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Sunny holidays and happy campers

This year, 300 young Swiss Abroad visited Switzerland. The camps run by the Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad were fully booked, and the kids enjoyed getting to know their parents' home country from an ideal perspective.

The two winter camps were held shortly after Christmas in the Bernese Oberland and in Pizol. Approximately 70 happy campers enjoyed ten days of mostly sunny conditions in the mountains, with a few snow showers cladding the pine trees in white towards the end of the vacation. In addition to skiing and snowboarding, the kids enjoyed lots of sledging and snowball fights, and forged new friendships with fellow campers from all over the world. Not only did they come away from the camp a better skier or snowboarder; they also found out lots about Switzerland, its inhabitants and their customs and traditions.

Thanks to a long, hot, sunny summer and the untiring efforts of sixty camp leaders, the seven summer camps in Melchtal (OW), La Punt (GR), Unterwasser (SG), Wila (ZH), Broc (FR), Bischofszell (TG) and St. Stephan (BE) were a resounding success! The programme included excursions in the countryside as well as city trips, sight-seeing, camping, swimming, outdoor games and crafts. Camp leaders were rewarded for their efforts by the beaming smiles, looks of amazement and loud laughter of the kids in their care. Some campers even turned chores like washing up and cleaning into fun activities.

On the visitors' day in Unterwasser, guests were able to watch the kids making carnival masks, learning Swiss-German, baking gingerbread and rehearsing lines for William Tell. Over coffee and cakes, young Swiss Abroad told visitors about their experiences in Switzerland and the leaders relat-

ed some anecdotes about camps past and present.

In mid-August, children attending the St. Stephan camp traveled to Berne and were received by Federal President Pascal Couchepin. Following a lively question and answer session, the children presented him with a gift package containing self-made specialities and symbols of their country of residence, such as a pizza, a rainbow and a pair of tango dancers. Then it was time for the entire group to take a tour of the Houses of Parliament.

Before returning home, addresses were exchanged so the kids could stay in touch over thousands of kilometers. Some even made firm dates for meeting up again!

This year the Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad was able to offer over seventy children a chance to attend a camp by providing financial assistance in the form of reduced camp fees or con-

tributions to travel costs. A big thank you to all donors who made this possible!

Winter camp preview:

Our two camps offer skiing and snowboarding for beginners to advanced level, as well as other winter activities:

26.12.03–4.1.04 in Sedrun (Grisons, between Disentis and the Oberalp Pass). Cost: CHF 800.–
21.2.04–28.2.04 in Charmey (Fribourg, between Lake Gruyere and the Jaun Pass). Cost: CHF 640.–

Applications may be made for a reduction in cases of financial hardship.

Detailed information on these packages is available at www.oso.ch (SJAS) or from:

Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad
 Alpenstrasse 26, PO Box
 CH-3000 Berne 16
 Tel. +41 31 356 61 16
 Fax +41 31 356 61 01
 E-mail: sjas@oso.ch

Mountains, sun and action

Young Swiss Abroad enjoy their vacation in the Swiss alps: an environment that not everyone is familiar with but that everyone craves. Fancy a breath of alpine air?

Some 100 young Swiss Abroad attended the two summer camps held in Flumserberg this summer. The weather was hot, so an alpine setting for the sports camp proved a good choice. At 1300 meters above sea level, at least the nights were cooler. The group enjoyed a breathtaking view of the seven peaks of the Churfirsten directly from their living quarters.

The young campers actively enjoyed their mountain environment,

either hiking, mountain biking, swimming in an alpine lake, or on cross-country treks. They forged contacts with young Swiss from all over the world and returned home with lasting impressions and hopefully a little nostalgia for the Swiss mountains.

Lively winter sports camp

The Youth Service wants to give more young people an opportunity to experience Switzerland. The 2003/04 winter programme offers the chance to get to know new winter sports resorts: "Porte de soleil", the Engadine and Fiescheralp. A choice of three famous vacation regions and a chance to enjoy a colourful, up-

beat atmosphere with people from all corners of the globe. The Organisation for the Swiss Abroad looks forward to welcoming you to Switzerland:

New Year's ski camp in Torgon (VS) 26.12.03 – 4.1.04

Vacancies are still available, so register now! Never before have you been able to bring in the New Year in so many different languages.

Winter sports week in Scuol (GR) 6.3.04 – 13.3.04

One year after the World Alpine Ski Championships, we aim to try out the Engadine's snow. Arrangements for young adults from age 18. So far, this camp has always enjoyed a unique atmosphere!

Easter camp in Fiesch (VS) 4.4.04 – 12.4.04

Enjoy spring sunshine and take advantage of tips from qualified OSA snowboard and ski instructors.

Planning to study in Switzerland?

