

Mailbag

Objekttyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad**

Band (Jahr): **46 (2019)**

Heft 4

PDF erstellt am: **28.05.2024**

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Switzerland's civilian service is almost too successful



If someone chooses not to order the schnitzel in a restaurant because the pasta tastes better, the owner is definitely not going to try and make the pasta any less appealing. On the contrary, he or she needs to identify why the schnitzel is not being ordered – and improve it. So, the Swiss government should have already started reflecting on the current and future tasks of an army in

Switzerland decades ago, and then modified them accordingly to make them attractive once more. Yes, I also did civilian service more than twenty years ago, and precisely because I did not “want to guard a bridge with a gun”. Even then, I found military service to be very unattractive compared to the work of a ‘Zivi’ (civilian service worker). **TOBIAS MUNZ, HAMBURG, GERMANY**

I have seen both sides. I did my time in the military training school (RS) as a paramedic. Unfortunately, our commanding officer placed far more importance on keeping your room tidy and standing at attention or yelling at us for no reason than on the paramedic training itself. As a result, the majority of recruits could not even apply a half-decent dressing after the RS. This is why I switched to the civilian service afterwards. I undertook various civilian service deployments in different places. It allowed me to make a difference every day, and I learnt a great deal in the process. In light of the above, I truly believe that my time in the civilian service was actually service to my homeland; my time in the military was not. **MARCEL ELLENSTEIN, ZÜRICH**

Lucens, the Swiss reactor meltdown



I read in the “Swiss Review” that the Lucens nuclear reactor suffered a core meltdown in 1969. I was not aware that such a thing had happened, so thanks for the information! The case brings back memories of my own. Strenuous

political efforts were made to push through a nuclear power plant in Rüthi, next to the Hirschsprung, in the St. Gallen-Rheintal region in 1964. The arguments at the time were as follows: there was a compelling need for it, sufficient cooling water was available from the Rhine, and damage limitation in the event of an accident as half of the affected area would be in neighbouring Austria. Those, like myself, who actively opposed such plans were vilified as traitors to their country, and accused of running it down and not being open to progress. That was no longer the Switzerland that I knew, and one of the reasons why I chose to emigrate.

HANSPETER WIDRIG, STEIN, GERMANY

Tighter Swiss gun laws



I noticed the similarities between the US and Switzerland. It occurred to me that we face many of the same issues: gun control, and trade. As in Switzerland our Constitution guarantees the right to own guns. There are many here

who want that right eliminated, or greatly controlled. Please remember that every country that took their citizens guns first registered them. I was amazed and disappointed you will align yourselves with the EU's wishes in this regard. I urge my Swiss friends to reject any further attempts by the EU to take away your sovereignty and independence. **TED GROB, GRAFTON, USA**

Voting rights for Swiss Abroad under pressure

I feel the same way as most letter writers, concerning the vote for Swiss Abroad. I have been living in Canada for 48 years, am a Canadian citizen; even if I would like to consider moving back to Switzerland (Geneva, where I grew up) I don't believe that I could afford it, considering the cost of living there and the pensions I have here.

As a result, while I follow closely news from Switzerland and go through the various voting papers I receive, I feel it would be wrong to have my voice heard on subjects that do not and never will affect me, nor can I claim that I would always have a full understanding of the issues, without living there.

WERNER HOHLER, WINNIPEG, CANADA

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