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Foundation of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad

## Fifth Switzerland becomes stronger

*The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) has made itself independent and has obtained new statutes. To mark this occasion a celebratory meeting was held in Berne on 4 March 1989 by the Council of the Swiss Abroad, the 'Parliament of the Fifth Switzerland'. The meeting was attended by Federal Councillor René Felber and NHS Central President Roger Ballmer. The central point of the new statutes: The OSA, which has been a part of the New Helvetic Society (NHS) since its foundation during the First World War, now is an independent legal entity and thus has a clear and improved organisational value.*

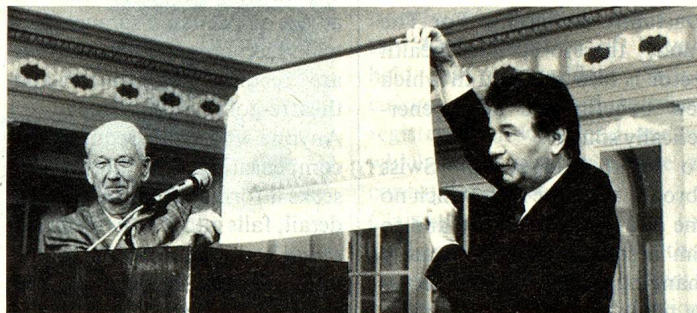
The Spring Session of the 'Parliament of the Fifth Switzerland' had an historical character this year. The delegates coming from all corners of the world convened under the old legal conditions for the last time on Friday 3 March 1989, to deal with pending business. Festivity was then the order of the day on Saturday morning. The Council of the Swiss Abroad assembled in the Hotel Bellevue-Palace in Berne to celebrate the creation of the Foundation of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad,



*New Foundation: new logo.*

which was accompanied by music. The importance of the event was underlined by the presence of the Head of the Department of Foreign Affairs, of many personalities from public life as well as by the presence of the press, radio and television.

The NHS, which has been responsible for the OSA until this date, released its 'daughter' with this ceremony and gave her her independence, being its sole founder. The NHS and OSA remain closely linked. The aim of the revision work, which was undertaken with the full agreement of all parties, was to grant the OSA more organisational independence and to make it



*A beaming OSA President (left) presents Federal Councillor René Felber with a lithograph of the Place of the Swiss Abroad*

possible, amongst other things, for the Organisation to handle its own legal affairs.

### Council of the Swiss Abroad

The structure of the OSA remains virtually unchanged. It has for decades been the recognised negotiating partner of the Swiss Authorities in all questions concerning the Swiss abroad. It will continue to be supported by the Swiss Societies and Institutions abroad which number around 700. The main organ remains the Council of

the Swiss Abroad (formerly: Commission of the Swiss Abroad) which has about one hundred members. The Council's role as the 'Parliament of the Fifth Switzerland' will become stronger. The foreign representatives will in future automatically be in the majority on the Council. The Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad will, as before, act as the headquarters and working body of the OSA. As is well known, the Secretariat offers numerous services for nationals abroad.



*Foundation inauguration in a ceremonial setting. OSA-President Hofer; SSA-Director Wyder; OSA-Vice President and National Councillor Cevey; OSA-Honorary President Guisan; NHS-President Ballmer; Ilse Frei, Delegate from Belgium (first line, from left to right). (Photos: SSA)*

### Felber: 'Appropriate legal form'

Professor Walther Hofer referred to the meaning of the reorganisation in his speech. He has been the President of the OSA since 1983, and is also the President of the newly formed Foundation. He stated that the OSA is moving into a new phase 'in which the idea of a "Fifth Switzerland" which spans the world will be put in more concrete terms. The great importance which our compatriots living abroad have for our land, must also find recognition in a strong Organisation.'

Federal Councillor Felber stated in his speech that 'we are following the welcome development of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad with great interest and are delighted that it has now attained its appropriate legal form.' As a sort of celebration present, Felber promised the introduction of the postal vote 'by 1992 at the latest' - this being something for which the OSA has been fighting for years. JM

### The SSA grows: AJAS in Berne

An additional service is now offered by the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad. The 'Association for the Promotion of the Training of Young Swiss Abroad' - formerly known as 'Association for the Training of Young Swiss Abroad', is to open its offices from July 1, 1989 in the Alpenstrasse in Berne. The AJAS which has until now been an affiliation of the Pro Juventute in Zürich informs and advises on matters concerning career training in Switzerland. It also arranges training grants and supports young people during their training period in Switzerland. Ursula Naegeli is the Manageress.

**Address: AJAS, Alpenstrasse 26, 3000 Berne 16,  
Telephone: 031 446625**