Editorial

Dear Readers in the United States

You should be a little more considerate with me: One week before deadline, I had not a single article from you! And I’m sure you don’t want to receive Regional Pages filled just with ads. So I sent out a “help” e-mail to all Swiss representations in the United States. And they came through. You will be able to read two articles from New York, one from Los Angeles and one from Texas. At the same time I received a book for a review. Then my husband was reading “Swiss Watching – Inside the Land of Milk and Money”. Friends who had lent the book to us thought it was very funny and my husband kept on chuckling while reading, although he felt that when writing about famous Swiss, Pestalozzi, Gottfried Keller and Jeremias Gotthelf should have been included. Suddenly he said: “You should publish a book review!” And indeed I think you would enjoy reading this book, especially when you haven’t been in Switzerland for a few years. Probably even your American friends would enjoy it. Some of the misconceptions about Switzerland would be corrected, and some of what people think we are, would be reaffirmed. Definitely something to enjoy!

And don’t forget, deadline for Swiss Review # 3 is April 20th.

WA L B A U R

wbaur@roadrunner.com

North Carolina

Swiss Society of Charlotte

For anyone who loves cheese, wine, a nice chat with friends, and a bit of “Swissness”, our annual “Raclette” evening was the right event to attend!

After the cold weather this week, we enjoyed a wonderful Saturday evening mingling with more than 100 Swiss and Swiss friends and relished the smell and taste of delicious cheese. Our guests ate more than 40 pounds of Raclette cheese during the social get-together and delighted in some Lindt chocolate and delicious desserts. In addition to the wonderful dinner the raffle, organized by Lorena Riedener, also turned out to be one of the highlights of the evening. The lucky winners took home Swiss Schnaps, excellent wine and even a Swiss Raclette set. Many thanks to Lorena!

With warm cheese in the belly, a last glass of wine and love in our hearts, we let the evening come to an end in pleasant company. Thank you to our Raclette Grill Masters Roger Boschung, Thomas Koch, Markus Bersinger, Reto Corbetti, Walter Hess, Titus Riedener and to the bar man Marco Deillon.

Don’t miss our next event! Visit our homepage: www.swisscharlotte.com. We hope to see you soon.

RAHEL KOLLER
BOARD MEMBER
rahelk82@gmail.com

Gisela Clark looks forward to the first portion of Raclette, prepared by Raclette Grill Master Roger Boschung
New York

Close partners Switzerland and US ring the bell at Wall Street

On February 11, 2015 Ambassador André Schaller, Consul General of Switzerland in New York rang the opening bell at the New York Stock Exchange to celebrate 70 years of the American-Swiss Foundation! The American Swiss Foundation is a private, non-profit organization founded in 1945 to preserve and strengthen the historic friendship between the United States and Switzerland.

The main program of the American Swiss Foundation is a Young Leaders Conference, held annually in Switzerland since 1990. Ambassador Schaller is an alumnus of the Young Leaders (1997). The program is an excellent platform to strengthen ties between our two countries through creating personal friendships and we are happy to celebrate this anniversary.

Consulate General of Switzerland in New York
nyc.vertretung@eda.admin.ch

Economic Outlook 2015

Again this year, we had the pleasure of hosting Andreas Höfert, Chief Economist and the Global Head of Wealth Management Research at UBS at the Swiss Consul General’s Residence in New York. In this annual event co-organized with the Swiss-American Chamber of Commerce, attendees have the chance to hear from one of the world’s leading economic forecasters and to engage in a lively discussion and Q&A.

Mr. Höfert spoke about the 2015 Economic Outlook and opened his presentation by highlighting the great divergence between regions, focusing on the US, EU, Switzerland and the emerging markets. By looking at the current climate, he states that “the economy is all over the place.” Mr. Höfert also discussed trends in business cycles, monetary policies, how countries are coping with the strong US dollar, and reforms.

The wealth of knowledge and experience that Mr. Höfert brings makes him a dynamic speaker and expert forecaster. A graduate of St. Gallen, he earned his doctorate majoring in international macroeconomics and econometrics. He began his career at UBS and has become one of the leading economic researchers. It was clear that the audience thoroughly enjoyed his presentation and many had questions on his predictions for 2015. We hope to see him present a yearly Economic Outlook again at the Residence next year. Thanks to our partners, the Swiss-American Chamber of Commerce, for co-organizing such a successful event.

