

Zeitschrift: Swiss review : the magazine for the Swiss abroad
Herausgeber: Organisation of the Swiss Abroad
Band: 18 (1991)
Heft: 2

Rubrik: Communications from the SSA

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Spring session of the "Parliament of the 'Fifth Switzerland'"

Meeting of the Council for the Swiss Abroad in Berne

On 2nd March the Council for the Swiss Abroad, chaired by Professor Walther Hofer, assembled at the Federal Parliament in Berne for its Spring session to discuss current topics concerning the Swiss abroad. Three new local members, all well acquainted with Swiss expatriate affairs, were appointed to the Council: Mario Grassi, Member of the National Council (CDP, Ticino) and President of the Programme Commission of Swiss Radio International, Roy Oppenheim, the new Director of Swiss Radio International, and Walter Leu, Director of the Swiss National Tourist Office. The Committee now comprises around 100 delegates from the major Swiss expatriate communities and 34 local representatives who are involved with matters concerning the Swiss abroad. The local members in Switzerland perform the important task of acting as a link between the 'Fifth Switzerland' and the political, economic and cultural aspects of life in their native country.

Social Security reforms

In response to an invitation from the Federal authorities, the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) has recently commented on plans for revision in three areas of social security insurance: the proposals put forward by the Schoch study commission regarding sickness insurance, the revision of occupational benefit plans (pension funds) and a bill for a decree governing unemployment benefit. Among other things, the OSA has petitioned for improvements to be made with regard to the transfer to a Swiss pension fund of Swiss nationals returning home.

Consular Protection

In connection with the Gulf War, the Head of the 'Consular Protection' section, Consul General Claude Duboulet, informed the Committee about the measures taken by the Swiss authorities to protect Swiss nationals in crisis areas. Led by recent events, the committee decided to devote the theme of the 1992 Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Baden to "Swiss Representations Abroad and the 'Fifth Switzerland'".

Europe and Education

A further topic on the agenda at the all-day meeting focused on the negotiations in Brussels over the creation of a 'European Economic Space' and the implications this would have for Swiss

nationals in EC countries. The position of our compatriots in these countries and the degree of mobility of Swiss nationals within Europe will in the end depend on what form Switzerland's relationship with her European partners will take.

A first interim balance taken by the Council on matters concerning the education of young Swiss abroad showed most positive results. The resolution adopted last year at the Congress in Fribourg, which combined the most important matters of concern of the 'Fifth Switzerland', has met with a favourable response beyond all expectation. The Swiss education system is at present in a considerable state of agitation, particularly in view of the rapidly approaching united Europe. In the interests of young Swiss expatriates the Committee will continue to fight for the breakdown of the barriers which stand in the way of mobility in the education sector. R.W.

obtaining a place for practical training as an apprentice, conditions for enrolling for study courses, and so on.

A further function of AJAS is to assist as an intermediary for securing financial contributions towards the cost of training from the cantonal authorities concerned.

Below is a list of important conditions required for the success of an educational or training stay:

An educational or training programme in Switzerland should first and foremost be the wish of the young person him/herself.

● Language

Swiss abroad who are interested in studying or training in Switzerland must be fluent in one of our national languages (preferably German or French).

● Educational Background

The various school systems abroad do not always cover the same subjects or reach the same standards as the Swiss schooling programme.

Apprenticeship

The requirement for an apprenticeship is generally nine years of schooling.

University education

Not all foreign matriculation diplomas are recognised by Swiss universities.

● Financing one's education

It is principally the responsibility of the parents to pay for their children's education or training, even if the children are of age. If they are not in the position to fully meet these costs, the home canton will pay an education allowance.

● Accommodation

Cheap accommodation is scarce, especially in the cities. Almost every university town has an accommodation agency.

For further information, just write to:

AJAS, Alpenstrasse 26, CH-3000 Berne 16, or telephone to: 031 44 66 25 (with the appropriate prefix for calls to Switzerland)

Educational stays in Switzerland

Are you planning to get vocational training in Switzerland and/or would you like first of all to receive information about your possibilities of undergoing such training? What would you be most interested in – an apprenticeship, a course at a technical college or some other form of study in Switzerland? If you have any specific ideas about the type of training you want, would you like detailed information about this, or suggestions as to where you might be able to apply for some financial help towards the cost?

Please write or telephone to the "Verein zur Förderung der Ausbildung junger Auslandschweizerinnen und Auslandschweizer" (AJAS).

The main function of AJAS is to provide advice and information to young Swiss – boys and girls – resident abroad, as to their possibilities of obtaining vocational training in Switzerland, and to answer their questions

connected with a stay for training here. AJAS acts as an intermediary for arranging contacts with other institutions, such as specialist bodies for advising and organising training, whose expert staff will be able to offer interested persons advice on matters relating to choice of occupation,



Our new Managing Director Mrs. Huguette Déchanet, has been in charge of the FYSA secretariat since the beginning of the year.



Breakthrough for Voting Rights

The breakthrough has been achieved at last! In the March session the Federal Council's decided to grant postal voting and electoral rights at national level to Swiss expatriates (page 17). The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad is delighted that this long and hard fought battle has at last been won, and rejoices with all our compatriots abroad who would like to exercise their political rights in their native country.

