

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

Rubrik: Official communications

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Worldwide action by Switzerland in the humanitarian sphere

In view of the latest international political events and the dramatic situation in certain parts of the globe, Switzerland resolved to make her contribution, too, to the alleviation of this worrying state of affairs.

Suffering in the Gulf

At the beginning of March the Federal Council authorized an additional contribution of 10 millions francs to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The international opera-

and to assist the civilian population.

New aid package for Eastern Europe

After it was established at the beginning of the year that most of

Marriage of a Swiss woman

Swiss women who would like to retain their *Swiss citizenship* after marrying a foreigner must make a declaration to that effect *before the marriage* on a form obtainable from the Swiss embassies and consulates abroad. If they wish to place their *present surname* before their new one they must declare this, too, at the competent Swiss embassy or consulate *before the marriage*. Only the authorities of their country of residence can give binding information on whether this use of their surname will be recognized there. In the case of dual nationals there is at present some legal uncertainty on the Swiss side. It is nevertheless advisable for them to make the declaration as a precaution.

tions of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent for the benefit of the victims of the Gulf war will be supported by this contribution. The object of this aid is above all to care for war wounded, to protect prisoners of war

the three-year block credit of 250 million francs for Central and Eastern Europe for, among other things, financial and economic aid, food distribution, training and environmental measures had already been spent after barely 12 months, the Federal Council decided to lay before Parliament this summer a second package of support measures. According to Federal Councillor René Felber, Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, the new block credit will be «appreciably larger» than the first aid package.

Development aid credit in the framework of the 700 years celebrations

On 13th March, by reason of its 700th birthday, the Confederation made 700 million francs available for development aid. 400 million will be used to write off the debts of the poorest countries in the world and 300 million for environmental protection in the Third World.

Will you be 50 this year?

If so, you can still join the voluntary OAI/DI but you must do so within a year of reaching 50. Leave it any later and you will have finally missed the boat. Exceptions are special cases such as naturalization, divorce or separation, widowhood or continuation of the compulsory insurance. For further information you can apply to the competent Swiss embassy or consulate.

Editor (Official Communications),
Service for the Swiss Abroad, Federal
Department of Foreign Affairs.



*Two Swiss aircraft will support an observer mission of the UNO.
(Photo: Ringier)*

Aid to humanitarian organizations

On 17 April the Federal Council also decided to make contributions amounting to 12.3 million francs to various international organizations and to the Swiss Red Cross for the year 1991.

Of this sum the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) will receive 9 million, the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO) 180 000, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) 600 000 and the Swiss Red Cross 2.25 million francs.

The Federal Council also...

- on 9 April authorized a credit of 10 million francs for the aid operations for the Kurds and Shias fleeing from Iraq;
- on 17 April granted a request by the United Nations Secretary General and made available to the United Nations as logistical support for their observer mission in Iraq/Kuwait two Pilatus Turbo Porter aircraft with crew.

Service of the Swiss Abroad

Postal votes for Swiss abroad

On 22nd March the Federal Parliament finally approved the law on the introduction of the postal vote for Swiss abroad. You will therefore be receiving your voting material by post direct from the voting commune of your choice and will also be able to vote by post direct.

Contrary to certain press reports the Act will not come into force this autumn but only 1992. This is due to legal and administrative reasons (time allowed for referendum, drawing up the implementing regulations at federal level, amendments to the cantonal laws with time allowed for referendums, preparation of the voting registers etc.).

In the "Swiss Review" 4/90 we summarized for you the most important elements of this revision of the law. In the next "Swiss Review" (3/91) there will be additional, practical hints to help you take part in elections and other ballots.

May we therefore ask you not to bombard our embassies and consulates with questions. You will get the information in plenty of time.

Service of the Swiss abroad



The Solidarity Fund

Providence abroad includes risk insurance

The Fund has already proved to be a "sheet-anchor" for many Swiss abroad. The Gulf crisis and the civil war situations prevailing in many countries clearly show how Swiss who are far from home often find themselves suddenly faced with an uncertain future.

"It is by no means impossible to cope after returning to the old homeland if economic conditions are favourable and if one is the right age. But what if job vacancies are rare? What if personnel managers reject applicants on the wrong side of 40?"

Crises are not a thing of the past

Catchwords like Gulf crisis, the emergence of the former "people's democracies" moving in the direction of real democracy, civil war type turbulence and bloody conflicts in African and Latin American countries, those are the danger signals received within one year alone. People who in such circumstances have to decide on a hasty return home are

frequently faced with serious problems as regards livelihood. The Solidarity Fund of the Swiss Abroad, founded in 1958 and now called "The Fund" for short, offers our 430 000 or so compatriots throughout the world tailor-made, tried and tested opportunities for provident risk insurance. The Fund pays out lump sum compensation to a maximum of 100 000 francs per person in the event of loss of livelihood resulting from war, nationalization, expropriation, unrest, expulsion, in short, from political coercive measures of all kinds.

Only a few insured persons

The Gulf crisis suddenly made it clear that not everybody fully realizes that it is possible to slip

from a secure existence into acute need. Thus The Fund's data show that, of the 97 Swiss registered with the Swiss Embassy in Kuwait at the end of 1989, only two had taken out an insurance against loss of livelihood. The provident situation for Swiss in Iraq was no better: among the 71 registered Swiss there was just one Fund member.

