

SWISS REVIEW

The magazine for the Swiss Abroad
May 2018



**A radical approach delivers Grammy success –
the violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja**

**Kosovo celebrates its 10th anniversary –
the nation's close relationship with Switzerland**

**O-Bikes are everywhere –
rental bikes cause a stir in Zurich**

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There has been some bad news for the Swiss Abroad. When Tim Guldemann stepped down from the National Council in March, the Swiss Abroad lost their most powerful voice in Parliament. The SP politician was the first Swiss Abroad ever to be elected to the National Council, but he is now standing down after just two and a half years in the middle of the legislative term. The main reason? It has been too difficult to “live in one place and conduct politics in another”. Living in Berlin and being a politician in Berne clearly did not work out.

Guldemann's departure adds fuel to the fire in an emotionally charged debate. Should a Swiss Abroad even be allowed to enter political life in Switzerland? How can somebody living in Berlin have a feel for what is best for Switzerland? And those who would like to take things a step further in this debate may make their voices heard after Guldemann's decision to step down. Should the Swiss Abroad even have the right to vote in Switzerland? Should someone who has spent decades living in Tasmania or Taiwan be able to influence life in their far-away homeland? Especially as they don't generally even have to live with the consequences?

Such arguments are understandable, whether you support them or not. On the other hand, shouldn't Swiss citizens be allowed to vote on Swiss issues regardless of where they live? They too have fundamental rights, including the right to vote. Many of them are only living abroad temporarily. They are working and living in the Swiss community abroad before returning to Switzerland. In that case, they definitely have to live with the outcome of referenda and elections. Some ballots also concern the Swiss Abroad directly.

It is a contentious issue. Fortunately, the debate has been very restrained thus far following Guldemann's premature departure. Instead of questioning the rights of the Swiss Abroad, most Swiss people have acknowledged the departure of the SP National Councillor with regret or at least with a shrug of the shoulders. Let's hope this remains the case and that sleeping dogs continue to lie.

I too would like to take the opportunity to say goodbye to you in this issue of “Swiss Review”. After an intensive period as editor-in-chief of this magazine, I am returning to my native Basel to embark on a new challenge in my career. Thank you all for your faith in me!

MARKO LEHTINEN, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Cover photo:

The violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja. Photo: Julia Wesely



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Fritz Osterwalder and the protests of 1968 – 50 years on



As a Swiss of a similar generation to Professor Osterwalder but living in Britain I remember the events of that time well. In Cambridge in the late 1970s we pushed the University to start child care for staff and students

through petitions, marches and occupations. The radical movement was democratic, socialist and feminist. I disagree with Fritz that if there had been a revolution it would have been undemocratic, chaotic and totalitarian. The revolutions in Russia and China took place in societies with very deep poverty and oppression and were opposed violently by internal and external forces that were recognizably fascist. There is no reason to suppose that the same trajectory would have been followed in Europe.

GREG KASER, UNITED KINGDOM

Secret ideas factory.
The hydrogen-powered lorry from Switzerland



Fantastic that the Swiss have come up with this! I know that hydrogen is the fuel of the future. The sooner we get more hydrogen fueled vehicles the better the world will be. I have thought about this for well over 20 years. Every

city, town and village has to have electricity and water so hydrogen can be produced everywhere. It can also be produced during low peak electricity hours and stored. The pollution is distilled water! Who can argue with that? Probably the oil companies, the biggest polluters of the world!

JOHN BOSSHARD, USA

Interesting to hear about hydrogen power which seems to have been supplanted in development terms by electric or battery power. If we can get over the initial development and production costs it looks to be a better solution than just electric batteries which looks to be storing up problems for the future with a huge problem being what to do with spent batteries.

MORITZ STEIGER, UNITED KINGDOM

It is a shame that this technology will not survive as it is too complex. It is hard to imagine that “filling up” in this way at home or on longer journeys is feasible. The technology and infrastructure are much too expensive compared with electricity.

JEN LE GRAND, CANADA

Swiss aid in Libya.
CHF 1 million for the coastguard



As long as no or only poor economic, social and hygiene-related infrastructure exists in the African countries, there will be no positive outlook for the future. People will flee to places where they can hope for a better life.

Everything else is just a pipe dream. After all, this continent has been exploited for centuries and proper development has been avoided. Put simply, a huge amount of money is needed to help develop the above-mentioned infrastructure. This must happen as quickly as possible as Africa’s population is set to double over the next 40 years. I cannot imagine what lies in store for merry old Europe then.

ERWIN BALLI-BAUTISTA, SPAIN



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Kosovo – our canton

In February, Kosovo celebrated the 10th anniversary of its independence. But what has that got to do with Switzerland? A great deal actually, as close relations exist between the two countries in a number of areas.

ENVER ROBELLI

It is said that Kosovo is the 27th canton of Switzerland. No earthquake, flood or hurricane separated the tiny country from the Swiss Confederation and transported it to the backwaters of the Balkans. The course of history ran very differently. One spring day in 1964, the Swiss Farmers' Union began recruiting agricultural workers from Yugoslavia - including lots of Kosovo Albanians. Their homeland, then a province of the multi-ethnic Yugoslavia, was poor and underdeveloped, and the Albanian majority of the population were suppressed by central government in Belgrade. That is why many Kosovans decided they would rather mow Swiss meadows and milk Swiss cows than face an uncertain future.

The future. More than half a century later, this is how things now look: Bernard Challandes from Neuchâtel was recently appointed head coach of the Kosovo national football team. Just two years ago, FIFA admitted the small Balkan country as its 210th member, and the Kosovans occupy 176th place in the world rankings. Challandes, a top coach previously in charge of FCZ, has a good knowledge of the Swiss football scene and he knows where, between Geneva and St. Gallen, the many talented footballers with Kosovan roots are plying their trade. Over 200,000 Albanians from the former Yugoslavia are living in Switzerland, and most come from Kosovo.

The close ties that now exist between Switzerland and Kosovo are also reflected in the fact that footballers such as Xherdan Shaqiri and Granit Xhaka are amongst the biggest idols of Swiss teenagers. Certain football officials in Kosovo hope that Challandes will manage to entice some talented players to Pristina. However, the stadium in the Kosovan capital does not meet the strict requirements of FIFA and UEFA, which means that the Kosovans have to play their home matches abroad. They once played in Frankfurt against the Faroe Islands, and on another occasion in Paris against Madagascar. The match against the African nation was the first under the new national coach Bernard Challandes. Kosovo won 1:0.

Record-breaking cake

Lots of things have to be improvised in Kosovo, and not just on the football pitch. On 17 February, the nation celebrated its first major anniversary - ten years of independence. It

was a cold winter's day when in 2008 the Kosovan MPs declared their own state - while outside on Mother Teresa Boulevard the crowds marvelled at and enjoyed possibly the biggest cake ever. And to top it all off there was free beer and fireworks. However, Kosovo is still not truly independent a decade on. Serbia, the former occupying force, refuses to recognise Kosovan independence. Belgrade regards Kosovo as a renegade province. Five EU states - Spain, Greece, Romania, Slovakia and Cyprus - have not recognised Kosovo either.



The fight for independence has to be continued every day. On the big stage of global politics, the Kosovans are supported by the USA and extremely influential Western European states, while Serbia is backed by Russia. So far, more than 110 countries – including Switzerland – have accepted Kosovo as an independent state, and the Balkan republic is now also a member of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the Olympic Committee.

Above all, the nation has enjoyed success in the fields of sport and music. Judoka Majlinda Kelmendi, who is now 26, wrote history at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio when she won a gold medal on only the second day of the event. Other Kosovan idols include Rita Ora and Dua Lipa. These young women – who are referred to as “our daughters” by young and old alike – come from Pristina, but grew up in London and are stars on the global music

scene. Ora gave a concert in Pristina on the anniversary of independence, and Lipa has announced one for early August.

In summer, Kosovo is overrun with “Schatzis”. “Schatzis” have become a permanent fixture in the Albanian language. This is the name given to Kosovans who live abroad but flood into Kosovo in their hundreds of thousands during July and August. They visit their families, spend their hard-earned money from the West, buy apartments and build houses. The “Schatzis” are very conspicuous. The boys are cool guys with gel in their hair, ripped jeans and tight T-shirts. The girls wear plunging necklines, big sunglasses, mini-skirts and high heels, which are highly inappropriate on Kosovo’s potholed streets. When the “Schatzis” come to Kosovo, the courting season begins. Future mothers-in-law go in search of brides, future fathers-in-law visit restaurants that could host flamboyant wed-



Ten years ago, Kosovans also celebrated their independence on the streets of Switzerland, such as here in front of the Federal Palace in Berne. Photos: Keystone

ding celebrations next year and future sons-in-law meet young women whom they have got to know on Facebook. For the females abroad, Kosovo in summer is like a dating agency.

Without money sent home by the Kosovans abroad, the tiny Balkan republic would soon collapse. Around a billion Swiss francs is sent to Kosovan households each year from compatriots abroad. “Unfortunately, most of the money is spent on consumer goods and is not invested,” reveals Agron Demi of the GAP research institute.

In Pristina and other cities, the street scene is dominated by yellow mail vans, red flags with a white cross and vehicles with the CH sticker. For a long time, many Swiss people saw Kosovo as a far-flung, unknown province somewhere in the backwaters of the Balkans. Much has since changed. More and more Swiss people are visiting Kosovo. You also see them in travel groups strolling around Pristina. “I’ve come to visit a friend. We’ve worked together for more than 20 years,” explains a mechanic from the Zurich Oberland. Local politicians from Wil are standing in front of the memorial to the Albanian national hero Skanderbeg and are showering the tour guide with questions. They want to learn more about the nation’s culture, history and politics. Such knowledge may prove useful in helping Kosovo Albanians in Switzerland to integrate more successfully.

In Pristina since 1999

Andreas Wormser has already integrated – into Kosovo. He came to Pristina in 1999 while working for the Federal Office for Refugees. The diplomat’s task was to establish whether the return of war refugees was feasible. Wormser decided to stay. He was primarily involved in securing the rights of the Roma minority. As an FDFA official, he nevertheless felt that he needed a greater challenge. In 2013, Wormser opened Hotel Gračanica, the first multi-ethnic accommodation in Kosovo. The building was designed by the Kosovan-Swiss architect Bujar Nrecaj. This

is another example of the close ties between Kosovo and Switzerland.

