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Little gems

Incredible journeys

Fables, legends and myths are the “family history” of a nation or country. They are both a commemoration and a foundation for the present. Stories and legends are told to us as children, and then we continually recount them. Listening to stories and legends is like going on journeys and discovering cities, countries and people. The au-

dio books of legends, which the German publishing house “Michael John Verlag” has been producing for six years, provide a new way of travelling. Forty CDs have been released to date, including a double album of stories and legends from Switzerland. These include the Rütli Oath and William Tell, but also the fable of the glow worms from Ticino. There are also leg-



ends from the cities of Berne and Zurich alongside those from Brazil and New Zealand,

for example. Listening allows you to escape like a child into unfamiliar worlds, not least thanks to the extraordinary storytellers. A booklet containing concise additional information is enclosed with every audio book. (BE)

Price: EUR 14.90 per CD.
Available from www.stadtsagen.de;
Further information:
www.john-verlag.de



Finally available in translation

Alfonsina Storni, the daughter of emigrants from Ticino, is regarded as one of the greatest artists of the 20th century in Latin America and enjoys legendary status in her homeland of Argentina. As she herself said, she wrote “to avoid dying”. She took her own life in 1938 aged 46. Storni’s work caused a furore and had a major public impact. Her way of life, a single mother and the lover of a married man, shocked society. (Charles Linsmayer gave an account of her life in “Swiss Review” in June 2013,

as part of the “literature series”).

Other works by Storni – in addition to her love poetry – have now finally also been translated into German. “Meine Seele hat kein Geschlecht” is the title of the book published by the literary scholar Hildegard Elisabeth Keller. As the sub-title indicates, the book contains narratives, columns and provocative works. Alfonsina Storni wrote for weekly magazines and newspapers in Argentina for around 20 years. She watched people in the streets and bars of the city, at social events, while flirting, dancing the tango and at work. She was a critical observer, a campaigner for women’s liberty, and she possessed a keen sense of humour and a penchant for irony. All of this makes her work highly enjoyable reading. (BE)

Alfonsina Storni “Meine Seele hat kein Geschlecht”, Limmat Verlag Zurich, 320 pages. CHF 44, EUR 38

Stories of Swiss emigration

Ilona Shulman Spaar grew up in Engelberg, in the canton of Obwalden, studied art history in Basel and then emigrated to Vancouver, Canada, seven years ago. There she carried out research into contemporary indigenous art and started a family with a Canadian. She has now published a highly impressive book on the destinies of other Swiss emigrants.

She recounts the stories of emigrants to Canada with historical accuracy but also great compassion. These include the marriage between a 22-year-old named Ermatinger from Schaffhausen with a 15-year-old Ojibwa princess Mananowe, whose 30 years of happy wedlock produced 13 children and saw the professional and political rise of this Swiss trapper to the upper echelons of Montreal society in the 18th century. Another story tells of Felix Schellenberg and his modern “cowboy in Canada” dream. Originally from Hilfikon in Zurich, Schellenberg and his wife Jasmin from Basel founded the bio-dynamic Demeter Cattle Ranch in 1979 in the wilderness of the Chilcotin Valley in British Columbia. Three generations live there today. The book is richly illustrated and reveals much about the Swiss pioneering spirit in Canada. (SIS)

Ilona Schulman Spaar “Swiss Immigration to Canada”; 240 pages; available from www.amazon.ca; 25 CAD



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Bulletins

Rudolf Friedrich passes away

Former Federal Councillor Rudolf Friedrich passed away in his home town of Winterthur in mid-October at the age of 90. Friedrich, a trained lawyer, was elected to the Federal Council as an FDP representative in 1982, taking over the Federal Department of Justice and Police. He was forced to step down from office just under two years later for health reasons and was succeeded by Federal Councillor Elisabeth Kopp. Throughout his life, Friedrich voiced his views as a committed citizen on political issues, notably during the referendum campaigns over Switzerland's accession to the UN and EEA.

More and more popular initiatives

Increasingly frequent use is being made of popular initiatives in Switzerland to achieve political objectives. The Swiss people voted on seven initiatives per decade on average between 1940 and 1970. There were 16 from 1971 to 1980, 34 between 2001 and 2010, and 11 from January 2010 till now. There are currently 34 initiatives pending or at the signature-collecting stage.

