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Ashamed

Today, after yesterday's disastrous referendum on the construction of minarets, there is one more reason to be ashamed of being Swiss. But at least I had the consolation that the Bundestag member for my Bavarian constituency, CSU Secretary General Alexander Dobrindt, spoke out strongly against following the Swiss example. He was even optimistic as to the negative outcome of such a referendum in Germany, if such an eventuality arose.

I wrote to him the following: "This time I do not have any concern to voice but would like instead to congratulate you on your position as to whether we should follow the Swiss example of opposing the construction of minarets, and to thank you for your clear and courageous words. As a world citizen who holds dual nationality, if I could not get by without an emotional identification with one particular nation state, then once again I would be ashamed to be Swiss at this moment. The result of Sunday's referendum represents a step backwards in civilisation, in the 'One World' which is slowly being achieved in spite of all the obstacles that still exist, mostly in people's minds. I do not entirely share your confidence that a similar vote in Germany would have a different outcome from that in Switzerland. And even the majority of Swiss politicians were against such a change to the constitution. But it is at least reassuring that a constitutional change need not necessarily be pushed through simply because so many people have voted in favour of it. Fortunately, there are still some hurdles that will hopefully be high enough to pre-

vent such an ignoble restriction on religious freedom from becoming embedded in the Swiss constitution.

M. de Coulon, Schabsoien, Germany

One-sided

Many thanks for the most recent edition of "Swiss Review". Like many readers I am delighted that this publication exists and it is a pleasure to receive it on a regular basis.

I was pleased to see that the editorial took such a prominent stance on Swiss culture and would like to make a few comments on Heinz Eckert's article. The significant investment in culture is indeed something our country can be proud of, something which helps us to maintain our identity. But I was somewhat disappointed at the one-sided description of Switzerland's flourishing cultural scene. Apart from the mention of a few open-air festivals, the examples given were of high-brow culture accessible to only a relatively small section of the population. It is not surprising that Presence Switzerland should be more interested in these examples, as it is their job to promote Swiss culture (and its image) abroad rather than to stimulate a cultural dialogue. But Swiss culture is so much more rich and diverse than was portrayed in this article. Pro Helvetia, for example, promotes a wide range of different cultural activities. And these are by no means all enormously expensive events (which are portrayed in the article as a prerequisite for world-class culture). What is important – particularly for foreign cultural policy – is to promote and share a diversity of culture that goes beyond the expensive and elite cul-

Swiss Gods

With more than 20 years in the business and 15 albums under their belts, The Young Gods have become an international benchmark in electro-industrial rock and sound experimentation. The group, originally from Fribourg but now based in Geneva, produces highly original work and never ceases to amaze the public and its wide fan base all over the world. After revisiting the music of the film documentary "Woodstock" (1970) in 2005 and 2009, the quartet laid itself bare by reinterpreting part of its repertoire in an acoustic version on the album "Knock on Wood". It produced a psychedelic brand of folk blues where two guitars are used with a sitar over vibrant percussion. All of this is augmented by Franz Treichler's captivating voice, the timbre and nuances of which seem haunted by Jim Morrison. There is no hesitation in giving a "Young Gods" interpretation of some anthology tracks, such as "Freedom" by Richie Havens, "If Six Was Nine" by Jimi Hendrix and "Everything In Its Right Place" by Radiohead.

This highly successful Swiss band formed in 1985. The following year, it was already performing in London and went on to turn out albums like clockwork. It even dedicated an album to composer Kurt Weill in 1990. The appeal of The Young Gods lies in their status as pioneers of industrial rock, where heavy guitar riffs are played over extraordinary sampling (repetitive sound loops). With its album "TV Sky" in 1992 and its cosmic blues rock, the band caused a frenzy on the electric scene. U2 and its producers acknowledged their admiration of the Swiss band. The Gods took North America by storm and set off on a global tour, the creativity of which is immortalised on the album "Live Sky Tour", recorded in Australia in 1993. The new millennium saw the band broaden its horizons to embark on adventures, such as the "Amazonia Ambient Project" with the famous anthropologist Jeremy Narby ("the cosmic serpent") and the purely electronic album "Music For Artificial Clouds", inspired by the group's performance at Expo 02. The Young Gods sample everything from the sound of an emptying sink to a drop of water falling into a pool.

What have Franz Treichler, Al Comet, Bernard Trontin and Vincent Hänni got in store for us in 2010? We will find out in the course of the year with an album described as rock, electro and acoustic. The group is in top form having finished the year 2009 performing with Richie Haven, the legendary guitarist who opened the Woodstock Festival in 1969. To discover the world of The Young Gods, simply enter the group's name into a video-sharing site, such as youtube or dailymotion, and let the adventure begin.

- ALAIN WEY

