

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 12 (1985)
Heft: 1

Inhaltsverzeichnis

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 22.08.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

Contents

Life-giving Waters	2
Results of the federal plebiscite on 2nd December 1984	5
Heidi and Jessica	6
Swiss-Video	7
Holidays in Switzerland	7
Pro Juventute	7
Storm over «Capdy Farm»	8
Official Communications:	
– The Federal Authorities 1985	9
– Unemployment Insurance	9
– Federal Ballots 1985	10
– Swiss Radio International (SRI)	11
– Heavy vehicle levy and motorway disc	11
– New legislation on Swiss nationality	11
Local News	12–16
Communications of the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad:	
– Citizenship Campaign	17
– Assembly of the Swiss Abroad 1985	18
– Book Corner	19
– Hiking Camp 1985	20
– Symposium «New Vistas»	21
1984 In Retrospect	22

Swiss Corporations

Consulting on the formation, the inheritance or the administration of Swiss corporations: financial planning or control, legal or tax advice, representation of absent members.

Treuhand Sven Müller

Birkenrain 4 CH-8634 Hombrechtikon-Zürich
Tel. 055/42 21 21 Telex 87 50 89 sven ch

Life-giving Waters

Biographical notes

The writer and poet Maurice Zermatten was born at St. Martin on 22nd October 1910. On completion of his studies at Fribourg University, he became lecturer in French literature at the «Gymnase» of Sion.

As author of many publications, he was awarded the Gottfried Keller Prize, the Grand Prix Catholique de Littérature and an honorary doctorate of the University of Fribourg.

In the Rhone Valley, the aqueducts have been the preoccupation of the rural population from one century to the next. It is the consequence of the driness of our climate and the poverty of our soil in this rocky country of ours. For fifty generations of our ancestors, water meant life. Without water no harvest. Driness means misery and death. The «bisse», the water duct is the vein which transports the vital element into the body dried out by the sun.

This means that the «bisses» are as old as the Valais civilization. Cranks would have it that it was the Arabs or, as we call them the Saracens who taught us the art of survival. This is an art which man discovers inside himself as soon as he is in danger. I watch children playing near water. With a small piece of wood or a pebble they spontaneously invent veritable aqueducts. The small stream is channelled according to their whims. A small boy is victorious over the inherent tendency of the water to follow the steepest gradient. The fragile barrage breaks all the laws of physics and the water flows where it had no intention of flowing.

It would be condemning the mountain dweller as an imbecile to maintain that he had lived for centuries in the neighbourhood of our great waterfalls and rivers without getting the idea of making use of them in order to fight hunger. Under the heat of

our summers, the harvest burns. The heat of high summer is mortal. Get a few steps away, the water runs uselessly into the Rhone... The remedy exists in the next room, whilst the patient suffers in his bed and dies. And nobody would have the idea to fetch the remedy?...

What I want to say is that the «bisses» are as old as our agriculture, as our paths and routes, our houses. Communal life was only possible, especially in the mountains, thanks to the «bisses». In turn, their use has improved ever more in the course of centuries. In order to construct the long ducts in the varied topographical terrain, it was necessary that the community organized itself and became aware of its collective responsibility and means. It is not in the power of one man alone to lead the water canals along the unconquerable rocks. The example of the old «bisse» of Savîèse is a most enlightening witness of a victory which was only possible by welding together all the forces available in a region which was threatened by famine year after year. The aqueduct or death... And these people of the 13th century achieved what seems to us today a veritable miracle: trimmed the walls of the vertical rocks and constructed the «bisses» with a courage and an intelligence which still today fills us with wonder.

Thus the whole Valais gradually became dotted with an immense system of canalization which is so fragile that it has to be serviced every spring in order to be operational. Ant's work, ancient obstinacy and fabulous enterprise which require the energy of all the men and women, for the women like the men take part in this drudgery. They use the pickaxe and the shovel just like the men.