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**Book Review**

**Barbarian Spring**

*By Jonas Lüscher, translated by Peter Lewis*

From the late-2000’s housing collapse in the United States to the recent economic unrest in Europe and beyond, money has seemingly caused more global panic than pleasure in the last few years. Now, Jonas Lüscher deftly reveals how tenuous our situation really is in his debut novel.

Preising is a man wealthy beyond measure – but without a shred of control over what matters most. The public face of a telecommunications company, he even has his vacations planned for him by a brilliant, yet commercially unappealing, younger colleague, the secret boss who sends Preising away when important decisions need to be made. On a trip to Tunisia, Preising is invited to the wedding of two traders from London. At the desert celebration, things take a surprising and ultimately gruesome turn after the British financial system collapses overnight – taking the wedding guests’ high-paying jobs and net worth with it.

Hilariously biting in its treatment of modern materialism and an international financial system built on twisted incentives, Barbarian Spring offers a wickedly funny imagining of just what might be in store for the world if we can’t get our priorities straight.

Jonas Lüscher was born in 1976 in Switzerland, and grew up in Berne. In 2013 he received the Berner Literature Award and the Bavarian Art Prize.


**Swiss Watching - Inside the Land of Milk and Money**

*By Diccon Bewes*

One country, four languages, 26 cantons and 7.8 million people (but only 78% of them Swiss); there’s nowhere else like it. Switzerland may be almost 400 km (about 250 miles) from the nearest drop of sea water, but it is an island at the center of Europe. Welcome to the landlocked island!

Swiss watching is a fascinating journey around Europe’s most individual and misunderstood country. From seeking Heidi and finding the best chocolate to reliving a bloody past and exploring an uncertain future, Diccon Bewes proves that there’s more to Switzerland than banks and skis, francs and cheese. This book dispels the myths and unravels the true meaning of “Swissness.”

In a land of cultural contradictions, this is a picture of the real and normally unseen Switzerland, a place where the breathtaking scenery shaped a nation, not just a tour itinerary, and where tradition is as important as innovation.

It’s also the story of its people, who have more power than their politicians, but can’t speak to one another in the same language – and who own more guns per head than the people of Iraq. As for those national clichés, well, not all the cheese has holes, cuckoo clocks aren’t Swiss and the trains don’t always run exactly on time, but Switzerland gave us the Toilet Duck, Velcro and LSD.

Diccon Bewes is a full-time writer following the international success of “Swiss Watching”. After ten years at Lonely Planet and “Holiday Which?” magazine, he decamped to Switzerland, where until recently he was manager of the Stauffer English Bookshop in Berne.

The book is available at Amazon.com
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Last week Swiss Prof. André W. Droxler of Rice University in Houston gave an interesting talk on his findings entitled “Successive Droughts and Floods let to the Demise of the Mayan Civilization”. His research is mostly on the marine geological studies at the Blue Hole in Belize. He as well touched on some of the history of the Mayans and on today’s climate change and shortage of water especially in South America and India. There was a full house at the Black Labrador Restaurant, and the attendants were not disappointed.

The ancient Mayan civilization, known for its monumental contributions to art, science, astronomy and architecture, was probably wiped off the earth by a 100-year drought. Although drought has been previously theorized as one of the causes of the Mesoamerican civilization’s decline, a new study of underwater sediments off the coast of Belize lends further credence to that argument. The study was conducted by a team led by André Droxler, an earth scientist at Rice University in Houston, who told Live Science that he analyzed data from multiple places in the former Mayan heartland.

The researchers extracted minerals from Belize’s famous underwater cave known as the Blue Hole and the lagoons that surround it, and on analyzing them found evidence of a drought between A.D. 800 and A.D. 900 — a period that coincides with the Mayan decline.

Droxler also found that in the two centuries leading up to A.D. 1000, there were only one or two tropical cyclones every two decades as opposed to the usual five or six. “When you have major droughts, you start to get famine and unrest,” he said.

