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Little gems

"I am more than one"

Buenos Aires, 1913. At the famous Café Tortoni, piano music is playing in the background and a man is telling the story of how his father emigrated from Switzerland to Argentina more than 50 years ago. He talks about farewells and hopes. "I bi meh aus eine" ("I am more than one") is the emigration story of a settler from Emmental uncovered by Swiss author Pedro Lenz on a trip to Argentina. As well as turning the story into a book, he collaborated with musician Patrick Neuhaus to create a stage show that is now also available on CD.

It is the story of watchmaker Peter Wingeier from Trubschachen, who raided the welfare assistance fund and then fled to Argentina, where he masquer-

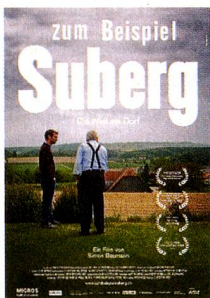


aded as a doctor. Under the name of Theophil Romang, he founded a village. The settlement is still there today, complete with a bust of its founder. From the few historical facts available, Pedro Lenz weaves a moving story told from the point of view of the man's son, wonderfully accompanied on the piano by Patrick Neuhaus. "Facts," he says at one point, "facts and truth are two different things." Facts can be discovered, "but the truth you have to feel".

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Pedro Lenz: "I bi meh aus eine. Die bemerkenswerte Geschichte eines Emmentaler Siedlers." Available as a book and audiobook from Cosmos-Verlag, Muri bei Bern; book, 75 pages, Swiss German, CHF 25, CD 78 minutes, CHF 29; www.cosmosverlag.ch; schaerer@cosmosverlag.ch



"Suberg for Example"

Simon Baumann hails from Suberg, a Swiss village like many others. The 33 year old grew up in the village, where he bought an old house from his parents that he shares with his girlfriend. But he doesn't actually like Suberg. The village has fallen victim to modern mobility, with what was once a village community becoming no more

than a dormitory settlement. In his documentary film, "Suberg for Example", Simon Baumann seeks to find a sense of home in his home village. He talks to people, some friendly, others less so: his parents, former National Councillors Stephanie and Ruedi Baumann (SP and Greens, respectively), are still regarded by many with a certain amount of hostility, even though

they have been living in France for the last ten years. Simon Baumann seeks to make connections, but opportunities are thin on the ground. One is the male voice choir to which he now belongs. In the film he sometimes appears as a detached analyst, sometimes as a bogeyman, but he never mocks others even when the opportunity presents itself. The result is an engaging,

humorous yet melancholy film – not just about Suberg, but about Switzerland. It is proving enormously popular at Swiss box offices.

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Available on DVD from FAIR & UGLY; www.fairandugly.ch, info@fairandugly.ch; Swiss German narration with German and French subtitles; CHF 27 plus CHF 7 P&P for international delivery
Interview at: <http://www.zeit.de/2013/48/film-zum-beispiel-suberg-simon-baumann>



The best of Switzerland

It is called "bestswiss.ch" and it promises to provide no less than the very best of Switzerland. And visitors to www.bestswiss.ch, the website of bestswiss GmbH from Zollikofen, will certainly find plenty high-quality, exclusive and unusual Swiss products. Fashion and accessories, food and drinks, interior design and, of course, lots to keep the little ones



happy. For example, there are hand-made products from the Poschiavo weaving company and a tube amplifier called Colotube, which, according to the description, produces "heavenly sounds that only a few chosen people can hear on Earth". There is also the entire range of tea towels by Meyer-Mayor as well as clothing by Swiss designers including Andrea Hinnen, Christa de Carouge



and Aziza Zina. And don't miss the legendary Elgg snails in a jar, which are advertised as "snail meat, extremely rich in protein, processed by hand". Some products can be purchased directly from bestswiss, though there are also links from the website to all the product providers. And anyone not wanting to buy can simply feast their eyes on the offering...

