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Little gems

An outside perspective on national history

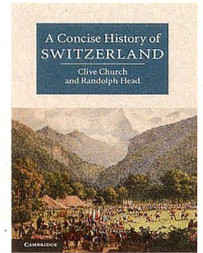
Anyone interested in Swiss history has until now primarily been dependent upon books and articles written by German-speaking or French-speaking historians. This has also resulted in Swiss history increasingly being overlooked in an academic world dominated by the English language. That may now change. The prestigious UK publisher Cambridge University Press has released a volume on Switzerland in its "A Concise History of..." series. The two professors Clive Church of the University of Kent and Randolph Head of the University of Riverside in California have produced a highly readable book



that is not just intended for academics. Thanks to numerous illustrations and graphical images as well as a detailed chronology, it also serves as a reference book – one which surpasses Wikipedia by some distance and could prove a real source of knowledge for the Swiss abroad.

BE

Clive H. Church, Randolph C. Head: *A Concise History of Switzerland*; Cambridge University Press 2013; 339 pages; CHF 32.90, EUR 22.50.



Globi becomes an organic farmer

German-speaking Swiss children have enjoyed the Globi stories for decades. Originally designed as an advertising medium for the Globus chain of department stores, Globi the parrot has since gone on many adventures in over 80 children's books. Although the first translations in French-speaking Switzerland

enjoyed little success, selected editions are still translated into French today. English translations have also been available for some years now.

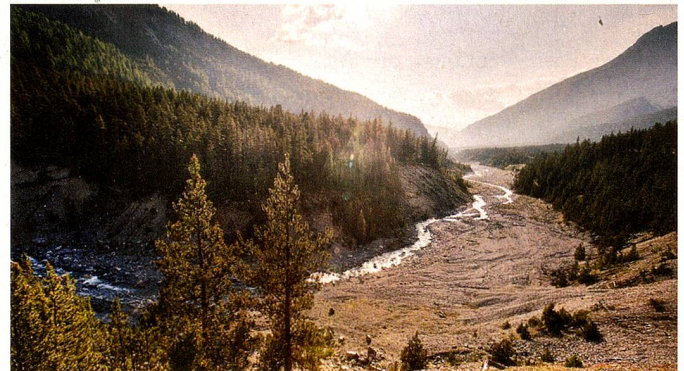
In the latest edition "Globi, der schlaue Bauer" (Globi, the Smart Farmer), the protagonist modernises a family farm by converting to organic standards and mild forms of pest control. The book has been brought out

in the UN's International Year of Family Farming, and the stories were produced in cooperation with the Swiss Biovision foundation.

As usual the story is told in rhyme – even in French and English in which this illustrated book has also been published. The stories and songs on the accompanying audio book CD are in Swiss German.

MH

"Globi, der schlaue Bauer", Globi-Verlag, Zurich; book (also in French and English), CHF 21.50; audio book CD in Swiss German, CHF 16.90



Untouched nature

The experiment to leave nature to its own devices and observe its development began at the Swiss National Park 100 years ago. It was a political decision: On 27 March 1914, the National Council adopted the federal resolution "on the establishment of a Swiss National Park in the Lower Engadine". The 100-year anniversary of the foundation of this unique outdoor laboratory in Switzerland has provided opportunity for celebration and review. What happens if human activities are completely excluded from a landscape? These events in the 170 km² nature reserve are documented cartographically in the "Atlas of the

Swiss National Park". The 230-page publication is a lavishly filled treasure trove and not just of interest to map lovers and hikers. www.atlasnationalpark.ch

BE

"Atlas des Schweizerischen Nationalparks – Die ersten 100 Jahre", (in German; also available in French);

edited by Heinrich Haller, Antonia Eisenhut and Rudolf Haller; Verlag Haupt Bern, 2013; 247 pages, colour illustration throughout; CHF 69, EUR 59. www.haupt.ch



Bulletins

Compensation for contract children

The victims of compulsory administrative measures should not just receive an apology but also compensation. A popular initiative aiming to achieve this objective was launched on 31 March. It calls for a 500-million-franc compensation fund to be created. The money should be used to help the worst-affected victims and make amends for the injustice they suffered. Parliament adopted a law at the beginning of March that recognises this injustice. It also governs access to records and an historical re-appraisal but does not provide for any financial compensation. This is now to be achieved through a popular initiative.

Members of Parliament fond of travel

Swiss Members of Parliament spent more time travelling abroad last year than ever before: 466 person travel days were booked compared with just 302 days in 2012. Out on his own at the top of the travel list was Filippo Lombardi, who visited 22 countries as the Council of States President. Travel costs for Members of Parliament amounted to 520,200 francs in 2013. They totalled 328,900 francs in the previous year.

