

# SWISS REVIEW

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The magazine for the Swiss Abroad  
March 2018

**900 varieties of beer –  
boom time for local breweries**

**CHF 1 million for the coastguard –  
Switzerland's contribution to Libya**

**CHF 70,000 for each new family –  
a village in Valais makes headlines**



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# Buying local

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Wine from Australia, fruit from the Caribbean and meat from Argentina – it is not so long ago that people thought the further a product travelled, the better it was. The world was becoming ever more interconnected, and there was an element of modernity about consuming exotic foreign products. It was as if people did not want to miss out on the opportunities and absurdities of globalisation in their everyday lives.

Today, the opposite seems to be true – the nearer a product is made, the better. There has been a sustainable improvement in awareness of “integrity of origin” and local products over the past ten years. It is not just a question of environmental protection. What is the ecological footprint of a bottle of wine that has flown halfway around the world? It is also down to people taking an interest in their immediate surroundings and, ultimately, perhaps even showing greater awareness of their own origins.

This trend has led many Swiss food producers to shift to local specialities. They are typified by regional cheese, bread and wine. There is huge demand for varieties of apple from the local area and if the meat at the butcher's comes from the neighbouring village, consumers are willing to pay a bit extra.

This trend has also encompassed beer. Instead of drinking foreign or national beers, the Swiss are increasingly opting for small regional brands. The number of local breweries has risen to over 900. This boom is also partly attributable to the collapse of the large beer cartel in 1991, a subject explored by this issue's focus article. But the extent to which appreciation of regional products – including beer – has increased in Switzerland over the last decade is astonishing and pleasing in equal measure.

MARKO LEHTINEN, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Cover photo:  
Local beer is enjoying growing popularity in Switzerland.  
Image: iStock



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Switzerland's digital transformation  
The objectives of e-government

The problem is receiving voting documents by post a week after the referendum date, which is what happened to some Swiss friends and me for the referendum held on 24 September 2017. I sent an email to Switzerland requesting that the voter identification card be sent to me electronically so that I could cast my vote in time. I received a reply saying that this was not possible for legal reasons. I don't know whether the blame lies with the Swiss authorities or the Thai postal service.

KARL WICKI, THAILAND

Experience shows that ordinary mail is becoming slower and slower. People living in South Africa can tell a similar tale of voting documents failing to arrive on time. Switzerland is lagging behind by 20 years! I personally have de-registered with my communal authority for elections and referendums. I would rather give up my rights than get annoyed four times a year.

HANS BEAT SCHWEIZER, SOUTH AFRICA

No Billag and a fight for survival.  
The Swiss media industry is undergoing a stress test

The assumption that competition and the market economy are always the best solution is a falsehood. Competition and the market economy always and everywhere favour the financially powerful, so we end up with the likes of Christoph Blocher and Silvio Berlusconi.

KLEMENS GRAF, GERMANY



The "Davos" sledge – a Swiss classic.  
A visit to a sledge-maker



I'm 82 years old now but I sat on a "Davos" sledge for the first time at the age of two. It was the number 1 sledge!

ERWIN F. SIEGLER, SWITZERLAND

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## Every district has its own beer

The bottle cap comes off with a “pop”, the beer flows into the glass, bubbles rise and a frothy head forms. There is nowhere with such a wide range of beers as Switzerland. It now has the largest concentration of breweries in the world. This can be seen partly as a response to the major crisis in the Swiss beer industry and the demise of many traditional brands.

MARC LETTAU

The seat of Swiss national government is ideally positioned as far as beer goes. Anyone who dines at the Galerie des Alpes restaurant in the Federal Palace will not only see the Alps but also have an unobstructed view of the brewery site at the foot of the Gurten mountain, home to the traditional Bernese “Gurten” beer. However, it is not served in the Federal Palace despite the view. Thirsty MPs and Federal Councillors have the choice between other local beers from Burgdorf and Einsiedeln. The brewery in Gurten has actually been consigned to the past. Today the site houses fantastic residential accommodation and innovative companies. The brewery founded in 1864 quenched the thirst of the federal capital for over a century. The company then got caught up in an economic downturn. In 1970, it was taken over by the Feldschlösschen Group, the largest brewery in Switzerland. This company currently brews a beer called “Gurten” at its company headquarters in Rheinfelden, Aargau.

This story typifies the general situation. It has been much worse elsewhere than in stately Berne. In Fribourg, the collapse of the Cardinal brewery, which was established in 1788, sparked a major crisis in the canton. When Cardinal closed down after struggling for years, Fribourg’s government at the time was “shocked” and its president Beat Vonlanthen expressed “deep sadness” at the loss of something that belonged to the canton and symbolised its own economic history. Cardinal only lives on as a name – on Rheinfelden bottles.

### “The last Eichhof”

The concentration of the beer market alluded to in these two examples was unprecedented by Swiss standards. It essentially goes back to the collapse of the Swiss beer cartel and eventually also affected the big players. Feldschlösschen AG initially quenched its own thirst through many acquisitions of regional breweries. However, in 2000, Feldschlösschen itself was taken over by Carlsberg, the Danish beer multinational. Heineken, the Dutch brewery group,

was also shopping in Switzerland at the same time. The Grissons beer “Calanda Bräu”, for example, is Dutch strictly speaking. “Eichhof” beer from Lucerne is also part of the Heineken empire. The futility of taking a stand became evident in Lucerne. Students from the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich launched a computer game at the time called “The Last Eichhof”, the aim of which was to prevent a hostile takeover with lots of shooting. It was all in vain, but grumblings about the globalisation of the beer market became louder.

Today, a generation on, the picture is completely different. Over 60 % of the beer consumed in Switzerland comes from breweries controlled by Carlsberg (Feldschlösschen) and Heineken (Eichhof, Calanda). However, hundreds of small-scale setups and microbreweries have emerged to take on the global multinationals. While Switzerland had just 31 operational breweries in 1991, there are over 900 today. No other country in the world has such a dense concentration of breweries in relation to its population. All the niche players are shaking up the market with an estimated 5,000 different beers.

### From “Öufi” to “Sierrvoise”

Local patriotic sentiment seems to have surfaced across the country. Solothurn today mainly drinks “Öufi” beer and extols the virtues of number 11 which is celebrated as the town’s special number (“öuf” means “eleven”). In contrast, Sierre swears by “La Sierrvoise”. Burgdorf espouses the local brewery’s slogan of “beer needs a home” and willingly backs this up through its drinking habits. The small town now has a second notable brewery in Blackwell. There seems to be plenty of room in the new homes of beer. Local markets are turning into micro-local ones. Every district has its own beer.

Adrian Sulc, a business editor and long-standing observer of the trend, believes the local patriotism has to be put in perspective: “Most people drink local beer because they like their local brewers and not due to their political outlook.” A general trend can be identified: “Because glo-





balisation is bringing consumer goods from all over the world to our supermarkets, we are suddenly taking an interest in local products.” However, this is not just resulting in more “beer from here” but also more vegetables grown in the region, more bread from the local bakery and more cheese from the area. As far as beer is concerned, he points out: “There would probably still have been a boom even if the beer cartel had not broken up.”

A very colourful scene has emerged. This ranges from unpretentious do-it-yourself recreational brewing and beer-swilling humour to an appreciation of a tradition of craftsmanship. An extremely high number of small-scale setups and microbreweries are clearly experimental artisan enterprises. They produce beverages which are very different to standardised industrial beers.

## Tiny universe inside the bottle

What is inspiring the new Swiss brewers? “Swiss Review” singled out the Brauerei Nr. 523 brewery which operates under the rather cryptic name of 523. The initial response to our enquiry was a refusal in itself: We are “rather introverted and therefore not ideal for the press”. That may well be true. The Köniz brewery, based in an old file factory, avoids all ostentation. Malt and hops are more important to it than marketing and merchandising. Even its beer labels are extremely understated. And although the local me-

**900 small-scale breweries have conquered the Swiss beer market within a few years. Some make their products in tiny kitchens, such as Christophe Haeni from the Barbriere-brewery in Berne.**

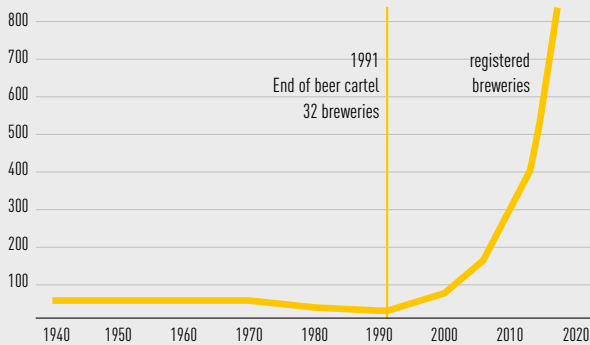
Photo: Keystone

dia all over Switzerland celebrate every new local brewery with great excitement, silence reigns as far as 523 is concerned. The small team – Sebastian Imhof, Nadja Otz, Tobias Häberli and Andreas Otz – do not shout about what they do from the rooftops.

What follows is an eye-opening insight into life inside a microbrewery. 523 beers are also produced for a very well-defined market. Simply being “local” is not enough, says Andreas Otz. 523 obviously samples hops produced in the region. “But the world would become too narrowly confined if we only used what grows on our doorstep.” Otz understands the concept of beer as a homeland-promoting “anti-globalisation beverage”. But when the team make beer, they experience “the positive aspects of globalisation”, he says. If they hear about a local farmer in Seattle experimenting with new hop varieties, they can contact him directly, buy from him and brew and launch a beer that uses the new variety. In this way, globalisation also enhances local products.

