

# Communications of the Secretariat of the Swiss abroad

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# Communications of the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad



## Good News

Both Federal Chambres – the National Council and the Council of States – have passed the federal law on the political rights of the Swiss abroad. This law provides the latter with the possibility to participate, while staying in Switzerland, in national votes and federal elections, as well as to sign petitions for federal initiatives and referenda.

According to article 89 of the Constitution, the new law is now submitted to a three months delay, expiring on March 29th, 1976.

If the referendum is not demanded until that date, the Federal Council will have to determine when it shall take effect and make provisions for enforcing it.

We look forward to giving you details, in due time, about the law and its application.

## Assembly of the Swiss Abroad 1976

The 54th Assembly of the Swiss abroad will take place in the beautiful town of Morat in the Canton of Fribourg. The main theme will be «Educating young Swiss from abroad in Switzerland».

We are looking forward to welcoming you on 27th, 28th and 29th August at Morat. The detailed programme and application form will be published on our June number.

## Book Review

### «La Cathédrale de Lausanne»

This work enables the reader to find out all about the archaeological and historical details of this astonishing architectural masterpiece. The book has 300 pages, 322 illustrations, of which 16 are in colour and 4 on folding prospect. Issued by the Society for History and Art in Switzerland. Published by Payot SA.

Price: Fr. 69.— (In French only)

## MUBA 1976 (Swiss Industries Fair in Basle)

A well-established tradition: The gathering of Swiss from abroad at the Industries Fair in Basle. We hope to see large numbers of compatriots from outside Switzerland. This year, Friday,

### 30th April 1976

has been reserved. We invite you to return your application on the slip below to the Secretariat of the

Swiss abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, CH-3000 Berne 16, not later than 9th April 1976, so that we can let you have details regarding the meeting, as well as to reserve admission tickets which you will receive free of charge. The communal luncheon will be charged to individual participants.



**Yes and no**

**Courier of the  
the Solidarity Fund**

No to war and dire need,  
Yes to Solifund with speed

### Application Form

MUBA 1976

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Christian names \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Number of admission tickets required \_\_\_\_\_

Number of people taking part at the luncheon. \_\_\_\_\_

Date and signature \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Communications of the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad



(Swiss Postbus Service, continuation)

garages also maintain the 9,000-odd motor vehicles used by the postal and telecommunications services.

The structure of the Postbus service shows a rather unfavourable picture, with the network including a great many short routes and commuters marking up half the users but accounting for only 20 per cent of total earnings. Party travel is far more remunerative (5 per cent of the passengers provide 20 per cent of the revenue). The remaining 60 per cent of the operating income is from individual travel. Except on routes warranting the use of special mail vans, the Postbus normally carries mail as well as passengers, luggage and goods.

While the Postbus route length has remained practically the same for the last ten years, the improvement of timetables has received particular attention. Between 1964 and 1974 the number of kilometres travelled rose by 48 per cent to 38,4 million, and the number of passengers even increased by 57 per cent to 52,9 million.

Foreign visitors tend to be impressed by the smooth interconnections between rail and road in the Swiss public transport system. Cooperation among the different carriers is indeed excellent, with regard to both timetables and ticket issue.

Unfortunately, the financial results of Postbus operation are far from satisfactory. The years 1974 and 1975 each saw deficits of nearly

50 million francs. The figures shown in the Postbus accounts are not directly comparable with those of other transport organizations, as they are not based on the same principles of calculation. The Postbus service relies on absorption costing, taking into account, among other factors, depreciation and interest on the capital invested (in line with real market conditions). Unlike other carriers, the Postbus does not include in its accounts any credit entries for services rendered in the public interest, work performed for Gov-

ernment departments, or losses arising from fare reductions allowed for policy reasons.

Thanks to constant improvements over a number of years the Postbus service has attained in the areas covered – more particularly in tourist regions – an economic importance comparable to that of the railways. It has stimulated tourism, and the services rendered by the PTT through its Postbus operations may well be said to offset the deficit arrived at by cost accounting.