Some Kosovan villages are completely dependent on the diaspora. One example is Smira on the border with Macedonia. To get to Smira requires patience. Firstly, you get snarled up in Pristina’s chaotic traffic, then the junction for the new motorway is impossible to find. The splendour of Balkan “turbo architecture” can be seen along the old road linking Kosovo and Macedonia. Boundless construction has resulted in unruly urban development. Like pearls on a string, there are rows of petrol stations, private hospitals, DIY stores, hotels letting rooms by the hour, furniture shops, garages, shopping malls and private schools. You are also sure to find a secured residential complex. The new rich and those who have profited during the post-war period live with their families in gated communities along American lines.

“Welcome to Smira,” says Tefik Salihu an hour later. He is something akin to the information officer in this village which lies in eastern Kosovo amidst gently rolling hills, open fields and luscious meadows. Smira has around 5,000 inhabitants and an estimated 2,000 more living abroad, most in Geneva and its surrounding area. “The economic prosperity of the canton of Geneva is important to us. We don’t expect much from central government in Pristina,” Salihu remarks sarcastically. He moved to the city on the Rhône in the 1990s, but soon returned home to his family when war threatened in Kosovo and then broke out.

The special month of March

In Kosovo, March is a month of historic anniversaries. In March 1981, students from the University of Pristina initially protested against the supposedly inedible canteen food but soon also tabled political demands - and received support from workers, some officials, professors and school pupils. “Kosovan Republic” – whole generations of Kosovo Albanians grew up with this slogan. Kosovo was to become a constituent republic with equal rights within the multi-ethnic state of Yugoslavia. People said this was the only way to shake off Serbian rule and prevent Belgrade from one day arbitrarily overturning the province’s autonomy. This actually happened in March 1989, just two years after an apparatchik – Slobodan Milosevic – had seized power in Serbia. He regarded nationalism as an instrument to exercise power for himself. After the abolition of Kosovan autonomy, Albanians, who made up the majority of the population, were marginalised in society. Western observers called it an apartheid system in Europe.

It resulted in the horizontal division of Kosovo: On the surface the Serbs had control, but beneath it the 1.8 million

Bernard Challandes from Switzerland, on the right, has been the national coach of the Kosovo football team for a few months.





Kosovo Albanians funded their parallel state with voluntary contributions. The community abroad also played a vital role here. The peaceful resistance led by the literary critic Ibrahim Rugova lasted for just under ten years. The suppressed Albanians won a lot of sympathy in the West. At the end of the 1990s, Rugova let the reins slip. More and more young men were losing patience and took up arms. The UCK rebel army soon made a name for itself with attacks on representatives of the Serbian state and Albanian collaborators.

The UCK's first press releases were written between Zurich and Geneva. The future rebel leaders Hashim Thaci, who is the country's president today, Ramush Haradinaj, the prime minister, and Kadri Veseli, the head of Parliament, lived here during the 1990s. The Serbian state responded to the first armed attacks carried out by the UCK with brutal force. The extended family of UCK founder Adem Jashari was almost completely wiped out at the beginning of March 1998. A year later, the Serbian security forces had killed around 1400 Kosovo Albanian civilians and displaced around 300,000 people. NATO intervened to prevent an impending genocide. The aerial battle lasted 78 days and ended with the withdrawal of the Serbian state from Kosovo. The province was put under UN administration and given independence in 2008 based on a proposal by the Finnish UN envoy Martti Ahtisaari.

The former UCK rebels have since had free rein. Hashim Thaci and Ramush Haradinaj govern Kosovo poorly. Corruption scandals shake Europe's poorest relation. But such conduct has few consequences. An EU mission, which sought to set up a constitutional state after independence, has been completely discredited in light of numerous scandals and suspected bribery. The Kosovan war heroes clearly believe they are entitled to dip into the state coffers. Over 100,000 Kosovans have therefore turned their backs on their homeland over the past four years. Anyone outside the system of patronage finds life

The Swiss Cross can be spotted in many places in Kosovo, not just at the Swiss embassy in Pristina.

hard. Unemployment stands at over 30 %, and young people, above all, see few prospects in the country. Huge challenges remain in the form of integrating the 100,000-strong Serbian minority and coming to terms with the wartime past. Several former UCK leaders carried out atrocities on Serbs and the Roma minority. A special tribunal, set up following a report by the Swiss politician Dick Marty, now aims to bring the suspected war criminals to justice.

Exports and glimpses of hope

There are nevertheless some glimpses of hope for Kosovo. For example, the company Frutomania farms 140 hectares of land with apple, pear, plum, apricot and quince trees. The Kosovan smoothies made of fruit juice with no added sugar, water or additives can be found in almost every shop in Kosovo and are increasingly being exported abroad. Swisscontact, the Swiss organisation for sustainable economic growth, is helping the Kosovans to promote their products. Frutomania recently also began producing spirits. Another example: Gjirafa is a successful IT company that runs an Albanian version of YouTube and Netflix and is trying to develop online retail in various forms.

All Kosovans received some welcome news at the end of March. The republic finally obtained its own dialling code – +383. These three numbers represent a symbol of statehood to Kosovans. States can make an application for an international dialling code to the International Telecommunication Union in Geneva as soon as they become a member of the United Nations. Kosovo is a long way off that. However, a solution was found under pressure from the EU. Austria made the application for a Kosovan dialling code. Previously, Kosovo was dependent upon Serbia in terms of telecommunications. Anyone wanting to speak to the president of Kosovo via the fixed network had to dial the international code for Serbia.

There remains much to do before Kosovo becomes a properly functioning state. It will be a hard slog to free the nation from the stranglehold of the greedy elite so that a young generation comes to power and leads the country into the EU in the distant future. That currently remains just a dream, but then Kosovans have made many dreams come true. Founding their own state, for one thing.



Bitter battle over radio and television

The electorate fended off a serious attack on Swiss radio and television on 4 March by an overwhelming majority. The Swiss Broadcasting Corporation (SRG SSR) nevertheless still faces calls for cutbacks.

JÜRIG MÜLLER

Switzerland has experienced plenty of highly charged ballots over recent years. But it has probably never seen such a long, fiercely contested and memorable referendum campaign as this one. There was much at stake with the “No Billag” initiative, namely the survival of the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation (SRG SSR) and 34 private local and regional stations. The authors of the initiative, a radical group of free-market libertarians, were calling for the abolition of radio and television licence fees which would have sounded the death knell for public service broadcasting. The referendum campaign was conducted in such an emotionally charged manner that it produced a great deal of hyperbole. While opponents of the initiative raised the spectre of the disintegration of quadrilingual Switzerland and the end of democracy, its supporters disparagingly dismissed the SRG SSR stations as state propaganda tools.

Broad front supporting the SRG SSR

Things looked promising for the group behind the initiative at the start of the referendum campaign in late autumn 2017. Initial surveys indicated that they might succeed in toppling the SRG SSR, a Swiss public institution with a very rich history. This was despite the fact that the proposal was rejected by the Federal Council, Parliament and all of the political parties except for the Swiss People’s Party (SVP). Then a wide range of different social groups started to realise what they might lose. Societies, associations and committees in all parts of the



Gilles Marchand, Director General of the SRG SSR, appeared in front of the media in Bern on 4 March after the “No Billag” initiative was rejected. Photo: Keystone

country and from the most diverse backgrounds were set up; citizens, friends of traditional folk music, writers, sports people, artists, musicians, eminent figures and opinion leaders from all walks of life fought tooth and nail for Swiss radio and television.

In the end, the trend was not only reversed, but the initiative was rejected by an unexpectedly overwhelming 71.6% majority of voters and by all the cantons. The referendum victors proclaimed that the result showed strong support for public service broadcasting, highlighted its unifying role in quadrilingual Switzerland and represented a vote against diminishing solidarity in the nation. The defeated initiative organisers claimed they had finally sparked a long overdue debate on media policy.

A CHF 100 million set of cost-cutting measures

Tremendous pressure had in fact built up with the initiative. Gilles

Marchand, Director General of the SRG SSR, responded on the evening of the referendum Sunday. He announced a 100 million Swiss franc set of cost-cutting measures and said that commercial breaks during films would be scrapped. The SRG SSR no longer intends to publish online content unless it relates to its programmes, which, in other words, means relinquishing its existing services that are similar to those of newspapers. Here it is meeting the demands of private publishers.

The losers have shown astonishing audacity, calling for massive cuts in the aftermath of the referendum despite the public’s overwhelming support for the SRG SSR as an institution. The SVP went the furthest, calling for companies to be exempted from the licence fee and a reduction for households from 365 Swiss francs as of 2019 – it is still 451 Swiss francs in 2018 – to 300 Swiss francs a year. If it fails to win majority support in Parliament, the SVP already has a popular initiative

The media crisis rumbles on

After the SRG SSR, the Swiss News Agency (SDA) is the second national media institution to come under pressure. Concentration in the media market continues unabated.

aimed at halving the licence fee up its sleeve. It is also remarkable that practically all the other parties have also proposed further cost-cutting and downsizing measures – even the Greens. Only the SP argued that the SRG SSR should now be left in peace. “After this referendum result, it is now time to stop this nonsense,” remarked Roger Nordmann, head of the SP parliamentary group.

Federal finances secured

The Swiss Confederation remains on a financially secure footing. 84.1 % of voters voted in favour of the federal decree on the new 2021 financial regime on 4 March. Strictly speaking, there was nothing new about this bill. It only really concerned the continuation of existing policy. The current financial regime expires in 2020, and will now be extended until 2035 thanks to the approval of voters. Direct federal tax and VAT together make up just under two-thirds of federal government's total revenues. The two taxes are therefore the main sources of income for the Swiss Confederation. Further income flows into the federal coffers from mineral oil tax, stamp duty, tax on tobacco and withholding tax.