The 523 brewers use a range of flavours, aromas and sensory stimulation from all over the world and pursue “their vision uncompromisingly”, Otz says. How can, say, the taste of “currants caramelised in port” be magically turned into beer in this “tiny universe inside the bottle”? Such questions show that this brewery does not primarily belong to the food industry but instead sees itself as a trailblazer in the realm of flavours. Otz: “We aim to pro-

### Number of Swiss breweries, 1940–2017

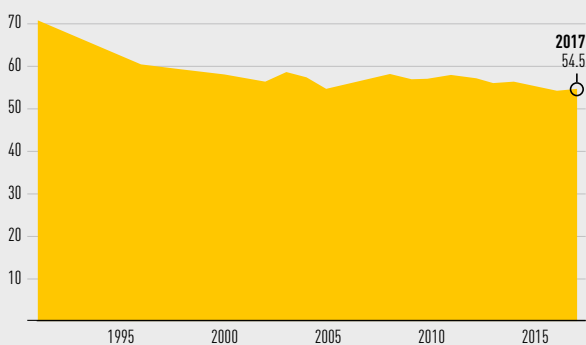


### The end of the beer cartel

The diversity of the Swiss beer market is explained by the collapse of the Swiss beer cartel. This was established by Swiss breweries in 1935. Distribution areas were defined, the range of beer was limited to a few varieties and it fought against the import of foreign beers. The cartel broke up in 1991 after the departure of three major breweries. The cartel also meant that Swiss beer came to be seen as commonplace. The market was therefore open to new players after 1991. Foreign beers quickly won growing market share and the number of Swiss breweries has increased three-fold between 1991 and today.

### Beer consumption in Switzerland, 1990–2017

Liters per capita



### Alcohol consumption is falling

The number of breweries is rising, but beer consumption is in continual decline in Switzerland. In 1990, it stood at around 70 litres a year per inhabitant. Today, it is just over 54 litres. One reason for the decline is the reduction in the blood alcohol limit for driving in 2005 from 0.8 to 0.5 per mille. A general change in society has also taken place. Alcohol is now taboo at the workplace and there is much greater awareness of health in general. The boom in microbreweries is not driving consumption up because they see their beers as an exclusive – and expensive – beverage. They are priced at 5, 10 or in some cases even over 20 Swiss francs a bottle.

Quelle: Eidgenössische Zollverwaltung, Daten

vide an experience. Inspirationally produced beer is a culinary experience.” There is no room for compromise: “We’ve thrown away entire batches because we failed to produce what we envisaged.” Achieving perfection is no reason to stop looking for new ideas either: “We make beer for a season. Then it’s over.”

### From local to global

The rock star of the “new age of Swiss beer” is undoubtedly Jérôme Rebetez from Saingelégier, who is anything but introverted. As a 23-year-old oenologist he created one of the first small-scale breweries in 1997 – the Brasserie des Franches-Montagnes (BFM). Today, BFM is a giant amongst dwarfs. However, Rebetez’s approach to brewing is not one bit tamer than when he started out producing a Jurassian synthesis of the arts, bringing together joie de vivre, craftsmanship, concerts and beers with edges and contours – the only thing they cannot be is random.

BFM now exports a quarter of its production abroad. In 2009, the New York Times lauded its Abbey de Saint Bon-Chien beer as being perhaps the best beer in the world. This meant Rebetez had achieved one of his main goals. He had started out with the aim of “creating an artisan, unconventional and defiant beer, a beer with an extremely sophisticated bouquet that was rich on the palate and could easily be compared with the finest wines”. “Abbey de Saint Bon-Chien”, which is matured in oak barrels, comes up to the mark.

Another product of the current boom: the beers from Brauerei Nr. 523

What does Rebetez – the successful pioneer of the early days – think of the current crop leading the way? He sees a fast-moving scene with lots of people flying the flag for the







The star of Swiss micro-brewing: Jérôme Rebetez from Saingelégier with his BFM beer

Photo: Keystone

new beer culture: “But few of them see themselves as business people.” He himself entered the industry years ago to counter its “extremely boring” character, but voices mild criticism: “I find some of it too experimental.” If a beer is to remain a beer, “then you should be able to drink a whole bottle on your own”. He remains a rebel and is resisting the pressure to innovate: “Four of my very first beers are still our best-selling. I take great pride in that.”

He believes that any brewers able to leave their own mark can look forward to an exciting future. Anyone in their right mind wants genuine choice, he says. This requires original products from authentic companies with a real story. The BFM team are also great storytellers. The immortalised Saint Bon-Chien – the noble, sacred dog – who appears on the label of the much-acclaimed fine beer is not a dog at all. This was the name of Rebetez’s dead brewery cat. The stout Alex le Rouge is also an obituary in the form of a beer in honour of BFM’s former communist brewery technician who even after his retirement continued to potter around and drink in the brewery until his dying day. The Jurassians sometimes like to use wordplay to get one over on the German-speaking Swiss. After deciding to promote a BFM beer in German-speaking Switzerland in the period before Christmas, Rebetez labelled the bottles with the grammatically incorrect expression “Die Bier vom Weihnachten” (the beer of Christmas). In short, four words, two howling errors and a smirking

brewer in Saingelégier. His Highway To Helles is also a bit of banter with German-speaking Switzerland. Beer drinkers there often order “ein Helles” (a light beer). He finds the fact that they ask for a beer based on its colour astonishing. If somebody buys a new car, they don’t say “a grey one, please”. Those who do not appreciate his tongue-in-cheek ribbing can turn to one of the other 900 breweries in Switzerland.

### Wild yeast

Back to the Gurten, the small mountain situated on the outskirts of Berne. The historic local beer has long since ceased to exist, as already mentioned. However, the 523 team recently began working on a plan hatched over many years to brew a beer based on original recipes from the 1900s – and using local yeast as it should “embody the earth”. They put down a dozen containers containing beer wort on the Gurten to collect wild yeast. The method worked. Promising samples were found in three of the twelve containers, so they decided to carry on collecting the wild yeast. They then carried out weeks of research on the old local recipes and gained new insights into the ingredients commonly used in the past. 523 has not yet decided what to do with the results. At least in this case, the Swiss beer boom will provide an entirely new interpretation of oral history.



## Sovereign money: a complex popular initiative

The Swiss National Bank isn't the only institution that issues money. Commercial banks are also involved in its creation. A popular initiative that will be put to the vote on 10 June aims to prohibit that.

JÜRIG MÜLLER

What is money? Coins and banknotes, obviously. However, it also comes in other forms, such as book money, which is primarily created when banks grant loans. There are also bank accounts. The money held in these accounts is not real money, but merely something that entitles the customer to demand cash from the bank when required. Time is also money, as we have known since Benjamin Franklin published “Advice to a Young Tradesman” in 1748. Money is almost as difficult to define as time. And there are good reasons to consider the nature of money at the present time. On 10 June, the Swiss electorate will vote on the Sovereign Money Initiative, whose official title is: “For crisis-safe money: money creation by the National Bank only!” This says quite a lot, but what exactly is sovereign money?

For example, a commercial bank lends somebody 10,000 Swiss francs and credits the amount to the customer's current account. The bank has effectively simply created money from nowhere, so to speak. However, this is book money. Today, book money consists primarily in digital form and is much more abundant than cash. Coins and banknotes account for only about 10% of the legal tender in circulation, while 90% is electronic money “that the banks create themselves at the touch of a button”, as the authors of the initiative write on their homepage. Now the initiative wants only the National Bank to be allowed to create digital money so that it also has the monopoly on book money.

This situation already exists for cash. After all, commercial banks can't mint coins or print banknotes. If the

initiative were approved, they could continue their transactions and issue loans. But they would be forced to cover them fully through equity capital, savings deposits or loans from the National Bank.

### A crisis-proof financial system?

According to the initiative's authors, the introduction of sovereign money would make the entire financial system more crisis-resistant and fairer: “Sovereign money held in payment accounts is as secure as cash because it is real money from the National Bank. Bank collapses would have no effect on it. The rules would once again be the same for everyone, banks and companies as well as large and small banks,” explains the homepage of the group behind the initiative. Above all, the money belongs “to the account holders and is not lost if a bank gets into trouble”.

The initiative's authors promise even greater things, namely a windfall: a welcome consequence of the sovereign money initiative is that the National Bank would be able to provide the Federal Government and the cantons with an additional 5–10 billion Swiss francs a year, simply from the proceeds of the creation of money. Aside for coin production, such revenue-generating opportunities have not been used up to now – not even by commercial banks – for systemic reasons. The group behind the initiative believes the sovereign money reform could harness this previously untapped potential. They also say that it would eliminate the risk of financial crises as the current money-creation system forces debt to be incurred

through the issuing of loans. No new money is created today without new debt. A heavily indebted society is vulnerable in the event of financial crises.

The initiative wasn't started by any political party or well-known organisation, but by the Monetary Modernisation association, whose executive board is made up of largely unknown figures. What is remarkable is that the popular initiative is backed by many economists – even prominent ones – at various universities, including the University of St. Gallen, a prestigious training ground for economists.

### Opposition across the political spectrum

However, the initiative has met with fierce opposition from politicians. All the parliamentary groups have rejected the popular initiative in Parliament, even though the Social Democratic Party (SP) and the Greens agree with certain aspects of it. A left-wing and Green minority tabled a counterproposal, but without success. As SP National Councillor Beat Jans explained, the counterproposal picked up on the issue of financial stability and called on the Federal Constitution to be amended to insist that “our major banks must have sufficient equity capital to get themselves out of difficulty if they mess up while playing the market”. However, even the SP rejected the initiative, using the argument put forward by almost all speakers: the risks are too great because it has never been tried. SP National Councillor and economics expert Susanne Leutenegger Oberholzer remarked: “There is not an economy an-





anywhere on this planet that has introduced a sovereign money system based on the principles of this initiative. There is therefore no empirical experience.”

Green Liberal National Councillor Kathrin Bertschy attacked one of the key arguments of the initiative head-on during the debate: said an individual bank can't simply “create money from nothing”. The creation of credit “is subject to restrictions, regulatory provisions, liquidity requirements and minimum-reserve regulations. There are limits. The National Bank can exert influence.” In the eyes of SVP National Councillor and banker Thomas Matter, the sovereign money initiative seeks to “fix something that isn't broken”. He said you might as well “flood the basement to test whether your newly purchased water pump works as well as the old one”. Matter believes the initiative's authors “want to demolish fully intact, globally recognized Swiss financial institutions to create something radically new from the ruins, based on their formula”. This would, he adds, create un-

certainty and be poisonous for the economy.

