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Little gems

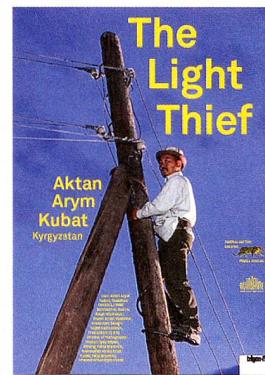


Mr Light

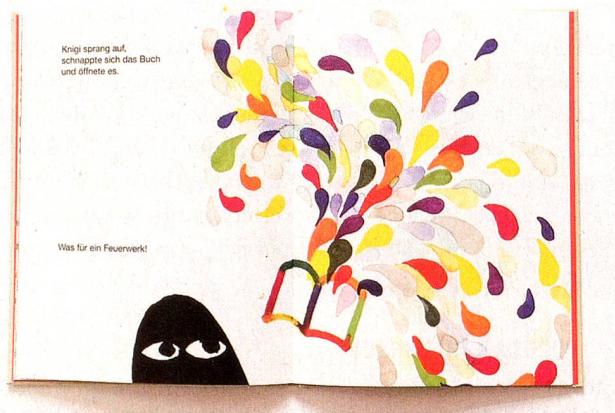
The audience in Locarno's Piazza Grande was enchanted, and film critics showered the film with the most lavish praise. The film is "The Light Thief" from Kyrgyzstan. The film's hero is an electrician

called, quite simply, "Svet-Ake", or "Mr Light", and he feels responsible for fixing everything to do with sparks and electricity, whether it be short circuits, power failures or even marriages where tensions are running high. Svet-Ake does not hesitate to help anyone in his home town. Even if it means breaking the law, such as the time when he turns back an electricity meter so that, instead of having to pay a bill, a poor family receives a payment from the electricity company. Aktan Arym Kubat, the film's direc-

tor and leading actor, depicts life in the post-Soviet Central Asian country as an often amusing adventure in spite of many hurdles. The DVD of the film is available from Trigonfilm with subtitles in German and French. Subtitles in other languages can also be downloaded via SubtitleSeeker.com.



To order: "The Light Thief" by Aktan Arym Kubat via www.trigon-film.org. Direct link: http://www.trigon-film.org/en/movies/The_Light_Thief

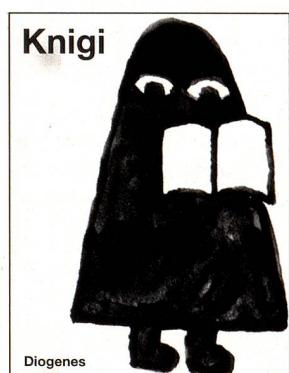


A great little ghost

"Ghost Knigi" has been around for some time now. The little ghost is the brainchild of Benjamin Sommerhalder, an illustrator and author from Zurich. First appearing in Sommerhalder's own small publishing house, Nieves, in Zurich, Knigi has now been "adopted" by the renowned Diogenes Verlag. The story goes like this: Knigi, the little ghost, receives a book from his aunt. But something's not quite right with it: the pages are all completely blank. The little ghost hasn't learned to read yet, which is why all books strike him

as just empty pages.

Knigi decides to discover the secret of what's behind this mysterious thing called "reading". And when he does, he discovers a miraculous explosion of colour, adventure and joy leaping out from the pages. This charming little book is the perfect gift for young and old. If you love books, you'll love Knigi.



"Knigi", Diogenes Verlag, Zurich; 24 pages; CHF 19.90; EUR 15.40; also available in German, French and Spanish, as well as an e-book.

"Flying is wicked"

Only insiders know how the Swiss Air Force functions. Sometimes, however, after faults, accidents or scandals, information leaks out. Swiss voters' "No" in the referendum on the Gripen fighter jets on 18 May might have something to do with this secretiveness. Margrit Sprecher, a reporter for Swiss and international media, was given the opportunity to accompany military pilots over several years of their training.

She has now brought out a book describing her experience, entitled "Unsere Kampf-Piloten" (Our fighter pilots). It is an attempt to cast some light on a closed world, which has its own ideas, rituals and rules – a world where the phrase "flying is wicked" is often heard. It would appear that individuals with ideas of

their own are not exactly welcome in the Air Force. It is all about adhering to the norm: in preparatory training, military rank, size and vocabulary. Sprecher presents readers with a type of collage in ten pictures. This book will have readers smiling in places, amazed in others and sometimes simply shaking their heads.

Margrit Sprecher
"Unsere Kampf-Piloten";
Echtzeit Verlag Basel, 2014;
128 pages with photos by
Fabian Biasio; CHF 32,
EUR 24.
www.echtzeit.ch



Bulletins

Dialogue on equal pay is a flop

In March 2009, the social partners, i.e. the Swiss Employers' Association, the Swiss Industry and Trade Association, the Swiss Federation of Trade Unions and the trade union umbrella organisation Travail.Suisse, agreed to eliminate discriminatory pay inequalities between men and women in Swiss companies as quickly as possible and received the support of federal government. After five years spent on the "equal pay dialogue", the result is mixed. The objective of eliminating wage discrimination against women has not been achieved. According to a press release from the organisers, the main reason for this is that there were only 51 companies involved in the project – a figure that is much too low to make an impact.

