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## Switzerland in the UK

# Tony Blair's promise to Adolf Ogi: We'll demolish those frontiers now

In a major development in Anglo-Swiss relations, British Prime Minister Tony Blair has given a personal assurance to Swiss President Adolf Ogi that Britain is ready to tear down the borders between the two countries.

In a personal face to face at 10 Downing Street, the Prime Minister said he welcomed Swiss citizens being given the same status as those from countries in the European Union from the moment they arrive at a UK airport.

However, hopes that this open-door policy would come into force on January 1 have been dashed because not all EU countries are showing the same determination as British MPs, who are expected to vote in the current Parliamentary session in favour of the bilateral treaty being made law immediately.

Swiss Review has been told that while the EU Commission in Brussels was trying to speed up the procedure elsewhere it was powerless to interfere in the legislative programme of individual countries.

Current thinking in government circles is that ratification by all 15 EU states could be delayed until the early part of 2001, with freedom of movement and jobs not coming into force until the spring at the earliest.

But when it finally happens it could have a dramatic effect on bringing Switzerland and the UK closer together.

The 600,000 Swiss citizens who visit the UK each year will find there will be no restrictions on their stay here. They will be able to look for work without the need to apply for a work permit.

Swiss citizens already working in the UK will be treated as UK citizens and will be free to find a new job if they want to

At present when a Swiss is offered a job in the UK the

employer has to prove why he needs this person and why the work cannot be done by someone from another EU country.

This lengthy and often complicated process will now be a thing of the past.

As a result of the new agreement it is expected that many more Swiss companies will open branches in the UK in addition to the 500 already here. One important benefit for

holidaymakers is that anyone falling ill while on a visit will be able to see a doctor, or go to a hospital, and receive exactly the same treatment as if they were insured here.

• A kilted Scotsman was one of 250 young people from all parts of Europe who invaded the Swiss Parliament building in Berne to debate their vision of the future. It was the first time the European Youth Parliament had met in

Switzerland, and for ten days Berne became the capital of European youth.

The European flag was even flown from the roof of the Federal Palace.

Following a speech of welcome from Hanspeter Seiler, president of the National Council, discussions ranged from the enlargement of the EU to global warming and the merits of belonging to the UN and NATO.

## Birdman Georg is flying high!



Georg Useld, an intrepid Swiss from Beckenham, Kent, celebrated his 90th birthday with an unusual present: a parachute jump at 12,000 feet from an aeroplane!

The jump was made in tandem with a professional parachutist. The first 7,000 feet were free fall and lasted about 45 seconds. Then, once the parachute was released, the pair gently floated down to solid ground.

Mr Unseld said: "The free fall is extremely exhilarating –

that's why I keep doing it, even though I am 90 – and then the feeling of gently floating is lovely. My family thought I was mad at first but they are getting used to it now."

In fact he first took the plunge from the lofty heights back in 1996. At the age of 86 he made his first paragliding tandem flight at Gstaad, breaking the Saanenland record for the oldest person to jump.

