

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE SWISS ABROAD

**S W I S S**

**REVIEW**

OCTOBER 2012 / NO.5



**Religious life in turmoil  
in Switzerland**

**Simone Niggli-Luder  
keeps on winning**

**The tax agreements and  
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## Feeling claustrophobic

**A**T SOME POINT IN AUGUST, Switzerland exceeded the “magical” number of eight million inhabitants. This was acknowledged by the media but there were no celebrations to mark the occasion. Instead, a sense of panic could be felt in the country. We experience an ever more densely populated Switzerland every day in the vast swathes of commuters in overcrowded trains, growing traffic congestion and urban sprawl in the countryside. This sense of claustrophobia is actually nothing new. A century ago, when Switzerland’s population had not even reached four million, fears that the people in our small country would soon take over all our natural surroundings led to the foundation of the national park in the Engadin. The aim was to create a free zone for nature.

The news of Switzerland’s population reaching eight million resulted in extensive analyses by the media and politicians concerning its significance and which approaches should now be adopted. The proposed solutions range from the termination of the freedom of movement of persons with the EU to calls for the construction of more high-rise buildings. The analyses underlined the point that life in Switzerland is good, very good



even. This explains why so many people wish to live here. The statistics suggest that the eight-millionth resident is highly likely to be a well-educated German, a doctor or an engineer – in other words, an employee who is contributing to Switzerland’s prosperity and development. The statistics also reveal, for example, that already over half the professors at Swiss universities come from abroad. These realities cannot be changed with a defensive attitude or sectoral approach without this having far-reaching consequences. We need to adapt to these realities even if the developments cause many people concern – the same may also be said of our expectations and consumption levels.

Unlike the country itself, churches in Switzerland are experiencing a huge exodus, with membership on the decline. One in five Swiss today indicates that he or she has no religious affiliation, yet churches are an issue that is covered extensively in public debate – this is what the results of a national research project on church and religion in Switzerland reveal. This issue is covered from page 8 as this edition’s key focus topic.

Finally, I would like to draw your attention to the series of articles on literature that begins in this edition. These will feature books and literary figures among the Swiss abroad, authors who spend or have spent all or part of their lives living outside Switzerland and naturally reflect this in their work. Charles Linsmayer, a literary scholar and journalist living in Zurich, will present famous and lesser-known faces from the Swiss literary scene in every future edition. The series begins on page 23 with a portrait of Guy de Pourtalès.

BARBARA ENGEL

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**Cover photo:** This photograph of the church at Saas im Prättigau, shrouded in mist, can be seen as a symbol of attitudes towards religion and churches in Switzerland, suggesting distance and estrangement, but also fear and mistrust.

**Photo:** Keystone / Arno Balzarini

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### Not such clear positions

The editorial in the June 2012 edition of "Swiss Review" looked at the debate on Switzerland's position in Europe, but definitely did NOT do this in an unbiased way – the editor clearly took a partisan approach. "Special case charade" to describe those she does not agree with is just one example.

It is good that "Swiss Review" should provoke thought, but not that it should take such clear positions on issues where parties and people differ.

ALEXANDER WYLIE,  
CAMBRIDGE, UK

### Congratulations

I really enjoyed your article on "a solar-powered voyage around the world" as I am sure many other readers did, too. I found it fascinating reading from beginning to end. The man behind the project deserves high praise indeed. I wish to express my gratitude to you for sharing the achievements of the ingenious Raphaël Domjan and his team with us. Long may we continue to enjoy such a well-produced "Swiss Review" (print edition).

MONIQUE THOMAS,  
LE CANNET, FRANCE

### Shocking attitude

The Swiss People's Party (SVP) is campaigning for a later start to school life and against day schools to protect its traditional family model with the mother over the stove. I left Switzerland at the age of 12 in the mid-1960s when this attitude was prevalent. I find it shocking that a large proportion of the population still thinks this way half a century later. This is no better than the Tea Party, which is quite simply abysmal.

HERMANN MEIERHANS,  
HEIDELBERG, GERMANY

### Procurement of combat jets

I am retired and live in Thailand but regularly keep up to date with Swiss news thanks to "Swiss Review" and "RTS.ch". I find the attitude of Federal Councillor Ueli Maurer absolutely shocking. I do not know whether he is lacking in ability, closed-minded or whatever else, but his actions, failure to act and little secrets are starting to become very annoying. A highly critical report was published about the Gripen jets and experts warned against purchasing them but Mr Maurer was insistent and signed the agreement with Sweden. They are purchasing aeroplanes that are

already out-of-date compared to the models of other manufacturers. This is a farce and makes Switzerland a laughing stock in the eyes of the world. I am glad that my taxes have not been used on this outrageous project.

G. PH. STRIBERNI, LOPBURI,  
THAILAND

### Electronic voting for the Swiss abroad

I took the first opportunity to vote electronically and welcome this initiative wholeheartedly. The voting documents only used to reach us just before the referendum date by post, which prevented us from voting on several occasions.

My entire family is delighted by this new option.

FRITZ BURRI, BAHIAS DE  
HUATULCO, MEXICO

### An excellent initiative

The e-voting system that enables me to take part in federal referenda as a Swiss citizen living abroad and which I will continue to take advantage of in future is an excellent initiative. I would like to say a big thank-you to the Swiss authorities who enable us to participate in direct democracy.

HANS PETER AUER,  
YEKATERINBURG, RUSSIA

### Referenda from abroad

Many of my Swiss friends and I in Brazil/Natal would jump at the opportunity to vote via the Internet. We have been waiting for this opportunity for some time. We could easily obtain campaign information and political parties have a homepage.

RENÉ GUSSET, PIUM, BRAZIL

### The Swiss passport is becoming unappealing

I must express my annoyance about the procedure for applying for a new Swiss passport as a Swiss citizen abroad. I believe many Swiss abroad will share my sentiments. A new passport (due to photograph, fingerprint and signature requirements) can only be applied for in person at the consulate responsible. I live in Dortmund and would have to take a day's holiday and drive 600 km by car to make the application. I could hardly take my four-month-old daughter on such a trip. I would therefore have to organise an overnight stay in Frankfurt to make passport applications for the two of us. That means a total of two days of holiday plus hotel costs. In the case of my 90-year-old grandmother, who also lives in Germany, travel-

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ling to Frankfurt is out of the question for health reasons and she cannot therefore renew her passport.

I appreciate the stringent security requirements for the new passport but fail to understand why we cannot cooperate with the German authorities, who could record the biometric photographs and fingerprints and send them digitally to the Swiss authorities. The technical capabilities available today are incredible.

On account of such an inconvenient procedure, dual citizenship is becoming an increasingly attractive option for Swiss people living in Germany. This would nevertheless result in us holding a valid German passport and an expired Swiss one.

DR DIRK ECKERT, DORTMUND,  
GERMANY

#### Marcel Cellier, magic words

Many thanks for the article on Marcel Cellier. When people ask me "Why Romania?", where I have lived for six months of the year since 1990, I explain that a French-speaking Swiss used to play fantastic Romanian music every Saturday on Radio Lausanne around 1960. I've bought countless recordings ever since and I've been visiting Romania since 1982. In 1990, I decided to live in this magical country with its captivating music. I would like to express my thanks to the man (and his wife) who inspired my decision to live in this paradise. And thank you for having celebrated the achievements of this unique couple.

NOEL TAMINI, CICIRLAU,  
ROMANIA

#### Tireless commitment to music

I would like to commend the author of the article "Love stories behind the Iron Curtain"

on the Cellier couple I have known for 40 years. The article told your readers that one of the main reasons for the popularity of folkloric music from eastern and southern Europe in western Europe were the tireless efforts of Marcel Cellier and his wife Catherine. The film "Balkan Melodies", which also received a mention, is well worth watching and may open up new horizons for music lovers. I wish to thank you and the author for this hugely enjoyable article. "Swiss Review" often contains excellent articles and does not shy away from tackling contentious issues and expressing controversial opinions. Hats off to you!

WALTER KNAUS,  
RAMMERSMATT, FRANCE

#### Education

##### according to HarmoS

I was surprised to learn that mandatory education in Switzerland is undergoing reform and is to be standardised at national level. This is not such a bad thing and progress in the administration of the public service of education will enable us to move closer towards unification between Switzerland's various cultural regions.

However, it is regrettable that this reform is part of an economic approach based on the fundamental requirements of capitalism and the pragmatic societal paradigms that are increasingly characterising the industrialised nations. In the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, emancipation and the need to understand the world differently gave Western societies the opportunity to develop new concepts full of hope rather than efficiency.

ALFONSO PERRET, CALI,  
COLOMBIA

"TRY TO GET THROUGH LIFE WITH A MINIMUM of information. You will make better decisions. What you do not need to know remains worthless even if you are aware of it." This sentence appears towards the beginning of the 200-page book "Die Kunst des klugen Handelns" (The Art of Acting Cleverly). As the reader, this makes you wonder whether it is worth reading on. By continuing to read will you only learn things that will prevent you from making good decisions?

The author of "Die Kunst des klugen Handelns" is Rolf Dobelli, a columnist with the "Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung" and the Swiss newspaper "SonntagZeitung". This is his second book featuring newspaper columns. The first was entitled "Die Kunst des klaren Denkens" (The Art of Thinking Clearly). It topped the bestseller list for weeks. Dobelli's specialist field are the "thought traps" we constantly fall into and which

make life difficult for us. His premise is that our brains are not designed for the modern world but instead for life as hunter gatherers. "This results in systematic errors of reasoning that can have a devastating impact on your finances, career and happiness", he writes. He also explains to readers why we systematically overestimate our own knowledge and regard other people as less intelligent than they really are, why things are not necessarily more likely to be true if millions of people believe them to be so and why we stand by theories even when they have been proven wrong. Examples Dobelli gives are voting blindly and the illusion of self-observation. These involve beliefs, positions and viewpoints of which we are deeply convinced. Dobelli explains that when judging those who do not share our convictions, we assume they are ignorant, stupid or ill-intentioned. But this can also be a mistake, which is why it is dangerous to hold firm to one's convictions for too long.

Dobelli does not consider himself to be a philosopher and certainly does not regard himself as more intelligent than others. His strengths are his abilities to research, read, consider and deduce. There are dozens of clever studies and analyses on behavioural economics and psychology. And this is where Dobelli finds

the errors of reasoning that destroy careers and make people unhappy. He has also learned "to act on gut instinct when making less important decisions". He writes that thinking clearly is time-consuming: "If the potential damage is small, don't rack your brain."

What emerges when Dobelli reflects on and discovers errors of reasoning is not just extremely enriching, it also makes for very enjoyable reading. Dobelli shows great

empathy and has a tremendous sense of humour. In the book's foreword, Dobelli quotes Aristotle: "A wise man does not seek happiness but rather aims to avoid unhappiness." Readers will most certainly take a step closer to achieving this goal by reading this book.

BARBARA ENGEL



ROLF DOBELLI: "Die Kunst des klugen Handelns"; Carl Hanser Verlag, Munich 2012; 248 pages with illustrations by El Bocho and Simon Stehle. CHF 21.90, EUR 14.90.

An English translation will be published in the UK and the USA in spring 2013. "The Art of Thinking Clearly: Better Thinking, Better Decisions" by Rolf Dobelli has already been translated into 20 languages.





The Battle of Morgarten (1315) was the first military encounter between the Swiss and the Habsburgs. Depiction from Christoph Silbereysen's pictorial chronicles of 1576



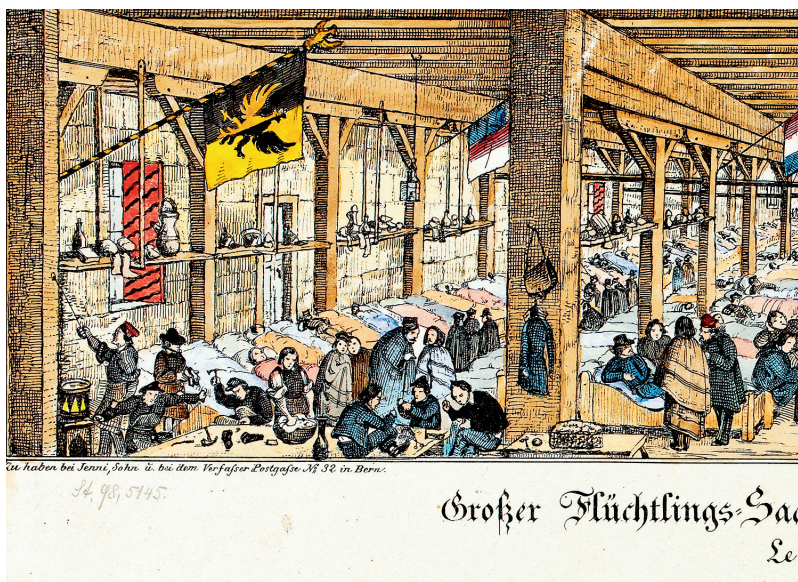
The oath of confederation sworn by 13 Swiss cantonal delegates with Saint Nicholas of Flüe pictured front left. Humbert Mareschet's painting from 1586 hangs in Berne's city hall



The first Federal Council in 1848. Swiss President Jonas Furrer in the centre, with Josef Munzinger, Henri Druey, Wilhelm Matthias Naeff, Friedrich Frey-Hérosé, Stefano Franscini and Ulrich Ochsenbein (clockwise from top)

## Swiss history in pictures

Two years ago, Thomas Maissen, an expert in modern history, gave Switzerland a book bearing the simple title "Schweizer Geschichte" (Swiss History). His publication was extremely well received by the general public and historians alike. It was regarded as a new standard text. Maissen has now published



The great refugee hall in the Kornhaus in Berne. Picture from 1850



Refugees at the St. Margrethen border fence near St. Gallen in May 1945

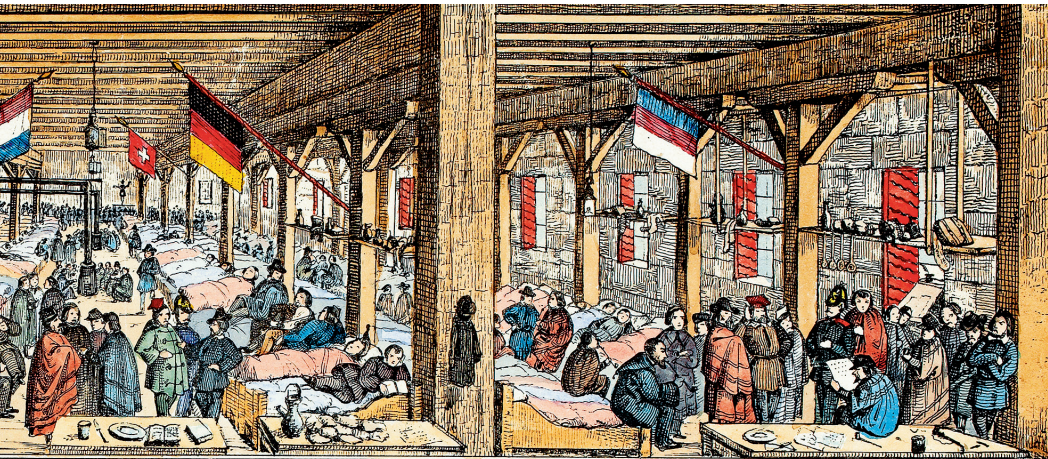


**“Schweizer Geschichte im Bild” (Swiss History in Pictures).**

This pictorial book impressively and dispassionately illustrates the path taken by the fractious and often internally divided Swiss people as they developed to become a modern society in an effective state. Myths surrounding the Rütli oath, Tell’s apple shot

and the Battle of Marignano, for example, are also set straight. This book is an informative and enjoyable read.

