abstimmungen > Hängige Volksinitiativen.

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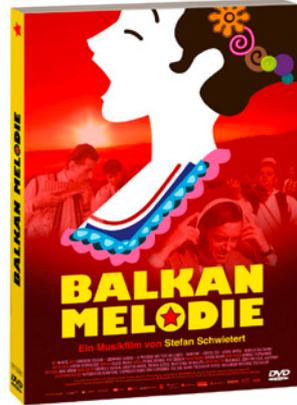
Travel advice

www.eda.admin.ch/reisehinweise
Helpline DFAE: +41 (0)800 24-7-365
www.twitter.com/travel_edadfae

Little gems

On the trail of the Celliers

The Swiss couple Marcel and Catherine Cellier spent 50 years collecting music from Eastern Europe and bringing it to the West during the Cold War (also see issue 4/2012 of "Swiss Review"). A film exploring the world discovered by the couple is now available. The documentary entitled "Balkan Melodie" by director Stefan Schwieterl



follows in the footsteps of the Celliers and features interviews with the protagonists of the day, such as the singers of the seemingly archaic "Les Mystères des Voix Bulgares". The film is a sensory piece of contemporary history thanks in no small measure to the historical footage. The sequences captured by Catherine Cellier on her Super-8 camera take you back to a

time when Eastern Europe seemed unreachably distant and grey to people in the West. But it was full of music even then.

MUL

"Balkan Melodie", DVD, 2012. Languages: original version in French, Bulgarian, Rumanian, subtitles: French, German, English, Bulgarian. Available from www.artfilm.ch. CHF 30

A reading book to indulge in

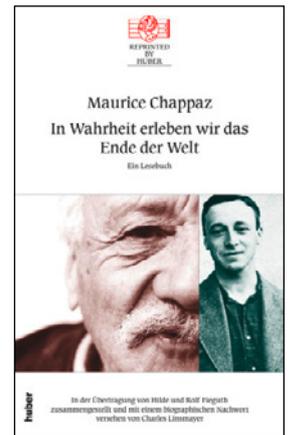
"Un homme qui vivait couché sur un banc" (A man who lived lying on a bench) is the title of Maurice Chappaz's tale published in 1939. This short text marked the beginning of his life as an author. The man on the bench "had fled the community in which his father held a position of authority as a kind of notary or sheriff. He had resolved no longer to agonise over the absurd tasks that everyone in his family and society wanted to impose on him". Chappaz is describing his own situation here. He made the right decision to dedicate himself stubbornly to writing rather than the notary's office. Chappaz was born in 1916 and had left a comprehensive body of work behind upon his death in 2009. A representative selection of his works has now been published in German for the first time. This collection is entitled "In



Wahrheit erleben wir das Ende der Welt". Its editor, Charles Linsmayer, who also contributes a comprehensive biographical epilogue, calls it a "reading book".

BE

"In Wahrheit erleben wir das Ende der Welt", translated by Hilde and Rolf Fieguth; ed. Charles Linsmayer; Huber Verlag, Frauenfeld, 352 pages; around CHF 40

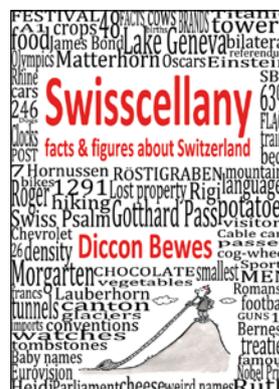


What makes the Swiss tick?

Which place in Switzerland is furthest from the national borders? What is Switzerland called in Ireland? Which is the oldest brand of Swiss watch? Which canton has the most cars per inhabitant? Here are the answers: Uttigen in the canton of Berne. An Eilvéis. Blancpain. Appenzell Innerrhoden with 949 cars per 1,000 inhabitants. All of these and many more amusing and informative facts can be found in Diccon Bewes' book "Swisscellany – facts & figures about Switzerland", recently published by "Bergli Books", a



small publishing house in Basel. "Bergli Books" was founded over 20 years ago by Dianne Dicks to facilitate interaction with the Swiss or "ticking along



with the Swiss", as Dianne Dicks puts it. Since then, she has regularly published books that are extremely useful in dealings with Switzerland and Swiss peo-

ple. "Going Local", for example, is a guide to the Swiss education system, which is very useful and not just for foreigners living in Switzerland. The publishing house's portfolio also includes several language guides: "Hoi zämme – your Swiss German survival guide" and "Sali zämme", an essential read for coping in Switzerland with over 2,000 expressions in the Basel dialect.

