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Little gems

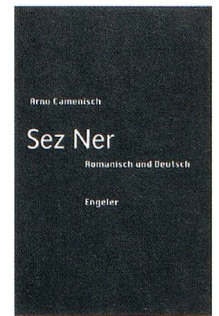
Small book but highly pleasurable reading

Arno Camenisch comes from the canton “where driving was banned until 1925”, as he himself once said – from the canton of Grisons, that is. Camenisch, born in 1978, is now an author. These days, he lives in Biel/Bienne rather than Grisons but still has a strong affinity with his childhood home. This is also apparent in his first book “Sez Ner”. In this small book – where German and Romansh are printed side by side – an alpine herdsman, his helper, a cattle herder and a swine herder tell of their work on the alpine pastures at the foot of the Piz Sezner mountain. Camenisch’s work is not a contin-

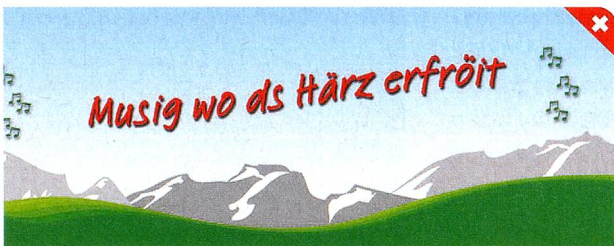


uous narrative and certainly does not depict an alpine idyll. It is a loose sequence of scenes in which the author’s delight in the comical and sometimes grotesque continually comes to the fore. Literary critic Hardy Ruoss has described the book as “a great linguistic phe-

nomenon, perhaps even a linguistic surfeit but most certainly a linguistic celebration”. “Sez Ner” has already been translated into French, Italian, Dutch, Hungarian and Romanian, while translations into Spanish and English will follow shortly. The book is published by a small Swiss publishing house, Urs Engeler. “Sez Ner” is also available as an audio book in German and Romansh. (BE)



Reading by Camenisch at the Leipzig Book Fair on YouTube:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0kgtaf1Sms



Radio for folk music lovers

“Please, please keep playing your wonderful folk music”, “God bless you, please keep the site going”, “It would feel like the end of the world if your station stopped transmitting.” – dozens of comments with compliments like these can be found on the homepage of “Radio Heimatklang”. Since the Emmental-based radio station first went on air a year and a half ago, its fan base and number of supporters has constantly risen. 25,000 listeners from all over the world tune into “Radio Heimatklang”

every day. The driving force behind the project is Marc Lauper, who is today a pastor in Eggwil and previously spent six years preaching in Canada. The station mainly broadcasts folk music from Switzerland and the alpine region and there is a sermon from one of the Swiss national churches on Sundays at 9.30 a.m., CET. “Radio Heimatklang” can be received via satellite, cable and the Internet. (BE)

Its website is very informative and well presented.
www.heimatklang.ch
Video on YouTube: www.heimatklang.ch/heimatklang/youtube-video2

Bernese bear joins the Swiss abroad

Berne is extremely fond of its own heraldic animal, the bear. The Bernese were therefore astonished at the decision made by the Bear Park in Berne this summer to expel one of its resident bears, three-and-a-half-year-old Berna, to Bulgaria. The reason was that Berna was behaving extremely badly. She was aggressive towards her own mother Björk and had given her some nasty bites. These attacks forced the park management to take action. The



expatriated bear is being accommodated at the small zoo in the Bulgarian provincial town of Dobrich. Berna did not put up any resistance and seems happy in Dobrich. Thanks to the support of an NGO from Schaffhausen, the zoo there is today a model for animal-keeping and a fine example of successful development cooperation. Berna’s enclosure is far from modest: it is located in the extensive grounds of the former Dobrich residence of the former socialist leader Todor Zhivkov. (MUL)



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Bulletins

New head for financial matters

Jacques de Watteville has been appointed the new head of the State Secretariat for International Financial Matters (SIF). He will succeed State Secretary Michael Ambühl. The 62-year-old Jacques de Watteville is currently the ambassador to China. He was previously head of the Swiss Mission to the European Union in Brussels from 2007 to 2012. Prior to that, he was the Swiss ambassador to Syria (2003–2007). Watteville's many years of experience, his international profile and his excellent contacts were key factors in the Federal Council's decision to appoint him.

