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67th Congress of the Swiss Abroad, Locarno (25th – 27th August 1989)

Media as a link to home

This year's congress of the Swiss abroad should enter into the archives of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad as one of its most spectacular meetings ever. Present and future developments in the media world were presented to conference participants from a technically sophisticated studio on the stage, complete with large screen. Swiss Radio International (SRI) and Radiotelevisione della Svizzera Italiana were responsible for organisation at the full assembly held in the Palazzetto Fevi, while Ticino television announcer Marco Cameroni moderated the session.

The links of Swiss living abroad, both to their home country as well as to the country in which they are living are bound to be influenced by the immense growth in the amount of information available, particularly in the electronic media. New challenges will result from the introduction in the near future of postal voting rights for the Swiss living abroad. These factors prompted the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad to choose as its topic for the full assembly at this year's congress, "The Fifth Switzerland in the Media Environment of the Future."

SRI manager Joël Curchod gave his assurance that even in the modern media environment the SRI would continue to take special account of the needs of the Swiss abroad. Unfortunately there are technical limitations to this objective at present, as many Swiss living abroad know only too well, and the PTT specialist drew particular attention to the bad reception of short wave programmes in many parts of the world. The project whereby short wave programmes could be received inde-



Media Congress in the television studio. (Photos: SSA)

pendent of the efforts of foreign countries could not be carried out before the mid nineties, he said. SRG general manager Riva reminded participants of Swiss Radio's 'satellite policy' and its decision to participate in a number of international satellite programmes.

Numerous requests

A great many ideas and requests resulted from a podium discussion in which information and media specialists and speakers from the floor participated, as

well as Swiss abroad who entered into the discussion by means of video play-in. One idea was that the Swiss Review should be produced as a monthly magazine. Another participant wanted subsidies on the high dispatch costs for Swiss magazines going abroad to be looked into. A Swiss living in Nairobi suggested the setting up of a facsimile subscription service run by the SRI to disseminate a page of daily headlines and short news items from Switzerland. A speaker

Quick reaction

Just a few days after the Congress of the Swiss Abroad ended, the Federal Council reacted very promptly to certain matters discussed in Locarno. It has commissioned the Federal Chancellery and the Federal Department for Foreign Affairs to examine, together with the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad and Swiss Radio International, how the "Fifth Switzerland" could better and more continuously be kept informed about political happenings in Switzerland. The Federal Government attaches great importance to the diffusion of such information, particularly in the light of the introduction of electoral franchise for Swiss abroad, enabling them to vote by correspondence.

from Buenos Aires requested the distribution of the "Swiss News" videocassette by Rincovision via a special television channel. A strong desire for information on political, economic and cultural events in Switzerland prepared specially for Swiss living abroad also emerged from the discussion.

SSA

Cotti about EEC

Our attitude to Europe must be flexible and we must not regard the present arguments against joining the EEC as "an immutable fact of life", warned Federal Councillor Flavio Cotti from Ticino, in his speech to the Congress of the Swiss Abroad. Cotti talked mainly about the European integration process.



Swiss Federal Councillor Flavio Cotti in Locarno.



Venue of the meeting: The Congress of the Swiss Abroad.

NHS on board

At its meeting on 25th August 1989 at Locarno the Council of the Swiss Abroad elected Dr. Roger Ballmer, Central President of the New Helvetic Society (NHS), to its board of directors. This increases the number of Council directors to 9 (previously 8), as foreseen in the new Foundation Regulations for the Council of the Swiss Abroad which came into force in March of this year. The additional seat on the board is reserved for one of the NHS representatives in the Council.