BE

Contact: Bergli Books AG, Falknerstrasse 12, 4001 Basel, Switzerland, Tel. + 41 61 373 27 78, www.bergli.ch

Bulletins

Swiss returns to Geneva

Geneva airport is set to become an operating base again for the airline Swiss 16 years after Swissair decided to focus its activities on Zurich. This decision sparked widespread protests in French-speaking Switzerland at the time. Swiss has announced that flights from Geneva will now be increased gradually. Staff numbers are expected to rise from 81 at present to 320 by the end of 2014. However, the only direct intercontinental flight out of Geneva for the time being will be to New York (JFK).

Federal Council opts for Gripen jets

Despite widespread criticism of the Swedish Gripen aircraft, the Federal Council has given the go-ahead for the purchase of 22 of these fighter jets for the Swiss armed forces at a cost of CHF 3.1 billion. The deal still needs to be approved by the Federal Assembly over the coming months. A referendum after that is highly likely. Various organisations have announced that they plan to call a referendum.

Award for Swissinfo

The Geneva office of Swissinfo, an Internet platform (<http://swissinfo.ch>) that is very popular with the Swiss abroad, has received the "Nicolas Bouvier Special Prize" for the quality and originality of its editorial coverage of the international scene in Geneva. The four journalists based in Geneva provide regular reports on international organisations, negotiations and agreements in Japanese, English, Arabic and French. The Prix Bouvier was awarded for the third time this year in memory of the travel writer and photographer Nicolas Bouvier, who passed away in 1998.

Switzerland takes over ESA presidency

Switzerland is taking over the presidency of the European Space Agency (ESA) together with Luxembourg. This is a "huge opportunity", says Urs Frei of the State Secretariat for Education and Research. Around a dozen Swiss companies with 800 employees work almost exclusively for the aerospace industry. Switzerland contributes around CHF 150 million to ESA's budget of CHF 4.5 billion.

Literature prizes awarded by federal government

The Federal Office of Culture awarded literature prizes for the first time in 2012. Eight authors received awards. These were Irena Brežná, for her novel "Die undankbare Fremde" (The Thankless Stranger), which featured in the August 2012 issue of "Swiss Review", as well as Arno Camenisch, Massimo Daviddi, Thilo Krause, Daniel Popescu, Catherine Safonoff, Frédéric Wandelère and Matthias Zschokke. The prize winners each receive a sum of CHF 25,000 as well as support through specific promotional measures.

Opposed to immigration initiative

On 7 December 2012, the Federal Council announced its rejection of the "initiative against mass immigration" submitted by the Swiss People's Party (SVP) in February 2012. The reason it gave was that acceptance of the initiative would have required the termination of the free movement of persons and of all other bilateral agreements with the EU.

Quotes

"The people do not want an ostentatious and glamorous President – that suits me fine."

Ueli Maurer, President of Switzerland in 2013 prior to his election

"I get along very well with Ueli Maurer and I respect his ideas. Admittedly, we do not always have the same ones..."

Federal Councillor Didier Burkhalter

"Those who are not politically active are essentially helping people who want the opposite of what they themselves consider important and right."

Federal Councillor Alain Berset

"I like being boring. You have to be boring as part of an executive."

Federal Councillor Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf in an interview with the "Zeit" newspaper

"Democracy is worth as much as those who speak in its name."

Robert Schuman (1886–1963), French politician and first President of the European Parliament (1958–60)

"Irony is the last stage of disappointment."

