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Swiss National (Holi)day

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This year's Swiss National Day on 1 August was a public holiday. But it has only been a holiday for the last 30 years. In 1994, the far-right Nationale Aktion party had its never-to-be-repeated 15 minutes of fame when it launched a referendum to make 1 August a nationwide day off work. Almost 84 per cent of voters approved the proposal – no other popular initiative has ever garnered as much support.

1899

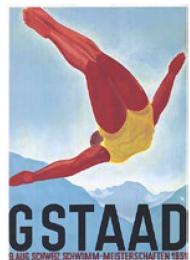
Maybe you're thinking: it doesn't matter whether 1 August is a holiday or not, the main thing is that we celebrate Switzerland's birthday. Well, 1 August isn't even Switzerland's birthday. It was in 1891 that a “federal celebration” first took place on this date. Not until 1899 did the Federal Council specify that church bells be rung on the evening of 1 August. The day was to be marked “simply and gracefully”.



Photo: iStockphoto

8.11.1307

But they took the Rütli Oath on 1 August, didn't they? No, they didn't. According to historian Aegidius Tschudi (1505–72), the oath was taken on 8 November 1307. This is why 1307, not 1291, is the year engraved on the plinth of the William Tell monument in Altdorf.



2

Plenty of smaller Swiss flags were waved at this year's Paris Olympics (see News, page 8). From 1912 to 1948, Olympic medals were also awarded in literature and the arts. Swiss competitors won eight of these medals. Graphic artist Alex Walter Diggelmann pulled off the unusual feat of becoming the only Olympian to date who has won two medals in the same discipline at the same Games. In 1948, Diggelmann won both silver and bronze for two different entries in the “Painting, Applied Arts” category. Diggelmann was a prolific artist who would have had enough works in his portfolio to have won all three medals that year. www.revue.link/diggelmann

6,400 m²

The Federal Council may have advised people to celebrate “simply and gracefully” back in the day, but now there are more ambitious ways to mark the occasion. The world's largest Swiss flag – measuring 6,400 square metres and weighing 700 kilograms – was again unfurled on the north face of the Säntis mountain this year. Around 20 workers abseiled down the cliff face, taking



Photo: Keystone

three hours to unfold the flag.