One of Swiss federalism's unique traits is that the federal tax system is always only valid for a limited period of time. The Federal Council initially wanted to amend the federal financial regime to allow it to levy both taxes without any time limitation. However, there was opposition during the consultation procedure and it is now only set to be extended by 15 years. The main argument is that making the taxes subject to time limits and a referendum puts them on a more legitimate democratic basis. (JM)

JÜRIG MÜLLER

It seemed like the soundtrack to the referendum campaign on the “No Bilag” initiative. Various developments over the first few weeks and months of the year indicated that the crisis in the Swiss media industry has further intensified. Dramatic events are unfolding at the Swiss News Agency. After the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation, a second public service media institution now finds itself under huge pressure. The acute nature of the situation is reflected by the fact that the editorial staff went on strike for several days at the end of January – an extremely rare occurrence in the Swiss media. When the management announced a rapid downsizing with the loss of 40 of the 150 full-time positions it caused uproar. CEO Markus Schwab added more fuel to the fire by declaring in an interview: “SDA only has a duty to its shareholders. We are not a non-profit organisation.” The company's homepage nevertheless continues to state: “SDA does not generally seek to make a profit.”

SDA is in fact little known to the wider public, but as the national news agency it is the backbone and central nervous system of Swiss journalism and therefore an indispensable part of public service media. The former FDP Federal Councillor Kaspar Villiger once aptly described the agency as “a conveyor belt of reality”. It supplies almost all of the nation's media outlets, but also authorities, organisations and companies, with news around the clock in three languages. As the Swiss News Agency also provides almost fully comprehensive coverage of par-

liamentary debates and political and economic developments in Switzerland, it also performs a significant archiving role.

Significant fall in revenues

The troubled situation has a complex background and is deeply rooted in the history and structure of the company. The Swiss News Agency was founded in 1895 by Swiss publishers. It has always faced a fundamental problem – the owners, who are the publishers, are also the customers. As owners they must take an interest in the success of the agency, but as publishers they also want to pay the lowest prices possible. This worked well to some degree while the newspaper industry was flourishing. However, until recently, the prices were linked to the number of newspapers printed. With the falling circulation of print media, SDA has also come under pressure. A new system was introduced at the beginning of the year. It is no longer based on print circulation but instead the reach in terms of print and online content.

Nevertheless, the management has indicated that a sharp short-term fall in revenues has made a reduction in headcount necessary. In contrast, the editorial staff are accusing the management of lacking a strategy. It is unclear which services the news agency is supposed to provide in future with fewer staff. Another factor is the federal administration, which has paid SDA around 2.7 million Swiss francs a year as a customer in the past. Politicians are questioning whether the agency should continue to receive

support from federal government in future.

In parallel with the crisis at SDA, the upheaval in the traditional media industry is continuing. It suffered major setbacks in 2017 with advertising, the most important source of income for publishers, increasingly moving away from journalism and shifting towards the internet giants. The diversity of the press is dwindling and concentration continues to increase. Editorial staff are being merged and are producing various newspaper titles centrally.

Tamedia, the media group with the greatest reach in Switzerland, is driving this trend. In 2017, it announced plans for the most radical form of internal press concentration. The 14 Tamedia newspaper titles would all be retained but, from the start of this year, Swiss politics, foreign affairs, business, culture, society, background, science and sport would each be merged into a single central editorial department.

Pietro Supino, Chairman of the Board of Directors at Tamedia and a publisher, is aware that the merger of editorial teams is a “contentious issue” because it affects the “identity of individual titles”. In the anniversary supplement “125 years of Tamedia”, published at the beginning of March 2018, he remarked: “This is why it is vital that we enable better journalism in the new structure – by bundling resources – and thus create a new identity.” If this fails, people will “rightly say that we have destroyed valuable

assets. However, if we succeed, and the initial indications bode well, then we will have laid a solid foundation for the future of journalism in Switzerland.”

“Operational viability under threat”

Editorial staff representatives take a much more critical view of this step. They believe it is resulting in ridiculous situations. Some of these central units are overstaffed because journalists from the various newspapers have been merged into them. Contrastingly, local departments, which continue to exist on some titles, tend to be understaffed because people leaving are not being replaced. An insider has revealed that the operational viability of the editorial staff is under threat. The group is focusing on natural attrition. However, unless enough people de-

part voluntarily, there are fears of a wave of redundancies in the near future.

The Tamedia group has now also started the takeover of the media marketing company Goldbach. The goal is to create a marketing company that is amongst those with the greatest reach in Switzerland. Goldbach organises most of the advertising shown on German private TV stations operating in Switzerland.

The Somedia publishing company in the canton of Grisons has been pursuing a similar approach to Tamedia since April 2018. The previously independent daily newspapers “Südschweiz” and “Bündner Tagblatt” will also be produced by a merged central editorial department. The reasons are the same – to create synergies and cut costs. This means job losses are likely.





Photo: Rental bikes from providers such as O-Bike and Limebike are causing a stir on the streets of Zurich. Photo: Keystone

Cyclists are moving into the fast lane

Do bicycles have a place in the city of the future? Whatever the answer, many Swiss cities are focusing on more bikes and on doubling their share of overall traffic. Muscle-powered travel gives rise to new hopes but also triggers defensive responses.

MARC LETTAU

Two hundred years after the invention of the bicycle by the ingenious Karl Freiherr von Drais, this engineless mode of transport is causing a stir in the cosmopolitan city of Zurich. It is not that Switzerland's largest city has just discovered the bicycle. But one particular trend has become a hot topic of conversation. Rental bikes are appearing all over the place. There are hundreds of them. They are also found in places where they seriously infringe upon the people of Zurich's expectations of orderliness.

The situation in Zurich is indicative of what is currently going on in other Swiss cities, too. Resourceful companies are pursuing the business strategy of flooding urban cen-

tres with their rental bikes without creating parking facilities for them. Instead they provide smartphone apps which enable available bikes to be found and unlocked. Customers who no longer need the bicycle after their journey can park it anywhere. At least six providers are vying for business from cyclists in Zurich: O-Bike, Limebike, Züri rollt, Züri-Velo, Smide with electric bikes and Carvelo2go, which hires bikes to transport goods. The Danish company Donkey Republic is also considering entering the rental bike market in Zurich.

In other cities, Nextbike, Velospot and PubliBike are shaking up the market. They are causing a stir and not just because of the revolution in transport. Great scepticism is

being shown towards the Singapore-based company O-Bike in particular. O-Bike's bikes tend to be of low quality, so the company is coming in for criticism, with people saying that its primary focus is on gathering useable and sellable customer data. More fundamental issues are also inflaming passions. There is major discontent about the commercial appropriation, constriction and "blighting" – a quote from the NZZ – of public space. Others, on the other hand, proclaim that rental bikes simply provide proof that sharing is increasingly becoming more important than personal ownership.

The bicycle in the Federal Constitution?

The current furore over rental bikes obscures the view of the bigger picture. Rental bikes may well become a firm fixture. Some rental providers may well disappear from the scene. But the importance of bicycles will undoubtedly increase in Swiss cities with or without the rental market. Many city authorities have put the promotion of cycling on their political agenda. The cities are going through a process of transformation. The "escape" to the country has long been supplanted by the desire to return to the city. The demographic change this entails is in turn putting pressure on the cities – including in terms of mobility. If they do not wish to suffer the impact of individual motoring to an even greater extent, they also have to promote "non-motorised transport" – walking and especially cycling – in addition to public transport. This has led to an ideologically charged situation. Left-wing and green politicians see the bicycle as a panacea in the fight against urban pollution, noise and confinement. In contrast, motorists feel patronised but understand that no new cycle paths can be created without reducing the road space dedicated to cars.

However, the general course has already been set. Under pressure from the popular initiative calling for the promotion of cycling to be enshrined in the Federal Constitution, the Federal Council has also yielded. Its counter-proposal does not go as far as the bicycle initiative, but it does recognise the importance of cycling and its promotion. Adopting the same position as the Council of States, the National Council also backed the Federal Council's cycling proposal in March. The Swiss people will have the last word.

Ever more car-free households

The politicians may well be lagging behind what is actually going on. Mobility in the cities has long been undergoing a process of transformation. In several of Switzer-

land's larger cities, less than half of all households now still own their own car. The main reason for this restraint is the well-developed public transport infrastructure. However, expanding it is expensive and restricted by urban density. The promotion of cycling in the cities as a transport policy goal not only aims to restrict private motoring but also to take the pressure off the buses and trams which are often full.

Evi Allemann endorses this view. The President of the Swiss Association for Transport and the Environment and SP National Councillor, who has just been elected to the Bernese cantonal government, believes public transport is extremely important in Switzerland. The share that bicy-

Swiss transport behaviour

Of the almost four million commuters in Switzerland who travel to work every day, 54% drive a car or ride a motorbike, while 31% use public transport, 9% go on foot and 7% cycle to work. Of teenagers and young adults in education 7% also travel to their place of education by bike. The proportion of carless households is on the rise, particularly in the cities. The leader here is Berne at 56.8%, followed by Zurich at 52.8%, Basel at 52.1% and Lausanne at 46.3%. Lagging behind amongst the big cities is Geneva at 40.9%.

cles make up of all modes of transport will probably double to 20% or more, particularly in urban areas, she says. However, it is unlikely that the figures of outstanding cycling cities, such as Copenhagen, will be reached in Switzerland. Public transport in Switzerland is simply too good for that. The burden on the cities will nevertheless be relieved by promoting cycling.

What steps are needed? The transport politician believes clearly marked and safe cycling lanes and paths are required as well as the improvement of danger spots. A perception of a lack of safety is preventing people from using their bikes in everyday life. Allemann: "Too many people say they are quite simply frightened." A sufficient number of suitable parking places is also required, she says. Is she implying that the flooding of the cities with rental bikes without fixed parking places is a problem? "If anarchy reigns over cycling, this tarnishes its image." "Clear rules" for everyone and binding agreements between providers and city authorities are needed. She also applies clear rules to her own mobility. She never drives a car and does not even hold a driving licence. Though this is actually no longer particularly unusual in Swiss cities, as already mentioned.

Radio abandons FM in favour of digital

All Swiss radio stations will broadcast their programmes over the air via digital signal by 2024, sounding the death knell for FM. Supported by the Swiss Confederation, this change has enabled dozens of alternative radio stations to gain access to the airwaves.

