

# Mailbag

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### "Army seeks new enemies", "Swiss Review" 4/05

As a Swiss Abroad and regular reader of the "Swiss Review", I would like to congratulate you on the new look, but unfortunately I also have a criticism.

The presentation is very good, but the first title is nothing short of a catastrophe. Since when did the Swiss army, in other words Switzerland, need enemies? Is not the army, and indeed all Swiss, strictly committed to peace?

Generally speaking, the media are unaware of the forces they can unleash with negative headlines. The "Swiss Review" in particular should set an example and exercise more caution. Good reporting of any given issue can have a positive impact or at least lessen the negative impact. Please ask your editorial staff to take more care in future, to avoid any repetition of such faux pas.

PETER H. KOLB-SCHMID,  
BY E-MAIL

### Pride of place for the "Swiss Review"

Firstly, many congratulations on your magazine which we have known virtually since its inception. Among the newspapers and magazines which we read (French, German or English) the "Swiss Review" takes pride of place. Even though we live near Switzerland and visit our children and relatives there two or three times a year, the "Review" is a welcome link and, above all, a way to keep up with all the interesting news about Switzerland. Even here on the borders of France, it's rare to see articles on this or that referendum. As a final point, the articles themselves offer a fine example of unbiased reporting.

That said, my wife (from Geneva) and I (from Fribourg) would like to express publicly the shame we felt at the start of the Switzerland/France football match. We were profoundly shocked at way the Swiss fans behaved. When the Marseillaise was played, a packed stadium



filled with Swiss flags drowned the French anthem with deafening whistles! What a degrading spectacle! Having lived abroad for fifty years, we had an idealised image of Switzerland but that has now been tarnished. Naturally it would be wrong to generalise, but these people have lost any scrap of respect for others! And ultimately, all this vulgarity was for nothing!

Switzerland, you have scored an own goal. Don't forget that the match was broadcast widely throughout Europe and beyond.  
HILDA AND ROGER KIRSCHER,  
CLERMONT L'HÉRAULT, FRANCE

### "Swiss Review": A nice surprise

It is always a nice surprise to receive the "Swiss Review" with its varied subject matter. It helps us to maintain strong ties with the Swiss back home, and helps my son in particular to stay close to his roots. We feel very close to the other Swiss expatriots who make up the so-called Fifth Switzerland. I was moved to read about the aid which Switzerland contributed in response to the Tsunami on 26 December and Micheline Calmy-Rey's visit to Thailand and Sri Lanka. I have a great deal of admiration for her and read her article with great interest.

CLAUDE PFUND AND SON JULIEN,  
VENISSIEUX, FRANCE

### New look for the "Swiss Review"

Congratulations on the new look of the "Swiss Review." It's very appealing. I like it so much that I would like to ask you for the names of the fonts used, especially for the one used in titles and subtitles. (*The font is ITC Officina Serif. Editor*)

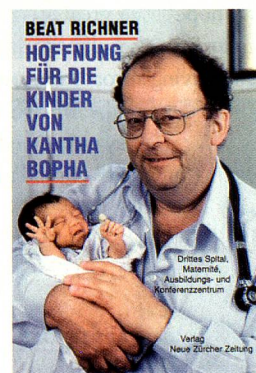
Who is the best-known living personality in Switzerland? Tennis ace Roger Federer? Federal Councillor Christoph Blocher? Architect Mario Botta? Or someone who lives far from his home country, working as a children's doctor in Cambodia? Virtually everyone in Switzerland knows paediatrician Beat Richner. In 2003, when Swiss TV ran their first live "Swiss of the Year" programme asking viewers to send in their votes, this physician to the poor and holder of two honorary doctorates won the title. Whenever he performs as "Beatocello", playing his cello in the monastery church of Einsiedeln or in Lausanne Cathedral, his concerts are a sell-out.