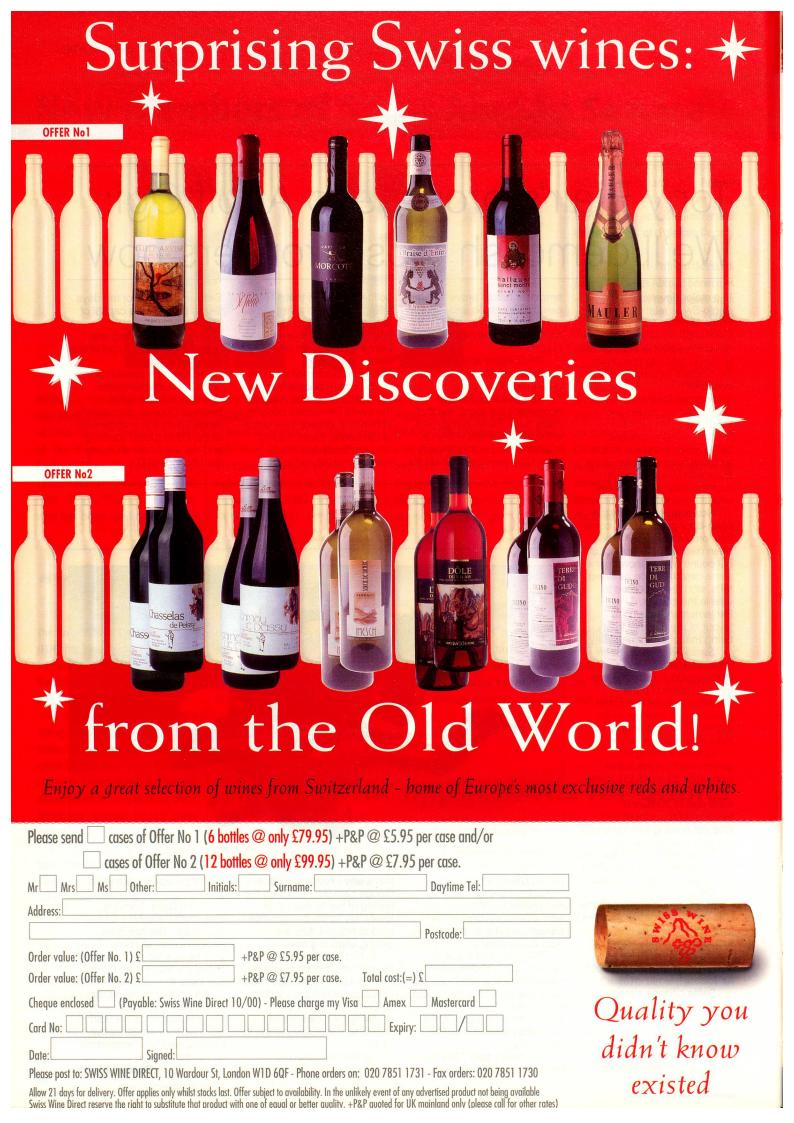
He then switched to parachuting and has since

raised the age record each year.

Clem Quinn from the Headcorn Parachute Club in Kent said: "George is an excellent man all round. Every year he ups the record for the oldest parachutist here. He just loves to make the jump."

Mr Unseld received not only a message of congratulations on his 90th birthday from the Embassy, but also belated compliments on his daring feat.

Robert Müller



## The bowler hat brigade on parade



leffrey Long

Nineteen competitors from the Swiss Rifle Association in London took part in the 54th Swiss Federal Shooting Competition, held at Bière.

In two days shooting they were successful in winning many medals.

One day was Swiss Abroad Day, with special contests in which members of Swiss shooting clubs from 13 countries as far away as South Africa, Canada and New Zealand took part.

The following day the British contingent, all wearing bowler hats, took part in a spectacular Official Day Parade in Morges, along with cavalry, fusiliers, civil guards and bands which had come from all over Switzerland to take part.

FOSSUK president Jeffrey Long, who was with them, said: "The parade was so big

The photograph in our last issue of Ambassador Bruno Spinner going to Buckingham Palace to meet the Queen was taken by the Embassy's Cultural Counsellor, Wolfgang Amadeus Bruelhart.

it took an hour to march past the saluting point. The applause and cheers from thousands of spectators was fantastic." The Swiss Rifle

## Alphorn marks opening of Swiss bakery

More than 80 years ago Swiss confectioner Frederick Belmont arrived in Harrogate by accident – after boarding the wrong train in London. But the clear Dales air reminded him so much of his native Alps that he decided to stay.

He opened his first café, called Bettys, in 1919, and three years later had saved enough money to build his own bakery. Today the business, still family owned, has five cafés and a mail order service, and has just opened a new craft bakery which boasts one of only three traditional wood fired ovens in the UK.

