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Credit Suisse charges Swiss abroad

It would seem that Credit Suisse intend to charge their customers living abroad who hold accounts in Switzerland the sum of CHF 40 per month. The charge can be avoided if one has a balance greater than CHF 1 million! This is outrageous as many Swiss abroad will have modest sums only in such accounts – such as savings from their youth and time living in Switzerland – now used for holiday visits etc. Not only is the scale of the charge disproportionate when compared with the current level of interest rates it unwittingly discriminates against Swiss people who live abroad. Domestic residents of Switzerland will not be charged.

H. CRABTREE-RUGGLI, ENGLAND

Not a globally unique issue

Peter Rothenbühler comments that the problem is more that the German-speaking Swiss have a major issue with High German and refuse even to speak the first national language. I must agree that some Swiss-German-speaking Swiss don't like to speak High German (myself included) but this is certainly not globally unique. Living in Scotland, I have never seen or heard a Scot switch to "English" when speaking to an Englishman/woman.

In an increasingly multicultural world we would end up speaking High German more and more – where would that leave our own unique dialects?

A. DUNKEL, SCOTLAND

Guisan legend

As a young Swiss boy abroad I had the incredible

good fortune to come to Switzerland in 1944 aged 11 and to spend a few years growing up in the Jura mountains. I was able to learn rudimentary French at the village school in the valley for which I am still very grateful today. In my youth, I was very familiar with the picture of General Guisan, which could be seen everywhere. However, I was not yet aware who General Guisan was. I gradually learned what kind of man Guisan was. He was and remains for me a legend whom we can thank for saving Switzerland during the war. He deserves his immortal status for his outstanding address on the Rütli alone. I have little interest still to this day in the "blemishes" gradually being uncovered by historians and biographers.

W. GEISER, GERMANY

The other father of the nation

The article on General Guisan is admittedly very well presented and the other Swiss figures mentioned are also well deserving of the prominence given to them. However, in my view – and hopefully that of many Swiss people – an extremely important figure was missing without whom Switzerland, dare we say it, would not exist as we know it today. That is Saint Nicholas of Flüe. I believe many people would find an article on him of great interest, particularly since he is the father of the nation and our patron saint.

M. LUMENA MC, GERMANY

Swiss icons under the microscope – in print and on screen

AFTER THE SUCCESS OF HIS BOOK "So Sweet Zerland", Franco-Swiss author Xavier Casile is back with a second volume. Here he explores 50 Swiss icons with plenty of humour, personal anecdotes and, of course, facts. Swiss who think they know all there is to know about their country are made to think again: the submerged part of the iceberg reveals lots of surprises. All aspects of Swiss life are covered, from brands to artists and museums to international organisations. In addition, a third volume is to be published in November and one-minute television documentaries are to be broadcast on channels TSR, SF and TV5 Monde (as well as on the Good Heidi Production website). These short stories will be narrated by well-known figures such as former Federal Councillor Adolf Ogi, who will lend his voice to the German version, and the unforgettable 007 star Roger Moore, who will present the English one.

So, what fascinating facts does "So Suite Zerland 2" have in store for us? Where does the name of the chocolate Ragusa, established in 1942, come from? It is the former name of the city of Dubrovnik in Croatia, which was visited by chocolatier Camille Bloch in the 1930s. As for the Alphorn, it started life in the 14th century as a much shorter instrument and it was not until the 19th century that it was lengthened to the 3.4-metre form we know today. Readers will also learn that the Red Cross was established by Henry Dunant of Geneva in 1863, after he was involved in the carnage of the Battle of Solferino, Italy, where Napoleon III fought the Austrians in 1856. The European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN) was founded in Geneva in 1954 and commissioned its first particle accelerator in 1959.

Remaining in the city of Calvin, readers are given an insight into the "Palais des Nations", firstly the headquarters of the League of Nations in 1936 and then of the UN in 1942. The Swiss Guard, the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos and the Montreux Jazz Festival (established in 1967) are all grist to the author's mill.

Tenth floor, please, but in a Schindler elevator! Founded in 1874, this famous company produced its first electrical lift in 1892 and installed the first escalator in 1936. The author also looks back at the success of the Omega Speedmaster watch, which helped save the Apollo 13 crew in 1970 and has been used on all manned space missions since 1965. In the field of journalism, Casile examines the history of Switzerland's oldest daily newspaper, the NZZ (Neue Zürcher Zeitung) which first appeared in 1780. In a literary anecdote, we learn that its founder, Salomon Gessner of Zurich, was a friend of Goethe. Readers also gain fascinating insights into a host of topics including the Betty Bossi diary and cookbooks, cow fighting, Thomy mustard, Hero rösti and ravioli, "läckerli bâlois" gingerbreads, Zweifel crisps, Morand liqueurs and brandy, and Micro scooters, which took the entire world by storm in 2000. The writer Max Frisch (1911–1991), sculptor Jean Tinguely (1925–1991), director Jean-Luc Godard and cartoonist Zep are featured from the arts, offering a good cross-section of Swiss culture. A passionate and entertaining book.



So ---- Zerland 2 (available in French and English) by Xavier Casile, Editions Good Heidi Production, Geneva, 2009. So Sweet Zerland 3 (available in French and German), November 2010. www.goodheidiproduction.ch