Born in 1947, Richner is a much admired as well as much criticised personality. In 1992 he abandoned his paediatric practice in Zurich and, at the request of the King of Cambodia, travelled to Phnom Penh to begin rebuilding the Kantha Bopha children's hospital which had been destroyed in the civil war. Since then he has selflessly devoted his life to this cause. The first hospital was opened in autumn 1992, followed four years later by Kantha Bopha 2 and, in 1999, the Jayavarman VII Clinic in Angkor complete with maternity unit and training centre. Every year more than 600 000 sick children receive ambulatory treatment and more than 67 000 are given stationary treatment. Almost 90 percent of all Cambodian children who ever need to see a doctor are treated free of charge in these hospitals. "Without our three hospitals, 60 000 children would die every year", says Richner, adding that 95 percent of all donations go directly towards hospital treatment.

The Swiss paediatrician fights his battle on many fronts. He accuses our rich confederation of contributing a mere CHF 2.75 million a year towards the annual costs of CHF 20 million. "My reserves are never sufficient for more than four months." In Richner's opinion, Cambodia is not a constitutional state and its Ministry of Health is incompetent and corrupt. He is highly critical of the World Health Organisation and its strategy, which he characterises as "poor medicine for poor people in poor countries", and he believes non-governmental organisations such as UNICEF have also failed to promote healthcare in Cambodia. Anyone who questions Richner's methods (for instance, the use of computer tomographs), can expect a passionate response.

In the opinion of many Swiss, Beat Richner is a great friend of humanity as well as a courageous and tireless fighter for a good cause. For his part, he sees himself as a "prisoner of his conscience", because "every child has only one life". His attitude to life is to stick to his guns and refuse to become embittered. By way of illustration he cites his hospitals' logo: a palm tree, a lotus and a star. The palm tree symbolises shelter, the lotus love, and the star hope.

ROLF RIBI



Beat Richner: Hope for the Children of Kantha Bopha. Pub. Neue Zürcher Zeitung, Zurich 2004. CHF 28, EUR 19.

Previously published: Beat Richner: Kantha Bopha. Als Schweizer Arzt in Kambodscha, Pub. Neue Zürcher Zeitung, Zurich 2001. CHF 28, EUR 19.

Postal account 80-60699-1, Bank UBS, 8024 Zurich, Account 838.570.01Q.

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Also: Beat Richner: Le médecin au violoncelle. Edition Favre, Lausanne 2005, CHF 29, EUR 18.

www.beatrichner.com



Thanks for keeping us Swiss abroad informed, and keep up the good work.

CLAUDE AUBERT, MARYLAND, USA

#### **"Every vote counts"**

##### **Supplement to**

##### **"Swiss Review" 3/05**

Many thanks for your informative and interesting publication which keeps us up to date far from home. We read with interest the supplement "Every vote counts". While we are amazed at the large percentage of Swiss living abroad (10%), we are even more surprised at how few Swiss Abroad are represented in the Swiss government. We too would very much like to be able to vote, but unfortunately the outdated voting system makes it impossible. By the time we receive the voting documents, we are able to read the results online. We are certainly not alone in this. Who speaks up for us in the Swiss government? Is it not high time Switzerland introduced an online voting procedure, especially for the Swiss Abroad (even as a pilot project)? As far as we can tell, even the education of Swiss children abroad is greatly neglected compared to other European countries. Who is there to campaign for a curriculum for Swiss children abroad that is consistent with the Swiss system (at least in terms of Swiss history and geography)? We believe that there are still many gaps to be filled. We hope to see greater efforts in future on behalf of the many Swiss living abroad, and look forward to the day when Swiss at home will pay more heed to their compatriots abroad and their interests.

G. & M. BALTENSPERGER,  
KIRGISTAN (CIS)

#### **A very pleasant surprise**

##### **"Swiss Review" 4/05**

For me and my friends in Bangkok, the August issue of the "Swiss Review" was a very pleasant surprise. Instead of a magazine to which little or no attention was paid in the past, we

received a publication that was excellent in terms of content and graphical design! We are already looking forward to the next issue!

The future of the Swiss army is also of great interest to us Swiss Abroad, and the article by Peter Amstutz was very much appreciated. The interview with Nicolas Hayek was brilliant: my compliments! Personally, I was particularly pleased to read Hayek's comments on Swiss politicians.

I also found René Lenzin's comments on extension of the bilateral accords valuable, since we were much preoccupied with the referendum on the free movement of persons.

