

**AAHA = Amicale Alexandrie Hier et Aujourd'hui**

**Yehia Shalash**

# **My Book Project**

**The Swiss Egyptians & The Egyptian Swiss**

**The Theban Legion Story**



**Cahier No 76**

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When **Sandro** invited me to write about the Swiss community in Egypt – which is a subject that was covered many times before in AAHA *cahiers*, I wondered, "What can I add more?"

**Sandro** knows that I am writing a book about the stories of Swiss Egyptians and Egyptian Swiss; there are about 20 books and studies on that same subject that I know of. The earliest I have read is dated 1946 made by **Jean Rene Fiechter** (1894-1981) commemorating the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Journal d'Egypte et du Proche Orient*, the bulletin which **Fiechter** helped founding in Alexandria and was directing till 1955, and the latest is the *Lizenziatsarbeit* of **Anna Regula Meili** from the University of Zurich dated 2009. Most of those works are either autobiographies of Swiss recording their lives in Egypt, or dissertation made for academic purposes, or finally those dedicated for recording lives of Swiss individuals and families in Egypt. My book – I hope – will partly belong to that last category. So in response to **Sandro's** request I decided to write the story of my book.

## The book story

What prompted me to write that book is my personal previous experience with Switzerland. It started since 1953 when my late father came to Zurich to obtain his doctoral degree from the Federal Institute of Technology of Zurich best known as the ETH. We joined him – my mother, younger brother and myself – and lived there till the summer of 1956. I was only three years old when we arrived there but I vividly remember many things, our house, my kindergarten, snow and a couple of visits to the zoo.

As of the summer of 1970, I visited Switzerland every year, and after obtaining my B. Sc. From the Faculty of Science Alexandria University in 1973, I came to Switzerland and stayed for five years till the end of 1978. Later on, in almost all my visits to Europe I used to get my ticket from Swissair so that if my visit was for another country I would still benefit from a stop-over in Zurich.

During those years I had many acquaintances, especially from the previous generation of Egyptian Swiss who came to the country in the mid 1950s and who are referred to as the "Ancient Egyptians". The stories they used to tell about the early years of their presence were simply fascinating; one of my late father's mentors, late **Dr. Hassan Badawy**, who also obtained his Ph. D. from ETH in 1940s, used to come with his beautiful daughters every summer to Zurich, he used to rent a large country house in Glarus where I was often invited. During the cool summer nights, **Dr. Hassan** used to tell me stories about his years in Zurich in the 1940s, WW II encounters, stories of success and many more. Stories that I can now unfortunately not recall, stories that are forever lost with his departure. It is because of many of such memories – **Dr. Badawi's** and others – that I dreamed of, someday, writing this book.

One year after my retirement, and in September of 2013, I was again in Zurich. Standing one night in the garden of my dear friend **Salama's** house along with **Nashar** waiting for the chicken to be slowly barbequed, chatting about good old days and remembering those who passed away; I decided it is about time to write that book.

I started immediately upon my return to Egypt. I wanted to avoid producing a copy of previous works, so I added a few new chapters, short history of Egypt and of Switzerland, development of European and Swiss communities in Egypt, development of Egyptian communities in Switzerland, history of air travel between both countries, the legend of the



Theban Legion and Saint Maurice, the role of the ETH in developing the Faculty of Engineering in Cairo University, the development of diplomatic relations between both countries and many more. That of course along with selected short biographies of the lives of over 20 Swiss Egyptian individuals and families as well as about 10 Egyptian Swiss, a category that was never covered before.

The book project turned to be a fascinating journey. First, I was guided to contact **Sandro Manzoni**, **Sandro** guided me to contact **Claude Lambelet**, and soon I had contacts to follow and sources to explore that

were unknown to me a couple of weeks ago and that kept me very busy for the last year.



I went to Switzerland twice, on April/May and September/October 2014 for further researches and interviews; I was based in Zurich but visited Winterthur, Bern, Solothurn, Zuzach, Schaffhausen and Geneva for calls. I also visited **Saint Maurice** Abbey in Valais twice, and met with dozens of interesting people who all generously contributed to my researches. Needless to say that while in Geneva, **Sandro** was a great host and guide.