If you're interested in further training or education, this is the place for information and advice. The Youth Service endeavours to address your individual needs and education requirements. But the emphasis is also on fun. After all, it's also your vacation. For information on our language courses, education arrangements or accommodation with host families, contact: www.oso.ch under "Youth" or Organisation for the Swiss Abroad (OSA) Youth Service, Tel. +41 (0)31 356 61 00 youth@oso.ch

"Financial institutions are not charities"

Stefano Iori



The 81st Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Crans-Montana devoted its discussions to Switzerland's financial sector

The financial sector plays a vital role in our country's economy. This was the topic addressed by the 81st Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Crans-Montana, which was attended by some 400 participants. On the Saturday, high-profile representatives from the world of banking and politics talked about the role and future of Switzerland's financial sector.

"Banking secrecy evolved from our traditional culture of protecting the private sphere," said Urs Philippe Roth, Chief Executive Officer of the Swiss Bankers Association (SBA). He went on to warn against any moves in the financial sector to reduce banking secrecy. In his summary of the day's proceedings, Jacques-Simon Eggly – Liberal National Councillor (GE) and Vice President of the Organisation for the Swiss Abroad (OSA) – emphasized that "We need regulatory mechanisms, but they must promote rather than impede our international competitiveness." After all, he continued, the reputa-

tion of Switzerland's financial sector is better abroad than at home. This key sector of the economy must be regarded as part of a coherent, stable political system. "Financial institutions are not charities", said Eggly. And since banks contribute a significant amount to the prosperity of our country, the Swiss must also stand behind their banking sector in the face of any criticism. In the words of Roth: to survive, the financial sector must be able to rely on solidarity, competence and an international presence.

Calls for ethical guidelines

Criticism was equally loud. Social Democrat National Councillor Remo Gysin (Basle), for example, warned against creating a "cluster risk" for the economy. If banks were to rashly speculate, the confederation would be obliged to make good the loss, as was the case with Swissair. "Banks often lack a sense of self responsibility," said Gysin. He called for binding rules that would benefit financial institutions as well as poorer countries. Michel Y. Dérobert, Gen-

eral Secretary of the Swiss Association of Private Bankers, warned against imposing too many rules and regulations and pointed out that the banking sector also contained SMEs, for whom such regulatory mechanisms would prove highly cost-intensive. Jean-Pierre Roth, Chairman of the Swiss National Bank, described the sector's sound reputation as essential. The globalisation and complexity of the subject would necessitate international and global controls. He warned against any moves which would isolate the markets as was the case under the "ancien régime". Zurich National Councillor Hans Kaufmann (SVP) repeated that secrecy for banking customers was "not negotiable": "Everyone knows that this does not help either tax evasion or criminal financial transactions."

Good reputation abroad

Gysin as well as Philippe Lévy, President of the Political Commission for the New European Movement, called for an end to the distinction between tax fraud and tax evasion. Käthi Bangerter, Radical

Free Democrat National Councillor (Berne) countered this by pointing out the dangers of excessive regulation. All the experts agreed that the reputation of the financial sector abroad was basically good. According to William Frei, Deputy Head of the Economic and Financial Affairs Division of the FDFA, "We need to distinguish between the banking sector and Switzerland. Their common denominator is a good reputation." Ernst Wald, Minister for Foreign Affairs for the Principality of Liechtenstein, described Switzerland's political system as fair, democratic, and successful: a system that is the object of general admiration and envy. "Managing it constructively is a major art," he said, and Switzerland should not forget that thanks to its system of direct democracy the financial sector's structure enjoys a high level of legitimacy.

In addition to the panel discussions, speeches on the pivotal role of Switzerland's financial sector were given by Jean-Pierre Roth, Chairman of the Swiss National Bank; Jean-Baptiste Zufferey, Vice Chairman of the Federal Banking

Commission; William Frei, Deputy Head of the Economic and Financial Affairs Division of the FDFA; Remo Gysin, National SP Councilor for Basle City; and Urs Philippe Roth, Delegate to the Board and Chief Executive Officer of the Swiss Bankers Association (SBA).

Gabrielle Keller

Translated from German.

Marcel Ney turns 80

Sixteen years ago, on the occasion of Marcel Ney's retirement as Director of the OSA, this publication honoured him with the words "His time at the OSA could rightly be called the Ney Epoch". On 19 September of this year, Marcel Ney celebrated his 80th birthday.

Marcel Ney was a leading light of the OSA and a key mover in Swiss Abroad politics for two decades. Following incorporation of the article on Swiss Abroad in the Swiss constitution in 1966, related laws of implementation had to be drawn up. Ney, an advocate by profession, produced trail-blazing work to this end, as much in the area of welfare as in terms of military service and political rights for Swiss Abroad.