“Schweizer Geschichte im Bild”; HIER+JETZT Basel; 292 pages, 425 images; ISBN 978-3-03919-244-1; CHF 78, EUR 60; [www.hierundjetzt.ch](http://www.hierundjetzt.ch)



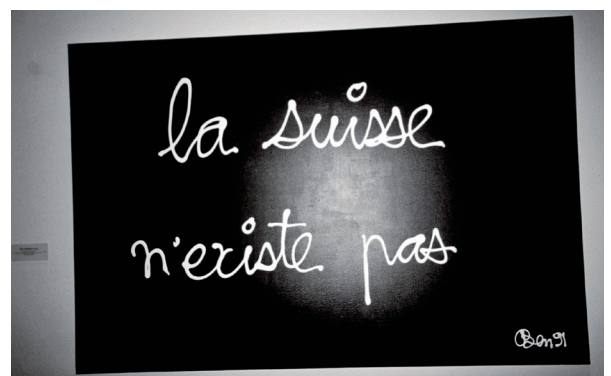
Salon des réfugiés im Kornhaus in Bern, Januar 1850.  
Salon des réfugiés



“Isolated Switzerland” – a caricature published in “Nebelspalter” in October 1945



February 1986: The committee opposing Switzerland’s accession to the UN with Otto Fischer, Hubert Raymond and Christoph Blocher. UN accession was rejected by 76 % of the electorate at the time



Artist Ben Vautier’s contribution to the 1992 World Expo in Seville. Was it an acknowledgement of Swiss diversity or a renunciation of the fatherland? It provoked great outrage anyway



## Moving away from the churches

**The Swiss people's relationship with religion is undergoing significant change. There are twenty times more Swiss with no religious affiliation today than forty years ago. Faith also plays a less significant part in the everyday lives of most churchgoers. Yet, religion is an issue that receives widespread coverage in the media. However, the focus there is more on differentiation from Islam than on Switzerland's own tradition.**  
By Matthias Herren

In terms of church membership, the situation in Switzerland 40 years ago was similar to that in the Vatican State. Just 1.1% had no religious affiliation in 1970. Today, the figure stands at 20.1%, a fifth of the population. Both national churches are experiencing a major exodus. The Catholics have fared better thanks to immigration from southern Europe. Their numbers have fallen by 10% since 1970. Today, 38.8% of the Swiss population are Catholic, while the number of Reformed Protestants is down by 15% to 30.9%.

Over the past five years, the "Religions, the State and Society" National Research Programme (NRP 58) has analysed the reasons for this fundamental change in the religiosity of individuals and in the religious landscape through a wide range of projects. The evaluation of the results of NRP 58 confirms the continual decline in the importance of religion among the vast majority of the population for decades. A distanced position is increasingly commonplace (see box). The services provided by the churches are being used less and less. Even a large number of religious people do not believe that faith should be practised in an extreme fashion or propagated with missionary zeal. People also believe that religion belongs in the private domain. As their importance has declined, churches find themselves in a period of upheaval. This development is being intensified by immigration. Alongside the traditional faiths, foreign religions are suddenly gaining in importance, especially Islam, which has increased its share from 0.26% in 1970 to 4.5% today.

### Religion as a means of differentiation

While the importance of religion has declined among the Swiss people in terms of providing individual guidance on values, media coverage of religion has increased in recent years primarily in the wake of global

political developments. Issues such as the ban on minarets and burkas have been the subject of intense debate in the media. But Christianity has also received attention. Politicians have strongly campaigned for the display of crucifixes to be allowed in public buildings, and the weakness of Christianity is lamented in light of the strength of Islam. NRP 58 points out: "Religious issues receive excessive media coverage, while religion is becoming less important in people's lives." Religion is frequently used in the media, but also in the schoolyard and in politics, to differentiate between "local" and "foreign" groups and often in references to violent behaviour. Islam, for example, is often associated with the repression of women. According to the report, this has more to do with the "origin and situation of the immigrants or with stereotypical perceptions" than with the religion. Conversely, mainstream society attributes positive values to Christianity, such as "equality between men and women". Yet, gender equality does not exist everywhere in the Christian world either: women are still excluded from the priesthood in the Catholic Church.

### Diminishing influence of the churches

The major churches often find themselves on the defensive in the current period of upheaval. Some people level at them the criticism that they have been left behind in the shift to the modern age. Others believe the reason for their diminishing significance is that the churches have watered down their traditions and message too much and have adapted excessively to the times. A study carried out by Jörg Stolz, a Lausanne-based sociologist of religion, and his colleague Edmée Ballif shows that the major factor in the development concerns social megatrends rather than the approach adopted by the churches. The megatrends are global processes of social change over which the churches have little influence. They are quite







**Places of worship in Switzerland:**

**Chapel near Vrin in the canton of Grisons**

**Abbey church in Romainmotier, canton of Vaud**

**Synagogue in Baden, canton of Aargau**

**Mahmud mosque in Zurich**

**Buddhist temple in Gretzenbach, canton of Solothurn**



simply part of the prevailing circumstances with which the churches will have to contend in future.

The first megatrend identified by Stolz is the further separation of society from the churches. The presence of religious institutions in schools, hospitals and social organisations as well as their influence over politics and the law, which has lasted for centuries, are continually declining and will dwindle further, according to the sociologist of religion. In contrast, individualisation is on the increase. People's social class, faith or place of residence is no longer defined for the rest of their lives by their family background and gender. Another megatrend that Stolz observes is the declining significance of values such as discipline, loyalty and obedience in the Western world and the growing importance of the search for enjoyment, emotionality and spontaneity. In this environment, the churches will increasingly be faced with stiff secular competition. People are also finding a sense of community in sports clubs or choirs and are able to engage in spiritual activities as part of wellness, popular psychology and esotericism.

### **Churches seeking answers**

The churches are responding in very different ways to these developments. Reactionary groups in the Roman Catholic Church are seeking to resist secularisation by ensuring their church keeps strictly to the Roman line. They are opposed to typically Swiss traits of the Catholic Church, such as democratic co-determination, ecumenical collaboration and the appointment of lay theologians. Instead, they call for the separation of Church and State, the denial of Holy Communion to those who remarry and the re-introduction of Latin mass.

Secularisation has also resulted in a significant decline in numbers among the next generation of priests. The number of Catholic priests has fallen by over 40 % since 1970. To cope with the shortage of priests, parishes are being merged into religious welfare centres where the ordained are responsible for the administration of the sacraments and lay theologians undertake other pastoral duties.

The Reformed Protestant churches are also facing organisational changes. Parishes are being merged due to shrinking congregations. The church council in the canton of Zurich, for example, is aiming to reduce the 179 parishes to a third of this number. Nevertheless, the Reformed Protestant Church

is attempting to ensure its presence in heavily frequented places through new projects. In recent years, churches attracting large congregations have been founded, including some based on ecumenical collaboration, at airports, railway stations and shopping centres.

The Reformed Protestants are also trying to hone their profile in terms of substance. The introduction of a confession of faith is intended to clarify what Reformed Protestantism is all about. Yet, a social study reveals that the Reformed Protestant Church only appeals to a small segment of the population despite its claims to be a popular church. According to the study, out of ten social types it only appeals to the "traditional middle class", the "frugal traditionalists" and the "well-established". The church holds little to no appeal for other social groups, such as the "post-materialists", "consumerist working class", "modern performers" or the "mainstream". The Reformed Protestant Church hopes the study will help engender understanding and sensitivity among its employees and authorities regarding the diversity of lifestyles. The aim is to reach a wider segment of the population and to develop forms of participation for seven to eight social groups.

The free churches are faring much better than the large national churches in the changing religious landscape. However, major differences exist here. While traditional free churches, such as the Methodists and Salvation Army, have lost more members than the national churches in percentage terms, charismatic, missionary fellowships and trendy churches aimed at young people have grown significantly. The membership of the free churches has remained stable overall in the past 20 years. Nonetheless, secularisation is also presenting these churches with major challenges. In the 1980s, when religion had greater importance, the free churches were far more successful in attracting new members than they are today.

The shift in the religious landscape in Switzerland is also having an impact on the relationship between politics and the churches. Despite the fall in membership, both national churches are still extremely well integrated in most cantons. They can raise church taxes and obtain the personal data of their members from the resident



registration office. However, political pressure on the churches is growing. If they take a stance on political issues, they are regularly criticised by right-wing politicians, who call upon the religious communities to concentrate on "proclaiming the gospel and providing pastoral care". While the complete separation of Church and State is only being sought by individual splinter groups, such as the free thinkers and the young socialists, calls for the abolition of church tax for legal entities are becoming ever louder. The Federal Supreme Court has confirmed the legitimacy of church taxes for companies on several occasions. Parliamentary proposals for the abolition of these taxes have also been rejected in the cantons of Zug, Zurich and Fribourg in recent years. Currently, the Young Liberals in Zurich and Grisons are attempting to abolish church tax for companies through popular initiatives in their respective cantons. In Zurich, they are being supported by the

Free Democrat-Liberals (FDP) and the Swiss People's Party (SVP). Both conservative parties believe that church is a matter for the people but not for companies. The churches, however, highlight the social responsibility of companies and argue that they support educational, social and cultural services with taxes raised from companies. They claim that these services also benefit people from outside the church.

### Recognised by society

The results of NRP 58 reveal that the churches still play an important role in society despite the major changes. Even 65 % of people with no religious affiliation believe the churches are important for the socially disadvantaged in particular. A study by the NRP also indicates that the churches invest significantly more than the 500 million Swiss francs a year they receive from the public in projects from which the entire population benefits. The level of acceptance is accord-

ingly high. Non-members of the churches also recognise the benefits they provide and, according to the study, accept the use of state funding for these services.

The importance of the churches has declined significantly in recent decades for both individuals and in society and will continue to do so. They nevertheless remain among the most important non-governmental institutions with an almost 70 % share of the population. This is also acknowledged by the vast majority of Swiss people even in an age of secularisation and pluralisation.

MATTHIAS HERREN is a theologian and freelance journalist. He lives in Stäfa.

## THE FOUR RELIGIOSITY PROFILES

The NRP 58 researchers differentiate between four religiosity profiles. The group who **distance themselves** is the largest among the Swiss population (64 %). Most of them are members of a church. They have certain religious beliefs but religion is of little importance to them generally and they only go to church on special holidays or for impor-

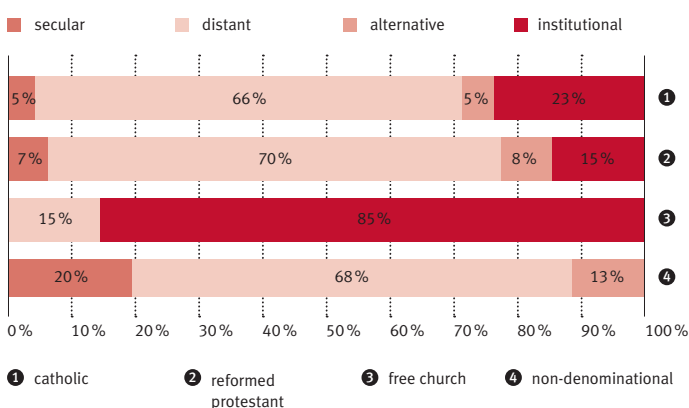
tant occasions (baptisms, weddings, funerals, etc.). Researchers say that this group will continue to grow.

The **institutional** group has declined and today represents 17 % of the population. The institutional group is made up of the active members of the national churches and the majority of free church members. They believe that life only has meaning through God and Jesus Christ and are extremely critical of laicist and atheistic viewpoints.

