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Trimbach – Mecca of motorbikes



For many, the «Eisenbahn» restaurant, above Trimbach near Olten in the canton of Solothurn, is an eating-house like any other. But not for ardent motorcyclists. Every Thursday, *s'Isebähnli*, as they affectionately call this «Railway» inn, becomes a mecca of motorbike enthusiasts and freaks. Not only half of bike-crazy Switzerland meets in the large car park:

number plates from Germany, France and Austria also surface very frequently. On sunny, peak days up to 4000 «fire-stools» (the fans' name for their steeds) stop at the «Little Railway». But why just at the «Eisenbahn» restaurant in Trimbach? It lies at the foot of the Hauenstein and because of the scenic attractions, the Olten-Liestal road is one of the most popular



stretches for motorcyclists. Ten years ago the bikers used to meet in Buckten on the other side of the Hauenstein, according to Ruedi Flückiger, the landlord of the *Isebähnli*: «But when the landlady of the previous restaurant died, the few motorbike riders that there were then, changed over to us on this side. Of course, we never dreamed at the time that, with the great motorcycle boom, our place would become the hub of motorbike fans».

*Pictures and text:
Andreas Blatter*

Feeling art with the hands

«Please touch: dancing gods». This was the name of a unique exhibition in the Zurich *Völkerkunde* (Ethnology) Museum. Thus, for the first time, an exhibition is open to the blind as well as to the seeing. It introduces the visitor to ritual masques in Tibet and the Himalayas.

Blind visitors get a catalogue in braille as well as a relief plan of the rooms, and, with tape-recorder and headphones, can do the round of the museum alone or, if they wish, in a group with guide.

Pictures and text: Karl Hofer.



Telegrams

■ The first subnetwork of the new «Natel C» mobile telephone system of the PTT will be put into operation in the autumn.

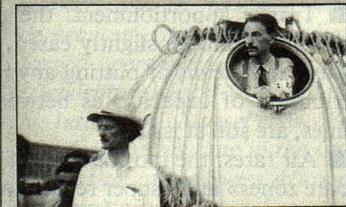
■ 6–16 August 1987: *International Film Festival in Locarno*. A retrospective of the films of the past 39 years will be shown.

■ Bischofszell (TG) receives the 1987 Wakker Prize of the Swiss *Heimatschutz* (fostering of regional values and traditions).

■ In 1986 the population of Switzerland increased by 0,6 per cent to 6,523,100 inhabitants. The decrease of about 20,000 in

the number of young people was particularly noted.

■ Professor Auguste Piccard, one of the greatest and most courageous researchers Switzerland has ever known, died 25 years ago. In the early 1930s this versatile scientist made balloon ascents into the stratosphere to reach hitherto unattained altitudes.



Auguste Piccard (left): leaving for the stratosphere (1932).

Symbolic figure of national unity

General Guillaume-Henri Dufour was born 200 years ago. He became a symbol for the national unity and independence of Switzerland when, in 1847, he successfully led the old confederate armies, with a minimum of bloodshed (150 dead), against the Sonderbund («separate league») and, through his resolute decision, against the threatened Prussian intervention in the Neuchâtel conflict. Dufour was also the creator of the original maps of Switzerland. As from September, an exhibition opens in Geneva.

Lake Geneva region: cross-border co-operation

The local governments of the cantons of Vaud, Geneva and Valais, together with the authorities of the French *départements* of Haute Savoie and Ain, have recently signed a protocol on the founding of a *Conseil Lémanique*. The new organ is intended to foster trans-border co-operation between these riparian neighbours on *Lac Léman* (Lake Geneva).

■ The St. Gotthard road tunnel – a magnet for heavy traffic: almost the total increase in transalpine goods traffic in Switzerland during the last two years (each about 15%) went through the Gotthard.

■ The Federal Office for Public Health has made a fund of SFr. 11.8 million available for an *Aids campaign*.

■ 1787: as the first known mountaineer, the Geneva physicist and geologist, *Horace-Bénédict de Saussure*, ventured into the eternal regions of ice and snow to climb the Mont Blanc, at 15,770 ft. the highest peak of the Alps.

Olympics candidate

Lausanne is the official Swiss candidate for the 1994 Olympic Winter Games. The final decision will be made at the 1988 summer Olympics in Seoul.

Record surplus

In 1986 the Federal Treasury ended a fifteen-year deficit period with the largest nominal surplus of all time. Federal revenues exceeded expenditure by SFr. 1.938 bn. According to the Federal Department of Finance, above-average receipts from stamp duties and turnover tax contributed to this brilliant result.