Appropriately, the occasion was marked with a blast from a 13 ft long alphorn.

Association welcomes new members, both shooters and social. Details can be obtained from secretary Urs Schaerer on 0208 850 8884.



## How to contact the editor

Reports of Swiss society activities and coming events, and articles and correspondence for the 'Switzerland in the UK' section of the Swiss Review, should go to the editor, Derek Meakin, at Europa House, Adlington Park, Macclesfield SK10 4NP. Tel: 01625 855 000; fax: 01538 306114.

His email address is: derek@meakin.net.

Enquiries regarding advertising should go to Jeffrey Long, 30 Finsbury Drive, Bradford BD2 1QA. Tel/fax: 01274 588 189.

• The 'Switzerland in the UK' supplement appears four times a year. The deadline for the next issue containing UK news, to be distributed in April, 2001, is February 2.

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#### **OBITUARIES**

They shared the same name, and the same desire to serve their respective Swiss communities

Hans Egli: The journalist who played a leading part in moulding London's thriving Swiss societies



He was aged 101 when he died, and could look back with pride on innumerable achievements that marked his colourful career. He first came to London in 1919 and spent two years studying at King's College and the London School of Economics. Five years later he returned as a journalist and made the capital his permanent home. He started writing for the Neue Zürcher Zeitung in 1936 and became its chief correspondent in 1940. His graphic accounts of the indiscriminate bombing of Coventry, in which so many civilians were killed, so infuriated Hitler that he sent the German ambassador to see his editor and demand he be sacked. Instead Hans Egli went on to become one of the most distinguished of London's foreign correspondents and president of the Foreign Press Association. His work for the Swiss community was no less impressive. He was twice president of the New Helvetic Society, was one of the founders of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK and a representative on the Council of the Swiss Abroad in Berne.



# Hans Egli: The engineer who helped hold the Swiss together throughout the Northern Ireland Troubles

He was a boy of nine when, with his family, he left Switzerland for Northern Ireland. For an impressionable child it was a cultural shock, facing not only a formidable language barrier but a completely different way of life. Yet he never forgot his homeland, and during his long career, first as a textile engineer with his own business and later as representative for Swiss embroidery machine manufacturers, he became Northern Ireland's unofficial 'Swiss ambassador'. He was one of the founders of the Northern Ireland Swiss Club and served more than a decade as president, holding together the small active membership through troubled times, organising a variety of events, most of which took place at the Belfast home he shared with his wife Aelish and daughter Sheena, who succeeded him as president.



## 150 balloons celebrate Manchester anniversary

One of the highlights of the 150th anniversary celebrations of Manchester Swiss Club was the release of a cloud of red and white balloons by FOSSUK president Jeffrey Long, ably assisted by four year old Rachel Baker and her sister Jennifer, aged 7, granddaughters of former FOSSUK president Bernie Simon.



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## Citizenship for children of Swiss living in the UK

One question often put to Berne from Swiss nationals living overseas, is what they can do to ensure their children become, or remain, Swiss citizens.

At the AGM Ambassador Walter Thurnherr set out the requirements.

"Children are Swiss from the moment of birth if the mother is Swiss or if the father is Swiss and married to the child's mother," he said.

"The only exception to this rule is in cases where the mother acquired Swiss citizenship through a previous marriage and is now married to the non-Swiss father of the child.

"This situation has not always prevailed. There are children, born before 1985, who are not Swiss citizens, although their mother was Swiss at the time of their birth.

"If this child still lives abroad, then it can acquire 'eased citizenship' if it has close ties with Switzerland.

"Children with a Swiss father can also obtain 'eased Swiss citizenship' before reaching the age of 22 if they have been living with their father for at least one year, or can prove they have a close relationship with him, or if they have been living in Switzerland for one year.

"After the age of 22, 'eased citizenship' can only be invoked if the person concerned has lived a total of three years in Switzerland and has been living there for the last year."