Agreement with the USA endorsed

Following in the footsteps of the Council of States, the National Council approved the Agreement on the Implementation of the US Tax Law FATCA (Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act) during the autumn session. This law enables the USA to force banks abroad to disclose the accounts of US clients to its tax authorities. The banks are obliged to implement the law from mid-2014 onwards or will otherwise be excluded from the US capital market. Opposition to the Agreement mainly came from the Swiss People's Party (SVP). It condemned the adoption of foreign tax law as unacceptable. Representatives of other parties also expressed reservations over "US imperialism" but viewed resistance as counterproductive.

Parliament in favour of new fighter jets

The National Council overwhelmingly approved the purchase of 22 Gripen fighter jets

at a cost of 3.1 billion Swiss francs, with 113 members voting in favour during the autumn session. The Social Democrats, Green Liberals and left-wing groups immediately declared that they would call a referendum to put the deal before the Swiss people. A referendum will almost certainly be held and looks set to take place in 2014.

SP celebrates its 125th anniversary

The Swiss Social Democratic Party, which was founded on 21 October 1888, celebrated its 125th anniversary in Berne on 7 September. Around 3,000 guests attended the celebrations, including former Federal Councillors Ruth Dreifuss and Moritz Leuenberger as well as one-time party president Helmut Hubacher. There was a long round of applause for the two incumbent Federal Councillors, Simonetta Sommaruga and Alain Berset, who played "The Entertainer" by Scott Joplin – the theme music for "The Sting" – four-handed on the piano.

In a class of her own

Guilia Steingruber won Gold in the All-Round event and on all four pieces of apparatus at the Swiss Artistic Gymnastics Championships. In the vault, her specialist event, the 19-year-old European champion was simply outstanding – she obtained the top score for the Chusovitina with 15,600 points. Following her success in 2011, it is the second time that Steingruber has triumphed in all five disciplines. The most successful gymnast in the men's events was Kevin Rossi, who won Gold in the floor exercise, on the parallel bars and on the high bar.

Quotes

"We are being vilified and blackmailed, bigger countries are ordering us around."

Ueli Maurer, Swiss President, in his 1 August address

"The thinking person has the strange characteristic to like to create a fantasy in the place of the unsolved problem."

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, German poet (1749–1832)

"Switzerland is not surrounded by enemies. It is simply confronted with changing realities."

Alain Berset, Federal Councillor, in his 1 August address

"The importance of the law of might is again increasing at the expense of international law. (...) Switzerland, which is committed to the principle that law has precedence over power, must resist this trend."

Federal Councillor Didier Burkhalter at this year's Ambassadors Conference in Berne

"To achieve the possible, we must attempt the impossible again and again."

Hermann Hesse, author and painter (1877–1962)

"The foundations of our political culture have survived much more uncertain times than these."

Alain Berset, Federal Councillor

"Everything that needs to be said has already been said. But since no one was listening, everything must be said again."

André Gide, French author (1869–1951)



Niklaus Meienberg was what is commonly known as an enfant terrible. A journalist and author, he was analytical, provocative and meticulous in his research into topics like suppressed aspects of Swiss history and the career of Federal Councillor Elisabeth Kopp's husband. His milieu studies and reportages remain legendary, and his passionate use of sometimes almost baroque language adorned with expressions from dialect and French, the language he loved so dearly, was greatly admired. He died twenty years ago on 22 September 1993 – angst-ridden, he took his own life. His works, most of which are still available, make highly pleasurable reading even today.