Sharing responsibility for childcare

Since 1 July, unmarried and divorced parents have had to look after their children together. This is a situation that divorced fathers, in particular, have been fighting to achieve for years as in the past normally only the mothers gained custody over the children. It is still unclear what will happen in the future in disputes over child custody. The public authorities, especially the Cantonal Conference for the Protection of Children and Adults (KOKES), have already declared that they will not adopt the role of mediatory bodies. The courts can refuse to grant custody rights to a parent where there are sufficient grounds.

More money for UN organisations

Switzerland is set to increase its contributions to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population

Fund (UNFPA), as was decided by the Federal Council in June. Switzerland's contribution to UNICEF for the years 2014–16 will increase from CHF 20 million to CHF 22 million per year, and UNFPA will now receive CHF 16 million per year instead of CHF 14 million. These increases were triggered by Parliament's decision to put more money aside for international development cooperation.

Seniors in the majority

As of 2030, the over-55s will make up the majority of all eligible voters in Switzerland. According to a study carried out by the University of Lausanne, it is already the case that more than half of those who vote are over 55. Having a majority of older people may lead to a generational conflict that is hard to resolve. The researchers have found that the generational discourse has already changed dramatically – the problem most frequently discussed is no longer the rebellion of youth, but rather the power of older citizens.

New national anthem

The competition for a new Swiss national anthem has received well over a hundred suggestions. In addition to proposals for lyrics in German (70), French (40), Italian (4) and Romansh (1), a Portuguese song has also been submitted. This entry cannot be considered according to the competition rules. A judging panel will now select a maximum of ten songs, which will be presented to the public via the Internet in spring 2015. The Swiss people will be able to listen to the songs and choose their favourite three for the final. The winning song will then be decided by a phone and SMS vote and will be submitted to the Federal Council as the replacement for "When the morning skies grow red".

Quotes

"We Swiss are like potatoes – our eyes are only opened when we are stuck in the mud."

Tim Guldmann, Swiss Ambassador to Berlin, on the vote held on 9 February in a speech to the SP in Zurich

"I'll spell this out clearly: We shouldn't leave anything undone. We shouldn't tie our own hands behind our backs."

Federal Councillor Johann N. Schneider-Ammann announces his intention to campaign against the initiative for inheritance tax

"He who is not satisfied with a little, is satisfied with nothing."

Epicurus, Greek philosopher (341–271 BC)

"A person should desire what they own, not what they owned in the past."

Charles Ferdinand Ramuz (1878–1947), Swiss author

"We stand disappointed and watch on with concern, the curtain is closed and all questions are open."

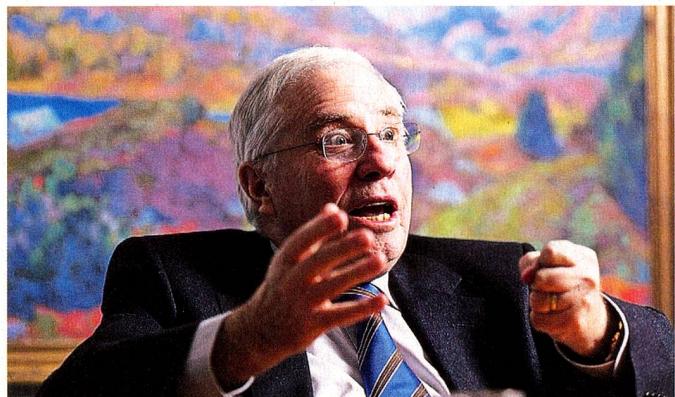
Bertold Brecht, German playwright (1898–1956)

"Going into politics is the equivalent of saying farewell to life – the kiss of death."

Hans Magnus Enzensberger, German author

"The art of politics is to antagonise others while not becoming antagonised yourself – by means of confrontation with hard facts."

Peter Bodenmann, former National Councillor and SP President, now a hotelier



"I am just frittering away my time in the National Council," was the message former Federal Councillor Christoph Blocher gave to his party leadership and the media on 9 May 2014. He relinquished his position in Parliament at the end of May and is set to dedicate all his efforts in future to fighting to sever Switzerland's close institutional ties with the EU as well as to combatting mass immigration. Blocher's decision has generated a great deal of coverage in the media. "With the help of Swiss citizens, he wants to decide on the future of the country and is flying in the face of the government, Parliament and the entire political and economic establishment," writes "Die Zeit" newspaper of Hamburg. The Swiss "Wochenzeitung" publication rendered the following judgement on his announcement: "His resignation is a declaration of war, he is making a lot of fuss in order to increase his strength and is using defamation as a stylistic device (...). The old man is getting ready for his decisive battle – a fight against the future." The "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" does not like the style of the former Federal Councillor either: "Blocher has not refrained from strongly discrediting the elected representatives of the people and states and from dragging the concept of parliamentary democracy through the mud in the most populist manner." The "Aargauer Zeitung" also commented on the situation: "Blocher's resignation is mainly the prelude to his last battle (...). This should be a warning to all those who advocate an open and liberal land."