More Swiss wine drunk

The Swiss consumed just under 107 million litres of Swiss wine in 2013. According to details from the Federal Office for Agriculture, that is almost 10 million litres more than in the previous year. The market share of Swiss wine amounts to 39% of a total of 273 million litres consumed. Among Swiss wines, consumption of white and red wines, standing at 53 million li-

tres and 54 million litres respectively, is almost identical. Among foreign products, significantly more red wine – 183 million litres – is consumed.

Disclosure of bank data for US clients

Swiss banks must obtain approval from their US clients to provide data to the US authorities under the FATCA agreement. They must also inform clients about a possible administrative assistance procedure in accordance with this agreement. The FATCA agreement with the USA will enter into force before 1 July 2014, according to the Swiss Federal Tax Administration. If a bank does not receive from a US client a declaration of consent to the transfer of account details to the US Internal Revenue Service within a stipulated period, the account will be classified as a “non-consenting US account”. The US authority may request details of the “non-consenting US accounts” from Switzerland on the basis of this information using the administrative assistance procedure.

Ambiguous advertisement

The advertisement by soliswiss, not clearly labelled as such, that appeared on the back page of the April 2014 issue of “Swiss Review” caused some confusion. Some readers got the impression that the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) was supporting the petition launched by soliswiss for the integration of soliswiss into the new law on the Swiss abroad and for a default guarantee from federal government. However, this was simply a paid-for advertisement that had nothing to do with OSA.

Quotes

“We cannot be certain that we will not face conflict situations even in Switzerland.”

Federal Councillor Ueli Maurer in the referendum campaign over the Gripen fighter jet

“Just escaping is not enough; you have to escape in the right direction.”

Charles-Ferdinand Ramuz (1878–1947), Swiss author

“In the past we had confessional wars in Switzerland, today we have the jihad.”

Federal Councillor Ueli Maurer again

“Madness is part of man.”

Blaise Cendrars (1887–1961)

“I, too, find it difficult not to see a possible demise of Switzerland as the end of the world. Only reason makes me appreciate that the world is bigger.”

Peter Bichsel, Swiss writer

“To be spared by fate means neither shame nor glory but it is a portent.”

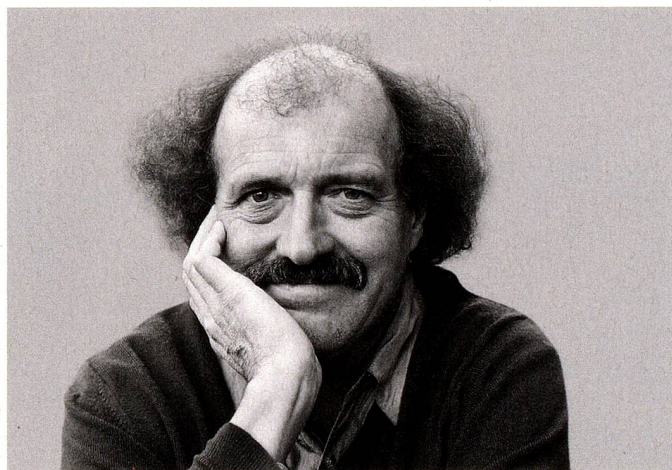
Friedrich Dürrenmatt (1921–1990), Swiss author, about his homeland in a speech three weeks before his death

“Blessed is the man who, having nothing to say, abstains from giving us wordy evidence of the fact.”

George Eliot (pen name for Mary Ann Evans) (1819–1880), English writer

“William Tell is still the only Swiss person whom the whole world knows.”

Friedrich Dürrenmatt again



“You only die once, that’s guaranteed. Death remains the scandal of every life. Absolutely nothing is more incomprehensible than death.” Urs Widmer wrote these words in 2002. Now the writer is dead, having passed away on 2 April, aged 75. Urs Widmer, together with Max Frisch and Friedrich Dürrenmatt, was one of the most famous Swiss authors in the German-speaking world. With his passing, Switzerland has lost a great literary talent and a vociferous intellectual who addressed issues ranging from colonialism to the conduct of senior executives. Widmer achieved his great public breakthrough in 2000 with the novel “Der Geliebte der Mutter” (My Mother’s Lover). His autobiography, “Reise an den Rand des Universums” (Journey to the Edge of the Universe), published last year, begins with the words: “No author in their right mind writes an autobiography because your autobiography is your last book.”