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It's not just Swiss people abroad who enjoy "Swiss Review"

I have been living on Easter Island in Chile for 18 years. I am an avid reader of "Swiss Review", which enables me to keep in touch with my homeland.

The Spanish version of "Swiss Review" is on my table and all of my visitors, even children, flick through and read with great interest about what is going on in our famous alpine nation.

I bundle up the year's editions and pass them on to the Easter Island's school library where more than 1000 pupils can benefit from them.

"Swiss Review" is not just read by the 10% of the Swiss population living abroad, it is also enjoyed by their friends and acquaintances. By transferring it to the Internet, all of this interesting information loses its value, as it can no longer be read by the friends of Swiss people abroad. Switzerland's profile will also be reduced as a result. It is ridiculous that parliamentarians want to "save" CHF 500,000, but agree to give billions to companies that have left entire countries facing ruin.

J. W. SCHMID, HANGA ROA, CHILE

Rich and poor in Switzerland

The article entitled "Rich and poor in Switzerland" in the December edition was very insightful, but this situation is in fact nothing new. It is the nature of capitalism that social extremes are polarised over the years at the cost of the middle. However, there is one aspect about the rich and superrich that was overlooked. The middle classes generally complain that the rich do not pay enough tax, but they do not consider the amounts of money the superrich donate to charity, the

arts and non-profit organizations. This is all money that would otherwise have to be found by the state or the public.

I do not believe any tax legislation could achieve equilibrium between the rich and poor, but more compassion could be shown towards the poor.

E. HAUSKNOST,
MONTREAL, CANADA

More than just a newsletter

"Swiss Review" is more than just a newsletter. It is a magazine specifically produced for the 700,000 Swiss people abroad. It is not just any daily or weekly newspaper. "Swiss Review" is a newspaper especially for me with information that concerns me as a Swiss citizen abroad, an association president and a member of the Council of the Swiss Abroad. I can use the magazine specifically for exchange with other Swiss people abroad. I am disappointed that the various resolutions on this matter failed to have an impact.

A. HAUENSTEIN, MERZENICH,
GERMANY

No electronic media

I am an avid reader of "Swiss Review", which provides me with quality information on various topics. The magazine is sent to me from the Ivory Coast and is my only source of information from Switzerland.

In the north of Niger, where I work with semi-nomadic people, there are no electronic media. I travel to Maradi every 10 weeks to pick up my post. The electronic version of the magazine may be easier and quicker for many Swiss people abroad, but it is not an option for me. I would therefore be extremely grateful if you could continue providing me with the paper version in future. S. DÜRRENMATT,

MARADI, REPUBLIC OF NIGER

Strike in Bellinzona – a canton rebels

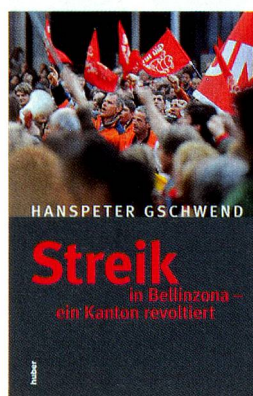
The one-month strike at the Bellinzona site of the Swiss Federal Railways (SBB) was one of the most significant events in Swiss politics in 2008. On 7 March, around 400 workers at the "Officine" went on strike indefinitely to protest against what they saw as the SBB's unfair and misguided restructuring proposals. Politicians from all sides and almost the entire population of the canton came out in support of the strikers and their passionate class struggle in a remarkable show of solidarity. "Giù le mani dalle officine" – "Hands off our workshop" was the slogan that echoed thousands of times throughout southern Switzerland and in the rest of the country as well. On 19 March, thousands of people from Ticino travelled to Berne to take their protest to the federal capital. Exactly one month after the beginning of the strike, the railwaymen ended their industrial action after the SBB withdrew its restructuring plans. The future of the site has since been discussed around a table. The aim is to maintain the "Officine" while, at the same time, significantly increasing its cost efficiency.

Radio journalist and writer of radio plays Hanspeter Gschwend has produced a chronicle of the eventful and emotional days of the strike, which is highly recommended reading. As a reporter, Gschwend followed the events from the front line. This provided him with a rich pool of sound recordings and other material that he was able to use for his book. Gschwend also conducted interviews with the key players after the strike and trawled through reports from other media.

He has produced a book that sets out the facts and the background to the action. Gschwend sheds light on the historical roots of the strike movement, the events leading up to the industrial action and the complex relationships between the workers at the site, strike leaders, unions, politicians at all levels, the Church and the people. The book contains over 100 images, five short profiles of strikers and a tabular chronology. It has been published in German and Italian.

Gschwend writes from the standpoint of the critical sympathiser. With great empathy, he explores the motives, anger and fears of the strikers and their families. But he also shows how the strike leaders under Gianni Frizzo deliberately stirred up the mood time and again when they believed this was necessary for the action to succeed. This is particularly true at the start of the strike. When Nicolas Perrin, head of SBB Cargo, tried to explain the restructuring plans to the workers, he was shouted down at Frizzo's instigation and had to flee from the building through a back entrance. Hanspeter Gschwend provides great descriptions of these anxious moments as well as of the many events, demonstrations and gestures of solidarity that took place during the month-long strike.

RENÉ LENZIN



Hanspeter Gschwend, Streik in Bellinzona – ein Kanton revoltiert. Verlag Huber, Frauenfeld 2008, 190 Seiten, CHF 36.00, EUR 23.90.
Hanspeter Gschwend, Sciopero a Bellinzona – il Cantone si rivolta. Rezzonico Editore, Locarno 2008, 200 pagine.