## The Belgian cartoonist had close ties with Switzerland

Hergé would have celebrated his 100th birthday in 2007, and Swiss Post is taking this opportunity to publish two picture postcards with motifs from "The Calculus Affair", based partly in Switzerland, and the most Swiss of all the Tintin and Snowy books. However, this Helvetic adventure is just the tip of the iceberg: Hergé always felt strongly drawn to Switzerland, which he even described as "Paradise on Earth".



Georges Remi (Hergé) loved the atmosphere of the Lake Geneva region so much that he decided to set "The Calculus Affair" there. Photo: Hergé-Moulinsart 2006–2007

readers of the adventures of Tintin and Snowy would be amazed to find that the editorial team had no scruples about taking liberties with the original: while Hergé's hero in "Le Petit Vingtième" was a Belgian (though this was no longer the case in the later colour editions), here he became "Tintin, the famous Swiss reporter for 'L'Écho illustré'". Despite these adaptations, Hergé remained on good terms with "L'Écho illustré", with the result that this magazine was the only one in the world authorized to publish all the adventures of Tintin and Snowy as they appeared.

## Hergé in Switzerland

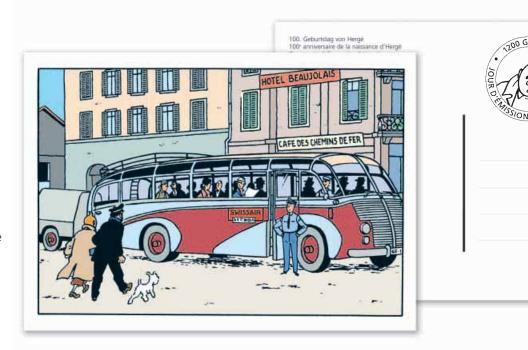
In the mid-1940s, at a time when Hergé was plagued with self doubt, he regularly fled the flat Belgian countryside to seek

recuperation in Ticino, and above all on the shores of Lake Geneva. There, he made friends with local fishermen whom he referred to as "a cheerful gang of hard-drinking, straight-talking fellows". He even thought about settling in Switzerland for good, and although he later abandoned the idea, he was so fond of the atmosphere around Lake Geneva that he decided to set "The Calculus Affair" there several years later. Being a careful planner, he researched the area, hiring the editor-in-chief of "L'Écho illustré", Jean Dupont (the name given to the scatterbrained detective in the French versions of the adventures, known as "Thomson" in the English ones) as a photographer. Later, he planned several times to send

Tintin back to Switzerland – among other

At the age of 15, Georges Remi – who later became famous under the pseudonym "Hergé", (his initials reversed and pronounced in French) – discovered Switzerland on a Scout trip. A talented draughtsman even then, he sketched landmarks such as the Rhine Falls and the Landwasser Viaduct.

The Belgian cartoonist probably recalled that same trip when he received a letter in April 1932 from Abbé Carlier, editorin-chief of "L'Écho illustré", a weekly newspaper produced in French-speaking Switzerland, asking for permission to publish the Tintin adventure which Hergé had drawn three years earlier for the Belgian magazine "Le Petit Vingtième". Hergé was only too delighted to expand his readership and immediately agreed. Were they to leaf through an issue of "L'Écho illustré" from back then, today's





things, he had a whole adventure at an airport in mind - Geneva Airport, of course – but the project was shelved. Jack Rollan even offered Hergé his services for a screenplay to be set in Switzerland. The cartoonist sent him the following humorous reply: "Tintin would love to return to Switzerland, but Snowy is grumbling because he remembers a taxi trip which ended with him in the lake" (a reference to The Calculus Affair), concluding "Your lakes are lovely, but bitterly cold!" Hergé himself had nothing to grumble about and returned to Switzerland almost every year until his death in 1983.

## Haddock swears in Gruyere dialect

So it comes as no surprise that Switzer-land is well represented in the programme of events to mark the 100th anniversary of Hergé's birth (with exhibitions in Paris, Stockholm, Barcelona and even in Quebec). Tintin and his pals are also expected to put in an appearance at the Geneva Book Fair, and in June, Lausanne is planning a Tintin Festival. Above all, Casterman, the Belgian company that first published the work, is planning a translation of "The Calculus Affair" into Gruyere regional dialect, an

initiative inspired by Alpart, a club of French-speaking Tintin fans from Fribourg. In "L'afére Tournesol" (the original title of "The Calculus Affair" in French was "L'affaire Tournesol"), the translator Joseph Comba has tried to reproduce the tone and language of Hergé's original, but this does not mean he hasn't slipped in a few pieces of local colour. For instance, Captain Haddock's famous oath "moule à gaufres" (literally, waffle iron) translates into "fê a brèchi", the dialect term for an iron used for making thin biscuits. And there are other humorous touches, but for the moment the detectives Dupont and Dupond (Thomson and Thompson) are betraying nothing more to us in line with their famous motto -"silent as the grave".

Avid readers of all ages who want to treat themselves to an amusing read, whether or not they understand all the finer points of Gruyere dialect, will have to wait until 22 May 2007, the centenary of Hergé's birth, for the official launch of "L'afére Tournesol" in the Gruyere Regional Museum in Bulle. The background to this unusual book will also be the subject of a Museum exhibit set up by Alpart, featuring the Nyon Fire Brigade Jeep that provided Hergé with his inspiration.

Swiss Post will be issuing a special cancellation with Professor Calculus's picture and the date "Bulle – 22. Mai 2007" well ahead of the launch of "L'afére Tournesol". So it's high time to follow in Tintin's footsteps and help him to keep the promise he made on the first page of his very first adventure "Tintin in the Land of the Soviets": "I'll send you postcards. See you soon!"

Hergé, "L'afére Tournesol", translated into Gruyere dialect by Joseph Comba and published by Casterman (distribution: Alpart), will be out on 22 May 2007 and on sale at the Gruyere Regional Museum, Bulle, and from Alpart (contact alpart@bluewin.ch).



Picture postcards Tintin – 100th anniversary of Hergé's birth

Sales

From 27.4.2007 Post offices: Not available Philatelic salespoints: Until 30.6.2008

Validity Unlimited from 10.5.2007

Printing

Offset Sizes

Card: 148×105 mm Imprinted stamp: 33×28 mm

Paper White offset board, 260 gm<sup>2</sup>

**Designer** Moulinsart, Bruxelles Hergé

First-day cancellation