STÉPHANE HERZOG

The days of pirate radio when activists would install rogue antennas to access FM band are long gone. Today, radio is in the process of freeing itself from the constraints of the terrestrial network. On the one hand, all radio stations are available online which requires a paid-for connection. On the other, most stations no longer broadcast just in frequency modulation (FM), but also via a digital signal. This system is called Digital Audio Broadcasting (DAB). It ensures interference-free re-

ception and textual and visual information can also be integrated, which represents a revolution.

This changeover has enabled the creation of an unprecedented Swiss radio eco-system, allowing small stations – often web radio channels – to access the airwaves. This peripheral network exists thanks to a small company called Digris SA, which has identified new opportunities in DAB. Based in Zurich, this start-up has developed a lightweight and affordable technology with the help of free air-

waves campaigners. Adopting this approach, it obtained a licence from the Swiss Confederation in 2013. The small enterprise has become the most important non-commercial radio broadcaster in Switzerland. “It has 70 stations, which accounts for half of those which broadcast in DAB,” states Thomas Gilgen, CEO of this small company which enjoys a monopoly of the niche radio market, proudly.

Digris provides a service for accessing broadcasting which the stations find attractively priced. The sub-

Digris's technology and broadcasting system provides even small cultural and alternative radio stations with access to DAB.

Photo: Keystone



DAB is 18 radio stations on a single frequency

Digital Audio Broadcasting technology enables channels to be packed into a single frequency where FM stations need space between frequencies to work. OFCOM notes that seven DAB frequencies are available to radio stations in Switzerland. Each of them can accommodate 18 stations which means scope for 126 channels in total. However, inside a home DAB is less attractive than FM because a radio requires the whole of the digital signal to work, unlike FM, which may be affected by interference but is still received. "At home, people will opt for internet radio via WiFi," is the verdict of René Wehrlin, Head of Digital Radio at OFCOM.

scription costs around 14,000 Swiss francs a year compared with 100,000 Swiss francs for a large operator such as Romandie Médias SA, which launched the first private DAB coverage in French-speaking Switzerland in 2014.

A national issue

Switzerland now has 3.5 million DAB-equipped devices, one million of which are in vehicles and this technology is an issue of national importance. The Swiss Confederation is supporting DAB through information campaigns and by funding for radio stations, which totalled 8 million Swiss francs in 2017, says René Wehrlin, Head of Digital Radio and Television at the Federal Office of Communications (OFCOM). "FM radio reception is obsolete. DAB increases access to the airwaves for radio stations and allows them to use a wide range of digital services," he remarks. With better audio quality and lower costs, OFCOM believes there are plenty of arguments in favour of this new technology.

The federal government has said that the FM network will be abandoned in favour of DAB by 2024, and measures to enable this transition are already under way. In a nutshell, the government will not grant any new li-

cences for analogue FM stations and will support all radio stations with the switchover to digital broadcasting. For a non-commercial radio station broadcasting via Digris, this means that 80% of the subscription charges to the company's DAB service are met by OFCOM. Radio stations can also receive financial support for the installation of digital studios. The "No Billag" initiative has highlighted the role of public support for cultural and local radio stations, according to the head of a small community station mentioned below.

Coverage in all tunnels

The change in radio broadcasting also affects the roads, and the Federal Roads Office plans to provide outstanding coverage nationwide for the one million cars fitted with DAB receivers. Eventually all tunnels longer than 300 metres – first on the motorways and then on the cantonal roads – will be equipped with transmitters. OFCOM indicates that the number will increase by 50% overall by 2019. "This policy is mainly being carried out for safety reasons because in the event of a crisis situation the bandwidth dedicated to smartphones connected to radio via internet would soon be used up, while radio always remains accessible," stresses René Wehrlin.

Back to small alternative radio stations which see access to the airwaves via DAB as a mark of recognition and a symbolic step. Radio Vostok, a community station in Geneva, only broadcast on the web. One of Digris's clients since 2015, it has seen its listening figures double. "We decided to increase live broadcasting time which has risen from one to 12 hours a week," says a satisfied Charles Menger, co-founder and permanent member of staff at Radio Vostok.

Listeners in Geneva or Berne now have access to a wide array of stations

broadcasting in DAB (45 in Geneva) on their radios.

However, tests carried out in an apartment show that the reception of programmes broadcast by Digris seems less stable than that of commercial or public radio. "It's to do with the output and distance of the transmitters," says OFCOM. The CEO of Digris responds that he plans to increase the company's broadcasting capability.

Restricted internet?

Thomas Gilgen believes a commercial battle is taking place behind the scenes of this technical revolution between public service broadcasting and major groups, and between DAB and the internet. "Smartphone manufacturers are currently refusing to integrate DAB reception capability into their devices despite computer chips making this possible. Unless political action is taken, within ten years every car and home will only receive internet radio via a smartphone and the internet industry will take control of radio frequency in Switzerland," he says.

The issue is the "neutrality" of the internet, provision of which varies depending on connection quality and requires a contract with a service provider, whereas Billag funds unrestricted access to radio stations. René Wehrlin is aware of these issues but is not concerned about DAB being ousted by the web because he believes smartphone manufacturers and the major operators only have a limited interest in radio. Why is that? "It does not generate enough revenue," he concludes.

Yearning for Japan, a country of nostalgia

When lecturing at a Japanese university, Adolf Muschg wrote his first novel “Im Sommer des Hasen” and could never shake off the hold Japan and its culture had on him.

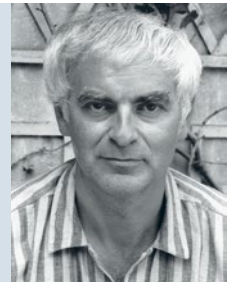
CHARLES LINSMAYER

It was “the discovery of a continent” that the puritanical Swiss was pursuing with Yoko, the Japanese theology student, and he discovered things he did not know in wild nights and passionate embraces: “the profoundly visible unity when his skin came together with the foreign body”. Wilfried Buser is the name of the Swiss author who like five others had to write an article about Japan for the anniversary publication of a Swiss company and was introduced to physical love in all of its delightfulness and excess in a world that was still unfamiliar to him.

The story comes from a novel which itself also goes back to a visit to Japan. From 1962 to 1964, the Swiss author Adolf Muschg, who was born in 1934, was a lecturer in German at the International Christian University of Tokyo. And it was this trip and the love story experienced there that inspired the novel “Im Sommer des Hasen”, which marked the start in 1965 of a literary career that spanned novels such as “Gegenzauber”, “Albissers Grund”, “Das Licht und der Schlüssel”, “Der Rote Ritter”, “Eikan, du bist spät” and “Löwenstern” and extended to the novella “Der weisse Freitag” in 2017, making it one of the most significant in German literature. With “Hansi und Ume”, the book about Japan by his aunt Elsa Muschg, Japan became a place he longed for as a ten-year-old and it never relinquished its hold on him, eventually fulfilling the dream he had from the beginning – that he would “find himself” there. Zerutt, Albisser’s adversary in the novel named after him, is a Zen master, and in 1985 Muschg spent four weeks at a Zen monastery near Kyoto. When “Im Sommer des Hasen” was turned into a film in 1986, he fell in love with Atsuko Kanto on set who became his third wife in 1991, also giving him family ties with Japan. This country and a spiritual and mystical experience have since pervaded his work in many ways. Not just in books set in Japan, like the novel “Eikan, du bist spät”, in which a European experiences liberation and enlightenment after meeting the Japanese Zen monk Eikan, but also in less obvious ones. After the publication of his narrative masterpiece, the Perceval novel “Der Rote Ritter”, for which he received the Büchner Prize, the greatest accolade in German literature, he revealed that he would never have written the novel without the three Zen masters Suzuki Taisezu, Hisamatsu Shin-ichi and Harrada

Sekkei. Muschg has nevertheless also built bridges between Japan and Europe by establishing a relationship between Japanese mysticism and that of Angelus Silesius, Meister Eckhart and Jakob Böhme. Through a theological and literary exploration he continued the work of his half-brother Walter Muschg, who died in 1965 but had previously carried out research into “mysticism in Switzerland” in 1935. “Im Sommer des Hasen” was initially to be published by the Walter-Verlag in Olten. However, the Yoko episode of all things was deemed indecent by the Catholic owner of the publishing house, which meant that the book was eventually published by the Arche-Verlag owned by Peter Schifferli who was captivated by its sensuality.

BIBLIOGRAPHY: “Im Sommer des Hasen” is available in paperback from Suhrkamp.



“I discovered in the monastery that life can be at one with itself and with its apparent opposite, death. And that if you regard everything as equally valid, then you are indifferent to nothing. That is more than I had previously learned in politics or in literature, through dialogue or in love. Do you have to live in a Zen monastery to discover that? It was necessary for me: as a way of learning that the obvious is difficult but possible.” (“Aussteigen? Einsteigen!”, in the “Frankfurter Rundschau”, 24/08/1985)

CHARLES LINSMAYER IS A LITERARY SCHOLAR AND JOURNALIST IN ZÜRICH

“Nothing ever runs smoothly with me”

The violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja was once criticised for her radical approach and for challenging deeply entrenched ways of listening to classical music. Today she is picking up awards for it. Who is this musician with Moldovan roots who has chosen Swiss nationality and has just received a Grammy Award for Best Chamber Music Performance?

MARIANNE MÜHLEMANN

Meeting the musician Patricia Kopatchinskaja is always an eventful experience. Whether she is giving a virtuoso performance on stage or simply talking about music, the 41-year-old violinist exudes energy and ingenuity. She is well-known to audiences and notorious amongst conductors and orchestras for her spontaneity. Once she puts the violin bow on the strings, absolutely anything can happen. Whether it is Beethoven, Bartok or a contemporary composer, Kopatchinskaja plays the violin with such intensity and directness it seems the ink of the notes she is playing is still wet. The fact that she never learns music by heart out of principle may come as a surprise. She has her reasons for this: “Notes give me the room for manoeuvre I require,” she remarks. “Playing music is about more than hitting the right notes. As an interpreter, I have to explore and reveal the meaning behind the notes.”

Every concert should be as immediate and fresh as the opening performance. Kopatchinskaja pays little heed to convention. This may explain why she is continually challenging classical music, but also herself. It is precisely this approach which is doing the concert business so much good. She was long unaware that her inclination for casting famous pieces of the repertoire in a new light was polarising audiences. She has now learned to cope with that. However, audiences have also become more receptive and curious. Today she often finds that people respond to her unconventional style with indignation when they first hear it. Then when they listen for the second time they are euphorically en-

thusiastic. This was also the case in 2016 at the memorable concert for which she has now won a Grammy for Best Chamber Music Performance.