## The Swiss Egyptians

The stories of the Swiss Egyptians are well documented, there is no problem in identifying the main names and quickly set up a work plan, the history of the Swiss community development is also well covered by various sources providing details by numbers, professions, locations and even their Swiss origin, and last but not least details of social activities and associations of this active community.

It is estimated that the Europeans living permanently in Egypt reached a peak of 300,000 by mid twentieth century. The Swiss counted at most only 1,600 (some unofficial estimates bring that number to about 3,000), yet this small community was very active compared to much larger European communities in Egypt both within its own members as well as within their host country, Egypt. The Swiss community in Alexandria was particularly praised by the Swiss authorities for being the most active, well organized and self sustained Swiss Community in a foreign country.

It is ironic to know that the Swiss in military uniform were also present in large numbers (about 2,200). They served on one occasion under the French flag during **Napoleon** expedition (1798-1801) and served on two occasions under the British flag; once against **Napoleon** expedition and once against **Mohamed Ali** in 1807. This means that the Swiss fought against each other during **Napoleon's** expedition. Well, yes they did and even more, the negotiation for the surrender of the French **General Menou** to the British army in September of 1801 took place between the Swiss **Lieutenant-Colonel Jots de Durler** from

Luzern representing the British side and the Swiss **Squadron Chief Peyer im Hof** from Schaffhausen representing the French side. Needless to say that those negotiations were held in a courteous sympathetic manner, I would not be surprised if a few *Schwyzerdütsch* words were exchanged. The second Swiss involvement under the British flag was against **Mohamed Ali** marking the last Swiss military involvement outside Switzerland. Finally, 400 Swiss soldiers were part of the European Police formed after the British occupation in 1882. (**Beat de Fisher** *Contributions à la connaissance des relations suisses-égyptiennes d'environ 100 à 1949*).

Going back to the individual and family stories, I was surprised to find many discrepancies between various sources, the most striking of which is the story of **Henri Meyer**. All the sources agree that he is the one nicknamed **Dreck Meyer** who started a manure business in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and was a very active business man and Swiss community member whose last contribution was the donation of his Villa Pax in Embaba west of Cairo for the use of the Swiss community. **Claude Lambelet** guided me to the "1945 Almanach of Neuchatel" which is providing a completely different story. It appears that **Henri** had an elder brother (whose name is not mentioned); this elder brother is the one who first came to Egypt and started the business, the younger brother – **Henri** – joined him later. This elder brother was killed in 1925 and **Henri** took over the business from then on!!

[http://doc.rero.ch/record/12446/files/BPUN\\_QZ617-1945.pdf](http://doc.rero.ch/record/12446/files/BPUN_QZ617-1945.pdf) (Page 96 – very heavy .pdf file)

This is the major discrepancy that I encountered. The source seems to be very reliable and authentic but yet, how could everybody agree on a different story? Did they just copy and paste from each other?

On the other hand, I had the privilege of having many of the short biographies reviewed by the persons concerned themselves. One of the main stories is that of the **Family Reinhart**, this was reviewed and enriched by Mr. **Jurg Reinhart**, Mr. **Christophe Burckhardt** and Mr. **Caspar Reinhart**. Mr. **Caspar** is the son of **Paul Reinhart-Weber** (1903-1992), he was born in Alexandria and raised at his father's Saba Pacha villa – the villa which was later donated to be the Swiss consulate in Alexandria – and witnessed the problems his father had to face before ending four generations of **Reinhart** presence in Egypt. **Paul Reinhart** maintained his Egyptian residence permit till 1973 to follow up on legal issues delaying the settlement of business compensation. The **Reinharts** history was therefore enriched by first hand information correcting many discrepancies found in other sources.

## The Egyptian Swiss

This community characteristic is different from that of the Swiss Egyptians. Egypt was a country which **Mohamed Ali** developed almost from scratch, seven centuries of abusive Mamluks and Othman ruling depleted the country from its wealth and means of development. In 1798, when **Napoleon** landed in Alexandria – which was one day the capital of the world for about six centuries, he found a ruined city counting about 10,000 inhabitants mostly fishermen. On the other hand, by the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, Switzerland was the second most industrialized country in Europe and home for some of the best universities in Europe. 25 Nobel Laureates are associated with the ETH of Zurich and over 1,000 Doctoral students are graduating every year from the various Swiss universities. Egyptian Swiss lived in a much more competitive environment where they had to excel to be distinguished. Many were up to the challenge becoming stars in their new community, but they were stars in a sky full of stars.





