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Fair and right?

It was with great interest that I read the last issue of the "Swiss Review" dedicated entirely to the elections. The influence of the Fifth Switzerland was discussed, and you raised the question of whether expatriate Swiss citizens would soon be sitting on the National Council. However, one aspect of the debate was overlooked: is it fair and right for the composition of the government to be chosen in part by people living outside its sphere of influence, when at the same time more than 20% of the population of Switzerland are denied this right simply because they do not belong to the exclusive club of Swiss citizens? Surely it runs counter to democratic ideals if people like myself, who have lived on the other side of the world for years (and others who have never resided in Switzerland), have a say in shaping events in a faraway, albeit beloved, country, while large sections of the domestic population have no right to determine their own future.

ANDREAS BÜRKI, SEOUL,
REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Army knives

I was appalled to read your article about Swiss army knives. It's unthinkable for a Swiss soldier to have to carry a knife made in China. Whatever happened to Swiss pride? Will Swiss chocolate and Swiss cheese soon also be made in China? How could Switzerland sell out in this way?

BETTY JUCKER, YOKNAM, ISRAEL

Expatriate Candidates

I value the "Swiss Review" as a refreshing and concise source on current issues back home. Your last edition surprised me: all three of the "expatriate candidates" listed with their picture are members of the SVP. In addition the SVP occupies an attractive slot



for publicity on the last page of the journal, whereas all other parties are squished together on some middle page. A few weeks before important elections this could be interpreted as a manipulation of voting citizens and you should take great care not to favor any party, particularly the one that is viewed from the outside as divisive and xenophobic among others.

GEORG EHRET, BROADWAY, USA

Editor's note: The three SVP candidates were presented in detail because they are members of the Council of the Swiss Abroad. All the political parties were free to place ads.

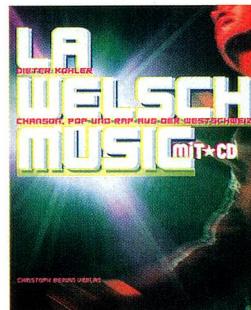
Low level

Although my family and I have been living in the Dominican Republic for the past four years, I still take an avid interest in what is happening back in my homeland. Apart from the "Swiss Review", whose layout and content I commend you for, I regularly read "swissinfo", the "NZZ" and the "Tages-Anzeiger" online. As in Switzerland, there will soon be elections here too, and I couldn't help noticing that the expensive election campaigns of the major parties in both countries have reached more or less the same (low) level, with the Helvetic style aligning itself with the Latin American one rather than the other way round. Instead of offering solutions to the now truly unmistakeable problems (the environment, social welfare, the integration of foreigners, fiscal justice, equal opportunities, etc.), the electioneering has degenerated into mud-slinging and doesn't even shy away from denigrating or making false accusations about individual candidates, male and female alike.

HANS PETER SOLARI, HIGÜEY,
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Music from French-speaking Switzerland

La Welsch Music. Odd as it may seem, this rather Swiss German title belongs to a book about the music scene in French-speaking Switzerland written in German. Penned by journalist Dieter Kohler, "La Welsch Music" offers a substantial overview of the most popular musicians of western Switzerland, where the author spent five years as a correspondent for Swiss Radio DRS. Thirteen extensive portraits present male and female artists of every conceivable musical persuasion, from chanson through pop to hip-hop, including the likes of K, Jérémie Kisling, Stress, Simon Gerber, Gustav, Sarclo, Bel Hubert and Polar. Brief portraits of a further 30 artists complete the overall picture. Although Dieter Kohler focuses primarily on chansonniers and hip-hop artists, his own preferences are clearly rock-related. He even describes Favez from Lausanne as Switzerland's best rock band! Of particular interest is the presentation of the energetic and original Fribourg-based singer Gustav. His speciality: just like Stephan Eicher, he sings in both Swiss German and French. For all the rock, folk, reggae



and Latin musicians in the book, Gustav is probably the most typically Swiss of all the artists presented. And as befits a book about music, it is accompanied by a CD containing examples of the works of the extensively presented musicians.

La Welsch Music, Chanson, Pop und Rap aus der Westschweiz, by Dieter Kohler, published by Christoph Merian, Basel, 2006.

Happy birthday, Petzi! Did you say Petzi? What's that? Surely not that adventurous little bear from children's comic books! If not exactly him, www.petzi.ch is all about a talent for improvisation and an openness to novelty. www.petzi.ch is the Web site of the PETZI association, the umbrella organisation of Swiss music clubs, which represents the so-called "alternative" music venues in Switzerland, of which there are no fewer than 60. It is this Petzi that has just celebrated its 10th anniversary. www.petzi.ch is more than an extensive source of information for night owls hunting for select concerts. It also sells tickets for upcoming events. Music fans are therefore never more than a few clicks away from details of who's playing at which of the up to 700-seater venues on a given date. Don't forget that all the bands now selling millions of CDs started out by playing on small stages like that of the Fri-Son in Fribourg or the Rote Fabrik in Zurich. And ask any die-hard fan whether the best concert by his favourite group was held in a mega-stadium or a small club, and the answer is more than likely to be the latter. These venues are just as open to internationally renowned bands as they are to popular local artists, and provide backing and act as a breeding ground for newly developing musical trends. At the same time, www.petzi.ch forms a kind of bridge between the different clubs, thus enabling joint projects to be organised and run. As such it is not just a source of new sounds, but also of opportunities and new ideas.

ALAIN WEY