

**Zeitschrift:** Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad  
**Herausgeber:** Organisation of the Swiss Abroad  
**Band:** 39 (2012)  
**Heft:** 5

**Vorwort:** Feeling claustrophobic  
**Autor:** Engel, Barbara

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. [Siehe Rechtliche Hinweise.](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. [Voir Informations légales.](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. [See Legal notice.](#)

**Download PDF:** 02.02.2025

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

## Feeling claustrophobic

**A**T SOME POINT IN AUGUST, Switzerland exceeded the “magical” number of eight million inhabitants. This was acknowledged by the media but there were no celebrations to mark the occasion. Instead, a sense of panic could be felt in the country. We experience an ever more densely populated Switzerland every day in the vast swathes of commuters in overcrowded trains, growing traffic congestion and urban sprawl in the countryside. This sense of claustrophobia is actually nothing new. A century ago, when Switzerland’s population had not even reached four million, fears that the people in our small country would soon take over all our natural surroundings led to the foundation of the national park in the Engadin. The aim was to create a free zone for nature.

The news of Switzerland’s population reaching eight million resulted in extensive analyses by the media and politicians concerning its significance and which approaches should now be adopted. The proposed solutions range from the termination of the freedom of movement of persons with the EU to calls for the construction of more high-rise buildings. The analyses underlined the point that life in Switzerland is good, very good



even. This explains why so many people wish to live here. The statistics suggest that the eight-millionth resident is highly likely to be a well-educated German, a doctor or an engineer – in other words, an employee who is contributing to Switzerland’s prosperity and development. The statistics also reveal, for example, that already over half the professors at Swiss universities come from abroad. These realities cannot be changed with a defensive attitude or sectoral approach without this having far-reaching consequences. We need to adapt to these realities even if the developments cause many people concern – the same may also be said of our expectations and consumption levels.

Unlike the country itself, churches in Switzerland are experiencing a huge exodus, with membership on the decline. One in five Swiss today indicates that he or she has no religious affiliation, yet churches are an issue that is covered extensively in public debate – this is what the results of a national research project on church and religion in Switzerland reveal. This issue is covered from page 8 as this edition’s key focus topic.

Finally, I would like to draw your attention to the series of articles on literature that begins in this edition. These will feature books and literary figures among the Swiss abroad, authors who spend or have spent all or part of their lives living outside Switzerland and naturally reflect this in their work. Charles Linsmayer, a literary scholar and journalist living in Zurich, will present famous and lesser-known faces from the Swiss literary scene in every future edition. The series begins on page 23 with a portrait of Guy de Pourtalès.

BARBARA ENGEL

4  
Mailbag

5  
Books: What thinking clearly can achieve

6  
Images: 700 years of Swiss history in pictures

8  
Churches remain a major political issue despite constantly dwindling congregations

13  
The perfect woman: Simone Niggli-Luder, the orienteering world champion, effortlessly combines many roles

### Regional news

17  
Voting

17 + 18  
Switzerland’s tax agreements and their implications for the Swiss abroad

19  
The row over new fighter jets for the Swiss army

20  
60 years of air rescue – Rega is a highly successful Swiss institution

23  
Literature series: Guy de Pourtalès

24  
OSA news

27  
Notes from Parliament

31  
Echo

**Cover photo:** This photograph of the church at Saas im Prättigau, shrouded in mist, can be seen as a symbol of attitudes towards religion and churches in Switzerland, suggesting distance and estrangement, but also fear and mistrust.

**Photo:** Keystone / Arno Balzarini

**IMPRINT:** “Swiss Review”, the magazine for the Swiss abroad, is in its 39th year of publication and is published in German, French, Italian, English and Spanish in 14 regional editions. It has a total circulation of 395 000, including 135 000 electronic copies. Regional news appears four times a year.

The ordering parties are fully responsible for the content of advertisements and promotional inserts. These contents do not necessarily represent the opinion of either the editorial office or the publisher.

■ EDITORS: Barbara Engel (BE), Editor-in-Chief; René Lenzin (RL); Alain Wey (AW); Marc Lettau (MUL); Manuel Gnos (MAG); Jean-François Lichtenstern (JFL), responsible for “Notes from Parliament”, Relations with the Swiss Abroad, FDFA, CH-3003 Berne. Translation: CLS Communication AG ■ LAYOUT: Herzog Design, Zurich ■ POSTAL ADDRESS: Publisher, editorial office, advertising: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, CH-3006 Berne, Tel.: +41 31 356 61 10, Postal account (Swiss National Giro): 30-6768-9. ■ E-MAIL: revue@aso.ch

■ PRINT: Swissprinters AG, CH-4800 Zofingen. ■ CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Please advise your local embassy or consulate. Do not write to Berne. ■ All Swiss abroad who are registered with a Swiss representation receive the magazine free of charge. Anyone else can subscribe to the magazine for an annual fee (Switzerland: CHF 30 / abroad: CHF 50). Subscribers are sent the magazine direct from Berne. ■ INTERNET: www.revue.ch

Copy deadline for this edition: 20.8.12