The easy and smooth ride I had collecting information about the history of the 1,600 Swiss Egyptians (or 3,000 at best) reaching as far back as 170 years ago, was the opposite of my quest to find information about the Egyptian Swiss community estimated today at 8,000 over a relatively much shorter and recent period.

**King Fouad I's** Royal visit to Switzerland 1929 indicates the presence of around 100 Egyptian students in various universities and schools in Switzerland at the time. A student's association in Lausanne called "**Misr**", had a delegation of about 60 Egyptian students welcoming the King upon his arrival at Bern train station on Wednesday morning the third of July 1929. **Dr. Farag Moussa** was a member of an Egyptian students association established in Geneva 1951 which produced a bi-monthly bulletin under the name of "**Echo du Nil - صدی النيل**", **Dr. Farag** is the Honorary President of "International Federation of Inventors Association", and is today certainly the dean of the Swiss Egyptians. While I was living in Zurich (1973-1978) I witnessed the rebirth of an Egyptian society association named "**Al Rabta - الرابطة**" which was originally established 1958. This association was reactivated following the events of October 6<sup>th</sup> 1973 and I was deeply involved in its activities issuing a bulletin named "**Al Anbaa - الأنباء**" and becoming the association president for two consecutive years.

Unlike the Swiss Egyptians, who have an association established in Alexandria since 1858 and another in Cairo since 1867, surviving in continuity without interruption through all difficulties till today and holding reliable records, the Egyptian Swiss activities seem fragmented and isolated, with lots of void periods and no records to be found to trace its

history or development. My attempt in this area failed to be at the same informative and definitive level as that of the history of the Swiss Egyptians communities.

Even the relatively recent history concerning the efforts of Egyptian Moslems and Egyptian Christians to secure their religious services and needs are not complete. I was lucky to enjoy the first hand information provided by **Dr. Ismail Amin** who was a founder and key player from day one in developing Islamic associations in Zurich and the German speaking part of the country. In 2009, he earned the Order of Merit from the city of Zürich in recognition of his lifelong efforts and contributions.

**Kim Sitzler**, The responsible officer in the Swiss Embassy in Cairo was very helpful in providing information and placing me in contact with other officers of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs in Bern; the emails exchanges are in the dozens and the help and support never stopped. Many other Embassy members including the Swiss Ambassador and the Swiss Consul were very helpful and supportive.

I was able to reconstruct – from various sources and with the help provided by the FDFA officers in Bern – the history of Swiss diplomatic representation in Egypt in a new updated version chronologically arranged which I believe is unmatched by any before.

The ETH library and administration were also very helpful.

## Saint Maurice and the Theban Legion

I vaguely knew the story before, but as I was doing my research for the book, a fountain of history sprang before me and a legend unfolded that was beyond my expectations, I wonder if even the Egyptian Christians are aware of its magnitude and inherent value. Now, let's see if I can squeeze this magnificent story in less than one page.

Egypt and Switzerland were both parts of the Roman Empire beginning 30 BC with the Roman invasion of Egypt and ending 476 AD with the fall of the Western Roman Empire.

The roman army recruited legionnaires from all over the empire; they used to move legions to distant parts to assist in maintaining order and subduing rebels. At the south of Egypt, near Thebes (today Luxor), a roman army legion was stationed consisting of Egyptian Christian soldiers, all recruited from the same area hence known as the **Theban Legion**. The commander of this legion was **Maurice** (or **Mauritius**) born 250 AD. In 286 (or 302 as per some sources), the **Theban Legion** received the order to join the Emperor **Hercules Maximian** (r. 285-305) in Gaul to fight the rebels of Burgundy.

The **Theban Legion** of 6,600 men joined the Emperor at Agaunum in the south west of Switzerland (today Saint Maurice, Valais), and after the revolt was quelled, the Emperor ordered the whole army to participate in a ceremony renewing the oath of allegiance to the Emperor and Roman pagan gods, a ceremony which also included persecution of Christian prisoners. The faithful Theban Christian legionnaires refused to take part in this ceremony, the Emperor surprised by their disobedience ordered the legion to be decimated, that is one of each ten to be randomly selected and executed, the legionnaires, supported by their commander **Maurice**, remained firm behind their choice dictated by their unshaken faith. The decimation was repeated a second time in vain, the furious emperor then ordered the execution of the whole legion.