### Closing the gap between the constitution and reality

FDP National Councillor Daniela Schneeberger underlined that the stability of the banking system the initiative is seeking to improve has already been strengthened by the too-big-to-fail regulations of 2011. Her party colleague Beat Walti warned against the initiative because it would “effectively nationalise the creation of money”. Peter Ulrich completely disagrees with this seemingly convincing argument. Ulrich is a former professor of economic ethics at the University of St. Gallen and economic advisor to the Sovereign Money Initiative. Writing in the *NZZ*, he said that the initiative would “essentially bridge the gap between monetary sovereignty intended by the constitution and the completely different, significantly higher-risk reality of the monetary system that exists today”. After all, a referendum held in 1891 approved the

**Campaigners from the committee of the Sovereign Money Initiative with a puppet of Helvetia and a mask of SNB Chairman Thomas Jordan in Bern in April 2017.**

Photo: Keystone

Federal Government's monopoly over the creation of money “for coins and bank notes, which were the predominant form of tender at the time, and this was reaffirmed by a referendum in 1951”. By contrast, he argued, the bank book money predominant today and the virtual money on our debit and credit cards lacks the status of being legal tender. National Councillor Kathrin Bertschy suggests “addressing such issues with a degree of humility” because they concern fundamental elements of the monetary system, are associated with great uncertainty and conjecture and the field is not an exact science.

And it could be added that it is an intellectually demanding proposal which for once does not appeal to prejudice or resentment but to the ability to think.

[www.vollgeld-initiative.ch](http://www.vollgeld-initiative.ch)

### Controversial gambling law

On 10 June 2018, the new gambling law will also be voted on. The Federal Council and Parliament want to merge the existing Gambling Act and Lottery Act into this new law. The current provisions of each will largely be taken over, but some new ones will also be introduced. For example, casino gaming is now to be offered online, while access to foreign online gambling services is to be blocked from Switzerland. The block is being justified on the grounds that Swiss providers have to comply with regulations that foreign gambling sites may not be bound by, such as measures to tackle gambling addiction. The youth parties of the FDP, SVP and Green Liberals called a referendum against the law precisely because of this block, as did the Young Greens through their own committee. They are more worried about a more fundamental question, namely “whether we want to restrict access to the Internet to protect domestic providers”, as claimed on the homepage of the Young Liberals. They say the law is reminiscent of “the situation in North Korea or China”. (JM)



## Switzerland helps to return migrants to Libya

The Swiss Confederation has allocated a million Swiss francs to the Libyan coastguard. This policy has helped to curb crossings but various NGOs have denounced it as being tantamount to supporting migrant trafficking.

STÉPHANE HERZOG

A million Swiss francs for the Libyan coastguard – that is the amount which Switzerland committed in 2017 as part of a European programme run by the International Organization for Migration (IOM). “Three training schemes have been provided for the authorities responsible for sea rescue and migration,” states Emmanuelle Jaquet von Sury, a spokesperson for the Federal Department of Justice and Police (FDJP). “Particular emphasis has been placed on registering migrants after rescue operations at sea

to ensure their cases are followed up, including in the detention facilities.”

The coastguard have received 2,500 items of rescue equipment, including life jackets, first aid kits and blankets, according to the FDJP. Switzerland is not there on the ground to monitor the implementation of this programme, “but the presence of representatives of the IOM and the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in most ports to the west of Tripoli ensures assistance and a certain degree of protection is provided during disembarkation and, in particular, the

registration and detection of particularly vulnerable cases”, says the spokesperson. However she adds, “the conflict situation in Libya sometimes reduces the mobility of IOM personnel and complicates the implementation of the project.”

### Accusations of racketeering and murderous interventions at sea

Various NGOs have accused the Libyan coastguard of involvement in migrant trafficking. They claim the crews of the Libyan Coast Guards (LCG) have

Libyan refugees aboard a boat are rescued on the open sea. Photo: Keystone





even caused people to drown. This is revealed in a report published at the end of 2017 by Amnesty International, which refers to an incident that occurred on 6 November, during which the manoeuvres of a coastguard frigate played a part in the drowning of around 50 people.

The FDJP said that it did not have any official information to confirm the incident. “However, the alarming number of ships that have sunk in the Mediterranean Sea – with 2,832 deaths in 2017 – obliges us to help ensure better protection for migrants. The IOM project for sea rescue was set up to pursue this humanitarian objective,” says Emmanuelle Jaquet von Sury. Amnesty points to double standards. “The European states, which are well aware of the serious violations suffered by refugees and migrants in Libya, have chosen to control migration by supporting the Libyan authorities. By stopping the crossings, they are keeping thousands of people in a country where they are systematically subjected to abuse and where they have little or no chance of finding protection,” it states.

“The people saved at sea tell us that they would prefer to die than return to detention centres in Libya,” says Caroline Abu Sa’Da, director of SOS Méditerranée Suisse, an association involved in the rescue operations carried out by the vessel Aquarius. She believes it is impossible to trust the LCG. “Who are these coastguards actually? They are just militia carrying out interception operations and taking migrants back to detention facilities where the conditions are atrocious, sometimes preventing aid from NGOs reaching them. Switzerland cannot turn a blind eye by simply being satisfied that these units are taking people out of the water.”

As the organiser of the third meeting of the Central Mediterranean Contact Group in November 2017 in Berne,

“Switzerland is aligning itself with a repressive European policy which aims to prevent access for migrants to Europe,” comments Vincent Chetail, Director of the Global Migration Centre of the Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies in Geneva. The European Union (EU) provided 46 million euros in 2017 to strengthen the intervention capacities of the Libyan authorities. It highlights the fact that this policy led to a significant reduction in the number of crossings last year. The FDJP indicates that this strategy has enabled the rescue of 14,000 people at sea. “Libya, which has not ratified the Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, is not a country of asylum. It is not safe nor does it offer protection. There is no system in place and the funds allocated will be misused,” counters the professor of international law, who believes that “Europe is making itself complicit to abuse.”

### Forced to undertake even more hazardous crossings

The expert condemns an ineffective policy that increases the dangers. “The crossings from Libya or Tunisia are the easiest routes. If they are blocked off, the flow of migrants will shift elsewhere, increasing the risk of crossings that endanger human life.” The founder of the Global Migration Centre believes the overall perception of migration is distorted. “In 2015, the number of asylum seekers arriving in Europe stood at 1.2 million, which is 0.2% of the EU population, and that was a statistical peak. It cannot therefore be called a mass influx. The real challenges are helping the reconstruction of Libya and reviewing migration policy, in particular by opening up legal access routes to Europe,” says Chetail. According to Amnesty International, almost half a million people set sail

between 2015 and 2017, resulting in 10,000 deaths. The number of exiles in Libya exceeds 400,000 people according to the IOM, and an estimated 20,000 migrants are being held in detention centres.

In addition to the UNHCR and the IOM, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which visits detention facilities in Libya, also attended the third contact group meeting in Berne in November 2017 and pointed out that “a migration policy must also aim to reduce the use of detention centres as a means of managing migration, as well as reduce the abuse of migrants.” The organisation recommended “improving the management of human remains and data about deceased persons to facilitate the provision of information about their death and where it occurred for the families of the deceased”, according to spokesperson Thomas Glass.

In the Mediterranean, winter has not stopped the crossings. On Tuesday 16 January, the crew of the Aquarius carried out five consecutive rescue operations, saving 505 lives. On the same day, the Italian coastguard, which has coordinated a total of 11 rescue operations – by NGOs and merchant vessels – estimated that 1,400 people had been saved off the coast of Libya. “It’s impossible to cover the entire rescue zone with three NGO boats which are permanently stationed there,” SOS Méditerranée said, calling upon European states to commit to establishing a European rescue fleet to prevent thousands of deaths.



Then Swiss President Doris Leuthard – pictured here at a news conference with Jean-Claude Juncker, the President of the European Commission – says that Switzerland is being discriminated against by the EU. Photo: Keystone

## Fee for access to the single market is due again

Switzerland has for the second time promised 1.3 billion Swiss francs to the EU for the development of poorer Member States. However, attempts by Brussels to exert pressure are causing resentment in Berne.

MARKUS BROTSCHI

Over the past ten years, Switzerland has contributed 1.3 billion Swiss francs to development projects in Eastern Europe. This cohesion contribution to harmonise the level of development between EU Member States was first requested by the EU over ten years ago as a fee for access to the single market. Switzerland contributed a billion Swiss francs to the ten EU states which became EU members in 2004, primarily Eastern European countries. It subsequently paid another 260 million for Bulgaria and Romania as well as 40 million for Croatia. Poland has benefited most from the cohesion payments thus far. Almost half a billion Swiss francs has been spent in this Eastern European country.

Through its payment of 1.3 billion, Switzerland has funded over 200 projects, including border protection infrastructure, support with establishing the administration of justice, environmental education projects and sewage treatment plants. The recipient states had to co-fund the projects by contributing 15%. Switzerland monitored the use of the funding through its own local offices. Federal government's verdict on the use of the money thus far has been positive. However, the European Union now expects Switzerland to make its cohesion contribution for the next ten years. The Federal Council pledged the money last November when Jean-Claude Juncker, the President of the European Commission, visited Berne.



It actually seemed as though this time the development aid for poorer EU countries would be agreed without domestic political squabbling. In 2006, the first billion Swiss francs in cohesion contributions had to be approved by the Swiss people because the SVP contested its legal basis through a referendum. This time, the SVP has allowed the deadline for calling a referendum against the renewal of the Federal Act on Assistance to Eastern Europe to expire without calling a vote. However, the SVP is regretting its decision now as there is once again widespread discontent over this in Swiss politics.

## Switzerland on the grey list

The reason this time is the threatening behaviour from Brussels that the EU is using to bring Switzerland to heel on other affairs. Shortly after the Federal Council made its pledge, it was revealed that the EU had placed Switzerland on a grey list of countries whose tax regimes are not compliant with its own in the EU's view. The EU is still opposed to the tax privileges that Switzerland grants to foreign holding companies. As the Corporate Tax Reform III was defeated at referendum, the EU's demands have still not been implemented in Switzerland.