«Tele Swiss America»

This is the name of a production team with which the Bernese actress, Linda Geiser, who lives in New York, intends to organize regular Swiss programmes for transmission on American cable television.

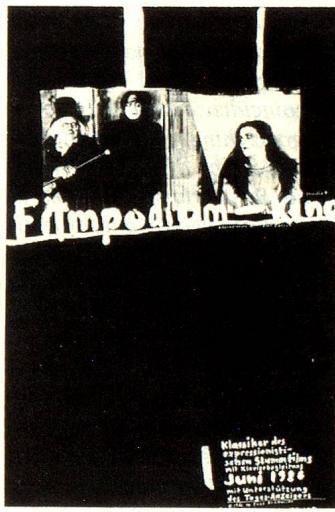
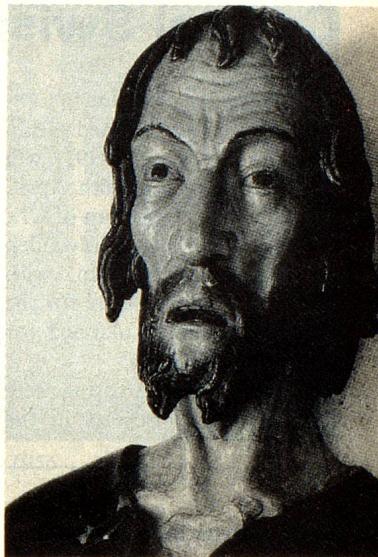
Art and Italianità

World innovation planned for Zurich: a school supported by two states. The *liceo artistico*, a novel form of secondary school, will lay particular stress upon artistic, creative subjects and the Italian language in speech and culture. The institutions concerned are the Zurich education authority and the Italian state.



Politician and hermit

The 21st March 1987 marked the 500th anniversary of the death of *Niklaus von Flüe*. This yeoman farmer, the father of ten children, took a lively interest in politics. He became a hermit at the age of 50 but in his solitude was repeatedly sought out and consulted by theologians, princes and ordinary people for advice on matters in dispute. In 1481 his successful mediation saved the Confederates from internecine strife. He was canonized in 1947. This year, commemoration ceremonies are being planned throughout the country.



Contest: «Swiss Posters of 1986». In the picture: one of the posters honoured by the Federal Department of Home Affairs.

Swiss wins music Oscar

Andreas Vollenweider is the first Swiss to win the Grammy Award in Los Angeles, in 1986, in the newly-created section: New Age. The «Grammy» is the much sought-after musical equivalent of the Oscar of the film industry.

Book review

Bergtäler der Schweiz

(*Mountain Valleys of Switzerland*)
By Franz auf der Maur, Publ. Birkhäuser Verlag, 1986, 224 pages, format 27.5 x 24.5 cm, bd. SFr. 98.- Together with some three dozen specialist authors, the well-known journalist, Franz auf der Maur, has ventured a description of eight medium-sized and larger valleys of Switzerland and their inhabitants – representative of the more than one thousand mountain valleys in our land. These are the Lötschental, Val de Travers, Haslital, Toggenburg, Val Maggia, Muotatal, Engadine and Saanental, and they are described in all their historical, cultural and economic variety. Some 300 illustrations – engravings, photographs and maps – enhance the text. The result is a superb book and we can but hope that a further volume will follow. Our valleys are so full of interest that there can be no lack of material, particularly if one makes, as the editor and publishers have already done, such an excellent selection of texts and pictures. M.N.

B
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Central-Swiss no to CH91 Exhibitions

The National Exhibition in Central Switzerland, planned within the framework of CH91, will not take place. On 26th April, the voters of the cantons of Uri, Schwyz, Obwalden, Nidwalden and Zug turned down, with clear majorities, credits for the «thematic events» planned for their cantonal areas.

The subject of the voting were the exhibition projects in the

five Central-Swiss cantons. Not affected by the people's no are the jubilee celebrations for the 700 years of existence of the Confederation, the Path of Switzerland round the lake of Uri and the country-wide activities in 1991. In principle, they remained uncontested in the voting battle.

Unexpected as the resounding no to the exhibition projects

turned out to be, the Foundation CH91 will still reconsider its concept.