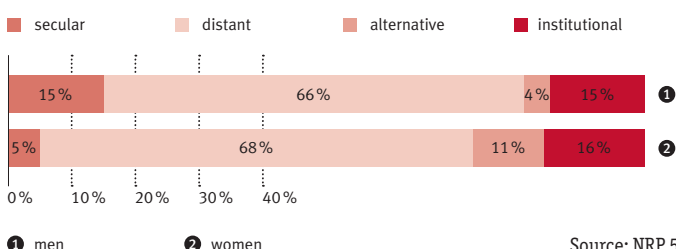
The **alternative** group has remained stable for years with a 9 % share. Esoteric beliefs and practices, such as the belief in cosmic energy, angels and astrology as well as practices like Tai Chi, kinesiology, yoga and meditation, are important to the members of this group.

The **secular** group is of a similar size. The researchers divide the 10 % of people in this group into those who are indifferent and those who are opposed to religion. While the indifferent category does not attach any importance to religion, church, faith or esoteric beliefs, the opponents of religion are consciously and often vehemently opposed to all of these. (he)

Graphic 1: Religiosity profiles according to denomination

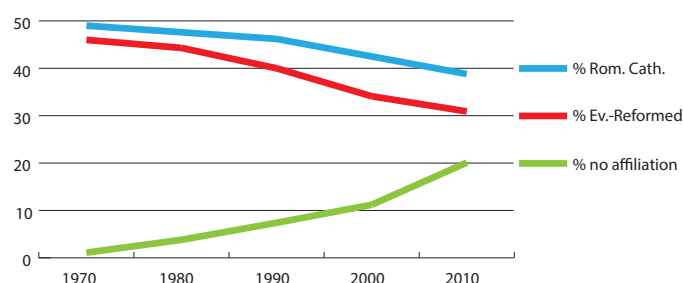


Graphic 2: Religiosity profiles according to gender



Source: NRP 58

Religious affiliation of the Swiss population in percent (source: SFSO)





## “Religion often seems a problematic issue”

Christoph Bochinger, a professor of religious studies, sees no countertrend to secularisation, with the result that the churches have lost their role as leaders on matters relating to values and conscience.

Interview by Matthias Herren



Dr. Christoph Bochinger is Professor of Religious Studies at the University of Bayreuth and President of the Steering Committee of the National Research Programme “Religions, the State and Society”

It is becoming increasingly clear that the churches no longer have a role as leaders on such issues.

*Who is responsible for values then?*

A process of secularisation has also taken place with regard to values. Many of the values in modern democracy have not been defined by the churches. One example is human rights, a value that has its roots in the Enlightenment.

*Despite shrinking congregations, the major churches are well integrated insti-*

*tutionally. They are recognised by the state and can raise church taxes. Is this status still justified?*

These provisions need to be revised. The question is whether these rights can be extended to other religious communities. If this is not possible or desirable, the rights of the major religious communities can also be curtailed. The state must ensure that the issue of religion is addressed fairly. This also means that people with no religious affiliation must be respected as well.

*Religion has received extensive media coverage since the terror attacks of 11 September 2001. Has the influence of religion on politics and society been underestimated?*

Our research has proven through several projects that the theory about the re-emergence of religion is not accurate. Religion often seems a problematic issue in public debate, particularly in relation to Islam. The role of religion is overestimated here. The vast majority of Muslims have no interest in political Islam but simply want to

practise their faith. They are not politically active, nor are they seeking to oust the Church.

*Why do these discussions result in such polarised positions?*

Society is becoming increasingly heterogeneous. The gap between devout believers and the non-religious has widened. This is sparking fierce debate.

*How is the situation set to develop?*

I cannot see any countertrend to secularisation and pluralisation even though there are isolated conservative reactions to these trends.

*This position of distance from religion that has been adopted in Switzerland and Europe is an exception globally. Religion has much greater importance in the USA. Could this outlook cross the Atlantic like trends in other walks of life?*

This is occurring on a small scale in relation to certain free churches or Jewish groups. However, the general situation here is very different to that in the USA. Over there, people have an acute awareness that the Protestant denominations made US democracy possible. Despite the formal separation of Church and State, religion therefore enjoys great status in the USA. The opposite is true in Switzerland. Here, the people and the state have painfully discovered that religion is an extremely complex issue. It has caused conflicts lasting centuries. Experience has shown that it is better if this issue does not become too prominent. In light of this situation, I do not envisage a resurgence of religion.

*“SWISS REVIEW”: The Catholic and Reformed Protestant Churches have steadily been losing members for decades. Have they done a poor job?*

CHRISTOPH BOCHINGER: No, I wouldn't say that. It has much more to do with a general change in the religious landscape and a long-term process of secularisation. The churches cannot alter this trend. Other large organisations are also losing members.

*What are the reasons for this change?*

The churches no longer have sovereignty over the interpretation of the major questions in life. Alternatives can today be found in any railway station bookshop. Religion plays almost no part in everyday life for the vast majority. Belonging to a specific religious community from the cradle to the grave is no longer the norm.

*The churches nevertheless assume the right to act as society's conscience on socio-ethical issues. Is this still justified?*



## The alternative to backyard worship

A "House of Religions" is being built in Berne. Muslims, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews and other religious groups are working together closely on this unique project.

By Reto Wissmann

Hartmut Haas has taken on a major challenge. The Moravian Church minister is in the process of building a "House of Religions" in Berne. The 63-year-old has been working on the project for ten years, and what long remained just an idea is slowly becoming reality. Various religious groups will obtain a place where they can practise their faith in the western quarter of the federal capital. The media has long been portraying the scheme as an interreligious flagship project seeking to contribute to religious harmony. Haas says there is some truth in this but it is primarily about practical benefits: immigrant groups will no longer have to hold their religious services in backyards and garages but will instead be accommodated in a prestigious building.

Muslims from the Balkans, Alevi from Turkey, Hindus from Sri Lanka and Buddhists from all over the world will use the "House of Religions" and set up their own prayer rooms. An additional chapel will be built for members of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church, Protestants, Catholics and the small Moravian Church that has existed in Berne since 1740, and to which Hartmut Haas belongs. Jews, Sikhs and Baha'is will also be involved in joint activities and be members of the support association, but they do not require their own rooms.

The various religious groups are structured very differently. While the Buddhists who will meet at the "House of Religions" come from a variety of countries, the Muslims almost exclusively originate from the Balkans. The Islamic umbrella organisations wanted a mosque for Muslims from Europe, the Middle East and the rest of the world and withdrew from the project because this could not be achieved. "We cannot make cultural differences disappear", says Hartmut Haas. Switzerland may well like to set up an overarching organisation for all Muslims as a point of contact, but the House of Religions Association cannot take on this task, he explains.

The project is being developed on Europaplatz, a nondescript urban space with a



Impression of the building on Europaplatz in Berne that will be home to the House of Religions

grand name. The building site in the west of the city is located close to a main road, railway line and motorway flyover. The groundbreaking ceremony took place in June of this year, and 75 million Swiss francs will be invested in this major development by November 2014. The "House of Religions" itself will cost around 10 million Swiss francs. In addition to the rooms for the religious communities, the complex will also comprise a cafeteria and event rooms available to everyone. It will be surrounded by a commercial development with offices, shops and apartments. As with sports stadia, the supplementary facilities will partly finance the "spiritual" purpose of the complex. The foundation to which the House will belong in future is funded by national churches, lottery money and independent foundations.

"This journey has been hellish at times", reveals Hartmut Haas after ten years of preparatory work. He does not so much mean the discussions with the religious groups, rather the coordination with the commercial umbrella project. He remarks: "We have only succeeded thanks to the support we have received from benefactors from the business community, such as Guido Albisetti, the president of the Europaplatz Foundation, the bauart architectural studio and Halter AG from Zurich." The negotiations with the religious groups also proved challenging but he almost always found a

willingness to compromise here. The mosque, for instance, does not point exactly towards Mecca.

Haas says that the city of Berne and the national churches did not take the association seriously in the beginning. But then they gradually became more involved in the process and learned a great deal from it. The city of Berne has become more aware of the religious dimension to immigration, and inter-religious dialogue now has a proper place in the churches.

However, Hartmut Haas, the director of the "House of Religions – Cultural Dialogue" association does not see everything as rosy. He arrived in Switzerland from Germany 23 years ago and has spent a lot of time working with immigrant groups. "Our project only exists because of the Swiss system of direct democracy", he says. But this is not all positive. Minorities only have their rights acknowledged in Switzerland if they can gain majority support and, for example, come together in projects such as the "House of Religions". Immigrant groups would find it very difficult to act alone, he says, as the ban on the construction of minarets showed.

RETO WISSMANN is an independent journalist living in Biel.



## A star with feet firmly on the ground

**Simone Niggli-Luder runs through unfamiliar forests with a map and compass, always finding the fastest route with tremendous precision. The elite athlete once again proved that she is the world's best orienteering runner at the World Orienteering Championships 2012 held in Lausanne in July.**

**By Marc Lettau**

This is roughly how orienteering works. The runners make their way to the start. They set off one after the other. Once the starting signal is sounded, the runner grabs the map laid out ready and gets going. The map is of a forest with which they are not familiar and where they are not permitted to train beforehand. Relying entirely on their own abilities, the compass and the map, they try to find the control points shown on the map as quickly as possible. The route is not marked out. Sometimes the runners head straight through the forest and sometimes they detour and opt for longer but quicker paths using forest trails. One last control point and then the final spurt for the line. The competition is over, and Simone Niggli-Luder is presented with the gold medal once again.

The 34-year-old from Münsingen keeps winning with a level of consistency that leaves her opponents dumbfounded. She has amassed so many victories that even her own fans only count the world championship titles as they would lose track otherwise. After taking a break to give birth last year, she has picked up where she left off: Simone Niggli-Luder stood on the top of the podium three times at the World Championships in

Lausanne. She was victorious in the sprint and the long distance, and she dominated the relay race together with Judith Wyder and Ines Brodmann. That takes this exceptional athlete's tally of world championship wins to twenty.

### Three times Sportswoman of the Year

Her home town of Münsingen has clearly become accustomed to the success of its high-profile resident and sent out invitations to a celebration in Niggli-Luder's honour before the World Championships had even taken place. The town council assured would-be guests that their sportswoman was "as brilliant as ever" after the birth of her twins. As a back-up, Münsingen would have been able to celebrate the three gold medals that Simone Niggli-Luder had won earlier in the year at the European Championships in Sweden, which was also an exceptional achievement.

Why the world's best female orienteering runner is so adored by the public was obvious right at the start of the reception in Münsingen. The guest of honour did not arrive in a limousine. There were no groomed horses or a carriage all decked out. Simone Niggli-Luder and her husband Matthias

turned up by bicycle with their three-year-old daughter Malin and the twins, Anja and Lars, in the bicycle trailer. The family arrived as though they were going into the village to do some shopping. This elite athlete, who has enjoyed constant success in the natural arena of the forest, goes about her daily business without any airs.

The public applaud her wholeheartedly because she seeks success but does not bask in it. Simone Niggli-Luder is regarded as conscientious, ambitious, unaffected, grounded and never aloof. "There is certainly no indication that she is putting this on", says Marcel Schiess, President of the Swiss Orienteering Federation: "This is just the way she is." She herself says likewise: "Thankfully, I never have to put on an act." You are inclined to believe her.

Simone Niggli-Luder was crowned Swiss Sportswoman of the Year in 2003, 2005 and 2007. She enjoys recognition because her popularity transcends sport. Her degree in biology shapes her current lifestyle. She does not just talk about the inherent and sensitive balance of nature, she is also committed to living in an eco-friendly way. The Niggli-Luders live with their three children in an energy-surplus house, a building constructed in accordance with strict environmental criteria that generates more energy than the family requires. She campaigns on behalf of aid projects in Africa and is also a credible ambassador here. She studied the tortoise beetle in depth as a budding biologist. These beetles love to eat thistles and may therefore one day be used as a natural means of controlling weeds. The fact that she was awarded the prestigious "Prix Nature" sustainability prize in spring as a "Beacon of Hope" comes as little surprise.

### Balancing everything

Niggli-Luder's tremendous successes mean that people almost forget that orienteering is a peripheral sport in Switzerland. Just under 10,000 Swiss actively participate in orienteering. However, the figure is rising due to the "Niggli effect", as



**Crossing the finishing line at the World Championships in Lausanne**





With her husband and children at the reception in Münsingen after the World Championships

many junior orienteering trainers will confirm. The number of young people taking an interest in the sport is increasing, and the newcomers include a noticeably high proportion of girls. This can be explained by the fact that Niggli-Luder inspires so many because she appears to balance her various responsibilities as a sportswoman, role model, mother and conscientious biologist so effortlessly. She puts this into perspective: "Appearances can be deceptive. I have not always been self-confident and sometimes I am still not." Being an elite athlete and a mother alone presents an enormous challenge: "We are sometimes pushed to our limits with three small children. Regular sleep is vital to any top sportsperson." She nevertheless soon found the strength to resume training after the birth of the twins: "Training generates energy rather than drains it

away. It provides an escape from daily routines and an opportunity to switch off." The major challenge still lies in "separating my role as a sportswoman from that as a mother". She attempts to keep the roles apart as far as possible: "By really being there for my children when I am with them and really pursuing my sporting objectives when I pull on my training shoes."

If mothers are very successful in sport they find themselves at odds with their traditional role. They have to justify their sporting ambition. Simone Niggli-Luder: "I know how it feels to have to justify yourself. I am also familiar with the insecurity this causes." She occasionally feels a need to be "seen as the mother of three young children" more often than she is at present "and not just reduced to a top athlete". After all, she is not the only mother who goes to work. She also

aims to stay honest, with regard to her family commitments as well: "I would not be satisfied if I were to restrict myself completely to my role as a mother. Of course I think about what being a good mother means. The notion that mothers ought to be on hand constantly is extremely prevalent in our society although many women will know from experience that they are far more relaxed and well-balanced when they have the opportunity to do things they want to do from time to time. This also benefits the child."

