

Tell im Alltag [Uli Windisch]

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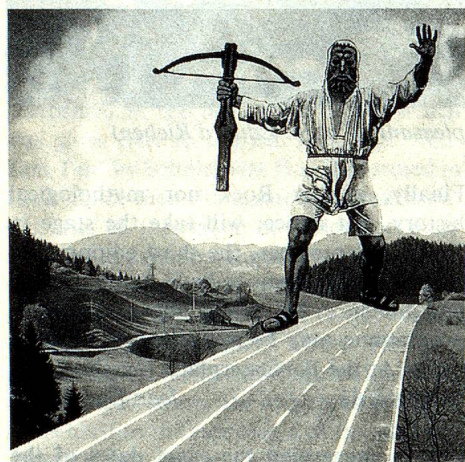
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A Hero to suit all life styles

Stubborn 'Tell-killers' and 'malicious' historians are trying to convince us that there never was a crossbow marksman from Uri. In spite of them all the robust mountain villager is still very much alive and kicking.

The phenomenon of the helvetic national hero cannot be looked at purely from a scientific historical point of view which is by no means a new idea. What is much more important, and also more productive, than questioning the historical Tell, is to investigate his effect on Swiss history through the centuries; that is to say, his symbolical, psychological,



William Tell in a political campaign ('An end to concrete')...

sociological and mythological impact. A recently published work by Uli Windisch and Florence Cornu, entitled 'Tell in Everyday Life' reveals new aspects. The evidence a Professor of Sociology and an art historian have collected in the space of about ten years is almost unbelievable, and their revelations prompt an incredulous smile, a shake of the head, and even give pause for thought.

Tell's Publicity Drive

William Tell did not only get rid of tyrants with a well-aimed shot during the High Middle Ages; he is still active - more so than ever before - in the areas of politics and economy. He is resplendent on pub signs, T-shirts, beer mugs and cheeses. He advertises weighing scales, machines, watches, pins, coal briquettes, strengthening medicine, pencils, hair slides, blue-jeans and winter socks. Car ferries and steamboats bear his name. And he is, of course, well insured, being covered by no less than four large

Swiss Insurance Companies, and he flies Swissair - what else?

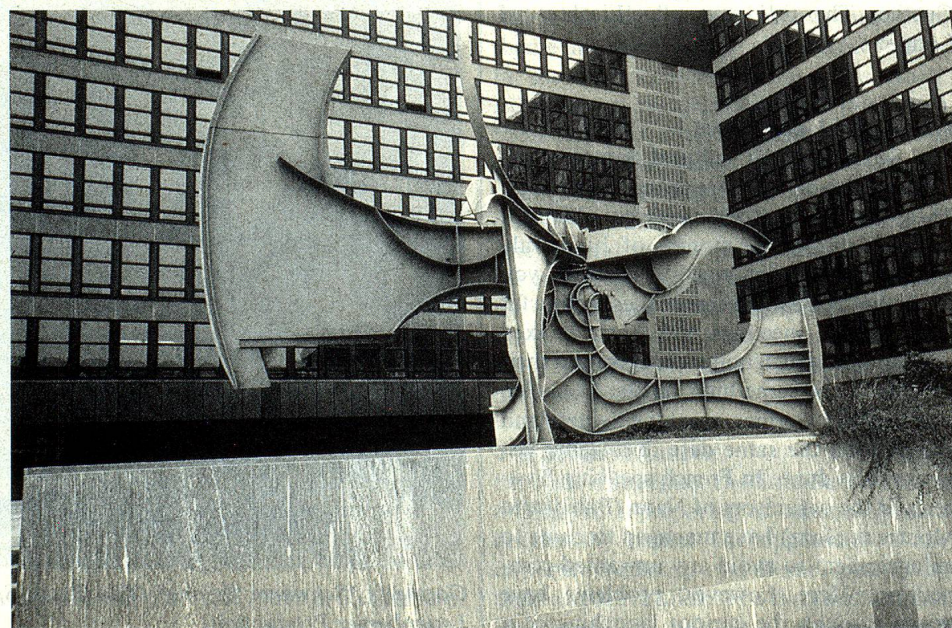
Politically versatile

Tell's active political engagement is rather irritating. He fought for, as well as against, a Swiss entry into the UN. He has voted for the Communists on several occasions,



...on a World tour (Swiss settlement New Glarus in the U.S.A.)...

...and as inspiration for modern art (The Tell of the sculptor Bernhard Luginbühl guards the Post and Telecommunications [PTT] Headquarters in Berne).



which hasn't prevented him from also supporting the Radical Party. With the upland moor farmers of Rothenthurm he has also spoken out against the weapon centre planned there, and the Swiss army. In fact, he supports the Left and the Right Wing; he really is there for everyone...

The book 'Tell in Everyday Life' is richly and colourfully illustrated. It was produced on a grandiose scale (format 24 x 28 cms) and impresses with its text which is competent and yet lively and easily understood. The authors have skillfully mastered how to track down Tell's many faces. One fact becomes more than clear through this: William Tell is not the distant national hero, rather a useful, up-to-date and versatile means of Swiss self-portrayal. JM

Uli Windisch, Florence Cornu. 'Tell im Alltag'. Edition M. Zürich 1988. SFr. 58.- Available in German and French through the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad.

Tell as a Comic

William Tell is also the hero of a French comic series. We encounter, however, a somewhat different hero from the well-known Tell as portrayed by Schiller. This Tell is admittedly also an unbeatable crossbow marksman. He has a son as his predecessor had. However, this son is called Butz and not Walter. The Tell as portrayed by René Wuillemin is not an illustrious hero. He has humour and is in this way a walking