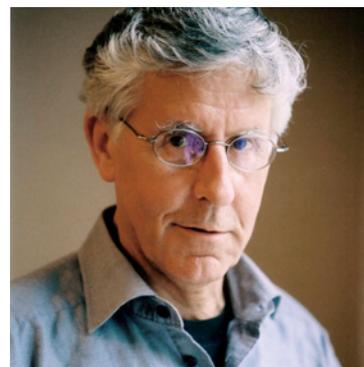
Anatole France, French author and winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature (1844–1924)

"In Switzerland, we know exactly how many three-legged cows there are but not how many people live here in poverty."

Hugo Fasel, former National Councillor and Director of Caritas on statistics in Switzerland

"I believe in God, but am very poor at practising my faith."

Didier Défago, Swiss ski racer after being asked whether he prays before the start of a dangerous race



Peter von Matt won this year's Swiss Book Prize for his book "Das Kalb vor der Gotthardpost" (The Calf in front of the Gotthard Post). The 75-year-old professor emeritus of German studies is "Switzerland's most important living author", Marcel Reich-Ranicki, the leading German expert on literature, said years ago. Von Matt himself is less enthusiastic about this statement: "I detest that phrase", he said in an interview. He considers the assertion to be wrong as there is no clear scale for judging this. The jury's appraisal of von Matt's work at the award ceremony: "It is a book that relates outstandingly well to present-day Switzerland. Peter von Matt highlights the relationship between literature and politics through analyses of great linguistic power and originality of thought." (The book featured in the "Books" section of the August 2012 issue of "Swiss Review".)



Carnival in Basel, Basel Region

Festivals in the height of winter.

With more colour than any other festivals, come and join in traditional Swiss carnivals that have been celebrated since the Middle Ages.

A few days suspended in time

Carnival is the uninterrupted festival – a few days of madness when music takes over the streets and where everyone can become someone else. The tradition of carnival comes alive across the whole of Switzerland. The “drey scheenschte Dääg” (the three most spectacular days) see an entire parade of floats in Basel, fife and drum players filling the streets of Lucerne for the city’s “5th season”, and the lively Rabadan festival in Bellinzona. Swiss carnivals are brought to life by hundreds of organisations and companies that spend the whole year preparing to put on a show at this time of year.

At the carnival in Solothurn, the mayor is even relieved from duty and the town adopts the name of Honolulu for the few days of the festival. There are countless towns and cities across Switzerland where various processions, dances, marching bands and fanfares lure you into celebrating the festival and joining wild dances.

Morgenstreich in Basel

The carnival in Basel is the largest in Switzerland and starts at 4 o'clock in the morning to the drumming sound of “Morgenstreich”. Over the three days, some 20,000 people put on their costumes and masks and live up the streets with music and magnificent lanterns.



Tip 1

MySwitzerland.com
Webcode: **A36438**

The festival of the south

His Majesty, the King, takes possession of the keys to the city and gets the Rabadan carnival underway in Bellinzona. Marching bands and long masked processions spread good cheer in the streets. The party culminates with the distribution of risotto.

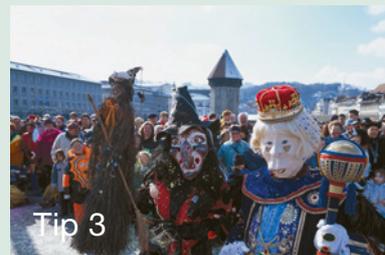


Tip 2

MySwitzerland.com
Webcode: **B28450**

Fritschi's country

It's Fritschi, the figurehead of the Lucerne carnival, his wife and son who lead the festival. Bands adorned with costumes and masks provide a theatrical spectacle during the parades and rope the public into their frolics. Festivities continue late into the evening with various dances.



Tip 3

MySwitzerland.com
Webcode: **A36453**

Network Switzerland:

Hotel de la Paix***, Lucerne

Register until 28.2.2013 at MySwitzerland.com/aso and win a two-night stay for two people at Typically Swiss Hotel de la Paix in Lucerne to experience the city's carnival in 2014.



MySwitzerland.com
Webcode: **A54742**

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



Auslandsschweizer-Organisation
Organisation des Suisses de l'étranger
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