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A Christmas Message from the Committee of the Swiss Society

The Committee of the Swiss Society wish to extend to all their members and friends the Season's Greetings.

Christmas is traditionally a time for exchanging gifts with family and friends; a time when people the world over wish for "Peace on earth and goodwill to all men". We trust that Christmas will be for everyone the best ever yet, and that the New Year 1973 will bring with it a new-found happiness and peace for which the world has long awaited.

A. K. Binder,
President.



BROADCASTING AN ANNIVERSARY FOR SWITZERLAND

(By John Trevor)

BROADCASTING in Switzerland is just fifty years old. From early beginnings which received little official encouragement, it has grown into a responsible service covering the country with radio and television programmes and also broadcasting to the world on shortwaves. There are special problems to be overcome, because of the country's varied racial, linguistic and cultural composition, and there is a particular obligation to further national unity and understanding.

To the city of Lausanne goes the honour of building Switzerland's first transmitter. In February 1822 the municipality gave permission for it to be constructed on the Champ-de-l'Air airfield, mainly to serve the needs of air navigation and communications. It was run by Radio Suisse, the telecommunications company which is also fifty years old this year.

This transmitter was only the third in Europe. It broadcasts on long waves only and to make the transmissions a little more interesting for the pilots, light music and newscasts were broadcast as well.

No Further

Little by little, local transmitters started in several parts of Switzerland. In those pioneering days the Swiss Government was not interested in the new-fangled communication media. It gave no support, financial or otherwise, and on at least one occasion voiced active opposition.

This was at the end of 1922 when a physicist in Zurich, Dr Gustav Eichhorn, started up an Institute of Broadcasting and sought a permit for public demonstrations of radio reception.

He got a stiff refusal from the Swiss Posts, Telegraph and Telephones undertaking, which a little earlier had been given the exclusive right to build and operate radio installations.

"Accept this official statement from me", wrote a disapproving PTT official, "that we shall not allow radio to develop any further in Switzerland. Your Institute is therefore completely purposeless". Despite this official damper, there were already nearly one thousand radio receiving licence holders at the end of 1923.

Radio co-operatives were formed in different parts of the country — like the one in Zurich, where in August 1924 the first Swiss transmitter exclusively for broadcasting purposes was opened.

Similar developments in other countries meant that broadcasting had to be regulated internationally and first steps towards this were taken at a conference in Geneva in 1924 — long before Switzerland's own local stations began to get together.

The Swiss stations began loose co-operation in 1926 when they formed the Swiss Broadcasting Union. Two years later proposals were made to build national transmitters for the various language regions of Switzerland. At last in 1931, when the number of licence holders was over 100,000, the various local co-operatives and societies formed the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation.

National Interests

Under the licence granted by the Government, the technical operation of the transmitters was the job of the PTT, while the studio societies were to build and run the studios themselves. The Corporation and the studios were responsible for the programme services for which certain guidelines were laid down.

The radio was to further cultural, spiritual, moral, religious and artistic values. Objectivity was to be the rule, and the need for rapid information and satisfactory entertainment was to be filled. The programmes were pledged to serve the interests of the nation and — an important point in a land with diverse cultures and languages — to strengthen national unity and harmony, as well as contributing to international understanding.

Now that the national audiences were being catered for, the interests of another section had to be considered — the many thousands of Swiss citizens living abroad, the "Auslandschweizer"

of whom the homeland is proud and whom it calls "The Fifth Switzerland", regarding them as an extension of the four national cultures, German, French, Italian and Romansch.

Experimental broadcasts began as long ago as 1935 from Pragins, West Switzerland. The transmitting centre at Schwarzenburg was opened in 1939. The shortwave service, now known as the European and Overseas Service, has made big strides in recent years, and broadcasts in several languages.

Round the Clock

Aiming at strengthening the links between Swiss living abroad and the mother country and also at presenting Switzerland's image to the world, the service broadcasts round the clock.

But the biggest post-war development for the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation has been television. The introduction of television was bound up with considerable opposition from existing media and there were also some surprising miscalculations. It was thought that the Swiss would not take easily to this new form of entertainment, and there were also dire forecasts that television would be a health hazard and would have a bad effect on family life.

The first experimental TV broadcasts started in July 1953. At the same time the Swiss were active internationally and it was Swiss initiative that led to the Eurovision organisation being

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