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Spring session of the Council for the Swiss Abroad in Berne

Towards increasing awareness of the concerns of the Fifth Switzerland

In view of the upcoming National Council elections in autumn, the Council for the Swiss Abroad (CSA) calls on political parties to pay more heed to the needs of Swiss nationals resident abroad.

“The Fifth Switzerland is an essential component of our State and forms a significant section of the electorate,” declared National Councillor Georg Stucky, President of the Organisation of Swiss Abroad (OSA) at the spring session of the CSA.

In his presidential report he made it clear that the Swiss public must be made more aware of the role, significance and specific needs of

Swiss Abroad. With around 70 000 Swiss nationals resident abroad already on the electoral roll, he continued, the CSA's declared objective of promoting the specific concerns and interests of the Fifth Switzerland is a welcome move.

Approval of election demands

During the session the Council for the Swiss Abroad un-

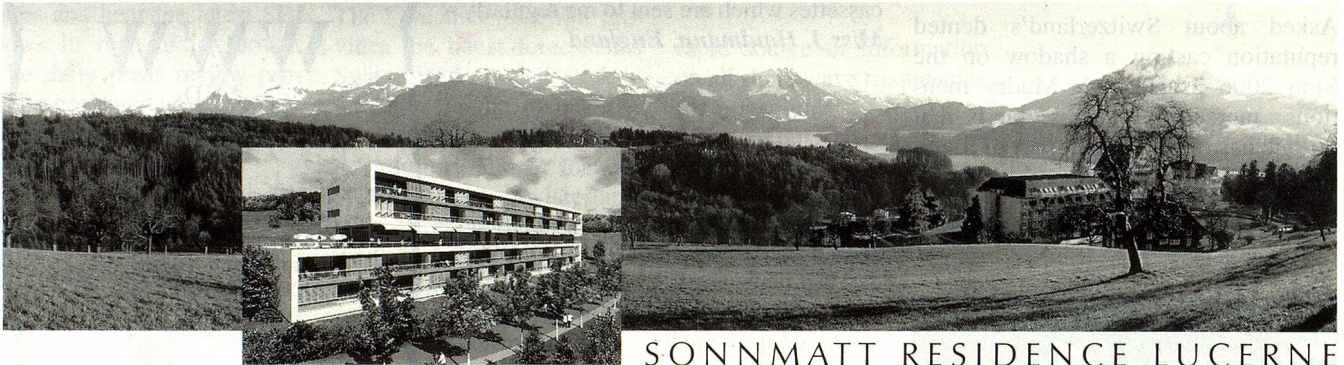
animously approved a catalogue of demands on the parties. Firstly, in line with the CSA's interest in further promoting international mobility, it asks for a means of facilitating the education of young Swiss Abroad and of guaranteeing social security during their stay in Switzerland. To simplify the return of Swiss Abroad, an internet-based job clearing centre for specific sectors was proposed.

Additionally, the Council for the Swiss Abroad regards the fostering of Switzerland's presence abroad as essential, and in this context

proposes increasing co-operation with Swiss institutions abroad (chambers of commerce, Swiss schools and Swiss clubs). To strengthen relations with the home country, the CSA urges a means of facilitating the exercise of political rights, particularly through doing away with the need to renew registration on the electoral roll. It is in favour of consolidating contacts between Swiss Abroad institutions and Swiss parties. In line with this, it would like to see party members abroad collaborating regularly on internal party policy building,

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77th Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Lausanne

Switzerland's growing integration with Europe

in order to increase the participation of Swiss Abroad.

Yes to the new federal constitution

The President of the CSA expressed satisfaction at the wording of the new Swiss Abroad article, part of the revised federal constitution which was the subject of a referendum on 18 April. In particular, said Stucky, the authors succeeded in incorporating the sensitive area of social insurance in the articles of the constitution. He sees in the new Constitutional Law evidence of the Confederation's openness to reform. In the President's own words, "The new federal constitution does not represent a radical change on the part of the State, but is a pragmatic, long overdue updating of our time-honoured Constitutional Law."

Turning to the outcome of the bilateral sectorial negotiations, the President of the CSA openly expressed his satisfaction on the agreement between Switzerland and the European Union (EU). From the point of view of the Fifth Switzerland in particular – around 2/3 of Swiss Abroad live in the EU – the agreement on free movement of people is highly significant, since after a short transition period it envisages equality of status with other EU citizens.

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(PHOTO: LT. J. STRAESSLÉ)

The successful conclusion to the bilateral negotiations has also left its mark on the activities of the Organisation for the Swiss Abroad (OSA). This highly significant step towards a new relationship with Europe is reason enough for the OSA to table the contents of the seven dossiers and further steps

towards integration for discussion at the 77th Congress of the Swiss Abroad.

But the Congress of the Swiss Abroad, to be held in Lausanne from 6 to 8 August, is more than just a meeting of specialists and a forum for exchanging ideas. Our programme also offers participants the unique opportunity of attending a very special cultural event: the Fête des Vignerons, a traditional folk festival held only four times each century.

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Info on the Youth Service Summer Camp

This summer the Youth Service of the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad is again running summer camps for young Swiss Abroad aged between 15 and 25 years old. Following the great time had by all last year, the friendly city of Baden is again playing host. The dates are:

11.7.1999–24.7.1999
25.7.1999–7.8.1999

Deadline for application: 15.6.1999. The cost of the camp is CHF 750.– per person. Detailed information is available from the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad Alpenstrasse 26 CH-3000 Berne 16 Tel +41 31 351 61 00 Fax +41 31 351 61 50 E-mail: post_aso@aso.ch

Registration for the 77th Congress of the Swiss Abroad

Persons wishing to attend this year's Congress of the Swiss Abroad can request the relevant documentation from the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad:

Please send me documentation on the 77th Congress for the Swiss Abroad, Lausanne (6-8 August 1999):

German French

Name/First Name _____

Address: _____

Zip/Town: _____

Country: _____

Tel: _____ Fax: _____

Complete the above form and send to the following address by the end of May 1999: Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad, Congress Organisation, PO Box, CH-3000 Berne 16.