## Summer Camp 1976

«Valais». This word which in the first place denotes a Swiss Canton, is at the same time a synonym for sun, mountains and holidays. That is where our next summer camp will take place. At first, we shall ramble through a part of the Valais along its slopes, and then in the second half we shall relax in a holiday home and alternate visits with excursions.

Provisional dates of the camp:  
20.7.–6.8.1976

If you are interested in taking part and would like to have more details, please write to the following address: Secretariat of the Swiss abroad, Youth Service, Alpenstrasse 26, CH-3000 Berne 16.

## Books

### «Zirkus Knie»

This book, published by Marguerat SA, was compiled in cooperation with the Knie Family, a writer, a journalist, a professor, as well as the Circus Knie Press Service. It begins with a short story by C.-F. Ramuz «The Circus», followed by the family history of the Knies, various interviews and an essay on animal training.

Language: French-German. Format 28x28 cm, linen cover with coloured jacket, 160 pages richly illustrated with coloured and black and white photos. Price: Fr.48.—

### «Merveilleuse Notre Dame de Lausanne»

#### Burgundian Cathedral

A new publication on the 700th anniversary of the Cathedral in Lausanne. The volume is comprised of text and more than 150 engravings and drawings, of which 60 are in colour and 25 in black and white, drawn by Henri Stierli and Michèle Duperrex. Published by Payot SA. Price: Fr.96.—  
Luxury edition with gilt edges Fr.112.— (In French only)



**Yes and no**

**Courier of the Solidarity Fund**

The no to mishap and to risk  
Means yes to Soli-savings brisk



## The Canton of Solothurn

### Biographical notes on Albin Fringeli

Albin Fringeli was born in 1899. For many years, he was a teacher at Nunningen (Solothurn). For over 50 years, he has published the annual «Dr Schwarzbuebe». He is the author of lyric poetry and prose, above all in the vernacular of the «Schwarzbubenland» (Solothurn Jura). He wrote the festival pageant of the Canton of Solothurn performed at the Swiss National Exhibition in Lausanne in 1964. He was awarded the Johann Peter Hebel Prize in 1961. He has an honorary doctorate in philosophy from the University of Basle.

The Canton of Solothurn is full of surprises; Whoever doubts this fact, should ask a number of men and women at random and find out what sort of mental image they have when they hear the name «Solothurn». A woman from South Tirol may answer quite spontaneously: «That is a district in the Jura, hilly like my homeland.» Her escort does not think of a state in the first place, but of a town: «Solothurn? I can see the clumsy Basle gateway, the mighty rampart and behind it the beautiful Church of St. Ursus.» And next: «Solothurn – the most bizarre state structure one can possibly imagine.» Yes, such an answer, too, we have to accept. The educated will probably use more refined language and say: «That state is devoid of any geographical logic!» The industrious pupil of yesteryear remembers his teacher who taught him that one needs a good 12 hours to get from the furthest point of the Canton on the Bucheggberg to the boundary of the Leimental. To follow the river Aar from Grenchen to Schoenenwerd would take 10 hours on foot. But if one puts someone on a seemingly remote spot anywhere in the Canton of Solothurn, he would be able to leave Solothurn soil within an hour. No need even to hurry, in order to get from the out-of-the-way corner to the Bernbiet, Basel-land or even the Alsace. Three en-

claves, too, the poor pupils will have to memorise: Steinhof, Kleinluetzel and the Leimental. The Solothurn people of the Middle Ages, hungry for land as they were, were hindered again and again by their neighbours from giving their state a reasonable and natural geographical form. Occasionally, they had penetrated into the region of the Prince Bishop of Basle, had occupied the townlet of Laufen, beleaguered the stronghold of Muenchenstein, had carefully moved forward across the narrow boundaries, and finally had to return again to the Aar, leaving behind the much coveted land beyond the Jura chains. Especially after the religious wars in the 16th century, the Solothurn people as Catholics, had to be most careful not to provoke serious conflicts with their Protestant confederates from Berne and Basle. And so the Canton looks like a poor, plucked bird on the map: Kienberg, immediately above the Fricktal, forms the beak. The trunk between Grenchen and Schoenenwerd has

