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Baba Maggi – the doctor of the tropical forest

It all began over 36 years ago ...

Almost a fairy-tale.

Giuseppe Maggi was the son of an engineer who taught him a different handicraft or trade every summer holiday; after a happy childhood in the Ticino and effortless studies in Lausanne and Paris, as well as a few years of practical work in the Canton of Neuchâtel and the Ticino, Maggi suddenly felt the call to go to Africa – as he confessed later, he wanted to see the Kilimandjaro.

Thus he has been in Tanganyika since 1948 as doctor and director of a hospital in the service of the Mission of White Brethren. He got to know the black continent and above all its inhabitants, and this became quite a passion. He also had to face all kinds of sicknesses, those from Europe as well as tropical diseases.

Quick action became vital. There was only one thing that mattered to him: to keep thousands of



people from a dark and certain death. In 1952, he left Tanganyika and went to the Cameroons. There, in the heart of the tropical forest, near Duala, he started work of which nobody ever heard. He built a hospital with his own hands, the first of a long row. In fact, no sooner had he finished one and made it operational, he handed it over to the

local diocese and moved on. Year by year he went on, further north, in stages of 150–200 km, and everywhere he left new hospitals and emergency stations. After St. André it was Omwan in 1956, next Tokombéré in 1959. He might possibly have remained there were it not for a hard blow fate dealt him which later turned out to be a bit of luck for him – a big fire destroyed his work, his house, everything except his glasses!

This dramatic night meant a turning-point in the life of Giuseppe Maggi. The news of the fire spread throughout Europe and also to Switzerland. Several charitable organizations got involved and collected money. Dr. Maggi rebuilt the hospital of Tokombéré, better than before. Since then he has not been alone, his name became known and he knew that help was there for him.

This encouraged him, and he once again started out for the north. In the village of Petté he began a fourth hospital. When it was completed, he gave the keys to Anna Maria Schoenenberger, a Lausanne doctor.

Baba Maggi as many natives call him familiarly, has a new idea, to continue his way to Zinah, the beautiful village in the middle of the savannah. He discovered it one night due to a puncture on his jeep. It is already 11 years now since the hospital there became operational.

A sixth hospital, the last in the row, was opened at Mada-Masaki in 1982, for Dr. Maggi could not be prevented from moving on his way. And he not only treats the sick, but does everything in his power to make sure that the fight will be carried on after his departure.

He is general practitioner and specialist all in one, surgeon, children's doctor, dentist, physiologist, but also an architect, and he knows everything about mechanics, he can picture a building-site in all details, and all this is by no means the end of the list.

On 3rd March 1985, Dr. Maggi will celebrate his 75th birthday and complete 40 years in the service of mankind.

Our best wishes on your birthday, Dr. Maggi, and many thanks! I. F.



has ceased trading

A man in the service of the Swiss abroad



Q: Dr Schuerch, you, like few others, are attached to the work of the Organization of Swiss Abroad. You started your professional career as a young lawyer at the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad, on the staff and as member of various committees from 1934 to 1941. From 1943 onward you belonged to the Commission of the Swiss Abroad,

which you presided over from 1959–1966. What led you to this «vocation»? How did you get involved with the problems of «Fifth Switzerland»?

A: As newly graduated lawyer, 24 years old, I was looking for a job as many other lawyers had to at that time. The Confederation reduced pay at a time of deflation, whilst the Secretariat of the Swiss abroad paid me Fr. 600.– a month, which enabled me to marry my fiancée.

Yet the problems of the Swiss abroad were not entirely unknown to me, for my father had chaired the Commission of the Swiss Abroad for a number of years. In addition, a period abroad at the age of 19 allowed me to get acquainted at first hand with the problems which I later had to face.

Gerhart Schuerch

Born on 23rd March 1910, in Bienne
Lawyer, Dr iur.

1934–1940	On the staff of the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad
1943–1984	Member of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad
1949–1953	Central President of the New Helvetic Society
1959–1966	President of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad
1941–1944	Minors' Counsel of the Bernese Oberland
1947–1948	Delegate of the Schweizerspende/Don Suisse
1962–1975	Finance Director of the Municipality of Berne
1962–1971	Member of the Berne Grand Council
1968	Head of mission of the International Committee of the Red Cross in the Civil War in Nigeria (Biafra).
1971–1979	National Councillor
1976–1980	Delegate to the Council of Europe

In the army, he was Colonel on the General Staff and commanded a mountain infantry regiment.

At the Assembly of Swiss Abroad in Basle in May 1984, Dr. Schuerch gave his resignation as member of the Commission. We should like to express our thanks for his devoted work and are sure to do this in the name of all Swiss compatriots abroad, for they were able to benefit for many years from his work in their interest.