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Thank you!

I received the December edition of "Swiss Review" today (it always arrives so late). I flicked through the pages and saw that the points I raised in my e-mail yesterday had already got through. Thank you for the differentiated approach to reporting. Now I too know that most cantons do not give a breakdown of votes cast by Swiss people living abroad and those resident in Switzerland in their election result listings.

EVELYNE URECH, TÂRGU MURES,
RUMANIA

Switzerland – a model of peace

I would like to congratulate you on the editorial in the December edition of "Swiss Review". The position taken concerning the recent unfair and unjustified criticism of Switzerland and the Swiss people abroad and in the foreign media was spot on. Spain was unfortunately no exception. Rash, unconsidered and untrue judgements on society in our peaceful nation started to appear everywhere, not just in Spain. These other countries should get their own house in order and concentrate on raising their own ethical standards before reproaching Switzerland for intolerance. Thank you for the clear, correct position you took on this. We Swiss (in particular the Swiss living abroad) have nothing to be ashamed of. Our country is a model of peace and will remain so.

ANDREW SANDILANDS, BARCELONA,
SPAIN

Black sheep

I really liked your editorial. During my holiday to Switzerland, I was saddened to see how much attention the media gives to comments made abroad.



I also saw the "for greater security" posters, where a flock of sheep snub a black sheep. I understood the notion of the "black sheep" in the customary sense.

To my great astonishment, I was told that

the poster had been interpreted as racist and xenophobic, drawing parallels between the colour of the sheep and foreigners. I felt Switzerland's need to be liked, recognised, held in high esteem and to conform. In psychology, putting such emphasis on the opinion of others is an indication of not liking oneself enough and of a lack of confidence. I believe the intelligentsia, including journalists and the government, have more of a problem with this than the Swiss people. I hope to see a new generation of politicians with the courage to be different and able to accept that we are who we are, instead of making excuses and doing everything possible to conform for fear of being alienated. As regards investors, do you know of any who are concerned about morality? They will go wherever's profitable, even if that means "the dark heart of Europe."

SYLVIA CHACHAY, NEW CALEDONIA

Ridiculous experience

As I have done in previous years, I mailed some smoked salmon to a friend in Geneva in early December. To my astonishment, when she received the package the salmon had been removed, with a note stating that as of July 2007, foodstuffs (comestibles) were not allowed into Switzerland from outside Europe. I find this ridiculous and want to warn others of this idiotic practice.

VINCENT M. JOLIVET, WASHINGTON,
USA

Did you know that the Ticino architect Domenico Fontana reinvented the city of Rome in five years? Of course this question posed by the Roman professor of architecture Paolo Portoghesi is somewhat overstated or pithy, as we journalists might say. But Portoghesi chose his words carefully to highlight Fontana's great influence on the pontificate of Sixtus V (1585–1590) which, although brief, was highly significant to the urban development of Rome. According to Portoghesi, Fontana, principally known as an architect until now, is also an important figure in urban development. Together with Francesco Borromini and other Ticino architects, he made a significant contribution to making Rome one of the outstanding centres of architecture from the 16th century to the 18th century.

A special edition of the Italian-language magazine "Arte & Storia" on the Swiss presence in Rome from the 16th century to modern times features the Ticino architects. Anyone familiar with the subject will find little that is new at first glance. A closer look, however, will reveal lots of new insights into well-documented figures and events. The organisational and technical impact of the Ticino group on the great constructions of the day, such as the dome of St Peter's, is examined. The authors have listed useful bibliographical information at the end of each chapter for anyone interested in finding out more about particular aspects.

The first part of this chronological, beautifully illustrated book with just short of 400 pages is dedicated to who else but the Swiss Guard, who have now served the papacy for over 500 years. In 29 chapters, the authors then concentrate on the most prominent of the Swiss in Rome and their most important achievements. As well as architects, the book also includes artists like Giovanni Serodine, Pier Francesco Mola, Angelica Kauffman and Arnold Böcklin, as well as the historian Jacob Burckhardt. Two chapters feature Swiss hoteliers who have strongly influenced the Roman hotel industry since the 19th century. One such hotelier is Alberto Hassler, from the Grisons, who founded the still world-famous hotel which carries his name on Piazza di Spagna in 1892. The Wirth family, who have run several renowned hotels for more than 100 years and who provided the impetus to found the Swiss School in Rome in 1947, are also featured. Along with the Istituto Svizzero di Roma, which is part of the Pro Helvetia cultural foundation, this school is still one of the cornerstones of the Swiss presence in the eternal city. A chapter of the book is dedicated to each.

The concise introduction to the history of Rome between 1420 and 1945 is helpful. Unfortunately, there is no indication of the numbers of Swiss in Rome. As the federal government has produced statistics on Swiss abroad according to country and embassy for the last 50 years, this information would have been available, at least for recent times. However, this shortcoming should not prevent anyone from enjoying this highly recommendable book.

RENÉ LENZIN



"Svizzeri a Roma" is a special edition of the magazine "Arte & Storia" and is published by Ticino Management SA in Lugano (www.ticinomanagement.ch). The book costs CHF 40 or EUR 24. Only available in Italian.