

Mailbag

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Switzerland and crisis

Many congratulations on your editorial "Switzerland and the crisis". Every word and every sentence was spot on. Your article ought to be published in a prominent place in all Swiss newspapers over the coming weeks to make people stop and think.

I hope you and your team keep up the good work and that "Swiss Review" – printed or electronic – continues to enjoy a strong readership.

E. DIETHELM, ALTENDORF

Women in Switzerland

Thank you for the very interesting article about the achievements of Pascale Bruderer Wyss. Swiss women have come a long way! When I left Switzerland in the summer of 1969 women were not allowed to vote. A married woman was not allowed to open a bank account or rent an apartment under her own name. Now women are running the country!

Congratulations, well done.

M. JOHNSON, CANADA

Policy on the EU: all aboard the Titanic!

In your rough calculation, you generously overlooked the



enormous consequential costs of migration and social insurance, etc., not to mention the billions on top which Switzerland would continually have to pay out to bankrupt states as

an EU member. You also failed to mention the EU directives, which Member States constantly have to implement, decreed by an unelected body of commissioners. Switzerland is not yet without alternatives as the people are being told by those who have deliberately taken us down the bilateral cul-de-sac, are vigorously undermining our institutions and are propagating defeatism.

M. NYFFELER, GERMANY

Strong argument

My hearing is failing, but my sight is very good. I was captivated by the April edition's front-page photograph of Pascale Bruderer. This is a strong argument for the printed version and against the online one.

Switzerland is blessed with extraordinary people as well as wonderful scenery. I look forward to future editions.

W. SCHALLER, GERMANY

The Federal Palace in Berne

Immersed in the history of the Federal Palace. The guide "Le Palais fédéral à Berne" (The Federal Palace in Berne) gives us an historical and architectural insight into this Swiss political landmark covering all stages of its construction and the reasons for its various extensions. The Federal Palace is made up of three buildings – the west wing, formerly the federal government building, built between 1852 and 1857, the east wing, built between 1888 and 1892, and, in the centre, the Parliament Building constructed between 1894 and 1902. Berne was chosen as the new federal capital in 1848 at the first meeting of the chambers. The Federal Council and the Parliament were temporarily based at different locations in Berne. In 1852, the Bernese architect, Jakob Friedrich Studer (1817-1879), started work on the construction of the government building in neo-renaissance style. As

the size of the federal administration became much greater than anticipated, extension plans had to be drawn up in 1874. Work on the building of the east wing began in 1888 under the guidance of Hans Wilhelm Auer (1847-1906), an architect from St. Gallen. The same architect was also responsible for the construction of the Parliament Building adorned with its cupola and built exclusively from Swiss materials. Illustrated with many contemporary and period photographs and plans, this guide also looks at the interior decor and the building's most important rooms – an extraordinary variety.

"Le Palais fédéral à Berne", Monica Bilfinger, Guide to Swiss monuments, Society for the History of Swiss Art, Swiss Confederation, Berne, 2009.

Switzerland under the microscope. In "En retard au paradis" (Late for Heaven), the humanist, Paul Grossrieder, and political analyst, Brigitte Perrin, examine Switzerland and its values in a lengthy work which interweaves the viewpoints of two generations. One, born in 1944, is a Dominican friar who later became a diplomat at the Vatican, before going on to work for the Red Cross at the age of 39 and becoming head of the ICRC from 1998 to 2002. His counterpart, born in 1974, works for TSR – the state French-language broadcaster in Switzerland – as a journalist. The book examines Switzerland's socio-economic and political landscape touching on humanitarian issues, solidarity, individualism, poverty, young people, neutrality, national identity, disparity in wealth, May 1968 and the erosion of social benefits. The tradition of compromise, the right of asylum, criticism of the Swiss People's Party (SVP), the Federal Council, banking confidentiality, the tax system, discretion, openness and diplomacy are also explored. The debate is based on the experiences and professional backgrounds of the two protagonists. It then becomes more general and more global, addressing the issues of the environment, climate change, man and nature. Parallels are drawn between the Swissair and UBS affairs. Finally, religion, philosophy and wisdom are also dealt with in the latter part. Times are changing and Swiss tardiness is scrutinised in detail. On the topic of punctuality, Paul Grossrieder's grandfather would say "hurry up or you'll be late getting to heaven" when he saw him dawdling.

Video interviews on the book can be found at: www.enretardauparadis.com "En retard au paradis. Dialogues autour du génie helvétique", by Paul Grossrieder and Brigitte Perrin, published by Xenia, Vevey, 2009.

THE GREATEST SWISS

We asked the Swiss abroad to tell us via the Internet who they felt was the greatest Swiss figure of all time. We received 2,500 votes. The result: Albert Einstein was voted the most outstanding Swiss citizen in history. In second place came Henri Dunant, the founder of the Red Cross, third was Heinrich Pestalozzi, and General Henri Guisan, whose service as commander-in-chief of the Swiss army in the Second World War has never been forgotten, finished in fourth position. In order of votes, they were followed by Le Corbusier, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Alberto Giacometti.

We would like to thank everyone who took part in our little survey.