### Tenacious, fast and bright

The public and media applaud her success without worrying about conflicting roles. Inspired by the performances of the "golden girl", the Zurich-based "Tages-Anzeiger" even proclaimed that Switzerland has found a new national sport as orienteering represents the very essence of the Swiss. Whereas Swiss wrestling is a pre-modern show of strength, orienteering runners possess all the attributes that the ideal Swiss person should have: "They are tenacious and move quickly but smartly. They combine tremendous fitness with intelligence, which is manifested in their use of a high-quality Swiss product – maps." This takes a certain kind of person who "makes his or her way forward through the undergrowth of the modern world in a disciplined, ambitious and admirable way".

The overstatement is not unfounded. Niggli-Luder has enjoyed a glittering career, but the sport itself is sometimes seen as rather lacklustre and lacking in glamour. Other sportspeople poke fun at orienteering runners, portraying them as rather austere, intellectual forest runners tending towards asceticism and as somewhat eccentric athletes in a rather isolated sociotope.

### Experiencing all states of mind

This question needs to be put to her. Simone Niggli-Luder, are you the figurehead of an intellectual sport that is devoid of emotion and rather boring? Niggli-Luder responds: "You couldn't be more wrong. You won't achieve anything in orienteering without emotion." All of the senses are needed in the forest: "I experience all possible states of mind during a run – it is like an emotional rollercoaster. If you make mistakes, you have to make up lost ground. At the same time, you have to maintain high levels of concentration, shut out any disruptive influences



and control your own thought processes.” She touches on the very essence of the sport here, which is what inspires her: “What is unique about orienteering is that both physical and mental challenges have to be overcome – running at high speed while at the same time finding your way through unfamiliar territory. The fact that decisions constantly have to be made while running is what makes it so special. It is never dull.”

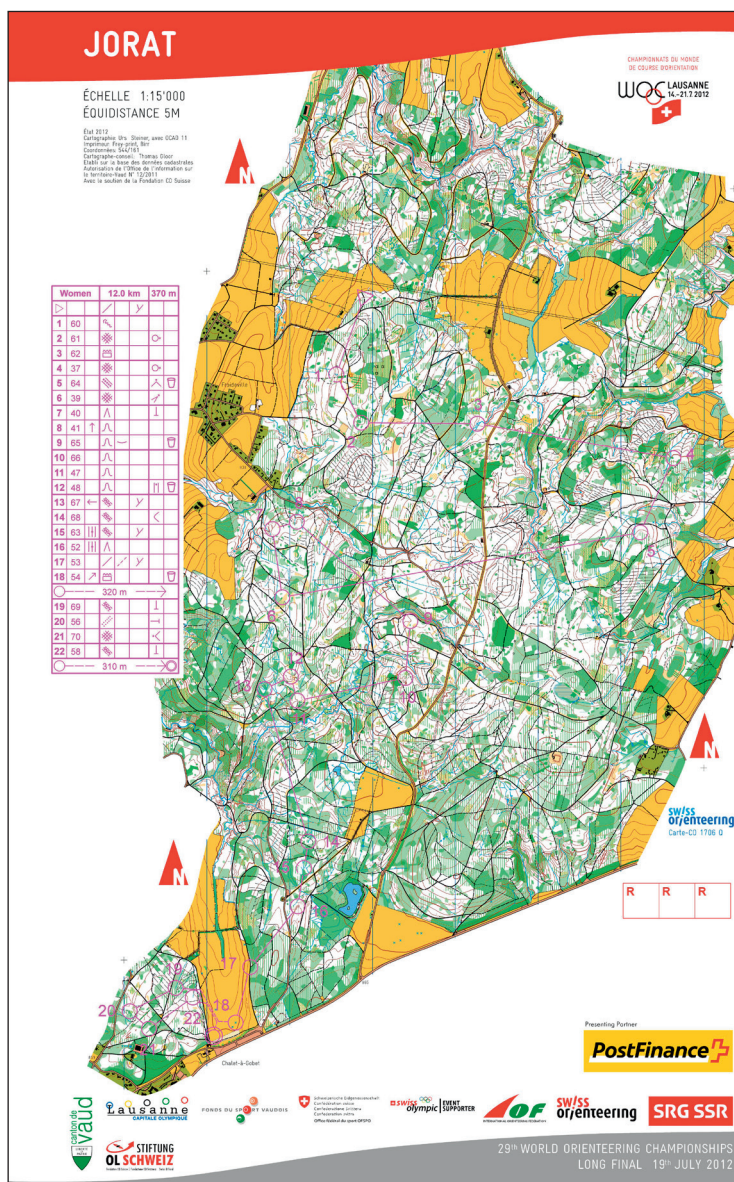
Even she has not succeeded in completely changing the sport’s image. She concedes that the scene sometimes makes it difficult for newcomers to settle in. The University of Lucerne in fact analysed the “orienteering sociotope” this year and revealed that the image of a rather elitist society in the forest is not all that wide of the mark. 64 % of orienteering runners hold a university degree or another higher education qualification, 50 % are homeowners and an above-average 30 % use public transport. According to the study, the main motivating factors for participation are enjoyment of the wonders of nature, contact with other runners and the fact that you are alone and self-reliant in the forest during the race.

### Applause for fifth place

Getting back to the sport and our outstanding athlete, those of us who are not so talented, have no sense of direction and are GPS-dependent would like to know whether the world champion has a secret recipe for success. Does she find her way through the unknown thanks to incredible intuition? Niggli-Luder remarks: “There are times when you know instinctively where the controls are but experience and practice are the key factors. I personally prefer to rely completely on the orienteering map.” Feelings come into play in competition in the last few metres before the control. She starts to tingle with nerves. “I need the exact map. Intuition is not really my thing”, she says. In everyday life, her powers of perception are limited to knowing where north and south are but “nothing more”.

The majority of people who are not extraordinarily talented take comfort in the

**A map from the World Championships in Lausanne**



fact, just as she herself does, that Simone Niggli-Luder often wins but not always. She only won three of a possible four gold medals at the World Championships in 2012. She performed poorly in one discipline, the technically challenging middle distance race. She fought her way back into the race after falling behind into a position from which she could not catch up and finished in fifth place. But she received no less applause than usual. It seems as though the odd lapse is required to sustain the constant success of sheer per-

fection. She was even thanked for the slip-up at the reception in Münsingen as it provided a valuable lesson. It showed that even she cannot take winning gold medals for granted. The manner in which she fought her way back into the race was admirable. It also underlined that she is not so far removed from those of us who regularly slip up, as making mistakes is human.

Niggli-Luder was herself surprised by the reaction. She received great encouragement and recognition in the midst of defeat: “Defeat highlights that victories have to be earned. It makes the actual achievement more visible.” It is difficult to find fault with Simone Niggli-Luder – even in defeat she does everything absolutely perfectly.

### SCANDINAVIAN ROOTS

Orienteering was translated into a running sport at the start of the 20th century in Scandinavia. It remains more popular there than anywhere

else, though top runners from Switzerland have been among the best at world championships for years. Over the last ten years, some 250,000 school pupils have been

taught how to find their way around using a map and a compass as part of the orienteering project “Scool”.





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## Withholding tax hanging in the balance – in Switzerland and Germany

Interim solution, permanent solution or no solution at all? The tax agreements with Germany, the UK and Austria face a democratic test.

By René Lenzin

International pressure on Switzerland to abolish its banking confidentiality and to provide foreign governments with information on suspected tax evaders has increased enormously since the start of the economic and financial crises. Switzerland's response to this pressure is a withholding tax. A tax at source on the return on assets is intended both to resolve legacy issues and to regulate the future taxation of foreign assets deposited in Switzerland. Switzerland has reached agreements with Germany, the UK and Austria (see the article on page 18).

However, whether the agreements will enter into force on 1 January 2013 as planned is uncertain. Opposition to them is emerging on two fronts in Switzerland. The Campaign for an Independent and Neutral Switzerland (Auns) has called for a referendum because it believes the agreements go too far, that they would undermine banking confidentiality and weaken the financial centre. Auns argues that it is unacceptable for Swiss banks to collect taxes for foreign states.

The Young Socialists have called for a referendum because they believe the agreements do not go far enough. They fear that illicit untaxed assets will continue to be deposited with Swiss banks and advocate the automatic exchange of data between banks and foreign tax authorities as an alternative.

In Parliament, the Christian Democrats (CVP), Free Democrat-Liberals (FDP), Green Liberals (GLP) and Conservative Democrats (BDP) strongly backed the agreements. The Social Democrats (SP) and Greens were divided, and the Swiss People's Party (SVP) voted no. The SP and SVP did not support the referendum but still decided to back the no campaign. The banks are firmly in favour of the agreements. However, there are some figures within the financial centre who are primarily keen to resolve the legacy issues through the withholding tax and who would accept the automatic exchange of information after that. The exchange of information would provide tax authorities with the identity of persons holding accounts in Switzerland, but they would

have to examine, in every individual case, whether there are untaxed assets in these accounts.

### German opposition says no

At the time of going to press, it was still unclear whether enough signatures had been collected for a referendum. But even if a referendum should take place or if this were to result in the approval of the agreements, the treaty with Germany at least would still not be secure. The German government has a majority to ratify this in the Bundestag, the lower chamber of the German parliament. However, it does not have a majority in the Bundesrat, the upper chamber. As the Social Democrats in opposition regard the agreement as insufficient to combat tax evasion effectively, they plan to reject it. The Bundestag will vote at the beginning of December. The mood is becoming increasingly heated in the build-up to these votes, both between government and opposition in Germany and between the two countries. This has also been influenced by the fact that German federal states governed by Social Democrats have purchased CDs containing stolen Swiss banking data on several occasions. This is illegal under Swiss law but was deemed permissible by German courts because combating tax evasion takes precedence over illegal data acquisition.

### LAW ON EPIZOOTIC DISEASES

The Swiss people will also vote on the revised law on epizootic diseases on 25 November 2012. The Federal Council and Parliament are aiming to improve the prevention, early recognition and combating of epidemics among animals, such as bluetongue disease, through this bill. It governs cooperation between federal government and the cantons and gives federal government a stronger role in the coordination of joint measures. The law was largely unchallenged in Parliament. Groups opposed to vaccination have nevertheless successfully called for a referendum. RL

## Referendum results

A federal referendum was held on three proposals on 23 September 2012. There were no shocks among the results. The taxation of home ownership will remain an issue.

A smoking ban has been in force in Switzerland since 1 May 2010, with the cantons entitled to grant exemptions for catering establishments. Two thirds of the electorate and all the cantons, except for Geneva, voted to uphold this federalist solution. They rejected a popular initiative by the Lungenliga (Lung League) calling for a strict smoking ban for the whole of Switzerland. Eight cantons have already introduced these strict regulations, while the remaining 18 can now maintain their less stringent provisions. These allow served smoking areas or smoking lounges in restaurants.

However, the "secure housing in old age" popular initiative, which aimed to exempt pensioners from paying tax on the imputed rental value of their owner-occupied properties, was only narrowly defeated. 52.6 % of the electorate and 16 cantons rejected the initiative. It was approved by ten cantons, primarily in central and eastern Switzerland. This was the third referendum this year called by homeowner groups. The two initiatives for tax breaks on home purchase savings were much more heavily defeated than the proposal to abolish the imputed rental value tax for pensioners. The tight outcome this time indicates that the imputed rental value tax is a source of annoyance to many citizens. Several attempts to abolish it have nevertheless failed in Parliament over recent years. There is consensus regarding the fact that, in return, homeowners would no longer be able to deduct debt interest from their taxes, but the level of maintenance costs that they ought to be allowed to enter in the tax declaration is a contentious issue.

Finally, 72.7 % of the electorate and all the cantons approved a constitutional article on promoting musical education for young people. Federal government must now ensure that every canton devotes sufficient time to the teaching of music and that all children have access to extracurricular musical tuition irrespective of parental income.

The turnout stood at 42.5 %.

RENÉ LENZIN is an editor at "Swiss Review"



## How the new withholding tax agreements will affect the Swiss abroad

Parliament approved Switzerland's withholding tax agreements with Germany, the UK and Austria in June 2012. It was still unclear at the time of going to press whether a referendum would be called against them.

By Barbara Engel

The parliaments of Austria and the UK have already endorsed the agreements. The three agreements will enter into force on 1 January 2013 subject to a possible referendum in Switzerland and, in Germany's case, approval by the upper and lower chambers of the German parliament.

The three withholding tax agreements will govern the taxation of persons who are liable to pay tax in Germany, the UK and Austria and who have a bank or securities deposit account in Switzerland. This therefore also affects Swiss abroad living in one of these three countries who are liable to pay tax there.

### Retroactive settlement of tax arrears

Bank clients from Germany, Austria and the UK (excluding the British Crown Dependencies and Overseas Territories) will be able to pay tax retroactively on previously untaxed assets in bank or securities deposit accounts in Switzerland by making a one-off, flat-rate payment. The amount will be based on the length of the banking relationship and the level of assets. It stands at between 21 and 41 % of the assets for Germany and the UK and between 15 and 38 % for Austria.

This one-off payment will settle all outstanding tax arrears from the past in accordance with the agreements. Anyone who does not wish to make this payment, perhaps because they have already paid tax on the assets, will be able to authorise their banks to disclose their account information to the tax authorities in their country of residence. Persons who do not wish either to make the one-off payment or to disclose their account information must terminate their banking relationship in Switzerland. This must be done before the agreement enters into force for Germany and Austria and before 31 May 2013 for the UK.