As some of the legion members were stationed along the road from Liguria and Bergamo, north Italy, to Cologne and Xanten, north Germany, various other stories of martyrdom emerged all the way. These stories – as far as Switzerland is concerned – include the tale of **Saints Felix, Regula and Exuperantius** in Zurich, **Saint Verena** in Solothurn and many others.

In the year 350, the river Rhone flood caused parts of the river banks to collapse revealing mass graves, the bodies were identified by **Bishop Theodore** as those of the **Theban Legion** soldiers based on the testimonies of the inhabitants (second and third generation of actual witnesses to the massacre). **Bishop Theodore** built a basilica in their honor, which in 515 became the centre of a monastery on the land donated by **King Sigismund** of Burgundy.

The above is the most agreed version, however some historians argue that the whole Theban legion story is a fabrication of medieval Church to promote Christianity.

### The Saint Maurice Abbey



The Abbey – built 515 – will celebrate its 15<sup>th</sup> centennial in 2015; the festivities began since September 2014 and last for one whole year in association with the UNESCO.

**HH Pope Tawadros II** visited the Abbey on September 1<sup>st</sup> 2014, where a special service was arranged in his honor, however, absolutely nothing else is on anybody's agenda, be it the Egyptian Government or the Alexandria Church or any other institution public or private.

In all my presentations, private meetings and calls, I always mentioned the subject hoping to raise enough interest for active involvement in this unique opportunity; I sent an article to the "Al Ahram Weekly" Egyptian English newspaper and "Al-Ahram" daily Arabic newspaper, both were never published, I tried to make contacts to raise donations for the Abbey even on a symbolic level with no success.

Well, maybe it's just me not being a good salesman, but I appreciate anybody's contribution in this matter. This is an event where Egypt should play a major role. It comes at a time where Egypt's name is tarnished with fascist movements and mounting aggression against the Coptic community, this is an opportunity to redress that situation let alone develop relations with Switzerland. Pamphlets could be made, documentary films, programs and interviews on TV, articles and many more. Even a parallel celebration can be arranged in Luxor, the origin of the Theban Legion. I am sure that a few dozen professionals in the fields of marketing, advertising, tourism, public relation and others can come up with many more ideas, and after all, let us not forget, they were Faithful Egyptian Christian Soldiers.

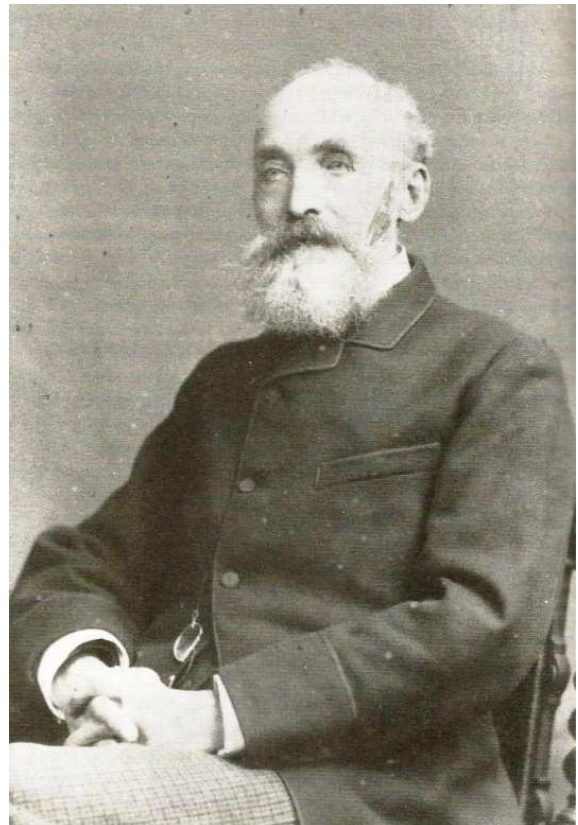
Contact with the Bibliotheca Alexandrina has been established and hopefully steps to bring awareness to the Abbey centennial festivities will follow.