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www.bestswiss.ch

Bulletins

E-voting set to be extended

The Federal Council has taken another step towards universal e-voting. Cantons meeting the newly issued security standards can allow up to 50% of the electorate to take part in referenda and elections electronically. There is nevertheless increasing scepticism in Parliament over the security risks. The National Council will debate the issue shortly.

Council of States approves the law on Swiss schools abroad

The Education Act for Swiss Citizens Abroad has been endorsed by the Council of States. This will give the 17 Swiss schools abroad greater commercial freedom and more planning security in future. The law also allows the model of dual education to be exported and enables support for vocational training abroad. Government funding will now no longer depend on the number of Swiss pupils but instead on the total number of pupils and on multilingualism. Investment subsidies for the establishment of new Swiss schools can now also be distributed.

Opposed to agreement with France

The National Council resoundingly rejected the new inheritance tax agreement with France in mid-December. The revised inheritance tax agreement aims to allow France to tax real estate in Switzerland inherited by persons living in France. The Council of States must now reach its verdict on the agreement.

Lack of transparency

Switzerland is not doing enough to ensure greater transparency

and less corruption. This is the conclusion reached by the monitoring body GRECO (Group of States against Corruption) set up by the Council of Europe in 1999. GRECO is particularly critical of the lack of transparency in Switzerland with regard to the funding of political parties.

High office at the UN

Switzerland's Pierre Krähenbühl took up a senior position at the UN at the beginning of January. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appointed him Commissioner-General of UNRWA (the United Nations Relief and Works Agency), the UN aid organisation for Palestinian refugees. The agency, founded in 1949, today provides over five million registered Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the Israeli-occupied Palestinian territories with medical care, social institutions, school education and emergency aid. Before joining the UN, Krähenbühl spent over ten years as Director of Operations at the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Still no equal pay

Large disparities in pay between men and women still exist in the private sector, according to a new study. The average salary gap stands at 23.6%. The differences cannot be explained objectively in 37.6% of cases. The study therefore points to discrimination. The salary gap has only narrowed slightly in recent years. The Federal Council has announced that the government would consider measures to enforce the pay equality enshrined in the federal constitution.

Quotes

"Switzerland and the world are not strangers. Like the lake and the sky, they meet at the horizon."

Federal Councillor Didier Burkhalter, speaking at the celebrations following his election as Swiss President

"Pride is the emotional certainty of our own greatness. Vanity is the emotional certainty that others perceive it in us, or at least attribute it to us."

Fernando Pessoa (1888-1935), Portuguese poet

"They busy themselves in all piety and propriety with milking cows, making cheese, being chaste and yodelling."

Friedrich Engels (1820-1895), German philosopher and revolutionary, about the Swiss

"Everything in Switzerland is better and more beautiful."

Adolf Muschg, Swiss writer and professor of literature

"Where there is no money, there are no Swiss."

Wilhelm Busch (1832-1908), German poet and illustrator

"Public opinion reigns in society because stupidity reigns amongst the stupid."

Nicolas Chamfort (1741-1794), French writer

"A man who does not know the truth is just an idiot, but a man who knows the truth and calls it a lie is a crook!"

Bertolt Brecht (1898-1956), German dramatist and lyricist



Eight Chinese ski instructors completed a training course in Switzerland in December. Those responsible for Swiss winter tourism are focusing heavily on Asia as a major growth market in the search for new visitors. The reasoning behind training the ski instructors is to enable Chinese visitors to take lessons in their own language and to improve understanding among the Swiss of Chinese winter tourists. The eight Chinese ski instructors will be deployed in Zermatt, Verbier, Grindelwald, Gstaad, Davos, St. Moritz, Villars and Engelberg. They will then promote Swiss skiing holidays in China because, according to Switzerland Tourism, people there are "often completely unaware of what is on offer during the winter". Chinese winter tourists currently account for "only" around 100,000 overnight hotel stays in Switzerland. The total number of overnight stays in Swiss hotels for winter tourism stands at around 7.5 million.