However, the real bombshell arrived just before Christmas when the EU announced that it would only recognise the Swiss stock exchange for a year. Brussels is using this time limit to apply pressure on Switzerland to conclude an institutional framework agreement on the bilateral treaties in the first half of the year. This should regulate the incorporation of EU law and the arbitration procedure in the event of disputes. But in Switzerland, the conservative parties, particularly the SVP, are finding it difficult to see such a framework agreement as a "treaty of friendship", which is what Juncker labelled it. Christoph Blocher, the dominant figure in the SVP, has even claimed that the fight against this agreement is just as important as the one against the European Economic Area (EEA) Agreement. Blocher argues that 25 years after the Swiss people rejected the EEA Agreement the Federal Council is attempting to make Switzerland subordinate to the EU through a "colonial treaty". The SVP has therefore already submitted a "self-determination initiative" which aims to enshrine the principle that Swiss constitutional law takes precedence over non-binding international law – such as the bilateral agreements with the EU – in the Swiss Constitution.

The Federal Council saw the one-year limitation of stock market recognition as an affront. It was completely inconsistent with the positive front put on matters by Doris Leuthard, then President of the Swiss Confederation, and Juncker at the reception last November. Several weeks later, Leuthard claimed Switzerland was being discriminated

against by the EU. The USA, Australia and Singapore, with which the EU has far less close relations, had received unlimited recognition of stock market equivalence from the EU. This year's Swiss President Alain Berset also condemned Brussels' conduct towards Switzerland.

Without stock market recognition, Switzerland faces losing a significant share of securities trading on exchanges in the EU. The conservative parties are therefore calling upon the Federal Council to use the cohesion payment as a bargaining chip until the equivalence of the Swiss stock exchange has been permanently guaranteed.

## EEA states pay more

Even if the Federal Council decides that Switzerland cannot avoid continuing to make cohesion payments, the EU's attempts to exert pressure have changed the mood in Parliament. The conservative parties will not want to approve the new credit unconditionally in light of the EU's power play. Whether Parliament ultimately dares to engage in a test of strength with the EU is another question. The EU demands even higher cohesion contributions from other countries, namely the EEA members Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. The three EEA states paid around €1.8 billion in total towards cohesion within the EU between 2004 and 2009. The EU will now receive further support of €2.8 billion for the period from 2014 to 2021. Norway will contribute the lion's share, paying 97%.

The EU will continue to insist on the rapid conclusion of a framework agreement because it aims to ensure a uniform application of the law in treaties that provide Switzerland with access to the single market. The new Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis must therefore primarily focus on policy on Europe during his first year in office. Before his election, the FDP Federal Councillor proposed a reset in negotiations with the EU.

The SVP understands something different by this from the parties to its left. It is opposed to any institutional binding of Switzerland to the EU. The other parties see the need for orderly relations with the EU and favour a court of arbitration that decides in the event of a dispute over legal interpretation between Switzerland and the EU. The EU has also indicated that it is open to such a solution and a way out of the institutional deadlock finally seems possible.

# The secret ideas factory

Esoro is making the cars of the future – and a hydrogen-powered lorry.

ANDREAS SCHWANDER

Almost everything that Esoro does in Fällanden is secret – and that has been the case for decades. That means practically all of its activities go on behind closed doors. The company is rarely visible, for instance when an articulated truck manufactured by Esoro delivers fresh produce to branches of the leading retailer, Coop, in the Aargau region. This heavy goods vehicle is the first of its kind in Switzerland. It is powered by hydrogen produced at a hydroelectric power plant in Aargau. A fuel cell acting as an on-board power station generates a continuous flow of electricity, charging a battery. The energy for acceleration comes from a battery which is much smaller than the ones found in an electric car. The lorry produces no exhaust fumes and does not take long to charge. This is a key factor when considering alternative drive systems for HGV fleets. The articulated truck was given the green light by the vehicle licensing office in Zurich last summer.

## Decades of tinkering

“We work on challenging, complex cross-sector projects,” explains Esoro CEO Diego Jaggi. He has been involved with utopian ideas on wheels for a long time. It all started back in the 1980s with the Tour-de-Sol, the legendary solar-powered vehicle race through Switzerland. That spawned a company in 1990. Esoro is part of the big – though largely unknown – Swiss automotive industry, which generates annual sales of 16 billion Swiss francs a year and has a workforce of 34,000. “We have to hold our own in the industry,” Jaggi adds, “despite facing huge disadvantages in Switzerland.” These include the strength of the Swiss franc and customs duties – two factors that make everything more expensive and complex. Simply getting the necessary papers for a new vehicle is something of an art form. Jaggi estimates that vehicle registration alone accounts for about 20 % of the cost of construction and development for the fuel cell lorry – assuming the company has already done it once before. If not, it is 200 %.

To be able to use the coveted white numbers, Esoro is also ultimately dependent on the goodwill of the road traffic offices. After all, the costs of just a single vehicle are also very high for them. It would therefore be much easier for the authorities to find some tiny detail that is not compliant and to refuse to issue a permit. Nevertheless,



the vehicle licensing office in Zurich made the effort. Its experts read up on the subject and collaborated constructively.

## 19 tonnes permitted

The Esoro truck is the first in Switzerland to receive certification in accordance with the provisions for zero-emission commercial vehicles. Trucks can weigh 18 tonnes in Switzerland and 19 tonnes in the EU. Switzerland now also permits alternative-drive vehicles with a total weight of 19 tonnes. However, significant modifications have to be made to meet the requirements of mass production.

It is therefore important to Esoro that the individual parts look perfect. When one of the first hydrogen-powered cars was presented at the Geneva Motor Show a number of years ago, a senior manager at VW is said to have told Diego Jaggi: “The paintwork is good.” In the jargon of the German automotive world, that effectively means “perfect”. The paintwork also looks good on the Rinspeed prototypes that Esoro regularly builds for Zurich-based businessman Frank Rinderknecht. Whether swimming, floating or diving, they all come out of the secret factory in Fällanden. These Rinspeed vehicles may look peculiar, but many of the ideas re-emerge later in mass-produced cars. Esoro is constantly working on the vehicles of the distant future in what is known as “advance development”, an area in which the sky’s the limit in terms of ideas and concepts.

**The zero-emissions truck of Swiss manufacturer Esoro recently started delivering fresh produce to Coop branches.**

*Photo: Keystone*

ANDREAS SCHWANDER IS A FREELANCE JOURNALIST AND CONSULTANT IN BASEL



# The Asian jungle – heaven and hell

The “poor poet” Hamo Morgenthaler enjoyed his best days in the jungle of south-east Asia and, for better or for worse, never freed himself of it.

CHARLES LINSMAYER

Hans “Hamo” Morgenthaler described the Burgdorf district, where he was born on 4 June 1890, as an “innocuous potato patch in central Switzerland”. Left without a mother and suffering misfortune at a young age, he studied botany, zoology and geology but was driven right from the start by the irrepressible desire to live “well and dangerously”. His first novel “Ihr Berge”, published in 1916, documents how he firstly developed a passion for mountaineering but took it to such an extreme that he almost lost all his fingers to frostbite in 1911.

In 1920, he apparently threw his mountaineering equipment into a glacial crevasse in protest at mass tourism. But before that he pursued another desire – adventure in the Asian jungle. He enjoyed “days in paradise” in a newly discovered “primeval home” when he worked for a company searching for tin and gold in the Malaysian jungle from 1917 to 1920 and experienced the “night-time song of the jungle” and “all the wonders of dark-skinned women”. However, his adventure had fatal consequences. Right up to his death he is believed to have suffered from syphilis – which was never medically proven – and malaria, which he brought to Switzerland, before contracting the tuberculosis that he died from in 1928 aged 38.

## Sensuously seductive

Before that he evoked the Asian land of his desires in novels twice – euphorically and with sensuous seduction in 1920 in “Matahari. Stimmungsbilder aus den malayisch-siamesischen Tropen”, a book which Hermann Hesse and Emmy Hennings raved about, and with a sceptical and critical tone where the jungle seems like hell in “Gadscha Puti. Ein Minenabenteuer”. This book was rejected by the publisher Orell Füssli to the chagrin of the author who was desperately short of money, and was not published until 1929, after his death, by Francke-Verlag. Also published posthumously was “In der Stadt. Die Beichte des Karl von Allmen”, a dark and sinister book about the city as the unrestrained whore of human urges and abysses, which the solitary reveller Von Allmen succumbs to in a kind of “metropolitan frenzy”.

After returning from Asia, Morgenthaler found no home and no peace. As a tuberculosis patient he lived in Arosa and Davos, then in Ascona, where miraculously the light-hearted novel “Woly, Sommer im Süden” was written, in the Waldau mental institution in Berne (he almost committed murder out of jealousy), in a psychiatric hospital in Mendrisio and finally in Berne in 1927 where the dentist Marguerite Schmid took care of him and tried to get his life back on the right track. After the expressionism of the Asian novels and the humour of “Woly”, he finally unleashed tragic, absurd succinctness in his poems, the last and most shocking of which reads: “Dear God, /strike me dead. / Take me from this barren life. / Then I’ll give you a peck on the cheek.”

BIBLIOGRAPHY: The following titles are available: “Dichtermisere. Ein Hans-Morgenthaler-Brevier”, edited by Georges Ammann at Orte, “Hamo, der letzte fromme Europäer” and “Der kuriose Dichter Hans Morgenthaler. Briefwechsel mit Ernst Morgenthaler und Hermann Hesse”, both edited by Roger Perret at Lenos-Verlag.



“It seems to me now that I already knew when I said my good-byes in the mountains resplendent in autumn snow that my departure did not mean separation and unfaithfulness, that I was not going away but rather returning to a primeval home and a new world that, while completely new to me, was still a place of past experience and untainted primitiveness.”

(From “Matahari. Stimmungsbilder aus dem malayisch-siamesischen Dschungel”, Zurich 1920, out of print.)

CHARLES LINSMAYER IS A LITERARY SCHOLAR AND JOURNALIST IN ZÜRICH

# “I’m pleased nothing came of the revolution”

Fifty years ago, it seemed in Switzerland too that the time had come to radically change the world. Fritz Osterwalder was involved in the 1968 protests as a Marxist before becoming a professor of education. What remains of 1968? An interview about mistakes and progress

INTERVIEW: DANIEL DI FALCO

**Mr Osterwalder, 50 years since 1968 is a big issue this year. And it’s also a chapter in your life. What’s it like to find your own youth presented in a museum?**

You realise that something you were involved in is over. But you also reflect on what happened.