The project for the creation of a Place of the Swiss Abroad, so enthusiastically accepted in expatriate-Swiss circles, as also in the region of its planned location in Brunnen, will not be directly affected by the outcome of the voting. However, before steps can be taken towards the

realization of this plan, we must now wait for the CH91 concept. The essential thing is to clarify the position in regard to the realization of the Path of Switzerland which was to be connected with the planned Place of the Swiss Abroad. Decisions can be expected during the coming autumn. The launching of the collection campaign, planned for June this year, must be postponed until then.

SSA

Forum: Peter Bichsel, Writer

Objectivity and homeland



It is odd how quickly you become homeless. By no means do I live as an emigrant in Frankfurt. I had no cause to flee Switzerland. I am living here purely by coincidence and only for a year. It's a good thing – you could even say – to put a bit of distance between yourself and Switzerland, to look at things rather more calmly and objectively. To gain more objectivity, is what the people who monitor our media would say.

Now, I have not given up contact with Switzerland. News and reports from the homeland reach me daily by letter and telephone. I also ask my own questions about Swiss politics: «How are things going?», «What happened to that?», «Party programme?», «Kaiseraugst?». And I am almost frightened that the answers do not even interest me so very much; the topicality, the relevance, is gone. But I know that all this will soon be of direct interest to me again – once I am back at home.

Of course I try to keep abreast of things so that on my return I shall not have too many large gaps in my knowledge; I also have subscriptions to a Swiss daily paper and two weeklies – and I get a shock when some copies remain unread, even unopened. I am also shocked at how quickly problems – political problems – which I felt to be vivid and realistic in Switzerland... how quickly such problems become abstract, for they lose in importance when they are abstract. My opinion about Kaiseraugst, for example, remains the same; my viewpoint has not changed but the fury has abated, the anger is less.

It is also odd that you lose your homeland if you lose your anger about it. A cooling down of feelings about something, happens not only in happiness but also in anger. Perhaps anger is simply a more intensive feeling and that cooling down, abstractivation, objectivization are indeed felt more intensely in anger.

Objectivity. How often was this sold to us at home in Switzerland as something of greatest value – demanded of television, radio and the press; demanded of every individual; demanded of all debaters. «Let's now sit down together quite quietly and, quite calmly, discuss it». «Let's weigh the advantages and disadvantages quite ob-

jectively, one against the other». Who has not already heard such invitations in some connection or other? Who, in such a case, would stand up and say: «No. I am not for it. I don't like it at all»? If, wherever you are, objectivity is being incessantly demanded, who would rebelliously demand unobjectivity? No one; and rightfully so, indeed – no one.

Only, there are groups of people who have a certain feeling of uneasiness towards those groups of people who always seem to have the word objectivity on their lips. Do not misunderstand me; no kind of uneasiness against the word itself – only against the tendentious use of it. We occasionally say «objectivity» when we do not want the hard truth – or, rather, the argument – about it.

I now experience one side of objectivity here, from a distance. Now, problems do not immediately make me frantic with rage – my anger is more subdued. My political adversaries in Switzerland would be astonished to see how peacefully people can speak with me here. Indeed, they would describe my peaceable response as reasonableness, as a sensible aloofness perhaps born of distance, as objectivity. I look on it differently; I look on my reactions with fright – as approaching indifference.

From my stay in Frankfurt I expected, among other things, a certain desistance, or even distancing, in regard to Switzerland, going off as I did and then thinking everything over again from a distance. Now it is already beginning: with distance, things become abstract; because of this abstractivity, my thinking becomes more objective; and through objectiveness the problems lose their explosiveness. And the consequence: the anger has left me; I am pacified.

I take it that many emigrants all over the world know this better than I do, for the homeland diminishes as and when the anger towards it wanes – when such anger is no longer vivid.

Could it perhaps even be that those who constantly and precipitately call for objectivity would like nothing else than to render the critics homeless?

The homeland is certainly not just simply where I have my love and my friends. The homeland is also where I have my feelings. Anger, and commitment too, are part of my feelings. Objectivity is a concept which I can associate with a lot of things, but not with the homeland. I have a suspicion that the objectivity fanatics know this too.

From: Peter Bichsel's IRGENDWO ANDERSWO (SOMEWHERE ELSEWHERE); columns, 1980–1985. ©1986 by Hermann Luchterhand Verlag, Darmstadt and Neuwied. The foregoing text was written in 1981 during Peter Bichsel's period as town clerk in Bergen-Enkheim, a city district of Frankfurt-on-Main. (Picture: Isolde Ohlbaum)