For the 'Fifth Switzerland', this development in political involvement signifies a momentous gesture of confidence and acknowledgement on the part of the Confederation. As a result the ties between our fellow Swiss abroad and Switzerland will be strengthened. The over 450,000 Swiss abroad fully appreciate this significant and most welcome gift in celebration of the 700th Anniversary of our Confederation!

Swiss Abroad Youth Camps 1991

The following youth camps are being organised by the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad for young Swiss expatriates aged between 15 and 25:
12.08.-23.08.1991 - Sports and Walking Camp, Rigi-Klösterli (Schwyz)

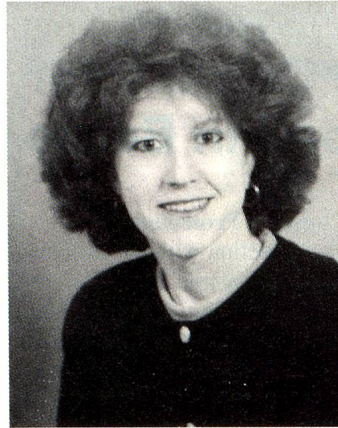
Two additions to our 1991 programme are:
For 15-16 year olds:
22-28.09.1991
Sports Camp in Fiesch (Valais)

For 16-18 year olds:
22-28.09.1991
Sports Camp in Tenero (Ticino) (participation free of charge)

These camps are subsidised by 'Action Encounter 91'. Registration forms for all camps can be obtained from Edith Locher, Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, 3000 Berne 16, Switzerland.

Woman to represent Old Age Insurance matters

In future a woman will represent the interests of the 'Fifth Switzerland' in the Federal OASI/DI Commission. The Federal Parliament has appointed Elena Biasca Zaugg, Legal Assistant at the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad to the Commission. Mrs. Biasca succeeds Professor Walther Hofer, who has been a member of this important body of experts since 1983.



Elena Biasca Zaugg

Churches for the Swiss Abroad

Everyone knows that there are Swiss expatriate schools. But that there are also churches for Swiss nationals living abroad is not such a wellknown fact. The reason for this is that in Switzerland, where most people are either Catholic or Protestant, only the Protestant faith enjoys a developed care programme for its Swiss expatriates, a fact which can make reporting in a confessionally neutral publication very difficult.

An ecumenical service of worship is always held at the Congress of the Swiss Abroad which takes place in Switzerland every year. The choice of the Catholic priest for this spoken service has recently come under the auspices of the Secretary of the Bishops' Conference, Roland Trauffer, in Fribourg. The Protestant clergyman is selected by the Association of Swiss Evangelical Churches in Berne.

This Association of Swiss Evangelical Churches, an amalgamation of all Evangelical-Reformed cantonal churches, has set up a Commission to deal with the religious care of Swiss expatriates. Its Secretary, Pastor Hartmut Lucke, is based in Berne, from where he maintains contact with expatriates throughout the world. Reformed Swiss parish communities, some of which date back for several centuries, are to be found in Italy - in Milan, Florence and Genoa. Trieste, the oldest of them, joined with the 'Waldenser' church some years ago. The Swiss parish in London, whose church in the city centre

was only recently renovated, also originates from the 18th century. Parishes in Argentina (Misiones) and Brazil (São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro) arose after the Second World War. It is hardly likely that new parishes will be founded in the future. Nowadays our compatriots tend to join international Protestant (German or French-speaking) parishes, or even become integrated into the evangelical community of the host country itself, such as those in Germany, France and the USA. Such international communities are to be found in Lisbon, Copenhagen, Athens, Kobe (Japan), Bogotá and Djibouti.

A new kind of parish work has materialised in Canada. The Eglise unie du Canada itself charged two of its clergymen (one from French-speaking Switzerland, and more recently, a German-speaking Swiss) with the task of ministering to the needs of newly arrived Swiss farmers. At the present time, there are around 28,000 Swiss in Canada.

Youth groups, mainly involved in

Addresses:

Dr. Roland Trauffer
Secretary of the Bishops' Conference
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1700 Fribourg
Switzerland
Tel. 037-22 47 94

Hartmut Lucke, Pastor
Secretary of the Commission for Swiss Churches Abroad
Sulgenauweg 26
3007 Berne
Switzerland
Tel. 031-46 25 11

Andres Streiff, Pastor
President of the Commission for Swiss Churches Abroad
Jungstrasse 9
8050 Zurich
Switzerland
Tel. 01-302 41 00

social activities, are to be found in London and Paris.

A further aspect of pastoral care concerns Swiss sailors. The naval chaplain periodically accompanies ships sailing under the Swiss flag and fits in with the routine work and leisure activities on board. Often very interesting conversations ensue, and the chaplain is frequently able to intervene in issues at sea as well as in domestic matters.

Contact is sought with Swiss all over the world who live in isolated places, by means of messages on religious feast-days, which are also broadcast by Swiss Radio International (SRI). In the SRI's Sunday broadcasts the weekly ecumenical news programme 'Lively Church' reports on events taking place in church communities at home.

A former Swiss chaplain in Rio de Janeiro, I have been in charge of the Commission for Swiss Churches Abroad for many years. I answer queries in writing or over the telephone from Swiss families who live in isolated places. These include queries about the possibilities of receiving confirmation instruction, the integration of young Swiss expatriates in Switzerland, mixed marriages and the return of aged Swiss to their home country. A really varied field of work - and full of surprises!

Andres Streiff, pastor