**How do you see it?**

There are two sides. We were concerned about issues such as social justice, gender equality and opening up society. In this regard, our efforts paid off as tremendous progress has been made. The other side of it was that we wanted to completely revolutionise society with 19th century Marxist, socialist and Trotskyist theories. Fortunately for us, nothing came of this.

## Fritz Osterwalder

Fritz Osterwalder, born in 1947 in Frauenfeld, was studying history and German literature in Zurich in 1968. Today, he is mainly known for his research on the relationships between educational ideas, religion and the state. He made a name for himself with his critical look at the “expectations of salvation” that society places on schools and the “cult status” of educational reformers, such as Montessori, Steiner and Pestalozzi. In 2012, Osterwalder retired from his position as professor at the Institute of Educational Science at the University of Berne where he had worked since 2000. Before that he lectured in education in Karlsruhe and worked as a teacher and journalist in Zurich and Winterthur.

DDF

**What do you mean by “fortunately”?**

Our ideas had no major repercussions in Switzerland. It was different in many Latin American countries where Marxist revolutions took place, some of which ended terribly. They cost lives, and ultimately also those of the Marxists. In this respect, we in Europe were the lucky ones in the 1968 movement.

**Because nobody was held accountable for the dream of revolution?**

It goes beyond that. People like me were even able to forge careers in the state education system, from teachers to professors.

**In the same system that you wanted to topple as a Marxist.**

Exactly. Our ideas were as fundamentalist as they were rudimentary, and perhaps even naive – council-based democracy and a planned economy. It could have ended badly. Very badly.

**Undemocratically, in other words?**

In an undemocratic, totalitarian and chaotic way.

**You were only 21 years old in 1968.**

**You then helped to found the Zurich section of the Revolutionary Marxist League (RML) which split away from the Communist Workers’ Party.**

Yes, but that wasn’t until 1971. Something else existed before that in 1968 – a broad, extremely diverse movement of non-conformists, by which I mean people who were essentially disillusioned with the prevailing social order and who articulated their

discontent outside of traditional political structures, which also meant outside of the “old left”. The entire movement extended far beyond a particular social milieu. The non-conformists also included people who sought radical change in literature and theatre. Other people saw opening up the education system as being the most important issue. Others were completely apolitical.

**How did you organise yourselves?**

We met up at demonstrations, at pubs and in action groups which pursued particular goals, such as solidarity with Vietnam, the empowerment of the trade unions and the revitalisation of theatre. The political groupings were very loosely affiliated. In Thurgau, there was a group of students, school pupils and apprentices who would meet up for discussions, including with representatives of the “old left”.

**So, 1968 was more than just a student movement.**

I was a student, but we weren’t just campaigning for educational reform but also on behalf of apprentices or foreign workers in Switzerland. It’s hard to imagine today but there was a waste disposal site back then on the outskirts of Frauenfeld next to which was a shanty town where the guest workers from Italy lived, separated from their families who were not allowed to come here with them. This was how Switzerland treated them. We wanted to do something about it.





**Fritz Osterwalder, 50 years on: "Traditional liberalism was one of the enemies, but it is the bedrock of a democratic society."**

Photo: Adrian Moser

**The sense of being able to change the world seemed to unite the movement, overcoming all differences.**

Yes, there was a sense of that. We'll start again from scratch and do a better job, especially morally. Ethics was a very important aspect of 1968. Small factions of the movement came from the SP or the Workers' Party. But a much larger part came from church circles. Greater solidarity with and justice for the Third World, guest workers and women – all of this was based on strong ethical convictions.

**What role did the protest against the Vietnam War play?**

This conflict raised many people's political awareness, as did the socialist revolution in Cuba, the fight to liberate French-occupied Algeria and also the dissident movements in the Eastern Block. These events showed us the emergent resistance against "imperi-

alism" and the Eastern European regimes. And we saw ourselves as part of this resistance.

**That is also the way the representatives of the prevailing order saw you. The authorities responded by repressing the protests.**

Yes, this was during the political climate of the Cold War, secret files and espionage. But that's just one half of the story. The other half was the willingness to engage in debate with us and to discuss our concerns, even amongst the traditional elites.

**Really?**

There was also a great spirit of openness in some of the universities. University administrations and many professors wanted to debate with us. I later experienced the same thing myself as a teacher. I taught at a vocational college for the deaf in Zurich. Our principal was the president of a

local SVP branch, but he still sat down with me once a week to discuss matters.

**But weren't you once barred from the profession?**

No, that's not true. I was not appointed to a senior teaching position at a grammar school in Winterthur and lost my teaching contract for political reasons, but I was able to teach at other state schools.

**Osterwalder (second from the right) and other members of the Revolutionary Marxist League announced in June 1975 that the party would run in National Council elections in 12 cantons.** Photo: Keystone



## 1968 – more than turmoil and scandal?

1968? Historians today, when they refer to 1968, actually mean the events – including in Switzerland – that were not restricted to a single year. There were the riots at the Rolling Stones concert at the Hallenstadion in Zurich in April 1967, the occupation of the teaching seminar in Locarno in March 1968, the battles on the streets of Zurich known as the “Globus riots” in June 1968, the large-scale women’s demonstration on the Bundesplatz (“March on Berne”) in March 1969 and Harald Szeemann’s provocative exhibition “When Attitude Becomes Form” at the Kunsthalle Bern in March/April 1969. The 1968 movement revolted against traditional forms of authority and demanded self-determination, justice and solidarity. However, a wider development was also identifiable in the headline-grabbing protests – they were the climax of social upheaval that began in 1965 and went on for over a decade. This development was reflected in the rising number of divorces, university degrees and women in employment. Prosperity, youth culture and mass media also created a dynamic that increasingly conflicted with the conservative values which shaped the climate in Switzerland during the post-war era. A process of social modernisation was underway which broke fresh ground with the protests of 1968 and finally resulted in political reform but also a broad liberalisation of social norms. The number of accepted ways of life multiplied, from cohabitation to cultural consumption and hairstyles. Much of what we take for granted today had its roots in the 1968 movement. DDF



The Globus riots in summer 1968 ended in battles on the streets of Zurich. Photo: Keystone

**In 1979, you explained the “path to socialism in Switzerland” in a book. This talked about “overthrowing capitalism and breaking the capitalist class’s power of control over the vast majority of the population”.**

That’s how we worded it at the time. We wanted to get rid of bourgeois society and private ownership of the means of production and strove to create a society of equals, socially and not just under the law.

**People on the left like yourself were accused of failing to critically come to terms with your past in an article published by “Weltwoche” to mark the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of “1968” ten years ago.**

As I said, I’m pleased that the revolution came to nothing. But I’m also glad that many of our goals have been achieved. There is now greater gender equality, the situation of foreign workers in Switzerland has improved and everyone is covered by old-age pension provision.

**What about capitalism?**

Some of our ideas are still relevant today. Just think about the power of the global banking system which plunged the western world into crisis in 2008. Controlling this power democratically still represents an attractive proposition for society today.

**You were a teacher and professor of education. What impact did 1968 have in schools?**

The first thing is that the education system was made more accessible. We had 36 pupils in our class at the grammar school in Frauenfeld – only five of whom were girls. Today, there are more girls and children from the lower social strata in upper secondary education. Corporal punishment has also disappeared, but fortunately authority has not.

**Would you consider yourself a liberal today?**

Yes, I’d say so, a social liberal. Traditional liberalism was one of the enemies in 1968 but it is the bedrock of a democratic society. This can be seen in Russia today. Democracy becomes authoritarian without liberalism.

**The 1968 generation grew up in the prosperous and growth-driven society of the post-war period. Then they declared war on this society and its values. Isn’t that a paradox?**

No, if anything it’s logical. Those who struggle to survive do not spend most of their time pursuing alternative world views, as we did back then. And conversely, those who can enjoy a beer and a steak can still reflect on the fact that, say, the same level of prosperity does not exist in the Third World. Such a gulf can make people sensitive to issues of social justice.

**From 1980 onwards, your RML was called the Socialist Workers’ Party (SAP). It occasionally won seats on cantonal and communal authorities and also launched a federal initiative in favour of guaranteed vocational training, which was resoundingly rejected in 1986. In 1987, the SAP ceased to exist and many of its members joined the Greens or SP.**

Yes, I was a member until the very end but didn’t join any other parties afterwards because I was focusing more on my academic work. I still feel a sense of commitment to many of the issues we campaigned on.

**Which ones?**

Democratisation, especially in relation to economic affairs, gender equality and social security.

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DANIEL DI FALCO IS A JOURNALIST WITH “DER BUND” AND A HISTORIAN



# How a mountain village made headlines worldwide

Albinen is combating emigration through a financial incentive. This story created a global furore that took the commune completely by surprise. We paid a visit to this besieged mountain village in Valais.

JONAS SCHMID

He finally gives vent to his frustration: “You’re all mad,” Beat Jost scolds the assembled crowd of journalists. The president of the commune of Albinen plucks at his moustache, mumbles something about an “absurd story” and storms off. Why is this man whom residents describe as hands-on and charismatic so exasperated? It is the proposed funding of homes in his village that has surprisingly caused such a stir all over the world. In the run-up to the communal assembly meeting, Albinen’s most senior official worries that his citizens may refuse to support him over this issue for fear of being overrun by outsiders. He complains that his opponents could not come up with a better campaign and makes no mention of the fact that the commune has pulled off a remarkable PR coup.

Let’s go back to the start. Albinen, an archetypal Valais village lying 1,300 metres above sea level, is in a tranquil spot and enjoys wonderful views. Yet the idyllic setting is deceptive. While Switzerland’s urban centres complain about trains crammed full with passengers, peripheral



**The idyllic setting is deceptive. Like many Swiss communes in peripheral regions, Albinen, a village in Valais, is also being adversely hit by emigration.**

regions like Albinen are desperately fighting emigration. So, to keep young people in the village or to attract new families, the commune put forward an unorthodox proposal – compensation of 70,000 Swiss francs for a family of four who decide to stay in the village. The money is subject to strict conditions – a ten-year stay and an investment of at least 200,000 Swiss francs in accommodation. Foreign nationals must hold at least a C residence permit.