a hole, the Bernese Bipperamt, as if a nasty animal had bitten a fat piece off the back of the persecuted bird. In the year 1415, the people of Solothurn went on the march to conquer the Aargau together with their neighbours from Berne. For half a century, they administered jointly the Bipperamt and the Gaeu. Two masters? One came to an agreement to share the cake amicably. Berne retained the Bipperamt, whilst Solothurn was allowed to keep the Gaeu as its property. Thus, if a man from Solothurn wanted to ride on an even road from his capital in the direction of the Aargau, he had to pass through the sovereign territory of Berne. Only someone who does not mind the fatiguing way across the heights of the Jura, can cross the Canton of Solothurn without trespassing into «foreign» soil. A Jura Canton? Yes, but we must not forget that one-third of this state reaches right out into the Swiss midlands. A wide valley bottom. The Aar Valley with several tributaries which lead behind

Olten at the bank of the Aar river

(SNT0)





# Communications of the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad



the Jura chains. Coming from Zurich or Berne, one believes that the blue Jura escarpment facing one, calls out: «Thus far and no further!»

Jeremias Gotthelf in his «Annebaebi Jowaeger» says about the beloved blue mountain extending behind a beautifully irrigated narrow valley: On the Weissenstein which nearly reaches up to the skies, there were many woods and pastures on it, but as Annebaebi Jowaeger thought, there was also some land; but nobody would think of it unless they had seen it themselves. That is the Jura mountain range densely wooded. Nowadays we only call one of the approximately 12 ranges «the Blue one». Roughly 55 km of the nearly 400 km-long Jura mountain range as such lie in the Canton of Solothurn. The Canton also has a share of the Jura plateau. That is the case in the changeable part between the Hohe Winde (1204 m) and the Baselbiet, as well as in the Schwarzbubenland. Contrasts and peculiarities developed on the sunny and dry heights of the Jura and in the parallel and lateral valleys. Since the various Chambers used to serve under many noble families and monasteries and formed, so to speak, individual, well-defined little states, a multitude of cultural differences thrived in rather confined space. The diverse nature of the soil has become the inhabitants' fate. The Canton of Solothurn does not speak an uniform Alemannic dialect. The vernacular of the Aargau and Berne got entwined with the inherited language. The dialects of the Schwarzbubenland have been

influenced by the sounds from the Baselbiet and even from the Alsace. The freedom of the industrial age and certain fashionable crazes, too, deprived the language of the Canton of Solothurn of its very own idiom. But what has remained is the mass of rock rising to the skies, with recesses in the chalk face, which used to be sought after in former times by falcons which made their nests there. There still are the wild, romantic small gulleies, as well as the gentle river valleys of the Bucheggberg which invites us to linger in this intimate, self-contained farming countryside. The other farming district, Gaeu of Solothurn, has changed its face in but a few years. Factories, business houses and modern dwelling blocks have risen on the fields. The construction of the national road has attracted greedy people like a mighty magnet. The Gaeu of many legends and customs lives on in the memory of few people only. Some writers and historians have preserved the past of this wide plain between Oensingen and Olten for posterity. The river Duenen with its many bends, flanked by native willow trees, can no longer overflow. It has been «corrected». It is with nostalgia that one talks about old times, but also with pride about the present which has allowed so much progress.

«Mir Luetli uf em Baerg deheim...» (We the people at home on the mountain...) Josef Reinhart sings in one of his songs. Gone! Once upon a time one could hear from the top of the Jura heights the shepherd songs by the blind singer Alois Glutz: «Goeh mer zu de



Clock-Tower in Solothurn

(SNTÖ)

Chuehne use...» Gone! The young people no longer go up to their cows on the pastures early in the morning. They ride to the factory. They earn much money and have a fine house built, equipped like flats in town. An enormous, almost frightening change has intruded like a howling whirlwind into the villages, and all within a few decades, in order to shake up all tradition, waiting to see how the battle between things handed down and new notions would end.

