

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 41 (2014)
Heft: 4

Buchbesprechung: Sommer in Brandenburg [Urs Faes]

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pressure must be increased yet further. After around a quarter of Europeans voted against the EU's present political course, Switzerland can happily leave the bilateral route with the Brussels vassals of the USA: The Swiss government should again finally start fighting for agreements that are in the national interest instead of taking a lead from the ineffectual lobby-controlled behaviour of the Commissions in Brussels.

DR. ING. (ETH) JEAN-PIERRE VOIRET, CALW, GERMANY

Realistic and farsighted decision-making

Some issues may still be a "matter of taste" or a matter of opinion. But (largely) unrestricted immigration and (resulting) overpopulation, on the other hand, are not merely a question of quality of life; they could even become a serious threat to basic survival. As in all areas, common sense applies in this case, too: if we do not remember this, not only will our mental and, as a result, also our physical well-being be jeopardised, we will also lose our room for manoeuvre to protect our basic needs in times of crisis. This is where the utopian faith in unending economic growth, increasing profits and material prosperity is in stark contrast to the reality of increasing environmental destruction and pollution, stress and the growing number of illnesses caused by the former.

It is up to us to face up to this reality, to come to terms with it and to prevent the worst by reacting appropriately as early as possible.

VITAL SCHERRER,
S. JORGE, PORTUGAL

Poor taste

Cover photo of Swiss Review 2: Symbolic, my eye. It is a picture of submission and defeat! Revolting, degrading and poor taste. What's next? A symbolic EU yodel?

ARMIN KUNKLER,
BONIFAY FL, USA

Book tip

Dear Swiss readers and readers from elsewhere in the world – especially from France and Germany: I am sometimes upset when I read the letters from the "Swiss Review" mailbag and, as an exceptionally helvetophile Hungarian, I will take the liberty of recommending my little book "Helvetismen – Deutsches Kulturwörterbuch der Schweizerischen Eidgenossenschaft" [Helvetisms – German Cultural Dictionary of the Swiss Confederation] so that you really appreciate the great treasure that Switzerland has and represents. Then people will also understand the results of referenda without incorrectly interpreting them. With great respect for the sovereign Swiss citizen.

PROFESSOR LÁSZLÓ ÓDOR,
BUDAPEST, HUNGARY

Love in foreboding times

"THERE CAN BE NO FORGETTING; what transcends reason cannot be forgotten," remarks one of the survivors in Urs Faes' book "Sommer in Brandenburg" (Summer in Brandenburg). The narrative, which is actually a work of literary and historical research, begins in 1938. Ron and Lissy meet at the Hachschara centre in Ahrensdorf near Trebbin, one of the farms run by the "Reich's Deputation of the Jews in Germany" along Zionist lines. He is from Hamburg, she comes from Vienna. Both are from affluent middle-class backgrounds. At the "emigration training facility" in Ahrensdorf, young Jews learn about arable farming, beekeeping, agricultural work and craftsmanship to prepare them for emigration to the promised land and a future as settlers in Palestine.

Love blossoms between Lissy and Ron. Urs Faes allows this love story to unfold as literary imagination. Stolen glances, surreptitious brushes, the desire and great hope of a future together – and a day and night together just before they separate.

Faes involves us in his research. In the life of the young people on the farm, an almost idyllic place despite the strict rules, hard work, doubts and fears, news of the gruesome events of nationalistic racial fanaticism only initially arrives through letters from parents and siblings. There are reports of exclusion, humiliation, expulsion and deportation.

"We had no idea how bad it would become," recalls Efraim Jochmann, known as Efri. Faes visits him during his research in Jerusalem. Efri, a 13-year-old orphan back then, was the youngest person at the Ahrensdorf farm. "Never in my entire life have I felt so looked after as I did on that country estate," he recounts as an old man.



But the time comes when the Nazis will no longer tolerate the farms. Lissy had obtained her permit to emigrate with a group to Palestine shortly beforehand. Ron and Efri are sent to the Neuendorf compulsory labour camp; Ron is carried off to a concentration camp in 1943. This is the last we hear of him. And all trace is lost of Lissy somewhere on the journey to Palestine or in Palestine itself.

"I'm completely enraptured by you. You will remain in my heart for as long as I live," writes Ron in a letter to Lissy. It is his last letter – a love story without a happy ending. It was a mere coincidence that Urs Faes stumbled upon this story through photos at the Museum of the Jewish People in Tel Aviv and carried out his research. As an author, not only does he describe the love story as he envisages it from the information available, he also breaks up the chronology of the events using four sequences with notes from his research. This stylistic device may irritate initially, but the encounters with witnesses increasingly emerge as a second moving plotline.

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URS FAES, "Sommer in Brandenburg"; Suhrkamp Verlag, Berlin; 262 pages; CHF 28.50, EUR 20; also available as an e-book.