Always barefoot

The award is seen as the greatest international accolade for musicians and is often compared with the Oscars in the film industry in terms of its importance. Although the prize has been presented in Los Angeles since 1959, Kopatchinskaja’s award is only the fourth Grammy to go to Switzerland. What was so remarkable about the concert? You have to visualise the scene. At the Ordway Concert Hall in Saint Paul, Minnesota, the audience was waiting for the music of Schubert. The personification of death unexpectedly appeared on stage next to the orchestra. Inside the black costume with its skeleton print was Patricia Kopatchinskaja. She came up with the idea of the fleeting, unearthly spectre. The audience could have recognised the soloist by her bare feet. The 41-year-old extraordinarily talented violinist always performs barefoot as it makes her feel more grounded. However, the clothing was not an end in itself. It went with the programme she was performing live with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra.

The centrepiece was a version of Franz Schubert’s quartet “Death and the Maiden” that she had rearranged herself for the chamber orchestra. But even without that the piece sounds unfamiliar. Kopatchinskaja broke it up and interspersed additional pieces of music about death between Schubert’s movements. They came from all

eras – from Baroque to the present day. The unconventional collage was skillfully pieced together, producing a perfectly composed programme made up of pieces which do not actually belong together but nevertheless complement one another. But that was not all. While playing, Kopatchinskaja sang Schubert’s song “Death and the Maiden” with lyrics by Matthias Claudius, on which the quartet is based. The audience’s reaction was one of bewilderment. Initially at least, but in the end they were moved to tears.

Thought-provoking

“It was a little bit mad,” recalls the violinist with a smile during the interview in Berne, where she now lives with her husband and daughter. “In Europe, they would have packed me off to the funny farm after a performance like that, but you can take such gambles in the USA.” Those close to her know that she never does such things simply for effect. When she tests boundaries, it is always about the music itself. She likes to provoke thought. “I am always looking for what lies behind the notes,” explains the musician who performs over 100 concerts a year all over the world.

She has been a star for some time now despite never wanting to be one. Kopatchinskaja much prefers to meet the audience on equal terms. When she releases classical music from its ivory tower with her impassioned performances, she also puts it out on the street, making it accessible to ordinary people. She reveals that she enjoys taking people on a musical journey of discovery during concerts. But



Patricia Kopatchinskaja

Patricia Kopatchinskaja, born in 1977, grew up in a family of musicians in Chisinau, Moldova. The family emigrated to Austria in 1989. Kopatchinskaja studied the violin and composition in Vienna before moving to Berne in 1998 thanks to a scholarship. She has received many awards, winning the Henryk Szeryng Competition in Mexico in 2000, the International Credit Suisse Group Young Artist Award in 2002 and the German Radio Prize for Outstanding Talent in 2006. She also won the Swiss Grand Prix for Music endowed with 100,000 Swiss francs in 2017 and a Grammy Award in the Best Chamber Music Performance category in January 2018. She is also known to the wider public thanks to Swiss customs officials who confiscated her valuable Guarneri violin, which was a loan, making news headlines. Kopatchinskaja is married to the former neurologist and author Lukas Fierz. They have a daughter together and live in Berne. In autumn 2018, Kopatchinskaja will take over the Camerata Bern as its new artistic director. MM

**A determined campaigner against pigeonholes in the mind and templates in classical music:
Patricia Kopatchinskaja**

Photo: Keystone

she warns: “Nothing ever runs smoothly with me as the tour guide.”

Kopatchinskaja regrets the lack of vibrancy on the classical music scene and the fact that much has remained the same for centuries. “A concert should change the lives of everyone in the audience a little,” she points out. She believes classical concerts today are often like visiting a mausoleum of dead composers. “People go to look at the corpses. They are expected to sit there in a dignified manner and move as little as possible.” “Repetitions of the same thing do not appeal to me,” says the musical interpreter. “If that is what you want, then listen to a CD. I’m not a copying machine.”

Profound and willing to take risks

Patricia Kopatchinskaja is a determined campaigner against pigeonholes in the mind and templates in classical music. Art is never about what you already know. She strongly believes that “art must raise questions and turn things on their head”. The messages of this profound musician who likes to take risks are now being heard. In addition to this year’s Grammy, in 2017 she also picked up the Swiss Grand Prix for Music, one of the highest accolades in her profession. Kopatchinskaja attends international festivals, composes, makes recordings and plays chamber music and concerts with the best orchestras in the world. In autumn 2018, she will also take over the highly regarded Camerata Bern as its artistic director. Where does her creativity, deep sense of musicality and artistic talent come from? Patricia Kopatchinskaja does not take long to answer this. She in-

herited her stubborn nature and passion from her father Viktor Kopatchinski, a virtuoso cymbals player, and her composure and intensity while performing from her mother, who is a violinist. The environment she grew up in keeps her grounded.

Kopatchinskaja was born in Chisinau in Moldova, one of the poorest countries in Europe. She had a difficult but happy childhood and recalls the idyllic village where she grew up amongst hens and cornfields with her grandparents while her parents toured the Soviet Union as professional folk musicians. Her father was a highly successful musician but not a party member and, as the occupying forces in Moldova constantly changed, the family never knew what the future held. “My father was not allowed to go abroad. That’s why we fled.” They emigrated to Vienna where she and her family lived in terrible poverty. However, the young violinist had a lucky break. A scholarship allowed her to come to Berne where she feels safe and secure. She believes the city plays an important part in her work and for her soul, which sometimes needs tranquillity. “Berne is sedate and slow-paced. I’m never distracted here and can focus on my work. Until I set off again.” Patricia Kopatchinskaja has entered the pantheon of classical musicians. She has reached the very top. However, she has not achieved all of her goals just yet. Her restless soul continually drives her in search of new musical secrets. “That’s what I live for.”

MARIANNE MÜHLEMANN IS CULTURE EDITOR AT THE “DER BUND” NEWSPAPER

Getting to the top in a roundabout way

Vladimir Petkovic is leading the Swiss national football team to the World Cup – something hardly anyone would have imagined just a few years ago. But pulling off surprises is part and parcel of Petkovic's career.

BENJAMIN STEFFEN

Perhaps this is explained by a hazy set of circumstances when Vladimir Petkovic, born in 1963, was growing up in the 1960s and 1970s in Sarajevo. When Vladimir was born, his father ended his footballing career and began working at the deeper level of coaching. But during matches his son was always by his father's side in the dressing room and on the side of the pitch. Vladimir Petkovic once said ten years ago that he had "probably" learned a great deal during that time "that he was not even aware of today".

An air of mystery surrounds Petkovic's rise to the leading coaching position in Swiss football, becoming manager of the national team which will take part in the World Cup in Russia in June. Petkovic did not enjoy a glorious playing career. When he joined Chur in the second tier of Swiss football in the 1980s, everything began with a misunderstanding. When they signed him, Chur thought Petkovic was a striker who would provide a regular supply of goals. But Petkovic was a midfielder. His was a journeyman career playing for various Swiss clubs. He had a spell with FC Sion, but not in a key role, before playing for Martigny, returning to Chur and then turning out for Bellinzona and Locarno – nothing remarkable by any means. He was only really noticed by people who made the effort to get to know him. Petkovic was reserved, but if someone asked him for advice he gave it. This is the view of a former teammate at FC Chur who went hiking in the mountains of Grisons with Petk-

ovic and other foreign players at the club.

Community worker with Caritas

Petkovic did not push himself forward and therefore long went unnoticed. This is how people saw and described him for a long time. He had a respectable coaching career at the lower levels. Wherever he went, he achieved some degree of success, and if he remained with a team for a longer period he generally improved it. Petkovic settled down with his wife and two daughters in Ticino where he coached almost every ambitious club from 1998 onwards, including Agno, Lugano and Bellinzona. He led AC Bellinzona to Switzerland's top flight and the cup final in 2008 and suddenly started to attract attention and media interest. Yet still this was not simply due to his coaching career, but just as much to his main job. Petkovic was employed as a community worker by Caritas and managed projects for the unemployed until summer 2008.

Nobody suspected that he would be leading the Swiss team to the World Cup ten years later. Throughout his career people have underestimated him. Outside of Ticino few people had noticed that Petkovic had embarked upon a remarkable career, usually with the firm intention of encouraging his teams to play attractive football. When he signed a contract with Young Boys in August 2008, there was once again much talk about his career in community work and how he was the exception to the rule. Petkovic also

continually heard how he had come to Berne from far away – as though Ticino was on another continent. And when the officials from the Swiss Football Association appointed him national coach in summer 2014, they had initially identified someone else as their preferred candidate and openly revealed their wish list. It included Marcel Koller, the coach of Austria at the time, a position he still holds. It was hard to tell if this upset Petkovic, whether he felt slighted to be underestimated and regarded as second choice or rather saw it as an opportunity. When somebody once asked him what convinced him that he could become a good coach, Petkovic replied: "Nothing really!" It was a moment of equanimity and humour which Petkovic only provides when he feels comfortable and sure of being understood. The deep belief that he would become a top coach had long been held mainly by himself, close friends and people from Ticino, this far-flung region on another continent.

Strategic self-belief

It is not blind confidence or arrogance but strategic self-belief that has taken Petkovic so far in his career. He has learned to believe in himself because he spent so long living out of the spotlight, because he was not an acclaimed international player with lots of caps who people naturally assumed would make a good coach. Yes, he has come a long way, if we are talking about where Petkovic started out rather than Ticino. He had to spend a long time showing what he could do in con-

trast to former star players who are often given big jobs before ever having coached a team.

There are probably lots of things that Petkovic has learned along the way that he is not even aware of today and not just dating back to the 1960s and 1970s in Sarajevo, but also later when he arrived in Switzerland as a 23-year-old player and was left waiting at Kloten airport. As the result of a misunderstanding nobody was there

It is a similar story with the national team. During the qualifying campaign for the 2018 World Cup, he led the team from one victory to the next for nine consecutive matches, but everyone was waiting for the tenth game away to Portugal. Switzerland lost and had to play off against Northern Ireland. Doubts were raised about the strength of the team, that it too is punching above its weight and has been doing so for years. But Petkovic

ability and skills as a coach. Petkovic, who now holds dual Swiss and Croatian nationality, had big shoes to fill in 2014 as the successor to the world-class coach Hitzfeld, and the man before him Köbi Kuhn, a national hero who was popular as a player and later also as a coach. Now he has the opportunity to surpass both of these coaches. He will try to lead Switzerland into the quarter-finals of a tournament for the first time since 1954.