Once a typical farming country, today it is the Canton most blessed with industrial undertakings in Switzerland! Already in the Middle Ages, it was a countryside with enterprising inhabitants endeavouring tenaciously to extend their sovereign land in all directions. Their penetration towards the midlands was halted by the Bernese after a short time. The districts of Bucheggberg and Kriegstetten, the Wasseramt, remained as spoils. Upstream along the Aar, on the Leberberg, the Solothurn people gained a footing towards Grenchen already in the 14th century. Downstream, the fertile Gaeu and the town of Olten, subject to the Bishop of Basle,



**Yes and no**

**Courier of the Solidarity Fund**

No, sure, it's never too late in the day  
To solidarity you must say aye

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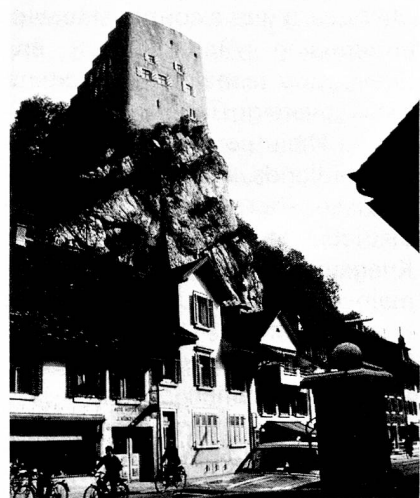
and the Niederamt beckoned. Down there, the Bernese had been masters since 1415 when the Aargau was conquered. The Solothurn people tried it in the Muenstertal and those hidden corners where worried barons watched from their cold castles how the towns turned independent and became wealthy patrons and at the same time new regents. From 1485, the people of Solothurn were successful in gaining a foothold in the Birs Valley. In 1515 they managed to buy the fertile sovereign territory of Rotberg, including the place of pilgrimage at Mariastein. An agreement with the Bishop of Basle ensured their possession of Kleinlützel, Baerschwil and Himmelried. Long negotiations preceded the acquisition of the country of Thierstein and the sovereign territory of Gilgenberg. Only their wish to procure the Birs Valley, important line of communication, remained unfulfilled.

The inclination and aspiration of the Solothurn people did not end in the struggle to enlarge their territory. Solothurn was the town of the martyrs Urs and Victor, and thus its inhabitants have felt obliged to uphold the past. The «Zeitglockenturm» still today proclaims

to every stranger that only one more town North of the Alps is as ancient as Solothurn. One talks about «Sister Trier».

The town with its monasteries, fountains, churches and chapels, its bulwarks built for eternity, has again and again received great praise from natives and strangers alike. The majestic front of the Church of St. Ursus, close to the impressive «Crown» Hotel, stimulated the North-German lyrics writer Wilhelm Lehmann to compose moving poetry which lets us experience the past and the present as a harmonious unity. Gott-helf, Spitteler, Romain Rolland and Josef Reinhart never tired of searching again and again for treasures in the small town and to present them to the reader. Painters followed the course of the Verenenbach to find the hermitage and the Wengistein. Romantic aspects everywhere. One admits in secret that one is fascinated far more by this evidence of past times than by the imposing factories and high-rise buildings in the surroundings. The old palaces still remind us of the gracious masters and chiefs. Before the French Revolution, they collected gold pieces as servants of kings to build their castle-like dwellings and to fill them with suitable furniture, carpets and pictures. Solothurn is a work of art – certainly, just like many other beautiful old Swiss towns. One says that the Jura is poor and sterile. Never! A drive through the Jura lets us forget perhaps that the Alps arrest our eyes rather unduly, and that those wonders falsify our ordinary standards. The Jura is a country of castles. The coat of arms of their former owners have been preserved into the democratic age as district and commune crests. One does not look upon these old homes of the former nobility as anything ignominious, but preserves them as documents of a great past.

