

**Zeitschrift:** Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad  
**Herausgeber:** Organisation of the Swiss Abroad  
**Band:** 47 (2020)  
**Heft:** 5

**Vorwort:** When David was Goliath  
**Autor:** Lettau, Marc

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 09.08.2025

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

# When David was Goliath

## 4 Mailbag

## 6 Focus

The fierce debate over wireless 5G

## 10 Report

A summer visit to La Brévine –  
Switzerland's chilliest village

## 13 Politics

Should companies be held liable for  
damage that they cause abroad?

## 16 Literature

Charles-Albert Cingria –  
a Swiss poet and his bicycle

## News from your region

## 17 Culture

From cinema to online – Swiss films  
become more accessible abroad

## 20 Society

Switzerland confronts its  
uncomfortable colonialist legacy

## 23 Sport

Hurdler Léa Sprunger writes  
sporting history

## 24 Switzerland in figures

## 25 OSA news

## 28 news.admin.ch

## 30 Books / Sounds

## 31 Top pick / News



Admittedly, the bronze statue depicting the gentleman on the cover of this magazine is hard to recognise amid the cold spray of a high-pressure water hose. The emergency clean-up was necessary after demonstrators in Neuchâtel smeared the statue with blood-red paint. However, David de Pury (1709–86) – the man on the plinth – will never quite regain his former lustre. De Pury bequeathed his home city of Neuchâ-

tel an immense amount of wealth after making a massive fortune with his business ventures abroad. He was a financial Goliath, hence the statue. However, since the public have become aware that de Pury made much of his wealth through the slave trade, the city's relationship with its favourite son has cooled noticeably. Cue the paint bombs.

De Pury was one of a group of entrepreneurs who, for a while, helped Switzerland to enjoy the spoils of 'colonialism without colonies'. This is old news if truth be told, yet the global Black Lives Matter movement has brought this chapter in Swiss history into sharp relief, as we will explain later in this issue (page 20).

Switzerland's image takes yet another beating, I hear you cry. But this is good medicine. Any society that can recognise past mistakes without being crushed is a progressive society. And for a modern-day Switzerland that prizes and thrives on the virtues of balance and compromise, being reminded of the errors and blood-spilling of bygone days ought to be a salutary experience.

De Pury and his peers also remind us that we were never an island in the first place. "Switzerland's story has always been about more than what happens in Switzerland and in Europe alone," says historian Bernhard C. Schär. Switzerland belongs to the global village, in good times and bad – as the Swiss Abroad know only too well.

The Responsible Business Initiative, due to be put to the electorate on 29 November 2020 (see page 13), proves how relevant the global village continues to be. Should Swiss companies be liable for human rights or environmental violations that they cause in other countries?

This voting question is not much different to the issue of whether David de Pury earned his fortune in a morally defensible manner. But, unlike de Pury back then, today's multinationals are under the close scrutiny of civil society.

MARC LETTAU, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Cover photo:

The statue of Neuchâtel slave trader David de Pury is cleaned following a paint attack. Photo: Keystone

"Swiss Review", the information magazine  
for the "Fifth Switzerland", is published by the  
Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA).

