

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 47 (2020)
Heft: 1

Rubrik: Top pick : Martin Suter

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Download PDF: 28.04.2025

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Martin Suter



Martin Suter is once again able to celebrate his birthday on 29 February because 2020 is a leap year. He also has every reason to pop the cork on a bottle of champagne. The Zurich-born author, who will soon turn 72, has been the highest-selling Swiss author internationally for more than twenty years. His breakthrough came with the novel “Small World” in 1997. At that time, he was in his late forties; a late bloomer. Further well-known titles followed, including “The Dark Side of the Moon”. Suter also achieved success with the criminal series based around the dandified Zurich detective Allmen. “Allmen and the Koi”, the sixth volume, landed directly in the top spot on the bestseller list last autumn. This has almost become a regular haunt for the author whose works have been translated and filmed many times. Before he became a full-time writer, Suter was a successful advertising creative director. This period of his life afforded him an insight into the boardroom, which he later skilfully debunked in newspaper columns that were as biting as they were humorous. He is an extremely disciplined writer, but Suter the intellectual is also a bon vivant. He likes to look stylish, have beautiful things, had a second residence on Ibiza, and currently lives in Marrakesh. The “Süddeutsche Zeitung” has termed him “the very antithesis of the starving artist”. However, like other authors, he is concerned about the structural change afoot in publishing. Now Suter is experimenting with a digital model. You can subscribe to reading material, videos and podcasts for six Swiss francs or five euros per month on his website www.martin-suter.com. “Less than the price of a latte macchiato”, he notes. He has also revived his “Business Class” column online. Globalised Swiss bankers and other exponents of top management still provide him with plenty of material.

SUSANNE WENGER

Tension between Berne and Colombo

At the end of November, an employee of the Swiss embassy in the Sri Lankan capital Colombo was kidnapped and forced to reveal confidential information. The Swiss authorities condemned the attack, labelling it “extremely serious and unacceptable”. The Sri Lankan government disputes the Swiss account of the events. Observers suspect that the incident may be connected to the flight of a high-ranking Sri Lankan official to Switzerland. (MUL)

Cleaning service in outer space

Switzerland is contributing 542 million Swiss francs to the new five-year budget of the European Space Agency (ESA). By doing so, it is consolidating its role in space research. Switzerland is leading the way in several programmes, such as in the mission to locate space junk and bring down old satellites with controlled re-entry. (MUL)

Reformed church supports “Marriage for All”

In November, the delegates of the Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches voted overwhelmingly to back moves to allow homosexual couples to marry. Despite the decision, reformed pastors are still free to decide whether they wish to marry same-sex couples, or not. The landmark decision supporting “Marriage for All” was also made against the backdrop of the Green Liberals’ parliamentary initiative: they are demanding that all couples be allowed to enter into legally regulated domestic partnerships – irrespective of their sex or sexual orientation. (MUL)

Wind park fails due to landscape protection

There will be no large park with wind turbines built in the canton of Grisons. The voters of the local municipality of Lugnez have rejected the plan to build 18 windmills, each more than 100 metres in height, around the 2,357-metre-high Um Su mountain. They submitted that it is more important to protect the Alpine landscape than to build an ecologically viable wind park. (MUL)

Geneva airport: people want to have their say

The Genevans want to have their democratic say in the future of Geneva airport. They voted overwhelmingly at the ballot box in favour of anchoring their right to co-determination in the Geneva constitution. Under the new regulations, not only economic aspects must be considered when developing the airport, but also environmental protection and the quality of life of the local residents. Business circles vehemently opposed the change, but without success. (MUL)