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The "New York Deal" (SR 5/98)

"Switzerland no longer has any friends in the world." Wrong! In fact the country has more than at the end of the Second World War. I come across evidence of this all the time. Is Mr Rainer E. Gut right off beam? That would be worrying in a responsible figure at his level. It seems much more likely that it's all a pretext to hide his embarrassment at the pitiable way this whole business has gone. So a "gnome" described the

unclaimed assets as "peanuts", so the counter clerks insulted private individuals looking for information on members of their family, so laws were breached to make it possible to filch other people's money? Certainly, no bank with such failings could keep friends. But a private bank and Switzerland are not the same thing.

Jack Stoecklin, France ■

Glorified Fatherland (SR 4/98)

I prefer a glorified fatherland to a Switzerland that is shoved wantonly through the mincer on every possible occasion. Not the first article in the Swiss Review to be conspicuous for criminal imbalance!

Heinz Langenbacher, Switzerland

It was with amazement that I read the article on the theme of the "glorified fatherland", for it in no way reflected the mood in the country and among the Swiss people in those critical days in 1939. The Swiss had had to watch as step by step the newly strengthened Germany unilaterally broke through the restrictions imposed on it by the treaties

of Versailles. At that time, in Switzerland as elsewhere, worried people asked each other: "what is going to happen to us?" The Landi (exhibition) of 1939 could offer no answer to these questions and concerns. But it tried – successfully by the way – to give back to the Swiss people the self-confidence which they so badly needed. There was at that time hardly a Swiss, whether man or woman, who had not visited the Landi. And they all went home with a feeling of pride in belonging to a people that was unique in its cultural and linguistic diversity, and living in an extraordinarily beautiful country which was worth defending.

Hansueli Ammann, Switzerland ■

Praise and Blame

In the Swiss Review 4/98, which had the main topic on one kind of cultural expression, and used a fever thermometer as a symbol on its front page, 58 names of males and 4 names of females showed up (hopefully I didn't miss anybody or confuse genders). Certainly this imbalance is once again the women's own fault, of course. They get what they deserve. Or should I suffer from SAM (Swiss Abroad Misconception)? Could it be that 58 males are still flyweights against the power of 4 females? Honestly, I suggest you either improve the quality of your product, or change its name to something appropriately out-dated like e.g. "HelvetiEr" or "MaCHO". And no cheap excuses, please!

René Pomey, USA

I was so very grateful to read in the 4/98 issue of Swiss Review the addresses of the political parties, the current popular

initiatives, but most of all the excellent information you gave on the federal referendums of September 27th, 1998. With this you have provided missing and much appreciated information on a subject of very great interest to us Swiss Expats.

Anita Branch, USA

I have been receiving your magazine for some years now. I should like to congratulate you on your articles and pictures, and thank you warmly for them.

Rolf H. Frischmut, Spain

As a Swiss Abroad I am very happy that the "Swiss Review" exists, and I enjoy reading it. Lately I have been following your articles on the subject of Switzerland and the Second World War with the greatest interest. I found this discussion of the question both critical and serious. As far as I am concerned, more such critical articles on Switzerland in the past and present would be desirable.

Raina Ruschmann, Austria ■

Letters from readers

The editors of "Swiss Review" are delighted about the numerous echoes from readers. In particular on the subject, "Switzerland/Second World War" we receive letters on a daily basis. But we would also like to treat other subjects in the section "Dialog". We ask for your understanding that on the one hand not all letters can be printed and on the other hand that we must reserve the right to abridge those we do publish. We do not conduct correspondence about readers' letters.

The Federal elections in 1999 (SR 5/98)

The article "The Orientation of Federal Politics at Stake" left me rather surprised at the author's simplistic and biased conclusion. Interpreting the last Federal elections, he asserts that "the centre lost ground to the advantage of the 'extremes', on the left as on the right. Socialists and the Blocher SVP won those elections. (...) If these apparently harmless phenomena should become stronger it could disrupt the functioning of our political system based on concordance, and call for a reform of our political institutions." How can one say that the Socialist Party is one of the extremes like the Swiss People's Party (SVP)? It is quite wrong to treat the Socialist Party as one of the extremes which the author places on the outer squares of the political chessboard. Putting it like that makes it easier for the author to defend his thesis of political instability which a renewal of political behaviour in favour of these two parties would suppose, and so propose implicitly the election of our representatives of the "centre".

David Bongard, France ■

Political publicity

It seems to me that the Campaign for an Independent and Neutral Switzerland (CINS) and Mr Blocher's paradoxes are pushing at an open door – and closing a good few other ones. His rhetoric looks very much like the opportunistic speeches of Benito Mussolini, diverse and inconsistent. Only the uneducated masses, frightened and discontented, can subscribe to such nonsense.

Madelaine Micheloud, Canada ■