



1.-August-Empfang im Erlacherhof vom Mittwoch, 1. August 2018, 20.45 Uhr

## ANSPRACHE VON STADTPRÄSIDENT ALEC VON GRAFFENRIED

*Es gilt das gesprochene Wort*

Sehr geehrte Damen und Herren, ladies and gentlemen, mesdames et messieurs, dear guests, your excellencies, Frau Regierungsrätin, Nationalräte, Grossrätinnen, Stadträtinnen und Stadträte.

Härzlech willkommen, willkommen, bienvenue, welcome, to this first of August in Bern. In the name of the Gemeinderat of the City of Bern. The celebration here in the Erlacherhof has become a tradition, some food, some drinks, some talking, and the big Gurtenfirework at the end. Due to the dry weather and therefore the forest fire risk there will be no final highlight with the firework. I am sorry for that and I am curious to find out how the evening will be without the highlight at the end. Thank you anyway for coming. At least I know now that you are not here only because of the firework. As you are not here because of my speech, I suppose you came for the great and delicious catering of the Bellevue Hotel, thank you Bellevue! And since you came even without the final fireworks we can consider to cut the firework next year to make a few economies. No, just kidding! Thank you to all the sponsors, we will literally save the firework for next year, with the sponsors. So I hope you all will come back next year.

One of the sponsors of the firework is Bern Football Club Young Boys; they have become a sponsor because they won the Championship Cup this year. So as you are already a sponsor for next year, you are obliged to win the cup again.

Just one last remark about the dry weather in Europe this year. There had always been dry summers, of course. But still, something is changing. The world climate is changing. This year, the world overshoot day is on the 1st of August. This means: We use more ecological resources and services than nature can regenerate through overfishing the sea, overharvesting forests, and emitting more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere than ecosystems can absorb. Today, we, all together in the world, already have

consumed all the resources for the whole year of 2018. Do remember: no firework, it is not just nature, it is manmade! We all can do something, for the better of the world. Ok. Now let me start with a little story.

LA SUISSE N'EXISTE PAS – SWITZERLAND DOESN'T EXIST  
SUIZA NON EXISTE.

Who am I, to tell you such a thing – especially on a day, when we invited you to celebrate the existence of this exact country, of Switzerland – de la Suisse?

It was in the year 1992. Spain had everything ready for: la Exposición Universal de Sevilla. THE BIGGEST FIESTA of all times, as King Juan-Carlos had said. The Swiss government, the Bundesrat opted to represent our country in a rather unusual, unforeseen, bold and refreshing approach: For the first time ever, the Swiss pavilion consisted entirely of objects and projects of ART.

In contrast to most of the other pavilions, our country decided to abstain from self-praise, and chose an ironic, critical and wit-ty approach of self-reflection instead. Irony is risky, as everybody knows. So, what happened in 1992?

As soon as the first Swiss visitors reported from the experiences they had in Sevilla, a full-blown political scandal erupted.

A number of Swiss Politicians called the pavilion a disgrace and an impertinence for the guests and visitors. It made them for instance furious that the Swiss hosts wore T-shirts with the now infamous slogan SUIZA NON EXISTE – LA SUISSE N'EXISTE PAS – SWITZERLAND DOESN'T EXIST to greet visitors at the entrance.

The commotion was real – so the Bundesrat had to clarify things in front of the national chambers of parliament. The Bundesrat agreed to offer some more context in order to explain the works of art exhibited. You can call this a reasonable trade-off – a typical Swiss compromise.

It was a painting, Suiza non existe, a painting by Ben Vauthier, a French-Swiss artist, double nationality. If the politicians only had looked at the whole exhibition, they would have found an-other painting by Vauthier: Je pense, donc je Suisse. That could have calmed them down. But of course these politicians were not interested in calming down, because they were real politicians.

The man who had dared to propose this witty, ironic path of self-reflection with the swiss pavilion in Sevilla was Harry Szeemann. Szeemann was born in Bern in 1933. He was a Swiss curator, his vocation was to be an exhibition maker, he curated more than 200 exhibitions throughout his life, many of which have been groundbreaking and breathtaking.

At the age of 28, Harry Szeemann was appointed as director of the Kunsthalle Bern. In 1968, when the Kunsthalle celebrated its 50th anniversary, Szeemann gave Christo and Jeanne-Claude their first opportunity to wrap an entire building: the Kunsthalle itself. This is when the career of Christo and Jeanne-Claude started, here in Bern. Only one year later, in 1969, the Kunsthalle showed Szeemanns landmark exhibition *Live in Your Head: When Attitudes become Form*. Shortly afterward Szeemann left Bern and went on to be – among many other things – the youngest artistic director at the Documenta 5 exhibition in Kassel.