<http://www.abbaye1500.ch/>

### A Few Other Unique Stories and Notes

The book will include many interesting stories. The following are a few examples:

- **John Ludwig Burkhardt (aka Sheikh Ali)** (1784-1817), is the famous explorer who discovered Abu Simble temple (cover) south of Aswan as well as Al Khazna ancient city in Petra, Jordan. His tomb in old Cairo has been lately drawing much attention. The tomb is visited by many, mostly tourists and historians amongst them **Farouk Hosny** the previous Egyptian Minister of Culture. It is easy to reach, the cemetery entrance is right opposite to Bab El Nasr city gate east of Cairo; just ask for **Mabrouk** the caretaker.
- **John Ninnet** (1815-1895) – This man influenced and shaped Egypt's future and ignited the spark for the call of equality, justice and freedom in Egypt along with **Ahmed Orabi**, the same values based on which modern Europe was built a few decades before his time. This man's role and sacrifices are today completely ignored. The continued absence of due acknowledgment and respect to his honorable role is unjustified neither by the Swiss nor by the Egyptians.





**John Ninnet** left Egypt aged 67, penniless, hand cuffed without a trial, placed on a boat headed to Constantinople, travelling on fabricated Egyptian identity papers to face a trial on treason charges. He was the only exception to the capitulation system.

- **Dr. Johannes Schiess Pacha** (1837-1910) was the founder and director of the municipality hospital *El miri* in Alexandria; he was also the vice president of the city's first municipality council. **Dr. Schiess** passed away in 1910, his body was mummified and placed in a 10 tons pink granite sarcophagus as per his request and placed in the hospital yard. In 1962 the sarcophagus was transferred to the yard of the Faculty of Arts.



One morning in April 1992, the mummified body of **Dr. Schiess** was found on the ground while the sarcophagus was missing. The mummified body was reburied in the Protestant cemetery in Chatby, while the stolen 10 tons pink granite sarcophagus was never found again.

- **The ETH and the faculty of Engineering Cairo University** - It was my late father who brought this story to my attention; I asked him one day "Why did the University of Alexandria choose to send you to a German speaking institute for your doctoral degree?" His reply was "It is the ETH of Zürich which helped create and develop both Faculties of Engineering in Cairo and Alexandria Universities in the first place"; in my research, I was amazed to see how little of this story is documented let alone duly recognized. This forgotten story which is detailed in my book (sorry guys, I have to market my book), surprised even professionals.

During the period when the Swiss **Prof. Dr. Charles Andreae** (1874-1964) was the dean of the then Egyptian Royal School of Engineering (1928-1938), he was also the Egyptian government consultant for many projects. One of those projects was the total restoration of the **Mohamed Ali** mosque in Citadel (1931-1936), everything except the minarets and the outer walls was completely rebuilt using reinforced concrete; many Swiss companies were also involved in the project, and the students of the ETH engineering department were engaged in the project as part of their training.