Ambassador Thurnherr also pointed out that 'eased citizenship' could also be obtained by non-Swiss spouses, especially if they had a close connection with Switzerland.

Full details can be obtained from any Swiss representation.



The AGM lineup: Ambassador Walter Thurnherr, FOSSUK president Jeffrey Long, secretary Anne-Marie Breitenstein and director of the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad, Rudolf Wyder

## UK Swiss urged: Use your vote

An impassioned plea to Swiss nationals in the UK to exercise their right to vote in Federal elections was made by two guest speakers at the AGM of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK – Dr Rudolf Wyder, head of the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad and Ambassador Walter Thurnherr, representing the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

"The long standing debate on the future of the voluntary AHV/IV makes one thing clear," said Dr Wyder. "The Fifth Switzerland needs a strong lobby if the interests of the mobile section of the Swiss population are not to be trampled underfoot.

"To promote our interests even more effectively in future, active political engagement on the part of our compatriots abroad needs to be stepped up."

The OSA recently decided to launch a campaign to encourage more Swiss Abroad to vote. The aim is to increase the number of registered voters abroad from

#### Want a vote?

Find out if you are eligible by writing to the Swiss Embassy at Montagu Place, London WIH 2BQ or call 020 7616 6000 70,000 to 100,000.

Appealing to UK Swiss to mobilise their forces, Dr Wyder said: "More active political participation by Swiss Abroad is a vital criterion for effective representation of your own interests and concerns".

"Even more importantly, it also contributes to political dialogue in your home country. Our small,



'Double your numbers' – Walter Thurnherr

introverted nation has need of the cosmopolitan views and experience of our compatriots abroad."

Ambassador Thurnherr said that of the 24,741 official registered Swiss in the UK, 18,500 are entitled to vote in Swiss elections or participate in referenda.

But only 2,900 of them – about 15.6 per cent – had their names on the voting rolls.

For comparison he quoted figures from other countries: 20% in Germany, 25% in Greece, 27% in Italy, 31% in the Czech

Republic, 40.5% in Papua New Guinea, 100% in Kiribati.

"Of course I have deliberately chosen countries with high voter rates to encourage you to follow their example," he said. "But it remains an unquestionable fact that the political weight of the Swiss Abroad is measured primarily by the number of you who vote.

"The community of the Swiss Abroad totals 570,000 individuals, and this number is growing every year by 10-20,000. If this trend continues, in 200 years' time the Service for the Swiss Abroad will speak for more than 3 million people!

"But the Swiss Abroad can only wield this well deserved political clout through the ballot box

"Today, only 70,000 of the 434,000 Swiss Abroad who are entitled to vote actually make use of this opportunity. It would be very much in your interests if this number doubled in the near future."

'We need your views' - Rudolf Wyder





## **City Swiss Club**

Founded in 1856, the City Swiss Club offers a wide-ranging programme of business and social events throughout the year. It provides an excellent forum at which to meet people drawn from a wide variety of occupations and including a cross-section of staff and management of many of the Swiss companies operating in the UK.

In addition to several informal evenings held throughout the year, we have also arranged joint events with other Swiss Clubs and societies. Our social programme culminates in a formal annual Banquet and Ball in November at Claridges.

We also hold our AGM and dinner at Mosimann's Club which always proves to be very popular with our members

If you would like to learn more about the Club and/or receive a membership form, please contact Gill Egdell c/o Swissca Securities Limited, Camomile Court, 23 Camomile Street, London EC3A 7LL

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## New president for the Swiss Church

Ursula Jost is the new president of the Consistoire of the Swiss Church in London. She succeeds Elisabeth Crack, who has been a member of the Consistoire since 1972 and has been president since 1980.

Joint vice president Susanne Singh writes this tribute to Mrs Crack:

It is with unfailing loyalty and a great sense of duty that Mrs Crack has held the post of president, the impetus to her success being her great commitment and dedication to the church. Her devoted service will leave an indelible and lasting mark in the history of the Swiss Church.