Petkovic, the composed motivator (with Swiss striker Haris Seferovic)

Photo: Keystone

to pick him up. This was followed by another misunderstanding when Chur mistakenly thought they had signed a striker who turned out to be a midfielder. You might say that Petkovic knows no other way than having to continually prove himself, and hardly any other attribute could help somebody more in the football world where what happened yesterday counts for little today. The best example: Petkovic's YB team played some magical football, but his tenure is mainly remembered for failing to win the title in 2010.

calmly led them through the play-offs and the period of doubt as though he had been coaching at the top level for 20 years and not just ten and as if he had been through it all many times before.

That was not actually the case. In contrast to his predecessor Ottmar Hitzfeld, Petkovic had not experienced dozens of big matches in packed-out stadiums. There are still situations that he is going through for just the second, third or fourth time and the fact that he is overcoming them reveals a great deal about his

Two years ago at the European Championships in France, he also fell short of this mark, losing to Poland in a penalty shoot-out in the last 16, but he has probably also learned things from that defeat that he is not even aware of today.

BENJAMIN STEFFEN IS SPORTS EDITOR AT THE "NEUE ZÜRCHER ZEITUNG"



96th Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Visp/VS

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

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

On Friday, 10 August 2018, from 6 p.m., all participants are cordially invited to a Congress aperitif at the Vespi Beach Nights venue.

On the morning of Saturday, 11 August 2018, participants have a

choice between three excursions in Visp and the surrounding area subject to registration. This will be followed by the plenary assembly at the La Poste conference centre where visitors can look forward to interesting presentations and discussions with figures from Swiss business, politics and the media. The final evening with a wine tasting will bring this day at the conference centre to an end on a celebratory note.

On Sunday, 12 August 2018, a trip to Zermatt – the world-famous mountain village at the foot of the Matterhorn – is on the itinerary. This year’s Congress of the Swiss Abroad will draw to a fitting close with a typical Valais Raclette dish, a congress declaration, and a folklore festival being held in the village at the same time.

Register now at www.aso-kongress.ch for the Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Visp and take advantage of a 75% discount on the purchase of a Swiss Travel Pass from 1 June to 31 July 2018.



The Swiss Travel Pass from the Swiss Travel System

The Swiss Travel Pass entitles you to unlimited travel on consecutive days throughout the rail, bus and boat Swiss Travel System network. The Swiss Travel Pass is available for 3, 4, 8 or 15 days. This pass is only available to non-residents of Switzerland and the Principality of Liechtenstein.

FSCA: A patron to Swiss children abroad for one hundred years

The Foundation for Swiss Children Abroad was founded in 1917. It is still involved in organising holiday camps today.

Founded in 1917 during the Great War by a group of people from Basel, the Foundation for Swiss Children Abroad initially aimed to host young Swiss Abroad living in war-torn countries where there were shortages and restrictions.

In its current form, it organises several holiday camps each year to give Swiss children abroad the opportunity to get to know and appreciate their native country.

The memory of the internment of Bourbaki's army in 1871 was still very much alive in 1917. This welcome, which was remarkable for the solidarity it signified, meant that several generations of Swiss people saw it as their duty to help people in war-torn countries. One member of a family, which offered to take in a "child victim" on the spur of the moment in 1917, recalled in 2001 that his father had witnessed the arrival of Bourbaki's army in Switzerland during his youth.

During the First World War, children in the nations at war were extremely vulnerable. They suffered terrible conditions, were malnourished, poorly clothed and often badly educated. Switzerland began taking in children from regions blighted by war very early on in the conflict. By this time many Swiss had emigrate to elsewhere in Europe. Their children suffered just as much as those in the countries where they were living. A decision was made to come to their aid. In 1917, a handful of philanthropists from Basel welcomed 280 Swiss children from Germany. The Swiss Confederation met the costs. This marked the birth of the Foundation for Swiss Children Abroad, which survived thanks to donations, grants and volunteer work.

When peace returned, awareness of the needs of children in the regions devastated by war gave rise to the establishment of the International Save the Children Union

in Geneva in 1920. This was followed by the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1923. In 1924, in cooperation with Pro Juventute, around 3,000 children were welcomed to the holiday camps. They came from big cities and very poor areas where children's illnesses were rife and tuberculosis was prevalent.

At the end of the 1920s, the foundation almost disappeared due to a decline in donations, funding and hosts. The economic crisis of the 1930s saw needs resurface. While Switzerland was also affected, it took in Swiss children from deprived backgrounds in Paris, Berlin, Hamburg and Brussels during this difficult period. Benefiting from the patriotic spirit that emerged with the national exhibition in 1939, the Foundation gradually transformed itself into a fundraising organisation, enabling Pro Juventute to organise holiday camps and accommodation. These two partners ratified their cooperation by signing an agreement on 13 January 1940.

The situation during the Second World War was very different to that during the Great War as this time Switzerland was encircled. Families continued to host Swiss children in poverty but the Foundation also started to organise trips to Switzerland. Throughout the war, this enabled a growing number of Swiss youngsters from bordering countries to visit places of significance or importance in the country. In 1942, for example, 330 children from Germany, France, Italy and Hungary obtained the visas required thanks to the efforts of Heinrich Rothmund, the director of the federal aliens' police division and in other respects a very controversial figure. The first ski camp was organised in 1944. It was visited by General Guisan.

PHILIPPE VUILLEMIN

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Stiftung für junge Auslandschweizer
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French course in Fribourg, 9/7 to 20/7/2018

For further information and to register, visit www.aso.ch and www.swisscommunity.org or:

Youth Service of the

Organisation of the Swiss Abroad

youth@aso.ch

+41 31 356 61 00

www.facebook.com/ASOyouth

Attractive offers from other Swiss youth organisations:

Federal Youth Session (8 to 11/11/2018):

www.jugendsession.ch

Swiss Youth in Science (competition 2019):

www.sjf.ch

Focus remains on e-voting

Meeting of the Council of the Swiss Abroad – 10 March 2018 at the City Hall in Berne

Seventy-four members of the Council of the Swiss Abroad (CSA) met in Berne for their spring meeting. Two issues were once again the centre of attention – e-voting and the attitude of the Swiss banks towards the Swiss Abroad.

Shortly before the CSA meeting, Franz Grüter, the SVP National Councillor from Lucerne and IT entrepreneur, had launched an initiative calling for a nationwide ban on e-voting which has since caused a stir amongst the Swiss Abroad too. While more and more cantons are endeavouring to meet the requirements to enable all citizens – including those abroad – to vote electronically, the initiative committee is seeking to put the brakes on this development.

In Berne, Franz Grüter took part in a debate with Claudia Pletscher of Swiss Post, which manages the e-voting system. “The question is not whether but when e-voting will be manipulated by hackers,” remarked Grüter. “I believe it's extremely important that we can have faith in referendum and election results.” Many countries, such as France, Norway and Finland, have abolished e-voting again. “We also attach top priority to security and trust. Swiss Post is therefore

working with a system where any manipulation will be universally detectable,” responded Claudia Pletscher. “This will enable us to verify where and how many votes have been manipulated.” However, complete security against manipulation cannot be guaranteed. “The comparisons with other countries are misleading. The systems that were hacked in the USA, for example, have nothing to do with our system. Online voting was not scrapped for security reasons in Finland.”

After a lengthy debate on e-voting, Remo Gysin, the OSA president, and Filippo Lombardi, its vice-president, reported on the current state of play in relation to the Swiss banks. “We're approaching systemically important and public cantonal banks to engage them in in-depth talks,” said Gysin. “We've made some initial progress. The Banque cantonale de Genève has promised to reach out to the Swiss Abroad.” Council of States member Lombardi reported on the latest developments concerning political proposals on the issue and called for patience. “Little strokes fell big oaks,” summed up Tim Guldemann, the Council member and SP National Councillor.

MARKO LEHTINEN



Franz Grüter and Claudia Pletscher debating the risks of e-voting at the CSA meeting.

Photo: OSA/Adrian Moser

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



OSA advice

How can you find information on the conditions applied by the banks to the Swiss Abroad?

The easiest way is to contact the banks directly. Following discussions with systemically important banks (Credit Suisse, Raiffeisen, UBS, Zürcher Kantonalbank and PostFinance), the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) has provided interested parties with advice and contact person details on its website. This can be found at: www.aso.ch > Consultation > Living abroad > Swiss banks.

The OSA has also entered into a partnership with the Banque cantonale de Genève (BCGE). The BCGE has undertaken to provide and maintain banking relationships with the Swiss Abroad under similar conditions to those offered to persons residing in Switzerland subject to the applicable regulatory provisions in Switzerland and abroad. This is the Xpatbking.ch programme which is aimed specifically at the Swiss Abroad. The services, conditions and charges that apply can be found on the BCGE's website at www.bcge.ch.

The OSA's Legal Service provides general legal information on Swiss law, particularly in areas which concern the Swiss Abroad. It does not provide information on foreign law or intervene in disputes between private parties.

Thank you, Tim Guldemann!

Tim Guldemann was our OSA National Councillor from October 2015. He unexpectedly stepped down on 15 March. That is regrettable but, of course, we must respect his decision. In his role as National Councillor, Tim Guldemann was a standard-bearer for the Swiss Abroad, a visible symbol playing an extremely important role for us which he carried out impeccably. He campaigned tirelessly on our issues, including e-voting, social insurance, bank policy and many more besides, and initiated and followed up many matters in cooperation with the "Swiss Abroad" parliamentary group and the OSA office. I wish to thank Tim Guldemann, who will continue to serve on the Council of the Swiss Abroad, most sincerely on behalf of the OSA.

REMO GYSIN, PRESIDENT OF THE OSA

THE SWISS ABROAD ON INSTAGRAM



From sport and nutrition advice to Insta star

Doris Hofer believes keeping fit was the best investment she has ever made in her life. The 42-year-old reinvented herself in Turkey, where providing tips on fitness and healthy eating has turned her into a much sought-after expert.