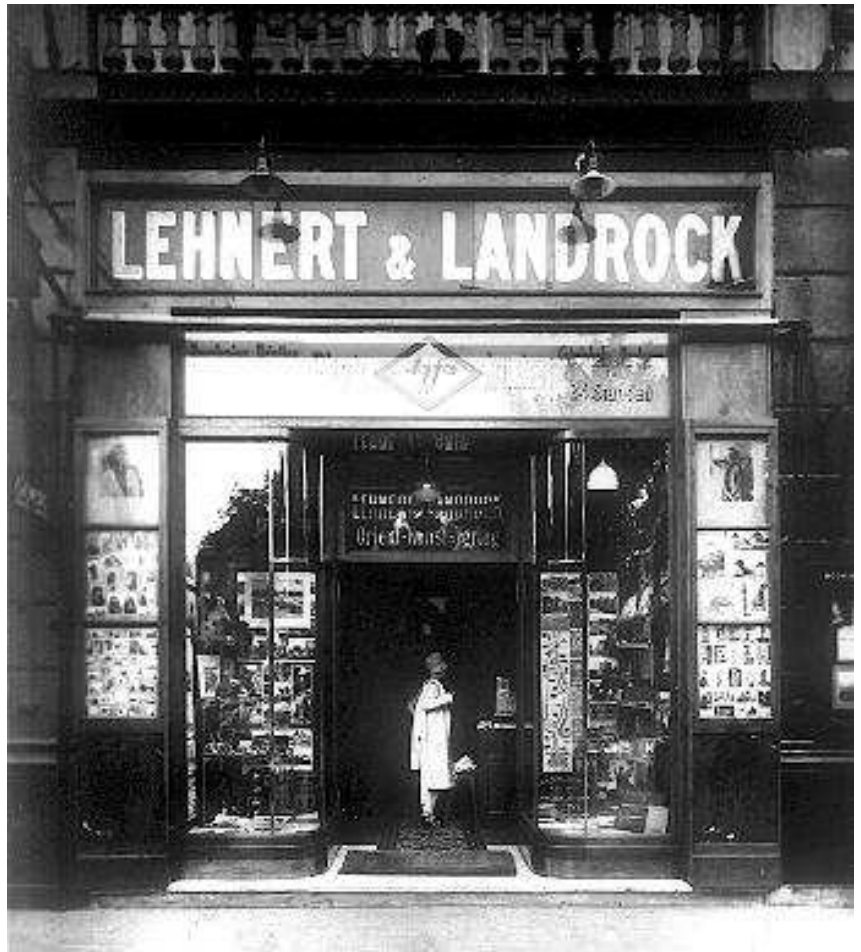


- **Groppi's** first shop was opened 1891 in Alexandria not in Cairo, a second shop also followed in Alexandria as well. The first shop in Cairo was not open till 1909. Both Alexandria shops were later known as "Beaudrot".
- **Rudolph Bless** (1894-1970) and his family were well known for their benevolent acts. After the 1952 revolution, and while renewing the family's residence permit, the officer in charge commented saying "there would have been no need for a revolution if all people followed the example of **Bless** family towards other Egyptians".
- **Dr. Alfred Bircher** (1872-1958) successfully introduced Avocado fruits in his botanic garden; but it was never produced on a commercial scale. Israel introduced Avocado and produced them on a commercial scale as of the 1960s, and is today exporting one third of the European market need.
- **Dr. Warda Bircher** (1905-2006) is a close relative of **Dr. Maximilian Bircher** who developed the famous Bircher Müsli delicious and healthy meal (provided it is *ohne rahm*).
- **The story of the three Meyers** goes back to the friendly regular Swiss compatriots meetings held since the early 1860s, those meetings took place at "Kom Cheikh Salama" Brasserie behind Attaba Market owned by the Swiss **G. A. Meyer** from Solothurn, this group included two more Swiss with the name **Henry Meyer**, a jeweller as well as the future chairman of the Egyptian Manure Co. In order to distinguish them from each other, they were nicknamed **Bier-Meyer**, **Gold-Meyer** and **Dreck-Meyer**.
- **Mango trees** were introduced to Egypt in the early 1870's by the Swiss **Christian Stamm**.
- **Swiss Franc & Egyptian Pound** – in 1930 one Swiss franc was worth 4 piasters; in 1970 One Swiss Franc was worth 20 piasters. Today, 2014, one Swiss Franc is worth



over 800 piasters (or 8 Egyptian Pounds); that is a 200 times appreciation of the Swiss Franc vs. the Egyptian Pound.

- **Lehnert & Landrock** started operations in Egypt 1924. It is the only Swiss establishment operating in continuity for 90 years since the glorious days of the Swiss community in Egypt. The present shop in Sherif Street was opened 1936.



- **Raoul Houriet (1869-1941)** from Chaux de Fonds, Neuchatel, came to Egypt in 1910 to join the Mixed Tribunal of which he later became president and in 1929 joined the Court of Appeal in Alexandria as Counselor till 1937. During his service he supervised the great project of building the new Mixed Tribunal in Cairo which started 1925 and was inaugurated 1934 at the corner of **King Fouad I** and **Queen Nazli** streets (today Ramses and July 26); the new Justice Palace





was equipped with four Schindler elevators, various electrical clocks, telephone central directly connected to the main central and with internal lines. The building was considered one of the best buildings in the world at the time.

Following abolition of Capitulation System as per the Montreux Convention terms in 1937, and expiration of the twelve years transit period, the court house was renamed Higher Court of Justice in 1949.