### Taxation of future income

Swiss banks will in future levy a withholding tax on the capital income of German, UK and Austrian taxpayers in accordance with the agreements. By paying the withholding



tax, they will be settling their tax liability for this income in their country of residence. The level of tax is based on the tax rate in the respective country of residence and stands at 26.375 % for Germany, 25 % for Austria and between 27 and 48 % for the UK depending on the type of capital income. Persons not wishing to pay this withholding tax must authorise their banks to disclose their capital income to the tax authorities in their country of residence. This will then be taxed as income.

### Inheritance

In the event of the death of a person who had a bank or securities deposit account in Switzerland and was liable to pay tax in Germany or the UK, the Swiss bank will levy a withholding tax on the assets based on the highest rate of inheritance tax. This stands at 50 % in Germany and 40 % in the UK. Heirs will settle their tax liability for this inheritance by paying this withholding tax. If they do not wish to pay the withholding tax, they must authorise the Swiss bank to disclose the account information of the deceased person to the tax authorities in the country of residence. Depending on the rate of inheritance tax and degree of kinship, this may be more favourable than paying the withholding tax.

Both the one-off, flat-rate payment for previously untaxed assets and the withhold-

ing tax on future capital income and inheritances will be debited from client accounts directly. The payments will be transferred anonymously to the Federal Tax Administration (FTA). The FTA will then transfer the amounts to the German, UK and Austrian tax authorities in such a way that it is impossible to trace the identity of the bank clients. This will ensure that the foreign authorities receive the taxation due to them and the privacy of the bank clients is maintained.

Written in collaboration with the State Secretariat for International Financial Matters (SIF)

Further information is available at:  
[www.sif.admin.ch](http://www.sif.admin.ch)

### FURTHER AGREEMENTS

The Federal Council is currently conducting negotiations for similar agreements with two further countries: withholding tax agreements are set to be concluded with Italy and Greece. Other countries, including some outside Europe, are also interested in concluding agreements, but formal negotiations have yet to take place.



## Yet another referendum on fighter jets?

**Does Switzerland need new fighter planes? If so, should it buy Swedish Gripen jets?**

**Parliament and, most probably, the Swiss people will decide.**

**By René Lenzin**

Defence Minister Ueli Maurer clearly believes Switzerland needs new fighter jets to replace its outdated Tiger fleet. He also says it should purchase Gripen jets made by the Swedish aircraft manufacturer Saab. Maurer and his generals want to purchase 22 Gripen jets at a cost of 3.1 billion Swiss francs, with the first half being delivered in 2018. The Swedish government has guaranteed that this price will be fixed even if the cost of manufacturing the fighter jets should rise. Maurer gave this assurance at the end of August. The Federal Council has approved the deal and Parliament will make its decision in December.

The issue is not as clear-cut for many politicians and military figures as it is for the national government. The Gripen triumphed over the UK/German/Italian/Spanish Eurofighter and French Rafale jets in an evaluation procedure. It has now become evident that the decision was based mainly on financial aspects. The Gripen is the least expensive of the three jets by some margin. However, it is also the poorest option in terms of performance, which has gone down badly with the pilots in particular. Most of them want the high-performance Eurofighter, which is manufactured by a broad-based consortium and is already being deployed in various countries.

### **"The greatest risks"**

There has been widespread criticism that the evaluation was not conducted properly. This has also been fuelled by lobbyists for the defeated competitors, which, like the Saab representatives, carried out extensive promotional campaigns behind the scenes. The National Council's Defence Committee has investigated these allegations and come to an ambiguous conclusion. Its report states that the procedure was carried out properly. It nevertheless points out that the Federal Council chose the jet that poses the greatest risks.



The Swiss army's F-5 Tiger has served its time after 30 years

The findings indicate that these risks relate to technical, financial, political and temporal aspects. By selecting the Gripen, Switzerland has made itself dependent on an aircraft manufacturer that has not yet completed its product development phase and has not managed to sell the jet elsewhere. The required number of new jets cannot be delivered on time either. Switzerland and Sweden have in fact agreed on a staggered delivery of the Gripen aircraft. Switzerland will hire eleven older used Gripen jets during the transitional period. Maurer dismisses the criticism, stating that the Gripen meet the requirements of the Swiss Air Force and sufficient guarantees have been secured to cover the other risks with the Swedish government as the guarantor.

Parliament's conservative majority is generally backing the acquisition of the new fighter jets. However, opinion is divided as to whether the Gripen jets really are the best option. It will become clear in December whether those supporting the deal will close ranks and back Federal Councillor Maurer's proposal. Prior to the choice of aircraft, they had managed to convince colleagues in Parliament that Switzerland urgently needed to acquire

new fighter jets and that the funds required should be made available.

### **Referendum on the horizon**

The left-wing/green parliamentary minority will vote against the Gripen proposal. This is not because it is opposed to these particular jets but because it does not want any jets at all. The Greens and Social Democrats argue that Switzerland does not need new fighter jets and that this billion-franc investment could be better used elsewhere. If the Christian Democrats, Liberals and Swiss People's Party fail to give the Gripen project their full support, the proposal could be defeated in Parliament.

If not, the Swiss people will have to address the issue. The opponents of the new fighter jets have already announced that they will call for a referendum against the loans required. There may therefore be a rerun of the 1993 referendum. Back then, the Group for a Switzerland without an Army quickly collected over 500,000 signatures against the acquisition of 34 F/A-18 fighter jets approved by Parliament. 57% of the electorate nevertheless supported the procurement of the jets at the ballot box.

RENÉ LENZIN is an editor at "Swiss Review"



## Flying rescue

**They were known as the “heroes of the air” in their pioneering days, and the fascination with air rescuers remains great to this day. Ever since it was founded, Rega has been striving to provide help to those in need more quickly and more professionally. A profile of the organisation on its 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary.**

**By Miriam Hutter**

A hiking or climbing accident in the mountains results in broken limbs and concussion. Urgent assistance is needed. One of the party pulls out his smartphone and makes an emergency call to Rega. The app sends the caller's coordinates to the operations centre while he gives details of the incident over the phone. The rescue helicopter can now fly to the exact location of the accident, and the emergency doctor knows precisely what to expect. This is the ideal scenario for modern air rescue in Switzerland.

The start of professional air rescue was a successful operation to save the crew and passengers of an aircraft that crashed on the Gault Glacier in 1946. Two Swiss Air Force pilots could not only deliver provisions and emergency aid, they were also able to land on the glacier and bring the victims to safety in the valley. From then on, experiments were carried out with various methods to enable aircrafts to land safely on glaciers and snowfields.

Swiss Air Rescue (SRFW), Rega's predecessor organisation, was founded at the beginning of the 1950s. Its rescue parachutists, trained in the UK by the Royal Air Force, and its rescue aeroplanes and helicopters were deployed not just in Switzerland but abroad as well in accidents, avalanches, floods and even following the collision of two aeroplanes over the Rocky Mountains. The SRFW became an independent association in 1960, before going on to become the “Rega” foundation in 1979. The name “Rega” is derived from a combination of the organisation's names in the Swiss national languages: Rettungsflugwacht – Garde aérienne / Guardia Aerea.

The use of helicopters became increasingly important in the 1960s and they ulti-

mately replaced aeroplanes completely in mountain rescue. Helicopters require less space to land and can hover over one place. This means that mountaineers who have had an accident can be rescued from steep and even overhanging rock faces using rescue winches. Rega is constantly developing new rescue techniques and resources. The principle of taking medical care to the patient rather than “simply” transporting him to the nearest hospital was established in the 1960s and 1970s. An emergency doctor and a nurse always fly with the team.

### Bringing Swiss people home

Bringing Swiss people home in emergency medical situations has long been one of Rega's tasks. It carried out its first repatriation flight in 1960, when a patient was brought home from France in an aeroplane. Rega undertook its first major mission abroad in 1977, when it flew the Swiss victims of a coach accident in Aswan home using a hired Super-Caravelle. In 1996, a mission took Rega around the world for the first time: two pilots, two co-pilots, a doctor and a nurse repatriated three patients within 43 hours, landing in eight different locations. In more recent times, the major operation following the tsunami in Southeast Asia was among the most spectacular: in December 2004, Rega repatriated over 60 patients from Thailand and Sri Lanka within a week, using its three air ambulance jets as well as charter and scheduled flights.

### Public solidarity

As a section of the Swiss Rescue Association and a non-profit organisation, the SRFW

began collecting donations from the public back in 1955. It raised its profile with a demonstration of an operation over Zurich's lake basin. Two years later, the Federation of Swiss Consumer Associations (VSK) donated a helicopter. The patronage model that exists today dates back to the 1960s: after federal government decided against funding the SRFW, which had by then become an independent association, its president turned to the public. He offered patrons free air rescue for a contribution of 20 Swiss francs a year. The Rega Foundation has almost 2.4 million patrons today. Thanks to donations, it is on standby to carry out rescue operations around the clock. Rega undertook over 14,000 missions in 2011.

### Commercialisation of air rescue

Since 2011, Rega has no longer been the only air ambulance service in Switzerland. The Touring Club Schweiz (TCS) now also provides medical repatriation and transfer flights from one hospital to another, which are known as secondary missions. However, this service is only available to TCS members who have taken out a specific insurance policy. TCS has therefore been accused of “cherry-picking” by Rega, which provides assistance to absolutely anyone in an emergency situation. Primary air rescue missions are the main cause of high stand-by costs and Rega is being left to bear these, wrote Albert Keller, former president of the foundation's board of trustees, in its annual report. Consumer and patient protection groups are nevertheless pleased with the introduction of TCS' service. They hope this new competition will bring prices down.

Rega itself faced accusations over its commercial activities in May of this year. The Swiss media made public Rega's deployment of its air ambulances for contract flights with no Swiss involvement.

#### 1952

Swiss Air Rescue is founded as a section of the Swiss Rescue Association (SLRG). Helicopters and parachutists are declared ready for action in the same year.



#### 1960

Helicopters play an increasingly important role in air rescue. Swiss Air Rescue (SRFW) breaks away from the SLRG, its parent organisation, to become an independent association.

tion. The first repatriation flight (from France) is carried out.

#### 1966

The running costs of helicopter rescue gradually exceed Swiss Air Rescue's resources. After the Federal Council refuses to provide public funding, the association turns to the public.

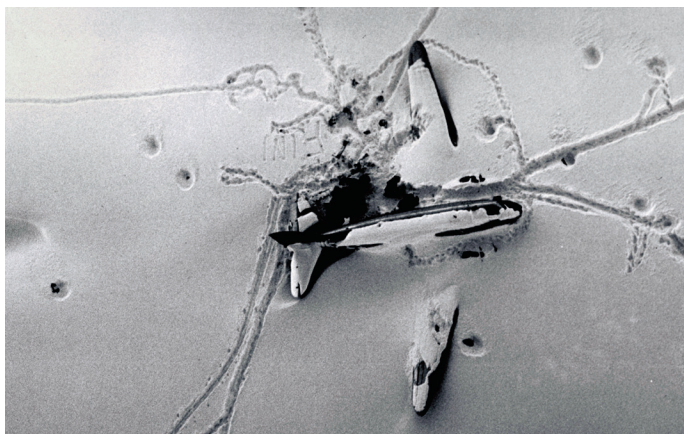
The principle of patronage is established with donations in return for the promise of free services.

#### 1971

Swiss Air Rescue takes delivery of its first helicopter financed entirely by patrons' contributions, an Alouette III.







The US Dakota C-53 aeroplane that crashed on the Gauli Glacier in 1946



In the cockpit of a helicopter on a night flight



Transportation of a newborn in an incubator from one hospital to another



Deployment in traffic accidents: Rega is often called upon by the police

The air ambulance jets are sometimes used to transport foreign soldiers to their homeland from war zones. Rega actually carries out such operations on behalf of international insurance companies if they are medically necessary. As far as Rega is concerned, their passengers are simply patients, whether they are in uniform or not. It also points out that the clients are invoiced the full cost in such cases, including accommodation expenses and aircraft depreciation. Patron contributions have never been used for contract flights. The Swiss Foundation Supervisory Board exonerated Rega and acquitted it of charges of “misuse of the Swiss cross” and violation of the purpose of its foundation.

### Patrons keep Rega in the air

In 2007, Rega was declared “Switzerland’s most popular brand” in a study by the market research institute IHA-GfK in Hergiswil. Rega’s immense popularity with the public is demonstrated by the contributions from its patrons. The 2.4 million patrons – individuals and families – provide around 60 % of the foundation’s funding, while Rega generates the rest of its budget through rescue operations paid for by clients. Even today, it does not receive any funding from federal government.

MIRIAM HUTTER is a volunteer at “Swiss Review”

### PATRONS ABROAD

Swiss citizens residing abroad can support Rega by becoming patrons. They benefit from the following aid services:

- Rescue flights within Switzerland
- Telephone consultation on medical problems abroad
- Repatriation flights to Switzerland for medical reasons

In return for their financial support, Rega waives the costs of such missions for patrons if they are not covered by third parties (insurers).

Further details: [www.rega.ch](http://www.rega.ch) – menu “Support Rega”

**1973**  
The SRFW purchases the first civilian air ambulance jet for



repatriation flights. A rescue helicopter is stationed on the roof of Zurich’s Children’s Hospital. This is known as the “baby helicopter” because it’s used to transport premature newborns.

**1979**  
The Swiss Air Rescue Association becomes a charitable founda-



tion. The current radio call name “Rega” becomes the organisation’s official title.

**1981**  
Rega, the Swiss Disaster Relief Unit, the Swiss Army Rescue Troops and the Swiss Disaster Dog Association form the Swiss “Rescue Chain” set up to provide immediate assistance in earthquake disasters. Their first deployment comes in 1982 in North Yemen.