The new president, Mrs Jost, has been a member of the Consistoire for the last three years. Originally hailing from Basle, where she studied economics, she spent a few years in the USA studying industrial administration.

Married to an American, she has been living in London for 15 years, where she has been involved in several leadership positions with voluntary organisations. Together with a partner she also runs her own management training firm.

She believes there is a great future for the Swiss Church if it actively faces up to all the new challenges.

The church has long been not only a place of worship but also where cultural and social events take place. In its endeavours to shape the church for the future and keep it an active, open and lively institution, the Consistoire will be addressing a range of important tasks.

These include finalising the introduction of formal church membership, carrying out refurbishment and major improvements to the listed building, and raising vitally needed funds – the church entirely depends on donations and voluntary contributions to meet its financial obligations.

New avenues will be explored to increase the number of members, such as a series of open evenings, called Thursday Encounter, with a cordial invitation to anyone who is interested in finding out what's going on at the church.

It is also becoming a sponsor of the London Marathon. A bond of five places has been bought and we are now looking for runners willing to be sponsored by friends or colleagues. Please contact the church if you are interested in this venture.

Finally, the Consistoire is committed to bringing the church forward into the future and keeping it a respected and welcoming institution for the Swiss community in and around London.



Ursula Jost

For more information on the Swiss Church telephone or fax 0207 836 1418 or e-mail swisschurch.london @btinternet.com

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At their home in Exmouth, the couple say the secret of a successful and long lasting marriage is "tolerance and understanding."

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## My week at the training experience workshop

I was one of the lucky winners of the training experience workshop held in Zug and organised by the Swiss Review. There were 11 participants in my group – from Germany, Peru, Italy, France and the UK – making it quite an international delegation.

Accommodation was arranged by Stapferhaus Lenzburg (Swiss Ping Pong) and we were all housed with regional host families.

The activities planned for the week were diverse, ranging from a visit to the post dispatcher office in Lucerne, the Navartis training centre in Basle, the ETH in Zurich and a day long outing to the Rigi.

The official Congress was held in the splendid surroundings of the Casino House in Zug and a full

#### **SWISS FLIGHTS**

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banquet with sumptuous Swiss cuisine was laid out for more than 400 delegates and guests.

Notable speakers included Patrick Rohr from Swiss TV and Chancellor Annemarie Huber-Hotz.

For me the highlight came on Sunday when we were treated to authentic Swiss yodellers doing what they do best, and the unforgettable sound of the alphorn in a church in Oberwil.

While in Zurich I was also interviewed live on the Barbara Peter Show on SF DFS1 – Swiss National Radio. Interviews with the Zuger Zeitung and Swiss Radio International followed.

The week proved to be an invaluable introduction to looking at the possibility of training and further education in Switzerland



## 'My best holiday ever'

Two week camps for young Swiss people living abroad take place every summer and winter in various locations in Switzerland. For the past three years I have been going to the summer camps.

They are a really good way of getting to know the country, making friends and simply doing things you wouldn't usually do.

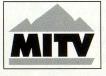
This year the camps were in Faulensee, a small village on the shores of Lake Thun in the Bernese Oberland, where we slept in tents. The combination of the beautiful setting, exciting activities and meeting with new people made it my best holiday ever.

Sports included wind surfing, climbing, mountain biking, cliff jumping, kayaking and traditional team sports. But the best thing about the camp was the people I met. I now have friends from all over the world. It's really interesting to meet so many people with a Swiss background but also with cultures of their own that you can learn about.

The camps are quite cheap. You can expect to pay around Sfr.750 for two weeks, including all activities, food and accommodation.

You don't need to be worried about understanding people because everyone speaks English. I would really recommend the camps to anyone who is bored with Switzerland. Two weeks at camp and you'll want to come back every year.

There's more information on the Internet at <u>www.regia.ch</u> or <u>www.regia.ch/youth camps</u>.



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