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## EDITORIAL

In most countries, the National Day is a day of unity, of celebrations, a day when, for a short while, you can forget differences and arguments and join in to commemorate the birth of your homeland.

Sadly, in New Zealand, Waitangi Day, which is supposed to act as New Zealand's National Day, has increasingly become a day of discord, disunity and of physical clashes between two ethnic groups that once had pledged to live together in harmony and in mutual respect.

There is no denying it that in bygone days, the Maori population had been treated harshly and unfairly, but this happened several generations ago and since then the Maoris have, in general, received far more assistance and financial support from the Government than any of us migrants could ever dream about.

Contrary to most Maoris' belief, that their problem is purely an ethnic one, public grievances against present and past governments exist in any country, including countries inhabited by only one single race and, in this respect, Switzerland is no exception.

I am sure that anyone of you who would explore your own family tree would find somewhere one or more ancestors who have been done in by some past government. You only have to dig down to the Napoleonic wars when Napoleon's rules had been imposed for a time on the Swiss and to the

Sonderbund war. During those times, many of our ancestors had seen their land confiscated without any compensation. Since then, over generations, thousands and thousands of hectares of land have been taken over by successive governments to build railway line, roads and motorways, hydroelectric storage lakes, military installations and housing and industrial complexes.

There is no doubt that amongst your ancestors, you would find a few who have been forced or strongly persuaded to part with some or all of their land under some government pressure. Most of us could raise serious grievances against some past governments on the grounds that had some of our ancestors not been forced to sell their land for what we would consider today as peanuts, we would now be sitting on a family fortune.

Put all these past grievances together and you could easily have a type of "Waitangi Tribunal" in Switzerland that would be kept busy for generations to come trying to sort all these claims out.

So why has no "Waitangi Tribunal" ever been set up in Switzerland and why is it unlikely to ever happen? There are several good reasons for that:

- 1) The ethnic stigma does not exist. The "victims" and the "oppressors" are from the same race and this alone would take all the wind out of the sales of the "victims" grievances.
- 2) The sense of fair play of the Swiss.

When you demand compensation from a government, the government can only pay you with money it has collected through taxes, in other words, from funds it has received from you and your fellow tax-payers. It is simply a situation of robbing Peter to pay Paul. So why should the present generation of people who, after all, had nothing to do with events that happened some 100-200 years ago and who never in their lifetime had derived any benefits whatsoever from the plight that might have descended upon one of your ancestors, pay you now some hefty compensation so that you can live a life of luxury or at least a life of leisure whilst they have to keep on toiling day after day?

- 3) The inborn Swiss drive towards achievement.

Most of us have been educated to look after ourselves, to do something with our lives, to be achievers. There is little time left for looking back, to mull and mope over what happened in the past and what our life could have been had injustice not been done to some of our ancestors. You cannot spend a whole lifetime walking around with a chip on your shoulder and crying foul play. Life is far too short and too precious for that. There comes a time when you have to forget the past and start doing something with your own life or else it is totally waisted.

We are convinced that there was and still is just as much injustice in Switzerland as in many other countries, including New Zealand, but it is the ability of the Swiss to overcome and forget these adversities and to strive for achievement that has put Switzerland at the forefront of the civilised world.

### NOTE TO SECRETARIES

Next issue of the *Helvetia* magazine: NOVEMBER 1996. All contributions must be in by 15 October. Many thanks for your kind cooperation.

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## FAREWELL TO OUR AMBASSADOR

It seems only a few editions ago that we welcomed in these columns Mr. Ernst Thurnheer and his wife Marianne as the new Ambassador of Switzerland to New Zealand. But in fact it was at the beginning of October 1993, already 3 years ago, that Mr. and Mrs. Thurnheer arrived in Wellington to take up their position.

During these three years all those of us who have had the opportunity to meet Mr. and Mrs. Thurnheer could not help but to be captivated by their engaging personalities, their down-to-earth and unpretentious approach to their job and their natural friendliness to us all. No doubt they will leave a lot of friends behind here in New Zealand when they return to Switzerland.

Having reached the end of his term in New Zealand, Mr. Thurnheer and his wife are flying back to Switzerland at the end of this month.

In the name of all Swiss in New Zealand, the 5 Swiss Clubs and the Swiss Society, we say them both a fond farewell and wish them all the best in their retirement. So long, it has been great to know you both.

The Editor.

### MESSAGE FROM HEINZ LEUENBERGER

#### THE SET-UP AND FUNCTIONS OF THE ORGANIZATION FOR THE SWISS ABROAD "AUSLAND-SCHWEIZER ORGANISATION" (ASO IN SHORT).

It all started in 1916 with the founding of the "NEUE HELVETISCHE GESELLSCHAFT". In political terms it is referred to as the fifth Switzerland. The organisation represents the interests of the Swiss abroad. Worldwide the ASO now comprises more than 700 Clubs, Societies and all kinds of organisations. In 1989, in the form of a stipend, it received legality in its own right.