The story was presented as it inevitably would be in the age of online journalism. After some media outlets had reported matter-of-factly on the initiative last summer, the issue provided the “20 Minuten” online platform with material for a Christmas story that was too good to be true: “Would you move here for 70,000 Swiss francs?” read the newspaper’s headline. The authors of the piece only mentioned the stringent conditions attached in passing. The news then spread like wildfire around the globe. Media outlets worldwide picked up the story. The UK tabloids were the first to run it, followed by media in Russia, India and China. They vied to outdo one another with headlines like: “This Swiss village will give you 70,000 Swiss francs to move there. Pack your bags!”

## Appearing with suitcases in the village shop

There was an immediate response. Officials were inundated with thousands of applications. Initially, they treated this with good humour. But they stopped smiling when Italians with their suitcases packed turned up in the village shop enquiring about the money. Jost, a former trade unionist and journalist, was overwhelmed by the developments. He went to ground and even wanted to ban journalists from attending the decisive assembly meeting. But he was called into line by the canton, which reminded him of the principle of public access. This led to a showdown at the fire station in early December.

The residents of Albinen backed their president, overwhelmingly approving the proposal that had caused such a furore beforehand. The young people celebrated, Jost smoothed his hair and all of a sudden willingly appeared in front of the cameras. He was once again at peace with himself, the journalists and the world.

The young villagers are still faced with a dilemma. Should they stay or go? Would they be better off heading to places offering employment, schools and supermarkets? Three young families recently moved away. The elderly are left behind. Next year, half of the village’s 240 residents will draw a pension. “We’re on our deathbed,” warns Jost. He still hopes the housing subsidy will help rejuvenate the village by attracting five to ten new families. In the best-case scenario, that would mean the school reopening.

JONAS SCHMID IS AN EDITOR AT THE “SÜDOSTSCHWEIZ” NEWSPAPER

## OSA Youth Service

*If you are interested in Swiss politics and Europe, and would like to take part in a fabulous programme of recreational activities in your native country, our politics and culture camp is ideal for you.*



You'll experience Swiss politics up close at our politics and culture camp – everything is explained in simple terms and in a concise and neutral way. You will meet young politicians as well as experienced ones from different parties who hold various political positions. Visits to the Federal Palace and the parliament of Valais are also on the itinerary. To round off the political programme, we will attend the Congress of the Swiss Abroad at the La Poste culture and conference centre in Visp. This year's theme is the mutual relationship between Switzerland and Europe.

Of course, this camp focuses not just on politics but also on your native country, which has so much to offer. Magnificent mountain scenery, fascinating historical cities and no end of culture. It goes without saying that all of this is part of an extremely diverse two-week programme. This includes mountain hikes, climbing, dinghy sailing, mountain biking, swimming, city tours and museum visits. A truly memorable experience is guaranteed.

The camp costs CHF 750 (including programme, accommodation, meals, excursions and visits), lasts from 28 July to 12 August and is aimed at young Swiss Abroad between 15 and 21 years of age. If we've sparked your interest, then register now!

Information about the offers for young people and to register:  
[www.swisscommunity.org](http://www.swisscommunity.org) or [www.aso.ch](http://www.aso.ch).

### Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA)

Alpenstrasse 26  
 CH-3006 Berne  
 Tel. +41 31 356 61 00  
 Fax +41 31 356 61 01  
 info@aso.ch  
[www.aso.ch](http://www.aso.ch)  
[www.revue.ch](http://www.revue.ch)  
[www.swisscommunity.org](http://www.swisscommunity.org)



### Our partners:

educationsuisse  
 Tel. +41 31 356 61 04  
 Fax +41 31 356 61 01  
 info@educationsuisse.ch  
[www.educationsuisse.ch](http://www.educationsuisse.ch)



Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad  
 Tel. +41 31 356 61 16  
 Fax +41 31 356 61 01  
 info@sjas  
[www.sjas.ch](http://www.sjas.ch)



Stiftung für junge Auslandschweizer  
 Fondation pour les enfants suisses à l'étranger  
 Fondazione per i giovani svizzeri all'estero  
 Fundazioni per giovani svizzeri a l'estero

## 96<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Visp/VS

From 10 to 12 August 2018 the 96<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Swiss Abroad will take place in Visp with panoramic views of the mountains of Valais.

The theme of our upcoming congress, 'Switzerland without Europe – Europe without Switzerland', illustrates that the relationship between Switzerland and Europe is a topic that extends far beyond the Europe issue. It is a topic with global dimensions, not only because of potential consequences for Switzerland, but also because of implications for domestic and foreign policy, as well as the economy.

One of the highlights of the congress will be the speech by State Secretary Roberto Balzaretto, who was appointed director of the Directorate for European Affairs (DEA) by the Federal Council on 1 February 2018.

During the event the participants will have the opportunity to meet compatriots from around the world, inform themselves about the current news in Switzerland and talk about their own experiences. Stimulating speeches by interesting personalities from Swiss business and politics, as well as a varied social programme with folklore and living traditions, complete the programme of the 96<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Swiss Abroad.

Further information about registration is available on our website [www.aso-kongress.ch](http://www.aso-kongress.ch).



## FYSA – summer camps for children aged 8 to 14

From the end of June until the end of August, Swiss children abroad can have a fantastic time while also discovering Switzerland and its culture at two-week summer camps with 36 to 42 other children from all over the world.



At the camps run by the Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad, participants will visit attractions, discover lakes, mountains, rivers and landscapes on short hikes, and explore cities. Some days will also be spent at the camp base where participants will enjoy games, sporting activities and various workshops.

They will also, of course, have the opportunity to gain fascinating insights into Switzerland. We look at the Swiss languages, Swiss songs, Swiss recipes and typically Swiss games and sports.

The interaction with participants from other countries and the exchange across linguistic, cultural and national boundaries present a unique opportunity to make new friends and enjoy some unforgettable moments.

There are still a few places available for our forthcoming holiday camps. Full details and the registration form can be found at [www.sjas.ch/en/camps/](http://www.sjas.ch/en/camps/). We would also be pleased to send you our information brochure with an overview of the offers available by post on request.

The Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad wishes to give all Swiss children abroad the opportunity to discover Switzerland in this way on at least one occasion. We can therefore offer reduced rates in justified cases. The required form can be requested on the registration form. We would be pleased to provide you with further information.

## OSA advice

Health insurance: we're interested in your experiences!

The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) has decided to turn its attention to the issue of health insurance for Swiss people living abroad. We want to know about the difficulties you have encountered in this area and the practical problems that you face as a Swiss person living abroad. By the same token, if you have had positive experiences or wish to share good practices, do please let us know.

The purpose of this is to enable us to discuss this issue at the Council of the Swiss Abroad meeting on 10 August 2018 in Visp, where we will look at ways of improving the situation of Swiss people living abroad in this regard.

Please send us your experiences and first-hand accounts, if possible by email to the following address: [info@aso.ch](mailto:info@aso.ch) or to:

Organisation of the Swiss Abroad  
Alpenstrasse 26  
3006 Berne  
Fax: 031 356 61 01

Thank you for your assistance.

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**CHANGE OF ADDRESS:** Please advise your local embassy or consulate. Do not write to the editorial office in Berne.



## THE SWISS ABROAD ON INSTAGRAM



### “I see Switzerland as a palace at the heart of Europe”

25-year-old Eva Witschi wants to “explore the big, wide world” before one day returning to Switzerland to raise a family. She is currently doing just that in London.

“I felt as though I had hit a brick wall in Switzerland. I was unable to progress career-wise. In contrast, London afforded me the opportunity to work with leading international advertising agencies, something I would never have been able to do in Switzerland. Astonishingly the 40-hour working week is shorter than in Switzerland, but you are not paid for overtime. That doesn’t bother me as the experience I’m gaining here is invaluable.

London practically brings the whole world together. You can do almost anything you wish if you know where and how to look. There’s even a farm not far from here, right in the middle of a city with millions of people! You can even stroke the animals. At the weekend you can go to museums, cultural events or parties which you won’t find in Switzerland. On the other hand, life in Switzerland is much safer. That’s probably because it’s much more tranquil, uniform and straightforward.

Switzerland is a palace at the heart of Europe. I don’t think people in Switzerland appreciate that. When you move away, you realise how precious it is to grow up in such a secure environment, how little university fees cost and how short the distances are that you have to cycle or walk.

Switzerland is my home, a safe haven where I’ll probably return to in a few years’ time because I want my children to grow up in a palace, too.”

This interview was published on [swissinfo.ch](http://swissinfo.ch), the online service of the Swiss Broadcasting Company which is available in ten languages. Do you also live abroad? Add the tag [#WeAreSwissAbroad](https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/weareswissabroad/) to your photos on Instagram.

OSA Youth Service and [educationsuisse](http://educationsuisse.ch):

## Help with starting education and training in Switzerland

The OSA Youth Service and [educationsuisse](http://educationsuisse.ch) jointly support young Swiss Abroad in planning and starting their initial education or training in Switzerland through the ‘Springboard’ programme.

The advice and approach are tailored to every participant individually. Registration is open to young people who have a place on a course – at a university of applied sciences or a traditional university – or who have been offered an apprenticeship, as well as to those who have not yet decided on a particular educational path. The staff of [educationsuisse](http://educationsuisse.ch) are available to answer any questions about education, planning and financial matters, etc. via email, by telephone or at the office in Berne. They advise participants on how to put their plans into practice and provide them with the best possible support.

### Living with a host family

As soon as the definitive acceptance by the educational institution or training provider has been confirmed, the OSA Youth Service checks whether a place with a host family is available in the local area. Host family places are currently only available in German-speaking Switzerland. Participants travel to Switzerland shortly before their education or training begins and can stay with the host family for up to six months. The hosts provide the young people with a room and meals and support them as much as possible when they start their education or training. Regular contact with the staff of the OSA Youth Service and [educationsuisse](http://educationsuisse.ch) helps to resolve any problems. It should be noted that applicants must be 18 years of age when starting their education or training.

