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January/February 2005 report from the Auslandschweizerrat delegates

We were privileged to represent the Swiss in SA at the last ASR Session and Congress held in Winterthur last August. The theme of the Congress was "Technology and Innovation" which was a topic that produced many interesting presentations and debates.

Switzerland still registers more inventions than any other nation, but the "translation" of an invention to a commercially viable product or service is increasingly taking place abroad. We need to be aware of this tendency and support Switzerland in its efforts to regain its pioneering spirit of converting ideas into reality.

At the Auslandschweizerrat (ASR) session, a number of important items were presented and decided on. President Georg Stucky presented his report in which he highlighted a successful meeting held with cabinet ministers Pascal Couchepin (Home Affairs) and Micheline Calmy Rey (Foreign Affairs), at which the following topics were discussed: Presence Switzerland, swissinfo, Swiss diplomatic and consular

representatives, and plans to have 100,000 Swiss Abroad placed on the voters' roll.

It was decided to form an official Parliamentary commission, "Swiss Abroad", which will consist of 80 Swiss MPs and senators. This group will meet regularly to focus on all matters affecting Swiss Abroad. Ambassador Peter Sutter, Director in the Foreign Ministry for the Swiss Abroad, indicated that probably in 2005/2006 we could expect the first pilot project using a sample of Swiss Abroad on the matter of electronic voting (e-voting).

The bilateral no. II agreements negotiated with the EU were discussed. Not everybody is happy with the outcome. The meeting was privileged to hear pro and contra views, after which it was decided to support the contracts. Similarly, regarding the easing of acquiring Swiss nationality by second and third-generation citizens, it was decided to support this after much debate. In the actual referendum a few weeks later, this proposal was solidly defeated.

Continued on page B

Ein Tsunami-Fall bei uns in SA

Gemäss Schweizer Botschaft in Pretoria war glücklicherweise nur eine Person der Schweizerkolonie in ihrem Konsularbezirk von der Tsunamikatastrophe betroffen.

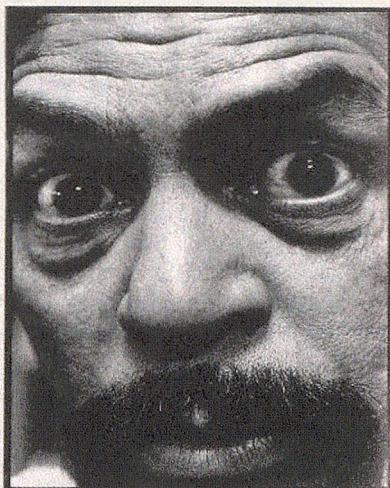
Ein Schweizer Bürger, der in Thailand Urlaub machte, wurde relativ schwer verletzt. Seine Verletzungen wurden zunächst in Thailand behandelt. Er hatte das Glück, mit dem ersten Hilfsflug nach SA geflogen zu werden, wo er in einem Spital in Johannesburg, anfangs in "intensive care", weiter behandelt worden ist. Ihm musste ein Notpass ausgestellt werden, da er seine Papiere in der Flutwelle verloren hatte.

Von den Inseln Mauritius und Rodrigues, welche auch im Konsularbezirk der Botschaft liegen, wurden keine Verletzten gemeldet. Es gab einige materielle Schäden auf Mauritius und etwas stärkere materielle Schäden und Überschwemmungen auf Rodrigues.

* Die Botschaft meldete am 20 Januar, dass es dem Verunfallten wenigstens physisch wieder gut gehe.

Mozambican photo collection on display

Iluminando Vidas Mozambican Photography 19502001 by Richard Rangel and the Next Generation is an iterant exhibition of contemporary Mozambican photography, and the first to offer a comprehensive view of Mozambican photography since the end of 16 years of civil war in 1992.



© Richard Rangel, self portrait 1972

Although the exhibition is based on 25 photographs of master photographer Richardo Rangle (79), it includes 126 photographs of 14 of his "disciples". The pictures are black-and-white gelatine silver prints, all printed in Maputo. There will be a statement about each photographer, their biographies and a self-portrait. Foremost among the artists is Kok Nam (born in 1939), who began working for Rangel as a photojournalist and who became one of Mozambique's most noted photographers.

The exhibition will be displayed at the Bensusan Museum of Photography, MuseumAfrica in Johannesburg (January to 20 February) and at the Joao Ferreira Gallery in Cape Town (2 to 26 March). It will also be shown in Windhoek and Luanda.

The exhibition is being presented by Pro Helvetia, the Arts Council of Switzerland.

* For more information telephone the Pro Helvetia office in Cape Town, 021-425 4701 or visit www.pro-helvetia.ch/capetown. For full biographies and images see www.iluminandovidas.org.

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Her life spans the oxwagon and cellphone ages

Margherita Blaser, who celebrated her 100th birthday on 14 October last year, was born in Cape Town but grew up on a farm in Philippi (today a suburb of Cape Town). This area was the vegetable garden of the Mother City. Farmers on smallholdings produced vegetables which were transported to the shops and markets in the centre of the city. She has memories of ox wagons in Main Road, Claremont, as well as of the first aeroplanes to fly to South Africa. Nowadays she makes use of a cellphone – a gift from her family on the occasion of her remarkable birthday.