This year, exactly 50 years after Christo and Jeanne-Claudes intervention, the Kunsthalle is celebrating its 100th anniversary. Of course. With a retrospective of its most influential curator: Harry Szeemann. Go to see the exhibition!

1968 Harry Szeemann in Bern: this was an unforgettable, a unique moment in the History of Art, worldwide. It was the Szeemann moment.

What does the story of Harald Szeemanns tell us about our city and about our country?

First of all: A small city in a small country like ours is a wonderful place for great minds to grow up and to work. Harald Szeemann was not at all the only extraordinary person to live and work in Bern. Bern was not only the home of many writers and artists such as Paul Klee or Ferdinand Hodler or Friedrich Dürrenmatt, but also the place where Albert Einstein wrote the essay about the Theory of Relativity. Einstein spent his most creative scientific period, his *annus mirabilis* in 1905, in our city. In 1905 he wrote 4 articles within 5 months, each article became world famous. This was another unique, unforgettable moment in the History of sciences and of mankind. The Einstein moment.

The painter Paul Klee was born in the same year, 1879, as Albert Einstein, he started his career in the same moment.

In 1905, both Einstein and Klee lived in Bern. But they did not know of each other. Did they meet? Who knows? I give you a hypothesis. Paul Klee was a painter, but he had no success yet. So he played at the Bern Symphony Orchestra as a violinist, to make some money. Albert Einstein loved music, and it is quite sure, that he went to the Concerts of the Bern Symphony Orchestra. So Einstein probably saw and heard Paul Klee playing the violin. I like this idea of Albert Einstein listening to Paul Klee playing the violin in Bern. Another magic moment in Bern.

Albert Einstein was a Jew from Germany who became a Swiss citizen. Paul Klee was a German, though he was born from Münchenbuchsee near Bern, he lived most of his life in Bern, but he never became a Swiss citizen. Harry Szeemann was of Austrian-Hungarian origin, he was born in Bern and had an international career in his later life.

Xherdan Shaqiri is a Swiss football player, born in Gjilane, Kosovo, he plays for Liverpool, he scored for the Swiss national team in the World Cup in Russia. Granit Xhaka is a Swiss football player, born in Basel, his parents came from Prishtina, Kosovo, he plays for Arsenal London, and he scored for the Swiss national team in the World Cup in Russia.

The most popular Swiss over all today is...

Roger Federer, of course. Is he Swiss? Well, yes. But: He has a double nationality, Switzerland and South Africa, he has got a South African passport, his mother Lynette is South African. His most sympathetic wife is Mirka Vavrinec; Mirka was a Swiss tennis professional, too. She was born in Slovakia and came to Switzerland at the age of 2 years.

You know: This is what I love about my country, this is why I love Switzerland. It is open. It is diverse. It is multi-faceted. We have all this wonderful people here. They provide us many of these magic moments.

You may say: but Alec, you only spoke of men, aren't there any women in history? Yes, of course there are women, but they are less known, maybe apart of Anna Seiler, founder of the Inselspital in 1354. But we will know women in the future. For example, last Monday, the violinist Patricia Kopatchinskaja and the cellist Sol Gabetta played at Menuhinfestival in the church of Zweisimmen a remarkable concert with pieces of 6 composers, and they performed not less than 6 world premieres. A magic moment, indeed! Sol Gabetta is a world famous Swiss cello player from Argentina, with Russian

and French ancestors, she lives in Basel. Patricia Kopatchinskaja is the most famous Swiss violinist, she comes from Chisinau, Moldova, was educated in Vienna and she lives in Bern. From this year she is the head of the Camerata Bern Chamber Orchestra.

We are lucky, there are many magic moments to come!

Last but not least: Suiza non existe? – yes, Switzerland does exist. But it exists in many variations. It is not one Switzerland, Switzerland is 4 languages, many cultures, Switzerland is and will always be a land of immigrants. Its cities, such as Bern, even more so. People from 160 nations live in Bern. You all are part of it.

Bern is very happy to be your home, the home of people from all over the world, with such a wide variety of languages, religions and cultural backgrounds. You make Bern great, again and again, every single day.

In this spirit, a spirit of respect, openness and inclusion, I would like to wish you a very happy 1st August. It is our national holiday and we could not be happier to share our special day with you. Relax and enjoy!

We now will sing our national anthem. But we will sing it in a new version. A new text has been proposed, based on the Swiss Constitution.

It goes like this:

A White cross on red background,

This is our symbol for the Confederation:

Freedom, independence, peace.

Open to the world we live in,

let us strive for justice!

Free is whoever benefits from his freedom,

strong is the people that supports the weak.

A White cross on red background,

This is our symbol for the Swiss Confederation. Thank you!