**1990**  
During a rescue mission in the Vaud Alps, a strong gust of wind blows a helicopter into the side of the mountain as it is landing. The machine is destroyed but, fortunately, nobody is hurt.

## *"I'm part of a great team"*

**Thomas Burren has been flying with Rega on repatriation flights as a nurse for 14 years. He has often brought the Swiss abroad home, too. He loves his work even though he is constantly faced with difficult situations.**

**Interview by Miriam Hutter**

«*SWISS REVIEW*»: Before joining Rega, you spent a long time working in intensive care units at various hospitals. How does working on Rega planes differ from being in a hospital?

THOMAS BURREN: First of all, it is not just about providing medical care; I also have to know a great deal about flying conditions. I went on a supplementary 14-day training course all about that when I started. Secondly, I work much more independently. It is just the doctor and I. We don't have a large team around us. You can't quickly run a special test; you have to work with what you have.

*So, what facilities are available on the Rega jets?*

We can transport four patients lying down in an aircraft. We have a kind of mini intensive care unit for two of them with respirators, monitoring systems and infusion pumps. Medicines and supplies are limited, of course. When something runs out, there is no replacement. This requires very careful, forward planning.

*What is a typical mission like?*

We are on stand-by at home and must be ready for take-off within two hours of an emergency call. My job up to the point of take-off is to organise provisions, check the main systems and medicines and ensure all the material required is available. After a briefing with the doctor, pilots and operations management, we carry out the final checks and then depart.



Thomas Burren is 47 years of age and has found his dream job as an intensive care professional with Rega. He is married and has two teenage children.

*Is the patient waiting for you at the destination airport?*

No, when we arrive an ambulance is normally waiting for us in which we then collect the patient from the hospital. We take medicines and equipment with us because we take over supervision and care of the patient as soon as we reach him. When we arrive at our final destination, the doctor and I accompany the patient to the hospital by ambulance where we hand him over to the medical team responsible there.

*And is the mission then complete?*

Just the medical part. We then often have to fly home. Not every patient is taken to Zurich. We then tidy up so that the jet is ready for the next mission. Our rest time begins after that. This depends on the length of the mission, but normally lasts at least twelve hours.

*Are there very special moments in your job?*

Every time you reach a patient is a special moment. People are usually really happy to see us when we walk into the room. They are often not aware of what is wrong with them due to the language barrier. We speak to them in their mother tongue, explain their condition to them and they soon feel they are in good hands.

*Difficult situations must surely arise.*

I find it very hard when red tape puts obstacles in our way. We sometimes get to an airport in the ambulance with the patient in an unstable condition requiring artificial respiration, perhaps on an intravenous drip or receiving blood transfusions, and we have to wait at customs with him for an hour. This can endanger the patient's life. Such arbitrariness is hard to accept. The journeys to reach the patients are sometimes also physically demanding, such as when we have to travel through the desert for hours. And, of course, I am constantly confronted with tragedy – deaths or an accident affecting an entire family. As we are often the first people the patients can talk to, we feel their emotions particularly strongly on the flight home. Missions involving children obviously always affect you deeply.

*What does working for Rega mean to you?*

I see it as a dream job and something I wanted to do for a long time. I can work independently and belong to a fantastic team. I have never come across such highly motivated people as at Rega. People at all levels, whether in the medical section or elsewhere, feel a great sense of responsibility for our mission of saving lives.



**1997**  
The operations centre, rescue jets, maintenance services and

administration are all relocated to the new Rega Center at Zurich airport. The new Rega emer-



gency number 1414 is adopted for air rescue services in Switzerland.

**2009**

A "life box" – a compact, mobile heart-lung machine – is deployed for the first time aboard Rega helicopters and air ambulance jets. It is successfully used



to support a patient on a transatlantic flight in 2010, which is a world first.

**2012**

On 16 March, after a coach accident in Valais, Rega deploys its three air ambulance jets to transport 14 patients and their families from Sion to Brussels in six flights. This is the first time that all Rega's air ambulance planes have been used together in the same mission.



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

By Charles Linsmayer

## *He celebrated Romantic Europe and was deeply affected by Franco-German enmity – Guy de Pourtalès*

"Is success after forty really success at all?" wrote Guy de Pourtalès in his diary on 21 August 1921. "All that remains is admiration in art and literature. So, do women still adore men over the age of forty?" Born the son of a Swiss officer in the Imperial Guard in Berlin on 4 August 1881, he grew up in Berlin and Geneva and learned to love Richard Wagner and despise Prussian chauvinism as an engineering student in Germany. Then, as a budding writer in Paris under the influence of Maurice Barrès he became so passionate about France that he gave up Swiss in favour of French citizenship – which his Huguenot forefathers had been stripped of in 1685. This was in July 1911, three months after his marriage to Hélène Macuard from Berne. It led to him being called up to serve in the French army in 1914. He experienced a poisonous gas attack by German forces in Le Touquet, Flanders, in 1915 and consequently suffered from pulmonary tuberculosis for the rest of his life. Although he enjoyed success as a translator of Shakespeare and was financially secure thanks to a significant inheritance, he was left behind by the transition to post-war literature and, as the quote above suggests, gave up on his literary (and amorous!) opportunities as a forty-year-old. Nobody would be discussing Guy de Pourtalès today had a coup de foudre not made him into a completely different writer in 1923.

### A momentous love affair

He became so caught up in a secret affair with a young woman named E. that he would have left his wife and family had the relationship not ended abruptly in 1930. His mood, alternating between despair and ecstasy, nevertheless enabled him to write much-read biographies on various romantic figures in which he captivated readers with his own erotic exuberance without them noticing. "What is the biography of a great man but the detailed formula of our secret hopes", he revealingly acknowledged in 1933, and his biographies of Liszt (1925), Chopin (1926), Ludwig II of Bavaria (1928), Nietzsche (1929) and Wagner (1932) proved so enthralling

not least because his own unfulfilled longings surfaced in each of the portraits.

But it was not until 1938 that de Pourtalès produced his masterpiece, with the novel "La pêche miraculeuse" (The Miraculous Catch of Fish), which was based on his own life. Like de Pourtalès himself, the musician Paul de Villars studies in Germany and goes to war for France, but then in 1919 in Geneva, the city of the League of Nations, he is able to transfer the reconciliatory symbolism of the novel's title to the optimistic finale of his "Symphonie lacustre". Paul's personal life is dominated by two love affairs that firstly link him with the reserved Louise, who plays an important part in his artistic development, and then with the sensuous Antoinette. The mysterious E. demonstrably served as a model for both women. The author provides each with an authenticity that only personal experience can produce despite dividing them into two figures for the purpose of alienation.

### France's defeat comes as a shock

Guy de Pourtalès mediated between German and French culture in an inspirational way as an author and journalist, and it came as a great shock to him when France's part in the Second World War initially ended in humiliating defeat in 1940. Having long since returned to Switzerland, residing in Etoy on Lake Geneva, he was bitterly disappointed by the French collapse. Filled with rage, he described Germany in his diary as an "infected wound, the insanity of mankind". However, he suffered his most severe blow on 3 July 1940 when he discovered that Raymond, his only son, had been killed in Le Touquet, the very same village where he himself had been wounded in 1915. His daily writing kept him alive for another year "like a compass in the eye of the storm". He died of lung disease aged 59 on 12 July 1941 at the Hôpital Nestlé in Lausanne.

CHARLES LINSMAYER is a literary scholar and journalist in Zurich



Guy de Pourtalès

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"La pêche miraculeuse" is available in German under the title "Der wunderbare Fischzug" as volume 9 of the "Reprinted by Huber" series from Verlag Huber Frauenfeld. Almost all the biographies and "La pêche miraculeuse" are available in French from Éditions Gallimard, Paris.



## Meeting of the Swiss abroad

The Congress of the Swiss Abroad took place in Lausanne from 17 to 19 August. Almost 400 Swiss abroad attended. This year's theme was "Mobility and Innovation: Switzerland in Times of International Challenges".

This year's Congress of the Swiss Abroad featured several highlights. Participants eagerly anticipated the visit of the new foreign minister, Federal Councillor Didier Burkhalter. In his speech, he outlined the Federal Council's priority objectives in foreign policy for the coming years. He indicated that relations with neighbouring states, the European Union and stability in Europe were key issues. Burkhalter said the Federal Council regarded support for the Swiss abroad as another priority. He pointed out that the Law on the Swiss Abroad, which is currently being drafted by Parliament, would be a key instrument here. There are plans to make one department in the federal administration responsible for all areas concerning relations with the Swiss abroad. Under the new law, the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad is to obtain the "status of a privileged discussion partner of federal government", Burkhalter explained.

### Eminent speakers

Attendees particularly enjoyed the presentations by the two speakers who directly addressed the congress' theme: Kurt Wüthrich, the winner of the Nobel Prize for Chemistry (2002) and Elmar Mock, the inventor of Swatch. Wüthrich gave an account of the vitally important experiences he gained abroad. Mock explained what is required to achieve genuine innovation and not just improvements on what already exists and also recounted the true story of how Swatch watches were invented. Both speeches can be found online at: [www.revue.ch](http://www.revue.ch) > OSA (menu on the left).

## Swiss banks and the Swiss abroad

As it does every year, the Council of the Swiss Abroad (CSA) met for the second time this year on the day before the congress. The conduct of the Swiss banks, an issue of great concern to the Swiss abroad, was once again discussed in great depth. Over the past few months, members of the executive and management of OSA had been constantly in touch with banks and financial institutions (Swiss Bankers Association, PostFinance and Raiffeisen, etc.) as well as with the Department of Finance and the price supervisor. The latter is apparently not in a position to intervene on behalf of the Swiss abroad as there is no price agreement on the accounts of Swiss clients abroad, which means competition between the banks continues to exist. (Response of the price supervisor in German online at: [www.aso.ch](http://www.aso.ch) > Beratung > Leben im Ausland > Banken)

None of the banks contacted is currently willing to make a binding offer at moderate cost to Swiss citizens abroad. However, PostFinance is prepared to offer basic services for payment transactions, account management and e-banking to all Swiss abroad under certain conditions. The CSA concluded that the Swiss abroad presently have no option but to try to find a solution individually. One thing is certain and that is that clients will almost always have to visit the bank in person to open an account.

As at the CSA meeting in March, ambassador Gerhard Brügger, head of the Consular Directorate at the FDFA, provided information on the "optimisation of the consular service". (Details regarding the merger and closure of consulates and the opening of new embassies abroad can be found on pages 27 and 28).

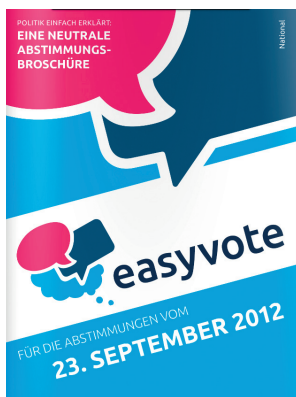
Federal government's new Law on the Education of the Swiss Abroad was another important item on the CSA's agenda. The Council was generally satisfied with federal government's plans and unanimously approved OSA's input as part of the consultation process.

Finally, François Baur was elected as a new member of the CSA. He replaces Monika Notter as the representative of Economie-suisse.



Jacques Simon Eggly, President of OSA, hands over the e-voting petition containing over 15,000 signatures to Federal Councillor Burkhalter





## Voting made easy

Young people aged 18 to 25 visit the ballot box less frequently than older voters at elections and referenda. The Swiss Federation of Youth Parliaments (DSJ) is attempting to redress this situation through the easyvote project. The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad's Youth Service is also involved. The DSJ presented the easyvote project during the summer camp for young Swiss abroad. So, now young Swiss abroad can join in, too.

The interests of people who never or seldom vote are extremely unlikely to be represented properly. This obviously also applies to young adults. The DSJ has developed the easyvote system to make voting simpler. All federal and some cantonal referendum proposals are explained simply and objectively. Young people eligible to vote – and, of course, any other interested parties – will be able to find out about upcoming referenda quickly and comprehensively, irrespective of which country they live in. easyvote is politically neutral and its information is based on the official voting documents issued by federal government or the cantons.

The project aims to make it easier for young people to understand Swiss politics and to take advantage of the opportunity to vote. In addition to the national version for federal referenda, easyvote is also currently available for the cantons of Aargau, Berne, Grisons, Lucerne, Schwyz, Solothurn and Zurich.

Advertisement

### By young people for young people

The content of the easyvote leaflets is written in German by school pupils, apprentices and students aged 16 to 30 on a voluntary basis. The texts are then discussed in groups via Skype, their clarity is checked and they are revised where necessary. They are then reviewed and edited again by other young people. Those involved come from all over Switzerland and sometimes also from abroad.

easyvote is currently being sent to more than 22,000 young people on behalf of over

100 communes and around 20 schools. It also has numerous individual subscribers of all age categories. Subscriptions are offered for both print and PDF versions. easyvote will also be published in French and Italian from autumn 2013.

*Annual subscription costs CHF 15 for the print version and CHF 10 for the PDF version. Further information is available at [www.easylvote.ch](http://www.easylvote.ch)*

### SEMINAR ON THE FEDERAL PARLIAMENTARY YOUTH SESSION

Each year, over 200 young people gain an insight into how Swiss politics works at the Youth Session. This provides them with the opportunity to obtain information about political players and processes as well as ways of participating. The aim is to encourage them to take part in further political activities. Places at the Youth Session are also reserved for the Swiss abroad. OSA will prepare participants for the session with a programme that will take place from 12 to 15 November 2012. This will enable them to take part in political debate with other young parliamentarians at the Federal Palace.