The organisation is headed by the "Auslandschweizerrat (ASR for short), also called the "Parliament of the fifth Switzerland". The "Parliamentarians" are none other than the Delegates of the Swiss abroad, or the foreign members of which there are 31 in Europe, 5 in Africa, 14 in the Americas, 7 in Asia and 3 in Oceania, plus 6 seats presently vacant, plus 36 Inland members.

The "Cabinet" is made-up of a President (this position is presently held by a retired federal parliamentarian from Montreux), plus 3 members residing in Switzerland and 5 members from abroad. The "Parliament's" job is to prepare and discuss the business and to represent you - the members and your interests in terms of what the ASO is trying to achieve. Finally, the "Auslandschweizer Secretariat" (ASS for short), the Secretariat for the Swiss abroad is the medium that coordinates the information coming out of the ASO and the various affiliated organisations and communicates it to you as well as the 529,999 other Swissies (approx) by way of the Swiss Revue.

Later in the year, I will endeavour to explain what your interests consist of and what the affiliated organisations are trying to achieve.

On your behalf, Yours H.L.

#### YOUTH EXCHANGE IN NEW ZEALAND

Since the Youth Exchange was established in 1989 through the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad, Bern, the project has gained in popularity. There are now 16 countries participating in this project.

In recent years, New Zealand has become a very popular holiday destination, as it is well known for its unique scenery, clean air and, of course, for the generous hospitality offered to the visitors.

For this reason the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad is looking at the possibility to include New Zealand in their Youth Exchange Project.

The Youth Exchange Project offers all young New Zealand-Swiss people, aged between 15-25, the opportunity to spend 6 weeks with a Swiss family in Switzerland (early July to mid-August). Likewise it would offer a young Swiss person from Switzerland the chance to spend 6 weeks with a Swiss family here in New Zealand (January-February).

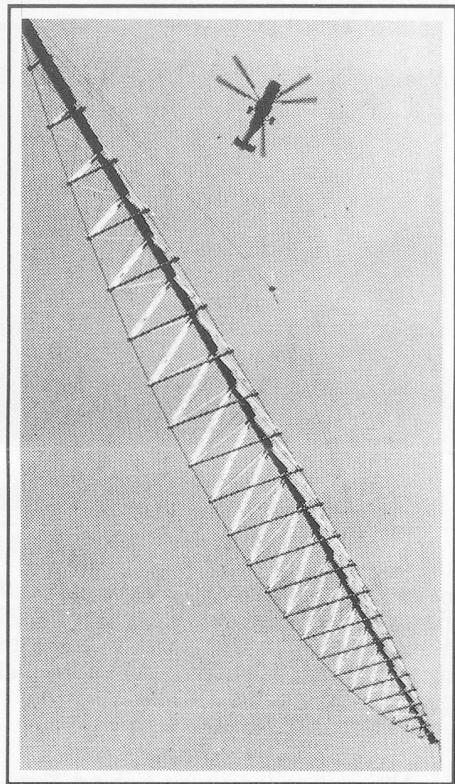
The Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad, Bern, is looking for a person to co-ordinate the exchanges between New Zealand and Switzerland.

If you are interested in developing this worthwhile Project in New Zealand and wish to find out a bit more about it, please contact:

**Marie-Theres Melville-Schöpfer,  
P.O. Box 79-294, Royal Heights,  
Auckland 1230  
Phone 09 833-4029 (evenings).**

## SPECTACULAR TRANSPORT

A 47 meter long foot-bridge weighing over 4 tons was recently transported and put in place by helicopter in the Via Mala (Hinterrhein near Thusis in Graubünden). The bridge is part of a new walk-way through the famous gorges.



#### FELDSCHLÖSSCHEN SWALLOWS HÜRLIMANN

Switzerland's biggest and third biggest breweries are joining forces. Both breweries felt that alone they could no longer withstand the pressure from their competitors, particularly from Heineken who had recently taken over Haldengut and Calanda.

Under the name of Feldschlösschen-Hürlimann, the new company expects to hold a market share of 53% of all beer consumption in Switzerland and, at the same time, save over 20 million SFR in operating costs by modernising some installations and shutting down others.

The management of the new company would not speculate on how many jobs would be lost through this merger.

#### IT MUST BE A JOKE

The Clown Festival of Leukerbad is among the newer generation of festivals. It took place last July and for a little more than a week it converted this mountain resort and spa into a veritable Mecca for clowns. Apart from the evening performances in the circus tent, clowns roamed the streets, nature walks and health baths. The highlights, no doubt, were experienced during the opening and closing gala performances which were attended by many world stars. Anything for a laugh.



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