

Mailbag

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An affront

As a Swiss citizen who lived and worked abroad for over seven years, I feel justified in taking a stance against the one-sided, left-leaning views of the Editor-in-Chief Barbara Engel. It should firstly be pointed out that she only speaks for a minority of the Swiss population. The views she represents are an absolute affront to many Swiss citizens and are almost exactly in line with those in the red-green end of the political spectrum in Switzerland. A generous calculation does not even give these left-wing parties a 30% share of the vote. The other 70% are staunchly conservative and demonstrably opposed to any kind of subjugation to EU legislation. These citizens certainly do not appreciate the disdain and contemptuous tone in Ms Engel's comments about the Swiss President. Her articles ooze underlying hostility towards the Swiss People's Party (SVP) and the Swiss President. This is a common thread through all articles written by her and like-minded persons.

ROBERT NIETH, WALCHWIL,
SWITZERLAND

Health insurance for the Swiss abroad

All Swiss citizens are equal before the law according to our constitution. This nevertheless fails to apply to rules on health insurance for the Swiss abroad. When we as Swiss citizens de-register in our home country and take up residence abroad we are excluded from the insurance schemes. This presents a major issue for many Swiss citizens abroad. We are downgraded to second-class citizens as a result of the exclusion. A nation's level of civ-

ilisation and greatness is measured by its capacity for assuming social responsibility towards minorities (Swiss citizens abroad).

WERNER WEGMÜLLER, THAILAND

Americans in Switzerland

As a dual citizen, I spent several years in the USA before returning to Switzerland to work for a US computer company. During my eight years working in Switzerland, I was told every day that I should go back to where I came from. After eight years of insults about those "Americans" I had had enough. I returned to the USA where most people leave each other alone and respect their views and practices. It would be nice if the Swiss would not generalise about Americans because we have very nice people here too. There are some rotten apples in Switzerland as well.

RUTH ZAHND, ORANGE, USA

A pleasure

I am enjoying reading the "Swiss Review" more and more. I read every article in the last two issues from start to finish. A wide range of topics is covered, the general tone is positive and it provides a critical look at current developments. I also find it extremely informative. The article on climate change opened my eyes to many issues and I was presented with completely new facts and observations. The short biography of Cilette Ofaire, the brief introduction to the life-work of Meret Oppenheim and the account of Luc Hoffmann's career in the latest issue were wonderful. Many thanks to everyone who has made this possible.

IRMGARD BAUER, CHARENSAT,
FRANCE

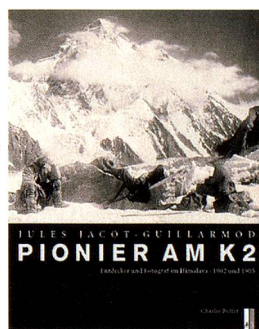
the real Mr K2

"SAW K2 FOR THE FIRST TIME," wrote Jules Jacot Guillarmod in his diary on 18 June 1902. "Imposing, daunting and yet a delight." The next day, the doctor and mountaineer from Neuchâtel took two photographs of Chogori, as local people call the mountain. These were the first images of the world's second-highest mountain. Nevertheless, they disappeared over the following decades, as did the diary and 12,000 other photographs taken by Guillarmod on his round-the-world travels using a verascope, an instrument used in relief photography, which was popular at the time.

Another mountaineer thrust himself forward to join the first K2 expedition – Aleister Crowley, the occultist and idol of the hippies. This Englishman influenced generations of K2 authors. They accepted the myth expounded in his "Confessions" in 1922 that Aleister Crowley was a genius surrounded by mediocrity on this expedition. Evidence confirms that Crowley was reckless, impulsive, rash, egotistical and often difficult. He is even supposed to have challenged a companion to a pistol duel during the expedition.

For a long time the contribution of Jules Jacot Guillarmod to the expedition was neglected. That has now changed. The grandchildren of the adventurer from Neuchâtel, who died in 1925, have now made their grandfather's legacy accessible to the public. His photographs are today housed in the Musée de l'Elysée in Lausanne, and the Parisian mountaineering journalist Charlie Buffet has written the story of "Jules Jacot Guillarmod, K2 pioneer". The book is breathtaking. Firstly, there are the photographs. Guillarmod did not just photograph mountains but also Sherpas and local people. They are insightful, sensitive images full of humanity. Buffet also puts the daring undertaking of a Himalayan expedition around 1900 in the context of the day. He describes Paris at the turn of the century where Guillarmod, a lover of technology with a thirst for knowledge, encountered the avant-garde in mountaineering.

The book meticulously covers what happened on K2. It looks



at the ascent over the Baltoro glacier and the nine camps that the group set up. We learn about the medical conditions that the expedition members suffered, including eczema, migraines and fevers – symptoms of altitude sickness. Guillarmod painstakingly noted everything with great objectivity. Buffet compares him to an entomologist examining life under a microscope.

It is hard to believe that such a dramatic event as a duel could have escaped Guillarmod's attention. Yet, his diary does not contain even the slightest hint of a confrontation between Crowley and another member of the expedition. Buffet therefore believes this story was invented and is untrue "like almost everything that was told about Crowley on K2".

SERAINA GROSS

CHARLIE BUFFET: "Jules Jacot Guillarmod, Pionier am K2" (in German), AS Verlag & Buchkonzept AG, Zurich 2012; 152 pages, around CHF 52 or "Jules Jacot Guillarmod. Pionier du K2" (in French), Slatkine Helvetica, Geneva 2012; 160 pages; around CHF 58.