The 13th century castle of Alt-Falkenstein (SNTG)



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Balsthal, protected by castles, where the roads cross from East and West, from South and North; the railway junction of Olten, for centuries a fortified town; in the Gaeu the national road junction; In the North of the Hohe Winde and the Passwang the openings leading to the French-speaking part of Switzerland, to the Alsace and to the cultural and economic centre of Basle: on all these paths, they walked, rode and travelled, the Celtic Rauracher and Helvetians, then the Romans and after them the Alemans. Some came from the South, others from the North. The spade of historic research unearthes evidence of those past times to the light of day. But there are also the caves in the limestone range used to serve as dwelling places thousands of years ago.

The Canton of Solothurn does not lack large and beautiful volumes about the old town on the Aar, nor historic documents, pamphlets and leaflets. Many an author feels the urge and ambition to strike up a hymn of praise and to extol the beauties of his homeland in yet a new manner. History provides much stimulation. The last battle in the Swabian war was decisive for the independence of the Confederation as a state; that battle was fought at Dornach on 22nd July 1499. On 22nd December 1481, Brother Klaus mediated between the fighting Confederates and brought about the admission of Fribourg and Solothurn to the Confederation. Benevolent Solothurn still today reveres Mayer Niklaus Wengi, especially in politically overheated times, because he stood in front of the gun so that brother would not shoot at brother. Wengi spirit, Wengi town. But one also remembers other great sons of Solothurn, the painter Urs Graf, Frank Buchser, Cuno Amiet; the musicians Hans Huber, Edmund Wyss, Richard Flury, Albert Jenny and Ernst Kunz; the scholars Franz

## A few figures

Surface area:	790,6 km <sup>2</sup>
Population:	229,600 inhabitants for 131 communes (36,477 in the town of Solothurn)
Denomination:	83,633 Protestants 132,370 Roman Catholics 3,869 other religions
Language:	German
Agricultural estates:	2,209
Tourism:	132 hotels (2,369 beds)
Industrial undertakings:	499 (45,696 employees)
Limited companies:	1,058
Net of roads:	2,344 km
Total of engine-vehicles:	60,505

Pfeiffer, Amanz Gressly, Walter von Wartburg, Werner Munzinger-Pascha. Many a warrior who once fought on the passionate platform of politics has been forgotten. Some names live on: Josev Munzinger, the first Solothurn representative on the Federal Council, Federal Councillors Hammer, Obrecht, Stampfli and now Ritschard. Commemorative publications see to it that the people of Solothurn no longer have to leave the Canton's boundaries in order to earn their daily bread. Ludwig von Roll pioneered Solothurn's industry and became the founder of the ironworks. It is due to the watches of Grenchen that the modest village developed into a town. Much of the wit and humour of the French-speaking parts has penetrated Grenchen, and one now speaks of an independent and enlightened Grenchen spirit. In

1830 the democratic spirit of Olten brought about the surrender to the people of power held by the well-established rulers. It was assisted by sparks from the Schwarzbubenland and the Lederberg.

As diverse as its history, is the view of the Canton seen from the air. The Hasenmatt, the highest point, is at 1444 m, whilst Dornachbrugg lies a mere 297 m above sea-level. How much variety in between! A wealth of stimulus and ideas for the planners whose task it is to work out the regional policy for Solothurn, to achieve things both with the heart and the reason. Anyone not satisfied with looking at the description of a landscape merely from the point of view of dry statistics, runs into the danger of locking only at praiseworthy and original characteristics. In the dramatic representation of the 18th century, the magnanimity and harmonising sense of the people of Solothurn were extolled. But we are aware that magnanimity occasionally derived from a shrewd sense of calculation! In the Solothurn Pageant for the EXPO 1964, I tried to crystallise what is typical. «Solothurnerland, Land of boundaries. Land of the golden middle. Land of passage. Deeply rooted in the native soil. Unquenchable urge to find new worlds. We look at the course of time. We look to eternity... what remains for all times are benevolence and humanity.» A.F.

*In co-operation with Pro Helvetia*



## Information

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