Several initiatives on agricultural policy

The Swiss People's Party (SVP) launched a popular initiative at the start of November that aims to enshrine Switzerland's level of self-sufficiency in the constitution. Other pending proposals concerning agricultural policy include the Young Socialists' initiative "No speculation with food", an initiative from the Green Party seeking to increase import standards for food and feedstuffs, and the Swiss Farmers' Union's "initiative to en-

hance sustainable domestic food production".

No new canton of Jura

On 24 November 2013, the people of the canton of Jura and of the Bernese Jura voted on whether a large canton of Jura should be formed. In the canton of Jura 77% came out in favour of the proposal, while 72% in the Bernese Jura rejected it. The project will not be pursued as it required the approval of both regions. However, the town of Moutier, which was the only commune in the Bernese Jura to approve the project, may request a change of canton. The contentious issue of the Jura appeared to have been resolved in 1979 when northern Jura separated from Berne and formed its own canton – but the debate has continued, ultimately resulting in the referendum on 24 November.

Against the tax agreement with France

Switzerland's inheritance tax agreement with France has little prospect of being adopted by Parliament. The National Council's Economic Affairs Committee has recommended not entering into it at all by 15 votes to seven with three abstentions. The committee's majority opinion is that an unregulated situation is preferable to the agreement signed by Federal Councillor Eveline Widmer-Schlumpf.

Correction

An error was made in the report on the 1:12 initiative in the October issue of "Swiss Review". Oswald Grübel was incorrectly referred to as Marcel Ospel in the photo caption. We apologise for this mistake.

Quotes

"Nobody is going to gift us anything."

Federal Councillor Schneider-Ammann on international trade relations after a visit to Brussels.

"He who was presented with an ox must give in return a horse."

Chinese proverb

"If you start giving presents, the friendship will soon be over."

French proverb

"Some of us are a bit too virtuous. I'm not always."

Federal Councillor Doris Leuthard on her party, the CVP, and herself

"The sheep is deemed stupid because it's dutiful."

Farming adage

"Darbellay is simply too over-excited, he swings from left-wing populism to right-wing populism from one week to the next."

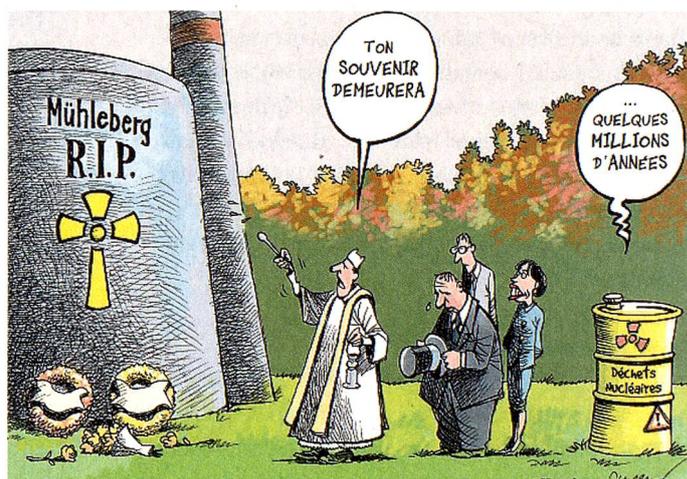
Michael Hermann, a political scientist, on the CVP's Party President

"I enjoy eating and drinking with the people of Appenzell, but I enjoy being their compatriot even more."

President of Switzerland Ueli Maurer at the "500 years of Appenzell in the Swiss Confederation" anniversary event

"Ultimately, man finds in things nothing but what he himself has imported into them."

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), German philosopher



"Your memory will live on" – "...for millions of years"

The Mühleberg nuclear power station will be decommissioned in 2019, according to a surprise announcement by its operator, BKW Energie AG, on 30 October 2013. The management explained that technical, political and economic factors had led to the decision. Doubts have long been raised about the safety of the Mühleberg nuclear power plant due to numerous incidents and emergency shutdowns, and a popular initiative calling for the "immediate decommissioning" of Mühleberg was launched in the wake of the reactor accident in Fukushima.

The shutdown in 2019 will be followed by a "post-operational phase" during which the highly radioactive waste will be cooled down in cooling installations. It will then be put into transport and storage containers and taken to an interim storage facility where the nuclear waste will be prepared over a period of some 35 years for geological disposal. The final repository has yet to be decided upon. There is huge opposition from the public in regions where geological disposal could potentially take place.