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Cover:

Unemployment in Switzerland has not been as high as this since the 1930s. Many people are desperately waiting for the upturn so long in coming. (Photo: Prisma)

I M P R E S S U M

Swiss Review, the magazine for the Swiss Abroad, is in its 23rd year of issue and is published in German, French, Italian, English and Spanish in more than 20 regional editions. It has a total circulation of over 310,000. Regional news appears four times a year.

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◀◀ In two years time B. would have retired. Instead both he and his job were rationalised away. He went into a state of shock and developed delusions. He imagined he was about to be fetched by the Gestapo, and he thought he could smell leaking gas in his apartment. His conclusion: "They're trying to kill me". Worn-out and totally daunted, he jumped out of the window to his death.

I had this story from his wife, who saw how he died. It is a simple human tragedy. But it may also be seen as an allegory for the state of the Swiss economy. It fits in well with the horror stories of the last few months. The headlines have not concerned people but rather companies – being dissolved, sold or merged out of existence. There are now too few workplaces and apprenticeships.

The cost of living is rising, while wage packets are shrinking. Switzerland is feeling the pain. It is especially sad to learn that since the beginning of the 1990s many centres of decision-making have left French-speaking Switzerland or are now controlled from abroad. Nervousness is becoming increasingly widespread in Ticino. The economic upheaval which has hit the whole country has given rise to shock and a sense of numbness in many places.

But there are also positive things to report. We have associations such as "The Innovators" in Soleure, which have organised national project competitions so that valuable ideas produced by

younger talent can find a market. We also have the "KaosPiloten", a Danish workshop for leadership concepts which has helped a large number of businessmen in Switzerland to take off (mentally) with stupendous success. The recipe for such vertical take-off: "Just do it! Don't look for obstacles which may not be there". We also hear about women setting up companies and managers of small and medium-sized businesses who keep the economic blood flowing even during times of crisis.

Revitalisation can emerge from turbulence. For at least one thing has been learnt by people who have a say in the economy: reality is not always what we think it is. Or, to talk like the "KaosPiloten": Do we want to look backwards or forwards? Do we want to play it safe or accept reasonable risks? Do we sit on our resources or put them to good use?

Whether we live inside or outside the boundaries of Switzerland we are all capable of overcoming mental barriers and winning competitions. So let us seek a platform for our utopias, let us give our visions and our projects a fair chance. For only in this way can we prevent the recession ruining more people and more businesses.



Alice Baumann

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