The Fund's statistics show that the extent of insurance in the whole Gulf region is terrifyingly inadequate. Of the 7716 Swiss registered in 11 states there, a mere 128 (1.65 per cent) had felt any concern at all for the future and acted accordingly. This attitude to risk is surprising in view of the fact that, among the 544 cases of loss of livelihood covered by The Fund in the last three decades, the four Arab countries Algeria (166 cases since 1958), Egypt (82), Morocco (56) and Tunisia (32) are quite high on the "crisis list". Of all the Swiss abroad in the world, at present barely 10 000, as members of The Fund, have anything like a guarantee "in the bag" that they would not have to start again from scratch if disaster befell them. Furthermore, two thirds of those Fund members live in European countries where the risk to one's livelihood can be classified as not particularly great.

Providence is the "better deal"

One of several explanations for the disinclination of many Swiss

Notice for the members of the Solidarity Fund of the Swiss Abroad

This year's Annual General Meeting will take place in *Lucerne* on 26 July 1991 as part of the Assembly of the Swiss Abroad. The agenda will include statutory business, such as the annual report, the annual accounts for 1990 and elections.

abroad to make provision is that, because they can get higher interest, some compatriots in the "fifth Switzerland" prefer other capital investments. However, they are ignoring the fact that higher interest savings investments do not include risk insurance. The Fund's rather less remunerative insurance cover has therefore proved subsequently to be the "better deal" for many Swiss abroad. "The Fund's current lump sum compensation can secure the financial help in getting started again after returning home that comes to the rescue during the difficult initial phase" points out Chairman of The Fund Dr Halbheer, referring, in the light of last year's experiences, to the still topical aim of The Fund. And he also declares: "Membership of The Fund is compatible with the spirit of adventure and the readiness to take risks which are characteristic of the Swiss abroad."

Coupon for those interested

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The Swiss Schools Abroad

The Unknown Entity

The Federal Office of Cultural Affairs – regularly receives inquiries about the education of Swiss abroad. Each time we realize afresh that the Swiss public knows very little about Swiss educational establishments abroad.

Many people are surprised that there are no Swiss schools in the U.S.A., Canada or Great Britain, that there are, in fact, only 16 in the whole world.

These gaps in their knowledge

may be explained by the following facts:

● The Swiss schools abroad are not state institutions but private schools, supported by associa-



tions, to which school fees must be paid.

- The founding of these schools has arisen from a need of local Swiss communities.

Geographical distribution

Of the 16 existing schools, 6 are in Europe, 7 are in South America, 2 are in Asia and 1 is in Africa.

At these 16 schools about 220 Swiss teachers, together with a larger number of indigenous colleagues, teach about 4,700 children, of whom approximately 1,700 are Swiss nationals (including dual nationals).

The Confederation

The Confederation's role in relation to these schools is limited to giving subsidies. The Confederation's financial contributions cover approximately 50 per cent of their expenditure. In order to enjoy such benefits, however, the schools must fulfil a number of conditions:

- a specified percentage of those taught well as the majority of the senior teachers, including the school managers, must have Swiss nationality;
 - the instruction provided must enable the pupils to continue their education both in their host country and in Switzerland; every school must enter into a patronage relationship with a Swiss canton.
- This last stipulation is particularly important because, of course, the Confederation has only limited jurisdiction in the schools domain.

Revision of the federal act

The Confederation's contributions are based on a *federal act* (Editor: federal law concerning the promotion of the education of young Swiss abroad) which was comprehensively revised not too long ago and came into force in its present form on 1 July 1988. This revision had become necessary because the previous act was no longer able to cope with the increased demands of the existing Swiss schools abroad. The revision introduced an im-



Swiss school, Colegio Pestalozzi, in Lima. (Photo: SSA)

portant innovation: the possibility not only for existing Swiss schools to be supported but for help with the education of young Swiss abroad to be granted in a flexible way according to need. The starting point for this change was the fact that about 1,800 Swiss children worldwide attend German, French or English-language schools abroad. That is more children than are educated in Swiss schools abroad! Hitherto the Confederation had hardly been able to do something for all of them.

Promotion possibilities

With the new assistance system, the Confederation is now in a position to promote the education of young Swiss abroad even in places where it has not been, or is not, possible to found a Swiss school. This is achieved by various measures, e.g.:

- by contributions to the cost of employing Swiss teachers at another country's school abroad;
 - by contributions for individual Swiss teachers who educate a certain number of Swiss children in places without a school;
 - by contributions for language courses or the acquisition of teaching material.
- However, these payments are linked to certain conditions, namely:
- the initiative must come from a group of Swiss abroad;
 - they must make their own fi-

nancial contribution of at least 50 per cent, and the assistance must benefit a sizeable number of Swiss children and help to make it easier for them to continue in the Swiss education system.

In the past three years the Confederation has made appropriate contributions

- for Swiss teachers at German schools in Hong Kong, Tokyo and New York,
- for extra instruction by a Swiss teacher in Montreal and in Quito;
- for language courses in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. To sum up, it can be said that the new possibilities of assistance have led to the Swiss presence being spread rather more widely in the educational sphere outside our country. This is thanks to the initiative and the financial contributions of the Swiss communities concerned.

Lecture by Hans Rudolf Dörig (Deputy Director of the Federal Office of Cultural Affairs, held at the 69th Congress of the Swiss abroad, Fribourg, 16-18 August 1990, shortened).

The Swiss Confederation and its Parliament...

...That is the name of a video cassette and small accompanying brochure which are intended to give you, among other things, by means of amusing cartoons on slides, a better understanding of our political institutions.

If you wish to know more about Switzerland and its political system, fill in the slip below and send it to:

Service of the Swiss Abroad/EDA
Bundesgasse 18, CH-3003 Berne

Coupon

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