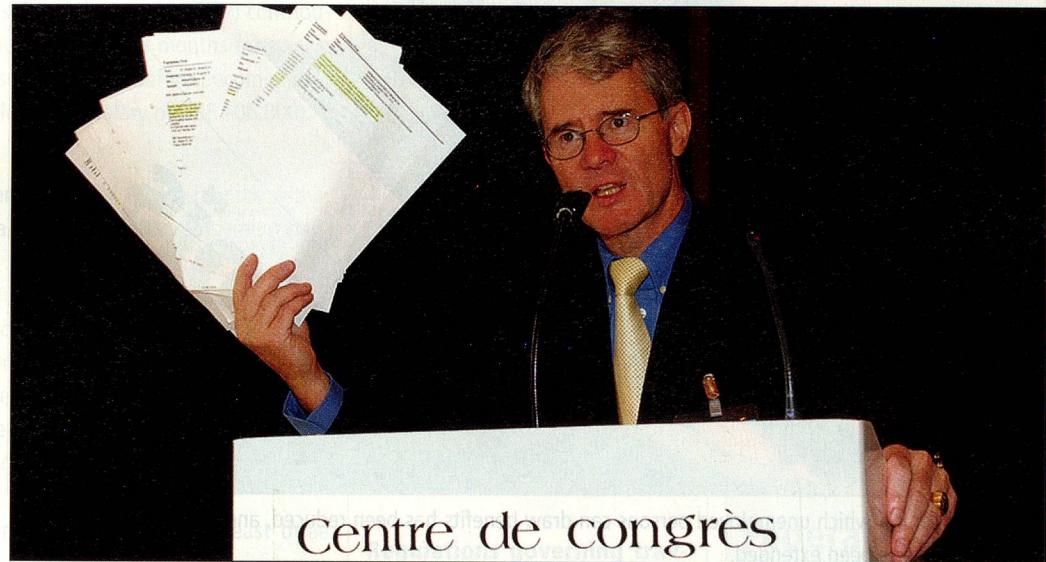
Marcel Ney and his wife Dorothe still take an active interest in the life of the OSA. A few days before the latest congress, he turned up on the doors of Alpenstrasse 26 with freshly-baked "Schinkengipfeli" (ham pastries) to build up our strength before Crans-Montana.

The OSA would like to take this opportunity to thank Marcel Ney for his decades of successful work in the service of the Fifth Switzerland. The OSA team wishes Marcel and Dorothe Ney many more years of pleasure and sunshine!

Rudolf Wyder
OSA Director

Swiss Abroad make political inroads

In the run-up to the autumn elections, delegates of Swiss clubs and associations abroad are working to ensure that the interests of Swiss Abroad are optimally represented in parliament. At the Friday session of the "parliament of the Fifth Switzerland" in Crans-Montana, council members from all over the world expressed their solidarity with Swiss living under difficult conditions in Argentina.



Stefano Iori

OSA Director Rudolf Wyder shows letters from Swiss Abroad objecting to the subsidy cuts for swissinfo/SRI.

As part of the 81st Congress of the Swiss Abroad held by the Organisation for the Swiss Abroad (OSA), members of the Council for the Swiss Abroad (CSA) passed a resolution concerning the 15,000 Swiss nationals in Argentina whose livelihood is threatened as a result of the economic crisis. According to OSA Director Rudolf Wyder, many of our compatriots are unable to pay their contributions to Swiss social security as a result of devaluation, reduced earnings and unemployment. The CSA therefore recommends that no-one be excluded from the optional AHV/IV as a result of inability to pay contributions due to an economic crisis in his country. The welfare plan for Swiss Abroad is failing to carry out its obligations in Argentina, and many of our compatriots have no alternative but to return home. The Council called for a stronger focus on a means of paying social benefits in the country of residence. This way, people in need would no longer be

obliged to return to Switzerland for support. Moreover, this would be a more cost-effective solution.

Following the Council's approval of this resolution, a spontaneous collection was taken among the delegates for the relief of Switzerland's largest expatriate community in Latin America.

Swiss Abroad in parliament?

At a panel discussion on optimal representation of Swiss Abroad interests in parliament, the following speakers crossed swords: National Councillor Remo Gysin (SP/BS), National Councillor Remo Galli (CVP/BE), Sylvain Astier, FDP Cantonal Councillor for Berne, Liberal National Councillor Jacques-Simon Eggly of Geneva and Rolf Schudel, National Council candidate from South Africa for the SVP Swiss Abroad List, Basle Country. The discussion focused on the question of whether a Swiss Abroad would be better suited to represent the interests of his fellow expatriates than a Swiss-based candidate. The speak-

ers also discussed Switzerland's policy on asylum and foreign nationals and the government's policy towards Europe.

Solidarity with swissinfo

As recognised advocates of the interests of the Fifth Switzerland, OSA President and ex-National Councillor George Stucky and Director Rudolf Wyder condemned the move to cancel subsidies for the international section of SRG idée suisse, swissinfo/Swiss Radio International. In Wyder's words, "We constantly receive letters from Swiss Abroad telling us how much they appreciate swissinfo as a key source of information". In many cases the OSA and swissinfo/SRI share the same target public. With this in mind they have enshrined their collaboration in a new partnership agreement with a view to providing this public with the best possible information.

Gabrielle Keller
Translated from German.