

**Zeitschrift:** Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad  
**Herausgeber:** Organisation of the Swiss Abroad  
**Band:** 35 (2008)  
**Heft:** 3

**Rubrik:** Mailbag

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### Thank you

The December 2007 edition of "Swiss Review" with the golden cover photo of the angel from Einsiedeln monastery is still lying on my lounge table in front of me. It was a pleasant surprise to receive this publication between Christmas and New Year, and then to read about the history of the monastery in its full context. I would like to say thank you for this and the copies of "Swiss Review" over all of the past years. May 2008 bring us all wonderful inspiration from the past for the future.

HEIDI BLACK-GOGEL, AUCKLAND,  
NEW ZEALAND

### Wonderful memories

As a Swiss National living near Manchester in the UK, I really appreciate the quality articles in "Swiss Review". As a child, I have wonderful memories of being hosted by Swiss families for long, happy summers, particularly with Lili Furrer-Amsler in Berne, organised by the Projuventute. My only contact with Switzerland now is through exhilarating skiing holidays in Zermatt! I have been particularly impressed by your "Green" articles, including how climate change has affected glaciers and snow levels.

LAURA DANIELS, CHESHIRE,  
UNITED KINGDOM

### Four national languages in Switzerland

I have just received the February edition of "Swiss Review" and I agree with the views expressed by David J.L. Bongard. I actually come from German-speaking Switzerland, but it annoys me that, considering the diversity of our beautiful homeland (where the various official national languages provide confirmation of the "togetherness" of all the different parts of the country), French and Italian are increasingly marginalised. The Swiss are often the envy of others because we speak several languages, which helps us (especially me) in our careers.

So please, let's preserve our wonderful languages like French and Italian (Romansch should not be allowed to die out either), so that we can continue to enjoy our linguistic culture in Switzerland.

KURT E. GROETSCH, MURCIA,  
SPAIN

### Different mentalities

I live in Munich, practically on Switzerland's doorstep, and visit Switzerland from time to time. I nevertheless enjoy reading "Swiss Review" which provides quality information about Swiss affairs in a concise format which you cannot get access to yourself despite living relatively nearby. The reason for my

*Alfred Escher, rise and fall*

With a fixed gaze and statesman-like demeanour, Alfred Escher has been standing on the plinth of the monument in front of Zurich's main station since 1889. This monument recognises probably the greatest of Swiss statesmen, the real founder of modern Switzerland. Following the death of the 63-year-old "federal baron" and "king of the railways" on 6 December 1882, leading figures from government and business joined the funeral cortege – Federal Councillors, around a hundred members of the National Council and Council of States, executive and municipal councillors, business leaders, academics and artists, "old and young, distinguished and ordinary mourners".

No-one else led the emergent federal state into the modern age with the same energy and far-sightedness as shown by this son of an upper-class Zurich family. Alfred Escher dominated politics in Switzerland and Zurich for decades. He

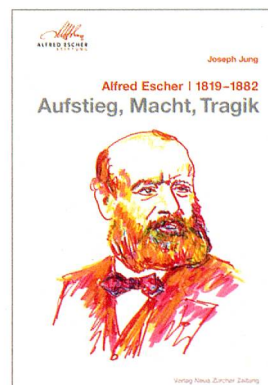
was a member of the National Council for 34 years and was four times its president. In the Canton of Zurich, he sat on the cantonal council for 38 years and on the executive council for seven years (four times as president). The name Escher is associated with new ventures of historical significance – the north-east railway (the largest private railway company of its day), the construction of the Gotthard tunnel, the Swiss federal polytechnic (now the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology, Zurich), the Swiss credit institution (now Credit Suisse) and the Swiss pensions institution (now Swiss Life). "No other politician of the 19th and 20th centuries achieved as much as Alfred Escher", writes biographer and historian Joseph Jung.

He demonstrated a tireless, almost super-human dedication to the common good throughout his life. Escher was a powerful man and a powerful politician who could be uncompromising and radical. His prominent positions in politics and business and his wide network of contacts gave him an unparalleled power base that also gave rise to stiff opposition. The railway construction and the creation of the polytechnic were his great projects, likewise his economic achievements, in particular the construction of the Gotthard tunnel.