### Costs and paying for education

There is a one-off contribution to expenses of CHF 500 for planning and organising the host family. Food and accommodation with the host family costs CHF 500 a month. Grants are available to participants whose parents are unable to fully meet the education or training costs.

### Registration and contact

The ‘Springboard’ programme will continue to run during the 2018/2019 and 2019/2020 academic years. For information and to apply, please visit [info@educationsuisse.ch](mailto:info@educationsuisse.ch).





## Federal Council photo 2018

The Federal Council in 2018 (from left to right): Federal Councillor Guy Parmelin, Federal Councillor Simonetta Sommaruga, Federal Councillor Ueli Maurer (Vice-President), President of the Swiss Confederation Alain Berset, Federal Councillor Doris Leuthard, Federal Councillor Johann N. Schneider-Ammann, Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis, Federal Chancellor Walter Thurnherr.

The Federal Chancellery has published the official Federal Council photo for 2018. It is the first time that it has been designed as an animated image for online media. 'BUNDESART – the artistic Federal Council photo' is the title of the concept selected by President Alain Berset. Both the concept and the photo were produced by STEMUTZ. The background image is the work of Michel FR.

Download, order: [admin.ch](http://admin.ch)>Federal Council>Photographs and speeches of the Federal Council.

### Please note

Notify your local Swiss embassy or consulate of your email address(es) and mobile phone number(s) and/or changes to these and register at the online desk (link on the FDFA homepage [www.eda.admin.ch](http://www.eda.admin.ch)) or via [www.swissabroad.ch](http://www.swissabroad.ch) to select your preferred format for receiving "Swiss Review" and other publications. Please contact your Swiss representation if you have trouble registering.

Both the latest issue of "Swiss Review" and previous issues can be read and/or printed out at any time at [www.revue.ch](http://www.revue.ch). "Swiss Review" (or "Gazzetta Svizzera" in Italy) is delivered free of charge either as a print edition or electronically (by email) to the homes of all Swiss Abroad and made available via an iOS/Android app.

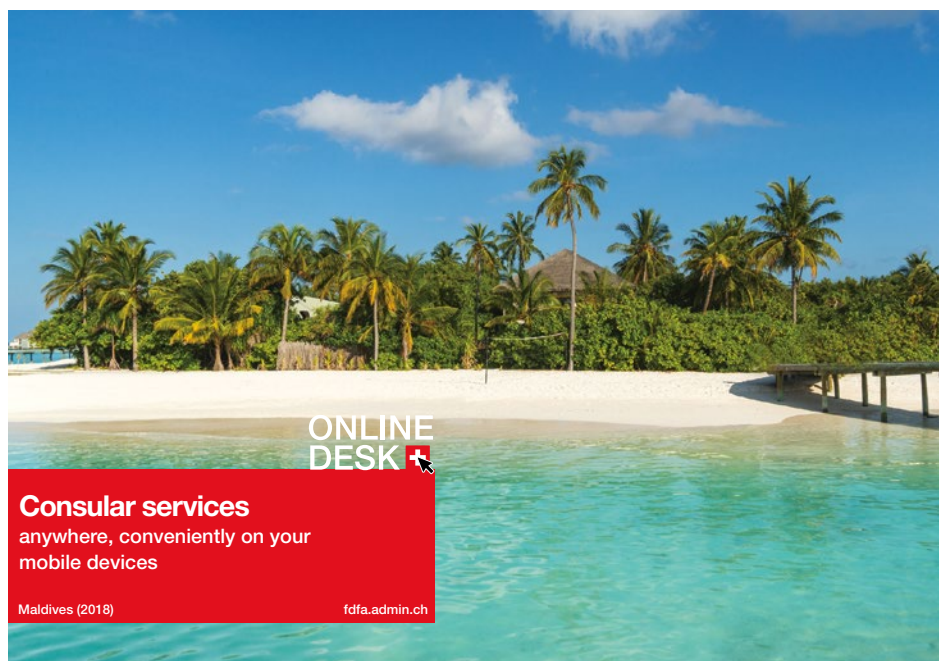


Foto Copyright: Babu Indergand

# The new Swiss Citizenship Act entered into force on 1 January 2018

Foreign nationals who feel a close association with Switzerland even while abroad owing to their family situation can also apply for simplified naturalisation under the new law.



Photo Keystone

As before, foreign spouses can also apply for simplified naturalisation while residing abroad. Former Swiss citizens who have lost their citizenship for various reasons can be renaturalised in certain cases. Answers to the key questions about changes to the Swiss Citizenship Act and about applying for simplified naturalisation are summarised below.

## I am married to a Swiss citizen and we live abroad. Can I apply for simplified naturalisation?

As the spouse of a Swiss citizen, you can apply for simplified naturalisation if you have lived in an actual, stable conjugal relationship for six years and have a close association with Switzerland. The Swiss spouse must have held Swiss citizenship when the wedding took place or have subsequently obtained it through renaturalisation or simplified naturalisation on account of having a Swiss parent.

## What are the criteria for having a close association with Switzerland?

The following conditions must be met to have a close association with Switzerland:

- You have visited Switzerland at least three times within the past six years, spending at least five days there on each occasion;
- You can conduct an everyday oral conversation in one of the national languages;
- You have basic knowledge of Switzerland (its geography, history, politics and society);
- You maintain contacts with Swiss citizens;
- You can name reference persons residing in Switzerland who can confirm your visits and contacts.

## What other conditions do I have to meet?

Simplified naturalisation is subject to the condition that you uphold public order and safety and do not jeopardise the internal and external security of Switzerland, that you respect the values of the Federal Constitution, that you are engaging in economic activity or currently undertaking training or education and that you promote and support the integration of your family members.

## I am under the age of 25 and a Swiss national born abroad. I am not yet registered with the Swiss embassy. Could I lose my Swiss citizenship?

Yes. Children born abroad to a Swiss mother and/or a Swiss father, who also hold another nationality automatically forfeit their entitlement to Swiss citizenship upon reaching the age of 25 if they were not registered with the Swiss authorities either abroad (embassy or consulate) or in Switzerland (civil registry office), did not register themselves or have not expressed a willingness to retain their Swiss citizenship in writing by that time. Anyone who reached their 22nd birthday by 31 December 2017 and had not yet been registered with a Swiss authority forfeited their Swiss citizenship at the age of 22 under the provisions of the previous law.

## HELPLINE FDFA

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 E-Mail: [helpline@eda.admin.ch](mailto:helpline@eda.admin.ch)  
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## Travel advice

[www.eda.admin.ch/reisehinweise](http://www.eda.admin.ch/reisehinweise)  
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[www.twitter.com/travel\\_edadfae](https://www.twitter.com/travel_edadfae)

## itineris

Online registration for Swiss citizens travelling abroad  
[www.fdfa.admin.ch/itineris](http://www.fdfa.admin.ch/itineris)



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### I have lost my Swiss citizenship. Can I apply to be renaturalised?

Yes. Anyone who has lost their Swiss citizenship can apply for renaturalisation within ten years of losing it. Close association with Switzerland is required and the other conditions must also be met. Beyond this period, anyone who has lived in Switzerland for three years can apply for renaturalisation.

### My grandmother is/was Swiss. Can I apply for simplified naturalisation?

No. In contrast to the previous law, this is no longer possible. However, there is an exception: a foreign-born child of a non-Swiss father married to the child's mother who possessed Swiss citizenship before or at the time of the birth may apply if the child's mother lost her Swiss citizenship due to her marriage to the child's foreign father rather than through forfeiture.

### How much does simplified naturalisation or renaturalisation cost?

A fee of CHF 600 is charged for decisions on simplified naturalisation or renaturalisation for adults. A fee of CHF 350 is levied for minors who are not included in the naturalisation application of one of their parents. The fees comprise those charged by the State Secretariat for Migration (SEM) and the cantonal authorities. Services provided by the Swiss representation abroad (advice, receipt, interviewing, evaluation, processing of foreign marital status documents and forwarding of the file to the SEM or any further clarification or research) are charged additionally according to the

actual time spent (CHF 75 per half hour). The cost of the involvement of third parties for marital status documents is charged as expenses. The fees are levied by the responsible Swiss representation abroad. They are payable in advance and non-refundable. In other words, they cannot be reimbursed, regardless of the outcome of the procedure. The fees must be paid in the

local currency of the relevant country. Payment in instalments is not possible.

For further information, see the FAQ below:

[www.sem.admin.ch](http://www.sem.admin.ch) > [Einreise & Aufenthalt](#) > [Schweizer Bürgerrecht / Einbürgerung](#) > [Rechtliche Grundlagen](#) > [Fragen zum neuen Recht](#)

## Federal referendums

Voting proposals are determined by the Federal Council at least four months before the voting date. The following proposals will be put to the vote on 10 June 2018:

- Popular initiative of 1 December 2015 'For crisis-safe money: Money creation by the National Bank only! (Sovereign Money Initiative)'
- Federal Act on Gambling of 29 September 2017 (Gambling Act)

Other voting dates in 2018: 23 September, 25 November

All information on the proposals (voting pamphlets, committees, recommendations by Parliament and the Federal Council, electronic voting, etc.) can be found at [www.admin.ch/votes](http://www.admin.ch/votes).

## Popular initiatives

The following federal popular initiative had been launched at the time of going to press (deadline for the collection of signatures in brackets):

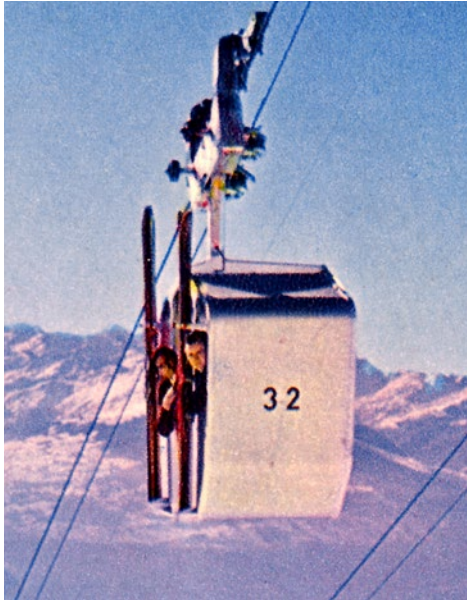
- 'For moderate immigration (limitation initiative)' (16.07.2019)

The list of pending popular initiatives can be found in German at [www.bk.admin.ch](http://www.bk.admin.ch) > [Politische Rechte](#) > [Volksinitiativen](#) > [Hängige Volksinitiativen](#).