Young people in the National Council chamber in Berne during the Youth Session

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## OSA advice

**There are various Swiss societies abroad. Some are recognised by OSA while others are not. How do you become a society recognised by OSA?**

The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) is a foundation established under private law that aims to strengthen the links between Swiss citizens abroad and their homeland, to represent their interests in Switzerland and to provide them with a wide range of services (information, legal advice, offers for young people, etc).

OSA is made up of Swiss societies abroad that it recognises. To obtain recognition from OSA, a Swiss society must meet the following criteria:

- The objective of the society must be to strengthen links between the Swiss abroad and their homeland;
- Over 50 % of the active members must be Swiss citizens;
- The majority of the committee must hold Swiss nationality;
- The presidency must be held by a Swiss citizen;
- Its membership must include at least seven Swiss citizens;

■ As a minimum, it must hold a members' meeting once a year and have a committee that is reappointed on a regular basis;

■ The society must be affiliated to the umbrella organisation in the country where it is located, if one exists (France, Germany, Italy, UK, Spain-Portugal, Austria-Liechtenstein-Slovenia, the Netherlands, Canada, Argentina);

■ It must undertake expressly to inform OSA if it is unable to continue meeting any one of these criteria.

The societies recognised by OSA may participate in the appointment of their country's delegates to the Council of the Swiss Abroad. This Council, which is made up of delegates from the Swiss communities abroad as well as members from Switzerland, such as federal parliamentarians, representing the institutions in contact with the Swiss abroad, meets twice a year to discuss issues that specifically concern the Swiss abroad. The media refer to the Council of the Swiss Abroad as the "Parliament of the Swiss abroad". The Swiss societies recognised by OSA make a direct contribution to policy on the Swiss abroad.

Societies which do not meet all of the conditions set out above can obtain recognition as an associated group. In contrast to the Swiss societies fully recognised by OSA,

associated groups cannot participate in the appointment of delegates from their country to the Council of the Swiss Abroad but benefit from all of the other advantages.

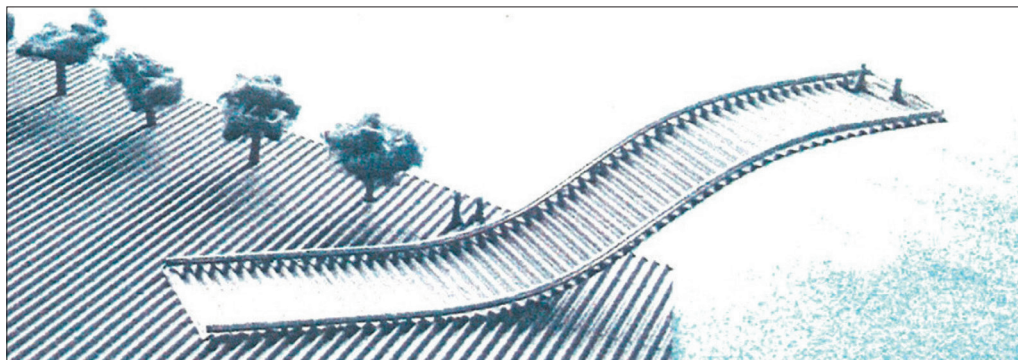
Having obtained recognition from OSA, the societies and groups join the global network of Swiss societies and institutions abroad. They also automatically receive information and newsletters from OSA and enjoy a high profile at [www.swisscommunity.org](http://www.swisscommunity.org), the social network of the Swiss abroad. They also add to the weight of OSA and therefore of the Swiss community abroad, which has an impact on the representation of the interests of the Swiss abroad.

Any societies interested in obtaining recognition from OSA can complete the recognition application form, which can be found on OSA's website at [www.aso.ch](http://www.aso.ch) > "About ourselves" > "Swiss Societies abroad" > "Recognition of a Swiss society by OSA".

SARAH MASTANTUONI,  
Head of the Legal Department

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

## Project for the Area for the Swiss Abroad



The winning project by artist Gino Bühler.

A distinctive symbol is to be created for the Area for the Swiss Abroad in Brunnen. The Area for the Swiss Abroad Foundation took this decision at the beginning of the year and launched a competition for the creation of this distinctive symbol. The winning project, which the jury selected from 52 entries, is called "Sprungbrett" (springboard) and was submitted by Gino Bühler, a Swiss photographer and graphic artist living in Düsseldorf.

Bühler's "Springboard" consists of a curved, wave-shaped structure, which will be constructed on the south-west corner of the meadow. It points towards the Rütli while also symbolising the springboard into the outside world. Visitors will be able to walk on the monument and reach a viewing platform some twelve metres above the lake via a set of steps. It is not yet clear how the work of art will be funded.

BE



## The FDFA's Consular Directorate – an international centre of expertise?

**At the Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Lausanne, Federal Councillor Didier Burkhalter once again underlined the importance of the Swiss community abroad in the Federal Council's foreign policy and its significance to the FDFA. By its very nature, foreign policy involves international cooperation. The FDFA's Consular Directorate has therefore been assigned the task of developing instruments and processes to support our representations abroad while also performing international networking activities concerning consular services and visas. An overview of its activities.**

### An increasing workload

700 000 – 16 000 000 – 500 000: these figures reflect the operational workload of the FDFA's consular services. Whether it is the number of Swiss abroad, the total number of trips abroad made by the Swiss each year or the number of visas issued by our representations annually, we are facing a constant increase in our workload coupled with increasingly complex and diverse cases.

In view of these circumstances, the Consular Directorate has been given a seemingly straightforward mandate – the coordination and optimisation of collaboration with international partners and other foreign ministries combined with the task of providing our consular services in an efficient and customer-oriented way.

Most of our European partners find themselves in a similar situation as they have to pursue the same objectives, albeit under sometimes different labels. Irrespective of whether a network of representations is undergoing reorganisation, restructuring or realignment, both we and our partners must ensure that our limited resources are deployed efficiently while maintaining or improving the quality of the services provided. Ideally, this results in an opportunity to complement the representation networks of partner states reciprocally to ensure a wide geographical spread of customer service. Two areas of cooperation are particularly topical.

### Passports and biometrics

The biometric passport is a major issue. Even though many services are currently provided online, direct contact between the applicant and one of our passport centres (consulates or passport offices in Switzerland) is required to record the biometric data for passports. Why couldn't Swiss citizens, living in a country where Switzerland has no representation or where the nearest Swiss consulate is several hundred kilometres away, use a German consulate, for example, to record the biometric data? This attractive prospect is not feasible at present due to the different technologies of the systems deployed.

IT architecture – data security – system compatibility: from a biological perspective, a finger is a finger and its print is clearly identifiable. Yet, since bits and bytes have been replacing ink more and more, the recording and transmission of this biometric data within our IT systems requires a level of compatibility that does not yet exist internationally. An initial pilot project is nonetheless underway. The systems of Liechtenstein and Switzerland are currently being adapted to enable citizens of Liechtenstein to use the technology at Swiss representations for recording biometric data for their passports in future. The data will then be sent to the passport office in Vaduz.

The idea of collaboration with foreign partners in the processing of passport applications (recording and transmission of biometric data) remains a contentious issue. The heated debate on data protection in Switzerland during the referendum on the introduction of the biometric passport, which was approved by the tightest of margins (50.1 %), serves as a reminder of this.

### Well-coordinated collaboration

The second area of international cooperation is the issuing of visas. Switzerland is actively committed to the development of the Schengen philosophy of shared responsibility by regularly concluding agreements with other Schengen states on representation in visa matters for countries and

regions where we do not have our own representation with consular services. The system is based on reciprocity, and we are currently working with ten Schengen states that we now represent in various constellations at 17 locations and which, in return, process visa applications for Switzerland at 19 locations.

### International protection?

The over 700,000 Swiss citizens abroad and the ever increasing mobility of the population are resulting in a continual rise in the number of consular protection cases. The closure of the consular departments at various embassies and consulates general and the concentration of consular services at regional consular centres are sometimes resulting in longer distances between Swiss citizens abroad and the administration. Cooperation with European partner states is also an option here, although Switzerland finds itself in a unique position. Citizens of European Union member states receive protection from the diplomatic or consular representations of any EU state in accordance with EU directives. This provision does not apply to Switzerland as a non-EU member.

Solutions must therefore be sought bilaterally, that allow Swiss citizens to receive support from non-Swiss representations under certain circumstances. Close international cooperation already exists in crisis situations (political unrest, evacuations, etc.) while just one single bilateral agreement has been concluded on everyday consular collaboration. An agreement between Austria and Switzerland from 1979 enables the provision of consular services for citizens of the other state at certain locations where just one of the two states is represented. As the content of this agreement and the list of representations concerned are outdated, there are plans to update this and initial talks are underway. Similar negotiations are taking place with other European countries.

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**International contact**

In addition to negotiations with European states, Switzerland is also in contact with other possible partner countries with overlapping or complementary interests. Discussions are being held with Turkey, Russia, Brazil and China on a wide range of issues, such as consular collaboration, integration of the respective immigrant communities, the promotion of tourism and access to the international community in Geneva.

**International collaboration and public private partnerships (PPP)**

With the aim of supporting the promotional activities of Switzerland Tourism, especially in the emerging markets of India, China and Indonesia, the Consular Directorate is

collaborating closely with partners in the tourism industry. Solutions are being sought that enable travellers from these countries to visit Switzerland without major obstacles. This involves establishing smooth and well-coordinated visa management between the various parties involved – local travel agents, Switzerland Tourism and the Swiss representations. This PPP approach allows all parties to adapt to the requirements responsibly and to the situations faced by the other players.

**What next?**

The path towards ensuring efficient, institutionalised and regular exchange has therefore been mapped out. It is now a matter of assessing the next steps and areas of coopera-

tion. This approach will be pursued over the coming years, and the Consular Directorate will continue to develop its international networking activities with great enthusiasm in order to fulfil the mandate assigned to it.

**REORGANISATION OF THE NETWORK OF EMBASSIES AND CONSULATES**

As part of the ongoing review of the Swiss network of representations, which has resulted in the opening of regional consular centres at 11 locations worldwide since the beginning of 2011 during its first and second phases, we are now embarking on the third phase. The reorganisation will be completed by 2014. This third phase will affect several representations worldwide whose consular departments are to be centralised.

The relevant Swiss communities abroad will be kept informed directly by their Swiss representation. We are aware of the inconvenience

that the reorganisation is causing for some Swiss citizens and are therefore simultaneously providing support measures. These include the opportunity to submit biometric data for Swiss passports at any Swiss representation or any passport office in Switzerland (in conjunction with a passport application within six months at the responsible Swiss representation), the possibility of using a mobile biometric data capture system and the FDFA helpline, which has been available 24 hours a day since spring 2012 (see page 29 for contact details).

**CLOSED CONSULAR DEPARTMENT**

(the representations concerned will remain open for safeguarding interests unless otherwise specified)

**Guatemala City** closure of the embassy

**La Paz** (Bolivia)

**Ankara** (Turkey)

**Los Angeles** responsible for the states of AZ, CO, NM and the Californian counties of Los Angeles, San Bernardino, San Diego, Santa Barbara, Orange, Imperial, Ventura, Riverside, Kern

**Chicago** closure of the consulate general responsible for the states of ND, SD, IL, ID, IA, KS, MI, MN, MO, NE, OH, WI

**Maputo** (Mozambique)

**Toronto** (Canada) closure of the consulate general responsible for the states of ON, MB, SK, NT

**Sarajevo** (Bosnia)

**Skopje** (Macedonia)

**Nikosia** (Cyprus)

**Jeddah** (Saudi Arabia) closure of the consulate general responsible for Tabuk, Medina, Makkah, Baha, Asir, Jizan and Najran

**Dubai** (UAE) responsible for Dubai, Sharjah, Ajman, Um Al Qwain, Ras Al Khaimah and Fujairah

**NEW REGIONAL CONSULAR CENTRE RESPONSIBLE**

Not yet decided definitively; planned: San José (Costa Rica)

**Lima** (Peru)

**Istanbul** (Turkey)

**San Francisco**

**New York** – for the states ND, SD, MI, MN, OH, WI

**Washington** – for the states of IL, NE, KS, IA, MO, IN

**Pretoria** (South Africa)

**Montreal** (Canada)

**Vienna** (Austria)

**Pristina** (Kosovo)

**Athens** (Greece)

**Riyadh** (Saudi Arabia)

**Abu Dhabi** (UAE)

**DATE**

(schedule status 1 Sept. 2012)

31.01.2013

04/2013

04/2013

07/2013

07/2013

07/2013

07/2013

07/2013

07/2013

07/2013

2014

2014





## Publications

### For Peace, Human Rights and Security

As part of its foreign policy, Switzerland is committed to peace, respect for human rights and the protection of displaced persons and refugees. Find out more about its priorities, the services it provides and the challenges it faces in the new brochure. You will also gain an insight into the roles of the people who mediate in conflicts, monitor elections and work towards ensuring peace and respect for human rights. The publication is available in German, French, Italian and English from:

*The Federal Department of  
Foreign Affairs (FDFA)  
Information/Publications  
Bundeshaus West  
3003 Berne*

*E-mail: [publikationen@eda.admin.ch](mailto:publikationen@eda.admin.ch)*

*Tel.: +41 31 322 31 53*

*The electronic version is available at:  
[http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/  
doc/publi.html](http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/doc/publi.html)*

## Important notice

Please do not forget to notify the embassy or consulate general responsible for you of your valid e-mail address and your mobile phone number.