His rise to power and lifetime achievements were as remarkable as the end of his political and private life was tragic. He was blamed for financial problems with the north-east railway and the construction of the Gotthard tunnel. His own liberal camp abandoned him. Escher was not even mentioned at the ceremony of 1880 to mark the 25th anniversary of the polytechnic. Neither was he invited to the proof-of-concept celebrations for the Gotthard tunnel in the same year. The Gotthard pioneer did not receive any official letter of thanks from the Federal Council. He suffered illnesses continually in his later years. At the end of his life, he had to endure great hostility rather than appreciation and recognition. "As

a politician, Alfred Escher stood head and shoulders above the rest in a way that is not tolerated in Switzerland", writes the biographer. – Joseph Jung's book is a fascinating biography of an extraordinary statesman and business leader, and also a portrait of Switzerland in the 19th century.

ROLF RIBI



JOSEPH JUNG: Alfred Escher (1819-1882). Aufstieg, Macht, Tragik. Zurich 2007, published by Neue Zürcher Zeitung, CHF 48, EUR 31. Only available in German.

letter is that I have just read the "Mailbag" section in the latest edition where a request for less emphasis on German-speaking Switzerland was expressed.

I would like to support that. The mentalities of the French and Italian Swiss are so fundamentally different from that of the German Swiss that it would be very enriching if their voices were heard more.

MAX NYFFELER, MUNICH,  
GERMANY

### Swiss-German is the language of the majority

I read with amusement some readers' complaints regarding Swiss-German "ethnocentrism" and monopoly on news in the February 2008 issue. As a French-speaking Swiss I recognize that Schwytzerdeutsch is the language of the majority, uniquely defining Swiss society and cultural space, unlike French and Italian which have their own cultural spheres. In fact, if Helvetic uniqueness is a consideration, all articles should be published in Romansch. While Swiss politics famously strive for perfect equilibrium and I hope "Swiss Review" does the same for its articles, I think the journal is reflective of Swiss reality.

FABRICE CHRISTEN, SAN DIEGO,  
USA

### Review in five languages

Well done to "Swiss Review", which I always



### Thank you

We received "Swiss Review" for the first time a few days ago. We have been living in Tanzania in East Africa since January this year. We think the magazine is a great way of keeping in touch with Switzerland. Our daughter Lea was also delighted with the news from home (see picture).

Our mouths were watering when we saw the Cervelats on page 18 of the last edition. We are already missing Swiss delicacies like chocolate and fondue.

A big thank you from Tanzania.

THE HUBER FAMILY, TANZANIA, EAST AFRICA

read with great pleasure. My letter concerns an item by Mr. David J.L. Bongard in the "Mailbag" section complaining that "Swiss Review" neglects French-speaking Switzerland, while this publication is produced in five languages, including French of course. I did not therefore understand the gist of this long diatribe – couldn't he perhaps have said that he would like to receive "Swiss Review" in French?

RAYMOND HOFFMEYERL,  
FRANCE

### "Swiss Review" as a Swiss publication

As a Swiss and long time reader of "Swiss Review" I find myself at odds with your editorial policy that to me as a Swiss Abroad seems not to reflect Switzerland but some UN-based multicultural cabal that does not reflect Swiss nationality. Front cover: a woman from Nepal drinking water from a tap? What does this have to do with Switzerland? Editorially a sort of diatribe against Christoph Blocher, the leader of Switzerland's

largest political party, and gloating over his loss of position. An article on Swiss aid to the third world. Would it perhaps be prudent to consider why these nations that have more natural resources and better climate seem to require all this help? Is it perhaps because they are lazy and stupid? Should this then be rewarded with gifts? At least two derogatory cartoons about Blocher. I think you can do better. I think you should consider "Swiss Review" as a Swiss publication about Switzerland for Swiss Abroad, not some propaganda tool for the political left and multiculturalism.

ADRIAN H. KRIEG, FLORIDA,  
USA

### Napoleon III

I was very pleased to receive "Swiss Review" of 2/08 today. I was also pleasantly surprised by the article on Napoleon III by Rolf Ribi. I know the Napoleon Museum and Arenenberg very well indeed. Each time I get the opportunity to visit my canton, which is very dear to me, I go to Arenenberg. My ancestors are citizens of Salenstein. I would like to thank you very much.

SOPHIE ZAJAC, BRUNSTATT,  
FRANCE

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