

# 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-Moulinart 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, editor-in-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