[http://www.cealex.org/pfe/diffusion/PFEWeb/pfe\\_028/PFE\\_028\\_019\\_w.pdf](http://www.cealex.org/pfe/diffusion/PFEWeb/pfe_028/PFE_028_019_w.pdf) July 27, 2014

- **Swissair** was established 1931 to be the world sixth passenger airline. **Egypt Air** followed next year, 1932 to be the seventh.
- **The Swiss Cemetery** in Cairo was opened 1925 (Malek Saleh metro Station). Half the value of the land was donated by the Egyptian Government. Today over 200 Swiss nationals rest in its confinement, the grave number 13 was however never utilized.
- In memory of **the Royal visit of King Fouad I** of Egypt to Switzerland in 1929, the Swiss community in Egypt decided to present the King with an exceptional gift; the choice made was for a special one of kind pocket astronomic watch produced by Vacheron Constantin – the oldest manufacturer of watches in the world – specially made for the Barcelona International exhibition of 1927.

The V&C watch took three and a half years to make, The Swiss Egyptians community bought it at 8,000 Swiss Francs in gold collected from the community members, a small fortune at the time. The Swiss Egyptians Community additionally charged an old student of the Geneva school of watch-making, for the monitoring and proper functioning of this watch which practically never left the King's vest because it was, by far, his favorite.



To close up the book, I have included some stories of second generation Egyptian Swiss; there are many beautiful stories that demonstrate how nicely integrated the community of Egyptian Swiss is within their new home in Switzerland. They are mostly holding double nationalities but living permanently in Switzerland, their opposite version of Swiss Egyptians living in Egypt today are much fewer in number.

The most recent example of successful second generation Egyptian Swiss is **Kariem Hussein** (1989). **Kariem** is a Swiss track and field athlete. He represented Switzerland in 2012 Olympic Games and recently won the gold medal in the 400m hurdles in the 2014 European Championship held at Zurich Letzigrund stadium on Friday August 15, 2014. Swiss mother, Egyptian father.



The Egyptian Swiss community is very well integrated and blending within the Swiss community, many are distinguished in their careers, and some have initiated associations for mutual cooperation such as "The Egyptian Swiss Cultural Association or *Association Culturelle Egypto-Suisse*" established in Geneva in 2006, and a few others.

Egyptian Swiss are to be proud of and congratulated for their efforts, their duties however has lately multiplied facing the spread of radical fascist movement in Europe which tarnished the name of Islam and Egyptians in general. Over the years, many fundamentalists have infiltrated Europe benefiting from its hospitality and freedom. Their true face soon appeared as they never showed any intention for integration, they simply abused their host's generosity and would rather engage in enforcing their own retarded ways of life, the result of which was apparent in the famous "Ban the Minarets" referendum of November 2009.

No further comment.

**Sandro** insisted that I have to present him with 16 pages; I still have 3 pages left, so I will take the opportunity and introduce **Sandro Manzoni** himself; I believe some of you may not know him well, so it is about time you do. Here is how I presented him in my book:

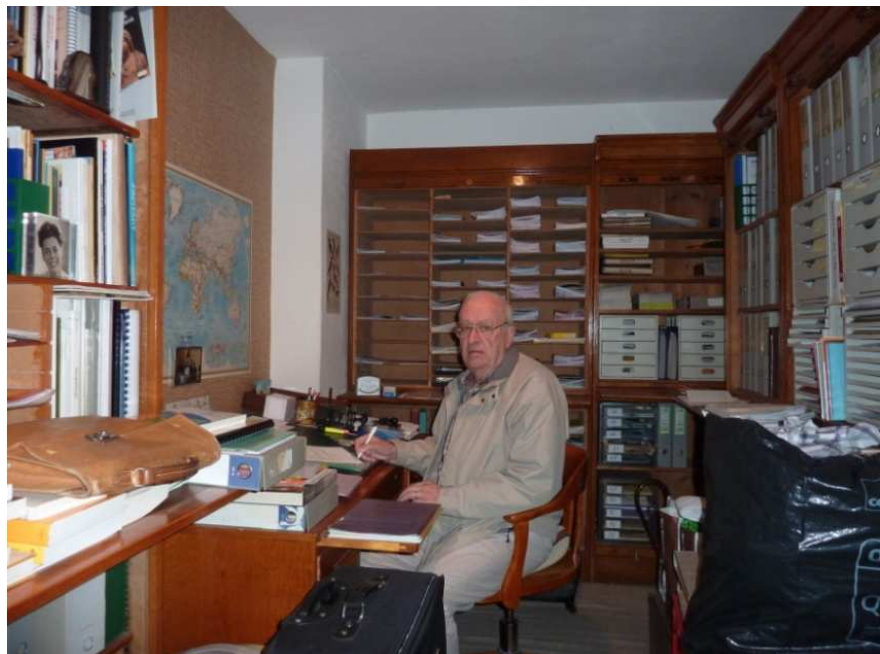
### **Sandro Manzoni (1938)**

When I announced to the Swiss Club members in Alexandria my plans to write this book, the first name that was proposed to help me was **Sandro**, I sent him an email and he immediately answered back; from then on his contribution never stopped.