WALTER L. MEYER, BANGKOK,  
THAILAND

#### **Nicolas G. Hayek**

##### **"Swiss Review" 4/05**

As a Swiss born citizen expatriated since childhood, I read Nicolas G. Hayek's statement "Switzerland needs entrepreneurs again" with heart-warming interest. Entrepreneurs hold the key to maintaining Switzerland's full employment with well-paid jobs. The case of Swissair is doubly "too bad" for the retention and creation of many more well-paid Swiss jobs. It is easy to pass judgment on Swissair's failed business plan by looking at it from the rear view mirror. Out of the box thinking could have made Swissair the Southwest Airline of Europe. Southwest Airlines just keeps on soaring while most others limp along or are still trying to get out of bankruptcy. Out of the box marketing would have given Swissair the élan vital of a Southwest Airline. Swissair on steroid coupled with out of the box marketing would have proven a dynamo of good paying Swiss jobs in Switzerland.

FREDERIC NEUENSCHWANDER,  
BY E-MAIL

#### **Entrepreneurs instead of managers in politics, too**

##### **"Swiss Review" 4/05**

The new look of the "Swiss Review" is a success and it seems

to me that the content has also changed. I congratulate you on behalf of several friends in Tenerife. The interview with Nicolas Hayek in particular was excellent, and Hayek's answers hit the nail on the head. We have long held the same opinion i.e. that we need more entrepreneurs (not managers) and that we also need to be governed by such types. Professors, teachers, lawyers and functionaries have never had to prove themselves in the tough world of business, as a result of which their attitudes are usually introspective and primarily theoretical in nature. This is evident in the head-long stampede to emulate the EU, even though we know that it is nothing more than a forum for politicians. Here in Tenerife we come into contact with people from many different countries, mainly EU member states, and with only a few exceptions they would all rather give up the EU membership that their politicians have forged.

Our far-sighted forefathers wisely bequeathed to us a form of government that occasionally allows us to quell the excesses of short-sighted, egotistical politicians. I hope that you continue in the new style of the "Swiss Review". Yours sincerely,  
PETER KÜNDIG, TENERIFE, SPAIN

#### **Images of Benedictine**

##### **Abbey Engelberg**

##### **"Swiss Review" 4/05**

Great pictures of the "885 years YOUNG" monastic community! Pater Bonaventura, shown on speedy skates, was equally skilled as a math teacher, Easter Sunday homilist, designer of a multi KW hydroelectric plant, installer of diesel engines in Cameroon and swift paddler of my canoe in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area (BWCA) of Northern Minnesota. Pater Johannes Zehnder, shown manoeuvring a tricky slalom, was equally adept as Rector of the Kollegium guiding the Liberal Arts college into the 21st century.

BEAT KEEL, PRIOR LAKE, MN USA

#### **Congratulations**

Warmest congratulations on this highly unusual issue... My three children and my parents all appreciated the front-page photo which turns stereotypes on their head, as well as the article on faux chalets. I teach cultural diversity and history at a high school and I intend to use these articles in my course. Many thanks again, and keep working on the "myths".

ANNICK BETTEX,  
TOURNAI, BELGIUM

#### **Enjoy the "Swiss Review", but...**

We enjoy getting the "Swiss Review" very much and like the new format but find the type quite hard to read comfortably. I don't know if it's the size as much as the "thinness". I wonder if you have had other similar feedback?

RUTH AND HANS HEUBERGER,  
BY E-MAIL

#### **"Swiss Review" 4/05**

##### **New enemies?**

Many thanks for your review which I read with interest. Nevertheless, I would like to point out that I am a little surprised at the headline to the article "The Swiss Army seeks new enemies".

While I agree that it is part of any army's tasks and responsibilities to continually monitor, identify and evaluate threats to its home country, I do not believe it is imperative to find new enemies at any cost, on the sole grounds that its old enemies no longer exist! It seems to me that when we seek to identify threats, in this sense, we mean not so much a particular enemy as potential enemies.

VALDO DEGLON,  
VENEUX-LES-SABLONS, FRANCE