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

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

Helpline number from Switzerland:

0800 24-7-365

Helpline number from abroad:

+41 800 24-7-365

E-mail: [helpline@eda.admin.ch](mailto:helpline@eda.admin.ch)

Skype: helpline-eda



### ELECTIONS AND REFERENDA

At its meeting on 4 July 2012, the Federal Council decided to put the following proposals to the vote on 25 November 2012:

1. Amendment of 16 March 2012 to the law on epizootic diseases;
2. Federal law on the international withholding tax of 15 June 2012;
3. Federal resolution of 15 June 2012 on the approval of the agreement between Switzerland and Germany on cooperation in the fields of taxation and the financial market and the protocol on the amendment to this agreement;
4. Federal resolution of 15 June 2012 on the approval of the agreement between Switzerland and the United Kingdom on cooperation in the field of taxation and the protocol on the amendment to this agreement;
5. Federal resolution of 15 June 2012 on the approval of the agreement between Switzerland and Austria on cooperation in the fields of taxation and the financial market.

Proposals 2 to 5 will only be put to the vote if referenda are called against them. The referendum deadline expired on 27 September 2012 after this edition of "Swiss Review" went to press. (See also pages 17 and 18)

Forthcoming referendum dates:

3 March 2013 – 9 June 2013 – 22 September 2013 – 24 November 2013

### POPULAR INITIATIVES

At the time of going to press, the following federal popular initiatives had been launched since the publication of the last edition of "Swiss Review" (deadlines for the collection of signatures in brackets):

- Für ein bedingungsloses Grundeinkommen (For an unconditional basic income) (11.10.2013)
- Schutz vor Sexualisierung in Kindergarten und Primarschule (Protection against sexualisation at nursery and primary school) (17.10.2013)
- Für den Schutz der Grossraubtiere (Bär, Wolf und Luchs) (For the protection of large predatory animals - bear, wolf and lynx) (19.12.2013)
- Schutz der Gesundheit vor dem Passivrauchen – Für einen effektiv wirksamen und nicht diskriminierenden Schutz gemäss den Normen der WHO (Protection of health against passive smoking – For effective and non-discriminatory protection in accordance with WHO standards) (19.12.2013)
- Zur Durchsetzung der Ausschaffung krimineller Ausländer (Durchsetzungsinitiative) (For the enforcement of the expulsion of foreign criminals - enforcement initiative) (24.01.2014)

The complete list can be found on the Federal Chancellery's website at [www.bk.admin.ch](http://www.bk.admin.ch) under Aktuell > Wahlen und Abstimmungen > Hängige Volksinitiativen.

## Little gems

### Angels and envy

"When I arrived in the world, Urs was already in Heaven. Urs was three, I am six. 'Urs was an angel', my parents say. But when he flew out of the window, he found he could not fly." So begins Guy Krneta's story "Ursel", which Merian-Verlag has brought out as a CD. It tells the tale of six-year-old Ursel, who recounts how her dead brother dominates her life. Her parents set a place at the table for Urs; he is the shining role model. The family visit him every Sunday at the cemetery. Ursel wants to be just as loved as her brother. So, she stages her disappearance, dreams of her own funeral, her parents' tears and a gravestone twice the size of Urs'.

Guy Krneta, who was born in Berne and lives in Basel, is an author, a great wordsmith and a politically engaged creative artist. "Ursel" once again demonstrates his ability to tackle challenging issues deftly and sensitively. The CD, featuring wonderful chamber music by Till Löffler, is a perfect gift for adults and children alike. **BE**

Guy Krneta, "Ursel" Eine musikalische Geschichte (in German); 1 CD, 45 minutes; Christoph Merian Verlag, Basel; ISBN 978-3-85616-554-3; CHF 19.90/EUR 13.90  
Theatre performances: 11 and 12 November, Theater Rigiblick Zurich [www.theater-rigiblick.ch](http://www.theater-rigiblick.ch)  
1 and 2 December 2012, Schlachthaus theater Berne, [www.schlachthaus.ch](http://www.schlachthaus.ch)



### Things run like clockwork in the Vallée de Joux

The Vallée de Joux in Vaud's Jura region is regarded as the birthplace of the art of watchmaking. Back in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, local farmers would spend the long winter months working at home as watchmakers. The region's workshops and factories still produce globally unique timepieces, some of which use highly complex mechanisms. The "Espace Horloger" museum was reopened in the village of Le Sentier in May. The mu-



seum covers the period between the 16<sup>th</sup> and the 19<sup>th</sup> centuries when the first watches were produced with split-second chronograph, tourbillon, perpetual calendar, moon phases and minute repeater. The horologists also created quirky pieces, such as a skeleton watch complete with a calendar and chime. "Espace Horloger" also shows how the art of watchmaking is preserved in the region today. Thanks to the local technical college, the museum has a remarkable collection of Com-



toise clocks that were repaired by students as part of their training. The exhibitions are designed to be educationally stimulating. State-of-the-art IT allows visitors to travel back through the centuries of watchmaking, and they can even create watches in their own style on a giant iPad. **BE**

Espace Horloger, Grand Rue 2, 1347 Le Sentier, Tel: +41 (0)21 845 75 45  
Open: from November to April, Tuesday to Sunday, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. [www.espace-horloger.ch](http://www.espace-horloger.ch)



### Where mountains rise

Shortly after its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Alpine Museum in Berne embarked on a brave new beginning. The building, located on Helvetiaplatz in Berne and therefore somewhat overshadowed by the grand Museum of History, has been renovated, and the management asked itself some fundamental questions for the reopening: Does the city need this collection of alpine paraphernalia? What is the significance of all these items from the alpine region? What should an alpine museum collect now and in the future?

The first exhibition was entitled "Berge versetzen" (Moving Mountains). Thousands of exhibits from the past were displayed, tidily set out thematically on the floor and accessible via a bridge. The Swiss Alpine Club (SAC) was



housed in a stylised alpine hut. Founded in 1863 by wealthy lowlands in Olten, the SAC today has over 130,000 members.

An exhibition entitled "Intensivstation" (Intensive Care Unit) featuring the work of the Austrian photographer Lois Heckenblaikner will now be running from 28 September to 24 March. He photographs alpine winter tourism not just in winter but throughout the year. Visitors will see the impact the tourism leisure industry is having: water accumulated in reservoirs in summer for the production of artificial snow, gigantic machines in front of a leisure-industry backdrop alongside an abject natural environment. This thought-provoking exhibition is accompanied by numerous events and educational programmes. **BE** [www.alpinesmuseum.ch](http://www.alpinesmuseum.ch)





## Bulletins

### Eight million inhabitants

The Federal Statistical Office (FSO) announced at the beginning of August that Switzerland's population had reached the eight-million mark. The FSO was unable to say exactly when the figure was reached as population censuses are not taken every day. The Swiss population has more than trebled since 1860. However, population growth has not been linear. Switzerland was a nation of emigration in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and also between 1910 and 1930. Population growth was highest between 1950 and 1970 at 1.4 % on average per year.

### More traffic – more congestion

Motorists travelled almost 26 billion kilometres on Swiss motorways last year – 2.8 % more than in the previous year. Mileage covered on the motorways has more than doubled since 1990. The rise in traffic has also resulted in increasing delays and congestion. A total of 19,149 hours spent in traffic jams was recorded in 2011 based on 12,325 traffic reports. This is 20 % more than in the previous year.

### Second homes – effective from 2013

The initiative restricting the proportion of second homes, approved by the electorate on 11 March 2012, will only take effect in early 2013. The Federal Council resolved on 22 August that the ordinance governing the key issues will not enter into force until 1 January 2013. The campaigners behind the initiative, led by Franz Weber, were outraged and accused the Federal Council of giving in to the construction lobby.

### The most popular first names

Mia, Mattia, Gabriel, Emma, Leon and Giulia were the most popular first names in Switzerland in 2011. Broken down by linguistic region, Mia, ahead of Lena and Elena, for girls and Leon, followed by Noah and Luca for boys were the most popular names in German-speaking Switzerland. Emma has been the number 1 for girls in French-speaking Switzerland since 2004, followed by Chloé and Lara. Gabriel, Noah and Nathan were the top choices for boys. Mattia, Alessandro and Leonardo and Giulia, Sofia and Emma held the top spots in Italian-speaking Switzerland. 80,808 children came into the world in 2011, of whom 39,182 were girls and 41,626 boys.

### No ransom money paid

The June issue of "Swiss Review" reported on the escape and return to Switzerland of the two Swiss hostages in Pakistan. The Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) wishes to emphasise that Switzerland did not pay any ransom money or render any other services to secure the release of the hostages. It has also stated that, contrary to reports shortly after their release, the two hostages did not have to bear any costs incurred by federal government in connection with their abduction. They will take part in information events at schools and other institutions to highlight the dangers of travelling in crisis areas.

## Quotations

*"Death is nothing to us. When we exist death is not, and when death exists we are not."*  
Epicurus, Greek philosopher (341–270 B.C.)

*"I was already happy yesterday, am today and will be tomorrow. I'm a complex character."* Steve Guerda, Swiss Olympic show jumping champion

*"Switzerland has not got worse, other nations have improved. Dreaming will achieve nothing."*  
Ueli Maurer, Federal Councillor and Minister of Sport, on Switzerland's performance at the Olympic Games

*"There are foolish thoughts in everyone, but the wise keep them a secret."*  
Wilhelm Busch, German poet and artist (1832–1908)

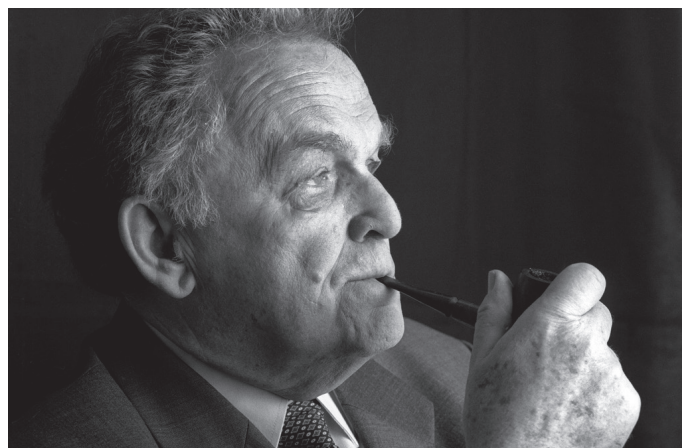
*"If 50 million people say a foolish thing, it is still a foolish thing."*  
Anatole France, French author and Nobel Prize winner (1844–1924)

*"Truth is the most valuable of all possessions and should be used sparingly and with restraint."*  
André Kaminski, Swiss author (1923–1991)

*"Facts and truth really don't have much to do with each other."*  
William Faulkner, American author and Nobel Prize winner (1897–1962)

*"Thinking is the hardest work there is, which is probably the reason why so few engage in it."*  
Henry Ford, 1862–1947, founder of the Ford Motor Company

*"Only human beings undergo catastrophes, provided they survive them. Nature knows no catastrophes."*  
Max Frisch, Swiss author (1911–1991)



The date was 7 December 1983. Otto Stich was elected to the Federal Council – by just one vote more than the absolute majority. His party, the Social Democrats, and Swiss women were shocked and outraged. The party had put forward Liliane Uchtenhagen as its official candidate to succeed Federal Councillor Willy Ritschard, but the conservative majority in Parliament elected Stich. Only, Otto Stich did not prove to be the easy-going SP representative the conservatives had wanted. He was an extremely frugal Finance Minister, he had no fear of confrontation, and he was resolute and sometimes gruff. He retired from the Federal Council on 30 August 1995. He passed away recently, on 13 September 2012, at the age of 85.



BLS RegioExpress in Emmental, Bern Region

# Roam between Bern and Lucerne.

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Setting off from Bern, the BLS RegioExpress travels through the beautiful green Emmental, a true land of plenty. It's worth making a stop or two to take in the magnificent houses that are typical of the region and taste its specialties, such as the famous cheese that bears its name, or even discover the cow bells produced at the Berger foundry in Bärau.

## ... and from Entlebuch to the foot of Mount Pilatus

After Emmental, the trail leads to Entlebuch, a region also known as the "Wild West" of Lucerne. This natural paradise is the only UNESCO biosphere in Switzerland, where fascinating landscapes of pre-alpine marshland and karst areas are waiting to be discovered. This is the perfect opportunity to try the beneficial effects of Kneipp baths, set amongst the idyllic backdrop of pastures above the village of Flüfli. With body and mind rejuvenated, you will be ready to set off again for Lucerne.

### The unique cheese with holes

Well known for its holes, Emmental is also a cheese that has attained Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée (AOC) status, granted to products with a designated origin. Discover how this cheese is made – nothing beats a visit to the cheese factory in Affoltern for a demonstration.



Tip 1

MySwitzerland.com  
Webcode: **D37291**

### The delights of Emmental

Kambly, one of the most famous biscuit makers in Switzerland, is situated right on the BLS RegioExpress trail. More than just a biscuit factory, a visit to the world of Kambly will involve discovering the secrets of those who create its delights or even try to do some yourself.



Tip 2

MySwitzerland.com  
Webcode: **C133096**

### Health through water

Relaxation and wellbeing amongst the pastures at the Entlebuch biosphere reserve, where there is a hidden pond fed by a source of freshwater, dedicated to hydrotherapy using the method developed in the 19th century by the priest Sebastian Kneipp.



Tip 3

MySwitzerland.com  
Webcode: **A38131**

## Network Switzerland:

### Hotel Landgasthof Kemmeriboden-Bad, Schangnau

Register until 30.11.12 at MySwitzerland.com/aso and win a two-night stay for two people at Hotel Landgasthof Kemmeriboden-Bad in Schangnau.



MySwitzerland.com  
Webcode: **A54647**

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



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Organisation des Suisses de l'étranger  
Organizzazione degli Svizzeri all'estero  
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