**Sandro** is a third generation Italian Egyptian, born in Alexandria, son of **Ettore Manzoni** born in Cairo in 1910, son of **Roberto Manzoni** who came from Italy to Egypt around 1900 to work as an engineer at the Lebon Co. in Tantah; **Sandro** joined Lycée Français and in 1957 College Saint Marc graduating 1958, he then left to Italy and continued his studies in Milan becoming an electrical engineer; **Sandro** married the beautiful **Anne-Marrie** in 1967, together they travelled to Canada and later settled in Geneva 1969 were they now reside; they have four children and seven grandchildren.

**Sandro** obtained the Swiss citizenship, Switzerland became his permanent home but Alexandria was always on his mind. **Sandro** had the goodwill and heart to single handedly embark on a voyage to unit old Alexandrians from all over the world; it started 1993 with periodical bulletins under the name of "**Amicale Alexandrie Hier et Aujourd'hui**" or **AAHA** which soon became very famous amongst all ex-Alexandrians and grew into a full time occupation of bulletins, newsletters, reunions, trips to Egypt, web site, and address finder to reunite old friends all over the world through its expanding network; **Sandro** naturally took over the Swiss part of the network.

It is from this small basement room of his apartment in Cologny, Geneva, that **Sandro** spends his time answering emails, collecting information, reviewing books and periodicals, documenting the stories and lives of all communities, professions and individuals who lived in Alexandria and Egypt in general, AAHA data base count today 5,300 names and the newsletter distributes 650 copies; it is thanks to his sincere efforts that many old friends have been reunited and many good stories have been preserved; his benevolent efforts for the needy in Egypt are to be congratulated.



Click on the link below and do not be surprised to hear **Dalida** singing for Alexandria (yes, she was born and raised in Cairo if you did not know); now listen to **Salah Jaheen** words



and if you are an "old Alexandrian" living abroad, I bet you will soon have tears in your eyes. Thank you dear **Sandro**. <http://www.aaha.ch/>

## The book

My book – which will be in English language – is soon to be printed; I am still chasing some details, missing names and dates, discrepancies between sources, the major discrepancy remains to be the story of **Henri Meyer** which will be clearly highlighted. I hope my book will be ready by early 2015.

I know nothing about publishing or distributing books. I hope I did not violate any copyright laws. I wish my book will also be available in Switzerland, I failed to secure any sponsorship but, miracles can happen. I will just have to take it one step at the time.

I have created a special email address for my book project

[egyptswiss@hotmail.com](mailto:egyptswiss@hotmail.com)

Please feel free to contact me if you have any comment or wish to share something that will enrich the subject of the book (a photo or a forgotten nice story), or if you wish to arrange for a presentation.

I made several presentations of my work. In Alexandria at the "Tehouty Cultural Society", the "Atelier", the "Egyptian Society for Spiritual Studies" and "Jesuit Cultural Center", and once in Cairo for the "Swiss Egyptian Business Association" which was attended by the Swiss Ambassador. They were all well received, which made me very happy, I do not really care if I sell a few hundred copies or more, I just wish I can recover my expenses, and I wish I can raise enough attention for active Egyptian participation in the Saint Maurice Abbey 15<sup>th</sup> centennial festivities.

Most of all, I hope I did justice in honoring the names mentioned and helped preserve their contributions, some of those names did – in a way or another – influence my life and the lives of many others. I realized a dream that chased me from time to time. At the end, this book project gave me lovely new friends, taught me a lot about both Egypt and Switzerland, and filled my life with joy for over a year for which I am very grateful.

(p.s. Sorry **Sandro**, even with your short biography I still did not make it to 16 pages. Just put some commercials and wrap it up please.)