My Job: My fans on social media say I inspire them to eat a healthier diet and be more active. Many have written telling me that they love my short videos because the exercises are fun and my cheerful nature is infectious.

My Turkey: People love you if you speak Turkish. That's very useful and stands me in good stead, particularly when appearing on TV. I've never received hate mail in Turkey, in stark contrast to Switzerland. That's either because of my accent or that people here are less frustrated.

My Switzerland: I'm very proud of Switzerland. Politically in particular, we act as a role model. If someone thinks differently, they can also express and defend their views as long as they are reasonable. I love Switzerland's public transport and recycling system.

My heart: I miss my friends and family most of all. In terms of food, it has to be the wonderful cheese I miss most. After my divorce, I became self-employed and founded the company Squatgirl. I would love to visit Switzerland more often again and work with Swiss companies. But we probably wouldn't move back because we have a patchwork family: the father of my children is here and I don't want them to grow up without him.

This interview was published on swissinfo.ch, the online service of the Swiss Broadcasting Company, which is available in ten languages. Do you live abroad too? Then tag your Instagram photos

[#WeAreSwissAbroad](https://www.instagram.com/weareswissabroad).

Good services for a diverse Swiss community abroad

The FDFA has expanded, modernised and optimised consular services for the Swiss Abroad in recent years. Jürg Burri, Director of the Consular Directorate from 2014 to mid-2018, looks back.

When I took up my position as Director of the Consular Directorate in 2014, my first impression was that here is a highly motivated team enthusiastic about continually optimising the FDFA's services for the Swiss Abroad. Most of the staff at the Consular Directorate have lived abroad themselves and therefore appreciate what it entails.

The cornerstones of the FDFA's range of services for the Swiss Abroad – which the Consular Directorate supports and coordinates from Berne – are the following:

90 consular posts providing an extensive range of services worldwide

The Swiss Abroad have access to an extensive network of Swiss representations. The Swiss consular network is not just present in countries with at least 10,000 Swiss Abroad but rather worldwide. All consular posts provide the full range of services, including registration, the issuing of passports, welfare assistance and civil registry office duties.

Newer services are becoming increasingly important:

- **FDFA website:** All the key consular information, including the latest advice on emigration and information about returning to Switzerland, can be found at all times on the FDFA's website under "Living abroad": www.eda.admin.ch.

- **FDFA online desk:** The FDFA's online desk, which can also be found on the website, is relatively new but has already been used by more than 10,000 Swiss Abroad.

- **FDFA helpline:** The FDFA's helpline in Berne is available 24/7 on 365 days of the year. The FDFA is therefore always there to provide support on telephone number 0800 24 7 365. The helpline answers around 65,000 queries a year, including from the Swiss Abroad.

- **Mobile passport stations:** Our mobile passport stations are very popular. Swiss people abroad can have their biometric data recorded for the issuing of passports in over 50 cities worldwide which do not have a consulate.

- **Cantonal passport offices:** Many Swiss Abroad still take advantage of the opportunity to have their biometric data for a new passport recorded at cantonal passport offices during a trip to their homeland thanks to an agreement between the cantons and the Consular Directorate.

Single point of contact for all Swiss Abroad

Switzerland today has a fully integrated network of services for the Swiss Abroad that compares very favourably with others internationally. Our well-used consular posts have high quality standards, not least thanks to the secondment of at least two transferable consular employees from Switzerland in every case. These colleagues receive support from head office and undergo further training. However, local staff also play a vital role. They make up more than two-thirds of our staff deployed in the field of consular affairs. Did you know that around 600 Swiss Abroad are also employed at Swiss representations abroad? The combination of seconded and local staff allows federal government not only to achieve a good cost/quality ratio for consular services but also to take advantage of a wealth of extensive and vitally important experience.

Close contact with the Swiss Abroad

Providing information for the Swiss Abroad is an important duty of federal government. It still uses a wide range of channels: in addition to various commercial services, swissinfo as well as the websites of the FDFA and the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA). The OSA produces its own magazine published in five languages on behalf of the FDFA. "Swiss Review", which is subsidised by the FDFA and which you are holding right now or reading online, also contains several pages providing information about the Swiss Abroad and their activities. It plays a key role in providing freely accessible information. The optimisation of the magazine's costs has been a major issue over recent years. It will be produced entirely by the OSA from 2019, and its future seems secure.

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Ambassador Jürg Burri, Director of the Consular Directorate from 2014 to June 2018. He will take up the position of Swiss ambassador to Poland and Belarus in summer 2018. Photo: FDFA



Ambassador Johannes Matyassy, Head of the Asia and Pacific Division at the Directorate of Political Affairs, will be the Director of the Consular Directorate from August 2018. Photo: FDFA

In addition, there are also newer sources of information, such as the embassy newsletters. After providing their email addresses, 65% of Swiss households abroad can today receive an embassy newsletter by email from the representations. Sixty-six Swiss representations produce such newsletters for anyone interested.

Efforts to maintain contact by the representations: The representations nevertheless also seek personal contact with the Swiss Abroad. In 2017, they organised 65 national celebrations themselves and supported 54 events organised by clubs. 33 representations also held an event for young Swiss Abroad. These are just some of the occasions to which the Swiss representations invite thousands of Swiss Abroad each year.

Via feedback from the representations and personal contact with a lot of people, but also through reports from the Council of the Swiss Abroad – the official body of the Swiss Abroad – the FDFA is aware that the services and availability of the Swiss representations are greatly appreciated. As far as the Consular Directorate is concerned, we appreciate the smooth cooperation with the institutions and societies of the Swiss Abroad and encourage all Swiss Abroad to get involved with such organisations or the OSA.

Digitalisation, changing life situations, new migration patterns and many other challenges will continue to shape the needs of the Swiss community abroad. The Consular Directorate will continue its endeavours to provide you all with modern services in cooperation with key partners, such as the OSA.

The quality of these services reflects the importance that federal government attaches to its citizens abroad. Helping to optimise these services over the past four years has given me tremendous personal pleasure – I wish the Swiss Abroad, the Consular Directorate and my successor all the very best for the future.

JÜRIG BURRI, DIRECTOR OF THE CONSULAR DIRECTORATE

Votes and Elections

Voting proposals are determined by the Federal Council at least four months before the voting date.

Other voting dates in 2018: 23 September, 25 November

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

Popular initiatives

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

- “Yes to the protection of children and young people against advertising (children and young people without tobacco advertising)” (20/9/2019)

The list of pending popular initiatives can be found in German at www.bk.admin.ch > Politische Rechte > Volksinitiativen > Hängige Volksinitiativen

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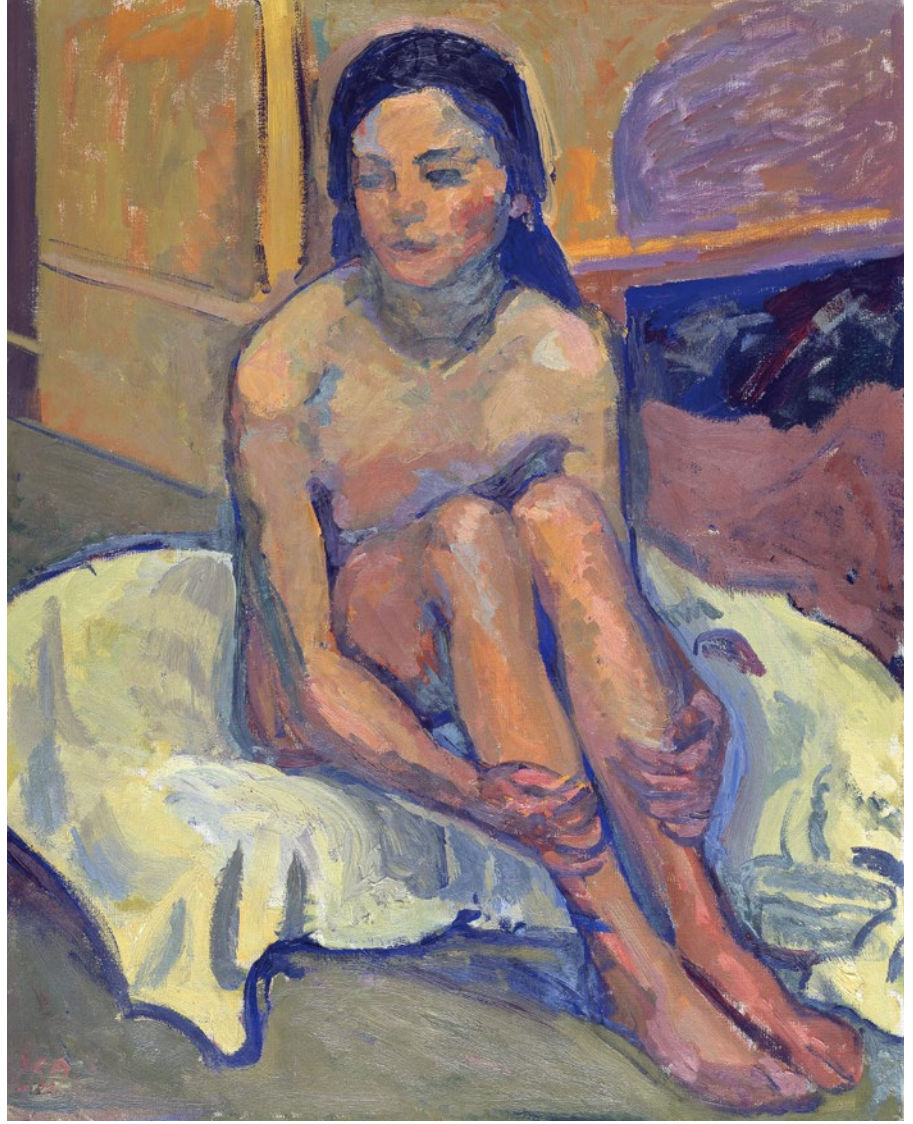
www.fdfa.admin.ch Vietnam (2018)

Photo © Lorenzo Barelli

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Niklaus Manuel: "Altar of Saint Anne: Joachim and Anne Meeting at the Golden Gate", 1515