André W. Droxler, Ph.D., is currently a professor in the Department of Earth Science and the director of the Center for the Study of Environment and Society at Rice University. As well he is a James Baker Institute Rice Faculty Scholar. Droxler received his master’s degree equivalent from the University of Neuchâtel (Switzerland) in 1978 and earned his Ph.D. from the Rosenstiel School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences at the University of Miami (Florida) in 1984.
**Califonia**

**OSCAR Season**

In January 2015, my duties led me to Soleure/Switzerland to attend the Solothurner Filmtage. This excellent intimate film festival dedicated to the Swiss film production celebrated its 50th edition demonstrating that Swiss cinema is in good health, vibrating at a pace adapted to present day rhythm. The success of the Swiss cinema is due to skillful directors, actresses, actors as well as to bright pictures captured all over the world to offer the audience food for thought.

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Leaving freezing Switzerland I was all set to face what Angelinos dare call winter thanks to the Hollywood-made imagination. Winter temperatures here often seem like spring, not to say summer... Let’s just call it Oscar Season. A season characterized by storms of superlatives such as “The Knights shining over the world capital of entertainment: Oscar.

I just came back in time to enjoy this glamorous season and to support *Parvaneh* the Swiss film nominated for the 2015 Oscar for Best Short Film (Live Action), a wonderful creation made by young people mastering the art of Short filmmaking in combining perfection with concision. It was therefore a privilege for me to contribute to the Swiss short movie’s campaign in introducing a screening of *Parvaneh* at the Museum of Tolerance and in hosting a reception for media and members of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences at the Swiss residence. In 1991, Swiss director Xavier Koller won an Oscar with a movie entitled “Journey of Hope”. This year, as Parvaneh’s production team made their journey to California, we hoped they would travel back with the...
supreme Hollywood award. Unfortunately the nominees, Talkhon Hamzavi (director) and Stephan Eichenberger (producer) did not win “our” Oscar. The day following the Awards ceremony at the Dolby Theater, I had the pleasure to host the production team for a lunch celebrating the end of the award season. Here I had the opportunity to thank and congratulate them for having contributed to put Switzerland on the Hollywood map during this 87th Oscar season, just being nominated is quite an achievement. As I mentioned above, Swiss cinema is in good health. Talkhon and the team she directed confirm the saying “True Value does not need the test of time” letting us to believe that Swiss movies have a bright future.

I also had the privilege to accompany the Swiss Oscar contender for the Best Foreign Language Film, The Circle by Stephan Haupt. My contribution to the campaign orchestrated by a professional PR – and which started under the umbrella of the Consulate General of Switzerland in New York - followed the same script: screening at the Museum of Tolerance and reception at the Swiss Hancock Park’s Residence. Lots of fans were disappointed not to see Stefan Haupt’s “The Circle” on the short list. However this world acclaimed masterpiece was nominated in Solothurn for the “Swiss Award” for the best fiction film among five productions. And the winner will be known on March 13, 2015 in Geneva, where the Swiss Film Award Ceremony will take place.

In the meantime I would like to thank the Swiss movie industry for helping us think and dream big. I wish all moviegoers a pleasant new cine-ma year towards the 2016 Oscar season. As they say in Soleure: Bonnes projections!

To know more about all above-mentioned movies, please visit www.Swissfilms.ch
Invitation from Switzerland
Dear friends across the world

In the course of this year, members of Swiss Clubs from all over the world will meet for the first time at the Domaine de Penthes in Geneva.

Swiss Clubs, wherever they may be, not only form an essential link amongst the Swiss abroad in any given part of the world - with some members living there for several generations by now - but also a link between its members and their country of origin. Indeed, all together they belong to what could be termed the Swiss World Network.

For forty years now, the Domaine de Penthes has hosted the Foundation for the History of the Swiss Abroad, its museum and its research center. One of our key aims at Penthes is to develop and to support projects, which contribute to preserving and enhancing the heritage of the Swiss Abroad.

Contact: clubsuisse@penthes.ch - www.penthes.ch

Wishing all Swiss Review readers in the United States a Happy Easter!

Wal Baur
Editor