Responsible for the FDFA official communications:  
Simone Flubacher, Relations with the Swiss Abroad  
Effingerstrasse 27, 3003 Berne, Switzerland  
Tel. +41 800 24 7 365 or +41 58 465 33 33  
[www.eda.admin.ch](http://www.eda.admin.ch), email: [helpline@eda.admin.ch](mailto:helpline@eda.admin.ch)







A new type of cable car was born in May 1950: Switzerland's first gondola cable car opened in Crans-sur-Sierre.  
Photo: Gentil private archive



The bright red Giovanola gondolas from the 1970s were in operation until April 2017. The Federal Office of Transport did not renew the licence, but there are plans for a replacement system. Photo: Martin Arnold



The "Urdenbahn" in Arosa and Lenzerheide is Switzerland's fastest cable car. The stanchion-free aerial tramway has connected two ski resorts since 2014 without having to open up new slopes. Photo: The Lenzerheide resort





These two "harbingers of good fortune" opened the world's first detachable chairlift on 16 December 1945 in Flims.

Photo: Danuser private archive



A world first built in 2012: a convertible-style cable car at Stanserhorn in Nidwalden. Photo: Photoglob



Small cable cars are a vital lifeline for many families and alpine farms in central Switzerland – one of these is the Bärchibahn near Isenthal which has been in operation since 1979. Photo: Heidi Ebertü



This system represents a remarkable piece of innovation. The world's first aerial cable car on three cables has been travelling up the mountain in Saas Fee since 1991. Photo: Martin Arnold

## The land of a thousand cable cars

Cable cars are an intrinsic part of Swiss cultural heritage. They hold a fascinating appeal, inspire dreams and rekindle memories. They combine incredible feats of engineering and entrepreneurial pursuit of innovation. Three museums are currently holding a joint interactive exhibition dedicated to cable cars. Under the slogan 'Cable Car – Happiness', various aspects of this remarkable mode of transport are explored.

'Luft Seil Bahn Glück': Gelbes Haus Flims, Nidwaldner Museum Stans and Heimatschutzzentrum Zurich. Until 28 October 2018.  
[www.luftseilbahngluck.ch](http://www.luftseilbahngluck.ch)



## The will of the people



CHARLES LEWINSKY:  
"DER WILLE DES VOLKES".  
Nagel & Kimche, 2017.  
384 pages, CHF 27.90,  
EUR 24.

Kurt Weilemann is a retired old-school journalist for whom professionalism meant in-depth research and a correct use of language. The times have changed and he is now surplus to requirements. One day, Derendinger, a former colleague, asks to meet him. Derendinger seems so confused that Weilemann suspects he might be ill. But when Derendinger is found dead a few hours later, Weilemann quickly realises that it couldn't possibly have been suicide, as is officially claimed. His curiosity is aroused and he is egged on by Eliza, a young friend of the deceased. When he starts researching the case, he stumbles across a potentially explosive

fact. Confronted by the omnipotent apparatus of state power that simply wants to cover up the truth at all costs, Weilemann eventually begins to fear for his own life.

Charles Lewinsky's novel belongs to both the science fiction and crime genres. The action is set in Zurich and in the world of Swiss politics. The country is governed by the populist fictitious Federal Democratic Party, whose seriously ill leader, Stefan Wille, is kept alive by machines in hospital. Nevertheless, Wille's ideology continues to influence the activities at party headquarters, which pulls all the strings. Surveillance cameras and electronic devices keep tabs on everyone, wherever they may be. Public opinion is shaped in a subtle and sophisticated way through political advertising and the media. The resultant popular sentiment provides the party and the state apparatus with a licence to use any means to maintain law and order.

Through the irascible, stubborn, though highly astute Weilemann, the accomplished author has created a character that you simply cannot help but like. The story does not always maintain the suspense of a crime novel. But it is told in a clever, humorous and critical way. The futuristic world of a totalitarian Switzerland envisaged by the author is unnerving and will hopefully never materialise.

Charles Lewinsky, born in 1946, studied German and drama. He worked as a director and editor before making a name for himself as a freelance writer from 1980 onwards. He has written many TV shows, including Swiss television's most successful sitcom series, "Fascht e Familie". He has also produced radio plays, song lyrics, screenplays and theatre plays. His novels have been translated into many languages. Lewinsky spends the winter in Zurich and his summers in Vereux, France.

RUTH VON GUNTEN

## The easy-going alpine revolutionary



TRAUFFER:  
"SCHNUPF, SCHNAPS +  
EDELWYSS".  
Ariola/Sony, 2018

It starts with cattle being driven up to alpine pastures – cows stomping, occasional mooing and the sound of bells are heard. Then hymnal yodelling starts up, leaving listeners in no doubt about where Trauffer sees paradise – high up in the mountains of picture-postcard Switzerland. A place where sex, drugs and rock'n'roll have never managed to oust "Schnupf, Schnaps + Edelwys" (snuff, schnapps and edelweiss), which is the title of the new album by the successful Bernese musician.

His fans will forgive the 39-year-old for dismissing rock as "yesterday's snow" in his title track and frequently resorting to its clichés in over half of his new songs. In "Dä mit de Chüe" he combines electric guitar with accordion to create a jangling stomping groove just as the Austrian alpine rocker Hubert von Goisern did with aplomb in the late 1980s. But Trauffer does not stop there. A Blues Brothers horn section, an alphorn and a dulcimer also feature on the same track. And, unsurprisingly, yodelling is continually heard on the singer's sixth album.

Marc Trauffer – the full name of the Brienz-born performer – can certainly not be accused of wasting his life. He had some big hits with his previous band Airbäg and has been setting records as a solo artist at least since "Alpentainer". That album spent a total of three years in the Swiss Top 50 from 2014 and the follow-up "Heiterefahne", released in 2016, topped the chart for seven weeks. It is only hit singles that have eluded Trauffer so far, and even his latest one "Geissepeter" only made it to number eight last December.

As well as catchy barn-dance rock, "Schnupf, Schnaps + Edelwys" also includes a few ballads and some ski-hut reggae. There is no real edginess though, including lyrically. Trauffer does not want to detract from his broad appeal in any part of the country, which is why he diplomatically enjoys his sausage with or without mustard in "Bier & Cervalat". More impressive is the limerick song "Obsi oder Nizi" in which he cracks jokes like comedian Peach Weber all the way through. One thing is for sure, Trauffer's star is still rising.

STEFAN STRITTMATTER



# Stress



Stress, who is 41 years old, is to Swiss rap what Stephan Eicher is to Swiss rock music – he’s just as well-known and identifiable. His seventh album is being released this year. The youthful Stress, who was born on the shores of the Baltic Sea, draws inspiration for the energy of hip hop from rock and not black groove. “I am rock-oriented. I grew up on housing estates in Estonia. There wasn’t much crime because the State were the criminals. We had to queue for toilet paper and bread, and – as there was no alcohol – people drank cologne. What about Lausanne? “It was a safe haven for me,” revealed the rapper in a report on the “La Première” programme broadcast in November 2017.

Stress talks about Switzerland and money with great eloquence and cheeky humour. He was criticised after he made an advert for Coca-Cola. He defended his decision by poking fun at a country that does not like stars. “You’ve sold lots of records? That’s an issue! You worked for Coca-Cola? That’s terrible! When I was 15 years old, drinking a Coca-Cola was the best thing ever,” he explained.

Stress, who has moved to Zurich, is a strong advocate of a multicultural Switzerland. He has voiced this sentiment by aiming some hostile words at the Swiss People’s Party over the years. “There are lots of people with populist opinions in German-speaking Switzerland,” he bemoaned, rebuking fellow rappers. “Some of them do the ‘juutz’. You can’t do the natural yodel mate! We’re from the urban music scene which is culturally diverse.” A businessman with a social conscience? This could be the oxymoron that best sums up this restless soul.

STÉPHANE HERZOG

## Victims of compulsory social measures to receive 25,000 Swiss francs

The first victims of compulsory social measures will receive their solidarity contribution this year. All applicants will receive a payout of 25,000 Swiss francs. This is the maximum amount that was earmarked. Compulsory social measures were arranged in Switzerland until 1981. Tens of thousands of children and young people were hired out to farms or placed in homes, and many were mistreated or abused. People underwent forced sterilisation, were used in drugs trials or were locked up without a court ruling because their lifestyles did not meet the expectations of the authorities. In autumn 2016, Parliament approved a total of 300 million Swiss francs for solidarity contributions. This meant the amount paid out would be dependent upon the number of applications. As there were fewer than 12,000 applications, all victims whose applications have been approved will now receive the maximum amount.

## Belair Airlines saved from insolvency

The German investment company SBC has rescued the Swiss firm Belair Airlines after Air Berlin went into liquidation. Belair halted flights at the end of October 2017, and liquidation proceedings were initiated. Belair was part of the insolvent Air Berlin. The 200 Belair staff were made redundant as part of the planned liquidation. They are now being asked whether they are interested in returning to their old jobs. Flights are to resume as soon as possible.

## Wild cats return to Geneva

Wild cats have returned to the canton of Geneva for the first time since their eradication over 100 years ago. Evidence of a dozen wild cats has been produced using photo traps. The Department for the Environment in Geneva says that this species is a distant relative of the domestic cat and is on the list of protected animals in Switzerland. The last confirmed sighting of wild cats in the canton of Geneva was back in 1887.

## Age-old gap in the motorway system bridged

Switzerland and Austria are to be linked by motorway for the first time ever. Ever since the motorway in the most north-easterly corner of Switzerland was opened 54 years ago, there has been debate over a direct link to the highway on the Austrian side of the border. Cross-border traffic has been running along ordinary roads and through villages for decades. Work on the link between St. Margrethen on the Swiss side and Dornbirn in Austria is set to begin in 2021 at the earliest, and the opening is scheduled for 2026.



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Zermatt, Valais. © Silvano Zeiter

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