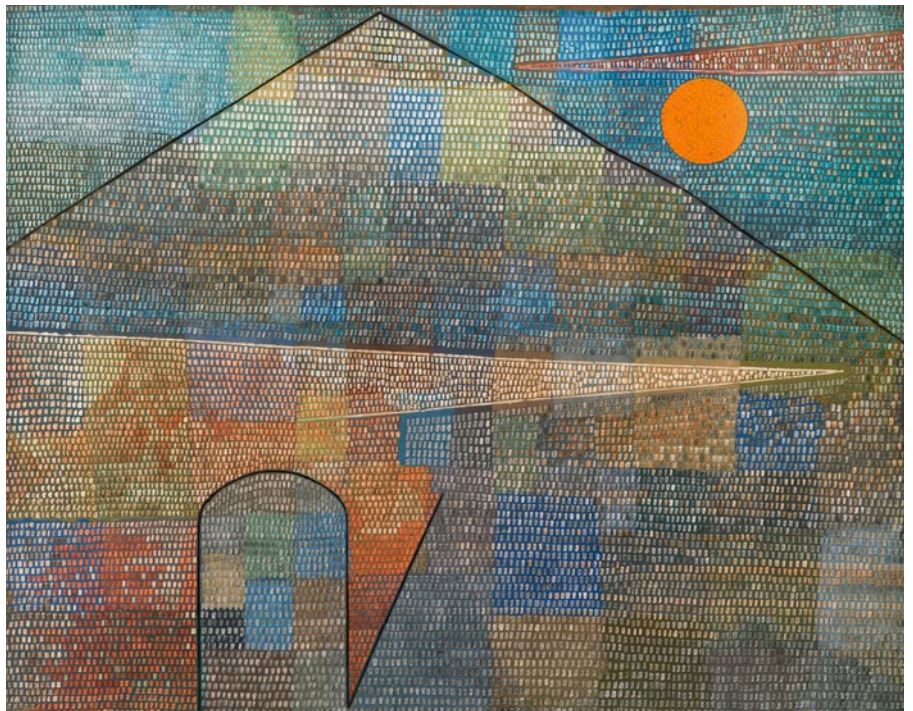


Cuno Amiet: "Naked Girl", 1911

The nation's oldest collection

Switzerland's oldest museum with a permanent collection of art is the Museum of Fine Arts Berne. Its collection extends from the Gothic period to the present day and consists of 3,000 paintings and sculptures as well as 48,000 drawings, graphics, photographs and films – including Swiss works, as this selection illustrates.

Museum of Fine Arts Berne
Hodlerstrasse 8–12, 3011 Berne
Open from Tuesday to Sunday.
www.kunstmuseumbern.ch



Paul Klee: "Ad Parnassum", 1932



Alexandre Calame: "The Grand Eiger at Sunrise", 1844



Franz Gertsch: "Patti Smith II", 1978



Albert Anker: "Infant School on the Kirchenfeld Bridge", 1900



Ferdinand Hodler: "The Night", 1889

Li-qui-da



ANNA FELDER:
"Liquida"
Edizioni Opera Nuova 2017
110 pages; CHF 20

Like a play on words, the syllables of the Italian book title stand above the three chapters of this collection of stories. "Li" means "there" in English, "qui" means "here" and "liquida" translates as "fluid", but can also mean "he liquidates" or the imperative form "liquidate!". The feel for language, its sound and the desire to play with it typify all of the stories in Anna Felder's book. Not until the final story does the author reveal the secret surrounding "Liquida", leaving readers to ponder over "the intricacies of liquidity".

The stories in the first part of the book are set in Switzerland. In "Merlot im Tarnmantel", the author depicts a train journey through the

Gotthard. The first-person narrator observes a woman who has poured Merlot into a water bottle. Perhaps she has done this to prevent her fellow passengers speculating about her wine drinking, or perhaps so that her memories of Ticino remain undisturbed.

"A play thing of the infinite ocean: at home, between the everyday objects and names which still float to the surface a bit, gently and inconspicuously. The telephone no longer rings impertinently..." This is the start of the story of "Madame Germaine", in the third part, in which an ageing woman attempts to come to terms with her diminishing ability to hear. It is funny to read how switching the receiver from one ear to the other can trigger things and change perspectives. Here the sea symbolises the silence which increasingly surrounds Madame Germaine.

To mark her 80th birthday, Anna Felder collected unpublished and revised stories which are now also available in German translation. The author writes about a world that she is familiar with and observes keenly. Everyday events are reflected intricately and often figuratively in short texts into which subtle irony is always interwoven. Every story appears honed at length so that it finally sparkles in many ways. These are short stories which can be seen in a new light every time they are re-read.

Anna Felder, born in 1937, grew up in Lugano and had a German-speaking Swiss father and an Italian mother. She studied literature in Zurich and Paris. She then taught Italian at the old cantonal school in Aarau. Today, the author lives in Aarau and Lugano. In February 2018, she was awarded the Swiss Grand Prix for Literature by the Swiss Confederation for her lifetime's work.

RUTH VON GUNTEN

Swiss devotion



MIN KING:
"Immer Wieder,"
Irascible 2017.

This has never been done before: soul from Switzerland – and in dialect too. And not simply the sterile, glossy dance music that has appeared in the charts under this name for a number of years. Rather, it is the kind of authentic soul that emerged from rhythm 'n' blues in the late 1950s.

The music of the Schaffhausen group Min King is a delight. The quintet play with great devotion and their most potent weapon – the voice of Philipp Albrecht – is always at the heart of the rousing arrangements. Thirty-something Albrecht's vocal talents span the full gamut of the genre, from painful yell to soulful whisper. Indeed, he sounds so re-

laxed and credible it is as though soul had only ever been sung in the pithy Schaffhausen dialect rather than the lilting English of black Americans.

Min King make audiences sit up and listen. Their single "Bluemewäg" has been enlivening the playlists of national radio stations since 2012, and their album of almost exactly the same name – "Am Bluemewäg" – entered the Swiss charts in its first week, albeit only in 86th position. There are a number of reasons why it has taken Min King five years to follow up with "Immer Wieder". Firstly, the band took some time out after an extended tour, front man Philipp Albrecht tested the waters as a solo artist with the dance hall track "Fründin", and a slight change of style had to be made for the second album.

On "Immer Wieder", Min King sound much less like a sumptuous soul band from the Sixties, instead leaving more space between notes. "Meisli" is a lingering Blues track in a minor key performed completely without a refrain. "Bisch Immer No Da" is a reggae number on which the rush of the Rhine Falls can be heard. While "Teil Dich Mit" is a gentle 6/8 beat song with a Nancy Sinatra guitar. In the title track, Albrecht sings about going round in circles and never "finding a way out".

Overall, the band seem more laid back on their second album, and their sound is warmer – like an after-hours party that you would really like to be invited to. Even though there are no big hits like "Bluemewäg", the path taken by Min King is still very much one worth following.

STEFAN STRITTMATTER

Tim Guldemann



“The international councillor” was the slogan Tim Guldemann used to promote his National Council campaign in 2015. The 68-year-old Social Democrat, who lives in Berlin, was elected to the Swiss parliament on the list of the SP in Zurich. As the first genuine foreign-resident member of parliament, this was a real coup. A total of 56 Swiss Abroad tried and failed to get elected that year. The chances of being elected are slim because most candidates are almost unknown. This was not the case for Tim Guldemann, who is an eminent Swiss diplomat.

However, Guldemann stepped down at the end of the spring session in the middle of his first term in office. Since he was living abroad, he had been unable to spend enough time in his constituency, he said. It wasn't easy living in one place and being a politician in another because you needed personal contact to gauge the mood of the people you were representing politically. After all, “The metro in Berlin is not the same thing as the tram in Zurich”. Guldemann also pointed to family reasons: his wife is extremely busy professionally because she is the deputy head of Spiegel magazine's Berlin office. His two school-age daughters therefore need their father to be there and relocation to Switzerland would be out of the question.

In parliament, Tim Guldemann was mainly involved in European policy. He has an outstanding network of contacts and was Switzerland's ambassador to Germany until his retirement in 2015. He previously made a name for himself as the Swiss ambassador in Tehran and in the 1990s as a crisis diplomat in Chechnya, where he negotiated the ceasefire as head of the OSCE mission. His political career has now come to a somewhat less illustrious end than his diplomatic one.

JÜRIG MÜLLER

Swiss cities in global ranking

A new study by Pricewaterhouse Coopers reveals how competitive the major Swiss cities are compared with those in other countries. This is the first time that Swiss cities have been included in the consultancy firm's annual ranking. Zurich occupies 5th place out of 34 cities behind London, Paris, Toronto and Singapore. Basel lies in 13th place, Geneva in 17th and Berne in 20th. Criteria such as the economy, adaptability and quality of life were evaluated. The Swiss cities performed particularly well in terms of quality of life. Berne actually topped the ranking in the health and safety categories.

Novartis to divest over-the-counter medicine business

The Basel-based pharmaceutical group Novartis transferred its over-the-counter medicine business to a joint venture with the UK company GSK three years ago as part of an exchange of several lines of business. Novartis satisfied itself with a 36.5% holding in over-the-counter medicine operations. The company is now completely divesting this line of business. GSK will pay 13 billion US dollars for the remaining stake.

CHF 80 million for the ICRC

Switzerland is supporting the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) again this year. The Federal Council has pledged 80 million Swiss francs with retroactive effect to the headquarters in Geneva for 2018, which is exactly the same amount as last year. In addition to the contribution to headquarters, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) is providing 60.9 million francs to fund specific humanitarian operations carried out by the ICRC. Some 62.5 million francs was made available for this purpose last year. Switzerland was the fifth-largest contributor to the ICRC's total budget in 2017.

New systems for air defence

The Department of Defence plans to reorganise air defence. The Swiss army is to be equipped with ground-to-air missiles with greater range. They must now be able to travel a distance of 50 kilometres and fly at a height of up to 12 kilometres. In addition to range, the missiles must also be able to cover at least 15,000 km². New requirements have also been placed on the fleet of aircraft that will replace the Tiger and F/A-18 from 2025. Four fighter jets must be able to protect Swiss air space continuously for a four-week period in future. The air force must also be capable of carrying out aerial reconnaissance and combating ground targets in the event of an attack.



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