A descendent of Italian parents, she married Johann (known as John) Blaser, a Swiss citizen who had immigrated to SA in 1921 and who worked for the Bally shoe factory in Woodstock. The couple moved to Claremont in 1947, and Margherita Blaser has lived in the same house ever since. The Blasers had four children – two daughters and two sons. Sadly, her husband, who was one of the founder members of the Swiss Club in Cape Town, died in 1976 at the age of 79.

Her 100th birthday was celebrated at the Catholic Church of St Ignatius in Claremont. Present were a large crowd of relatives and friends and also the Archbishop of Cape Town, His Grace Lawrence Henry. The service was conducted by Father Emil Blaser, her son, director of Radio Veritas in Johannesburg. One of the many congratulatory messages came from none other than President Thabo Mbeki.

The church service was followed by a reception in the community hall, where the birthday lady and her guests were serenaded by the Swiss Choir of Cape Town.

Margherita Blaser's passion is nature in general and gardening in particular. She is still an active member of the Cape Horticultural Society and the Cape Clivia Club. She works in the garden every day, lives on her own and cooks for herself.

What is her secret for scoring a century but still looking as if she's 60? She eats a healthy diet which excludes dairy products, beef, vinegar and sugar. She drinks only rooibos tea and chicory – no coffee. Most of her vegetables are truly fresh as they come from her own garden. She has not seen a doctor since the 1960s! However, she ascribes part of her longevity to her genes – she had a grandfather who lived to be 91.

— Robert Müller, Consul General, Cape Town



Report from the Auslandschweizerrat delegates (from Page A)

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Rolf Schudel, Paul Haberstich, Fritz Thalmann, Peter Muller (Wildegg AG, 14 January 2005)

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The Club's various societies hold regular meetings. For details see above - ask for your name to be placed on the mailing list of the Club newsletter.

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12 and 13 Feb.: Our traditional Waldfäscht at Jonkershoek begins on Saturday with camping for everybody. Sunday lunch will be a happy bring-and-braai, with activities such as a lotto, wheel of fortune and the traditional shooting competition.

12 Mar.: Pasta evening a day before the Argus race. After the race on the 13th, a bring-and-braai will be held at the club house.

15 Mar., 8 p.m.: The club's AGM will be held at the club house in Green Point. All members are asked to attend.

27 Mar.: The Easter Bunny will visit Jonkershoek in the course of the afternoon.

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18 Feb.: Our AGM starts at 7.30 for 8 p.m. It will be held at the residence of Alexandra and Tony de Klerk, 19 Bluegum Bend, Eldoraigne X3, Centurion. For directions and further information phone Alexandra at 012 653 5246 or 072 1209207. For a quorum we need as many members as possible to attend. An important item on the agenda is the election of ASR (Auslandschweizerrat) delegates.

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Please note that Ronnie Jucker has taken over the reigns at the club.

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13 Feb.: Erster Anlass ist unser Sonntagstreff beim Präsidenten, P Hess, in Olympia.

2 Apr.: Generalversammlung in the Festhütte Olympia. Das Jahresprogramm wird nach der GV vom neuen Vorstand an der ersten Sitzung festgelegt.

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New regulations for dual citizenship

Since many Swiss citizens who reside in SA are also South African citizens and therefore possess dual citizenship, the following Press release (shortened – Ed.) issued by the SA Press Association (SAPA) on 11 November 2004 may be of interest.

South Africans with dual citizenship may use their foreign passports in certain circumstances without losing their South African citizenship, according to the Department of Home Affairs.

Spokesman Nkosana Sibuyi said section 9 of the South African Citizenship Act of 1995 was repealed in September. This section regulated the use of the citizenship of nationality of another country by a major South African who has dual citizenship.

"In essence, the Act repealed the provision which allowed the Minister of Home Affairs to deprive a citizen of his or her citizenship for having used the citizenship of a foreign country," Sibuyi said.

Consequently, the previous requirement for exemptions or letters of permission from the Minister to make use of a foreign passport has now been terminated.

"The issue of deprivation of citizenship was inconsistent with the Constitutional right to citizenship."

A South African with dual citizenship may now use a foreign passport in another country, but he may not use it to enter or exit SA or to "gain advantage or avoid a responsibility or duty".

Sibuyi said the department had received enquiries from ports of entry into the country on whether South

Africans who arrived with foreign passports could be refused entry into the Republic. "The department is obliged to implement the Citizenship Amendment Act. However, we acknowledge that many affected South Africans may not yet be aware of the amendments to the Citizenship Act and the implications for themselves.

"We have therefore decided that affected South Africans departing or arriving through our ports of entry, attempting to use a foreign passport, will be issued with a warning giving them three months to obtain a South African passport." They would, however, be allowed to depart or enter SA.

The department advised South Africans who have dual citizenship, but who do not have South African passports, to apply for theirs as soon as possible.

* For further information, contact your nearest office of the Department of Home Affairs.

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by Paul Schamberger

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