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Five more consulates to disappear

Swiss living in Uruguay, Paraguay, Ireland, Malaysia and Portugal will this year have to turn to other countries for their consular services. The Swiss foreign ministry has decided to close the embassies in Montevideo, Asunción, Dublin, Kuala Lumpur and Lisbon during 2012. Their services will be transferred to the regional consular centres of Buenos Aires, London, Bangkok and Madrid.

The measure is part of a restructuring of the Swiss diplomatic network introduced last year, in which activities will be concentrated in regional consular centres and resources transferred to emerging countries. Around 7,600 Swiss passport holders live in the five countries affected by the latest move.

The foreign ministry intends to use the freed-up resources for a new embassy in Doha, Qatar, and for strengthening visa-issuing services in countries which are seeing a steep rise in tourists wanting to visit Switzerland. These include China and India, where consulate officials are struggling to keep up with demand.

The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) - which was not consulted by the foreign ministry - is not at all happy about the restructuring. Last year the Council of the Swiss Abroad gained a large majority for a resolution calling for a quality consular network to be maintained.

Closures and concentrations of services often leave Swiss abroad facing a longer trek for consular services. But according to the foreign ministry, most tasks can now be carried out by post or electronically. In addition, a helpline (0800 247 365) has been set up for those in countries affected by consulate closures. It will soon be in operation 24 hours a day and 365 days a year. The ministry added that the experiences of the past few years had been "promising".

The OSA is not against mobile solutions and is one of the most fervent supporters of boosting e-government. And where consulate closures cannot be avoided, the OSA is calling for honorary consuls with more powers.

from swissinfo

Ausgleichende Gerechtigkeit

*Die Strafe, die ich oft verdient,
gestehen wir es offen:
ist sonderbarerweise nie
ganz pünktlich eingetroffen.*

*Der Lohn, der mir so sicher war
nach menschlichem Ermessen,
der wurde leider offenbar
vom Himmel auch vergessen.*

*Doch Unglück, das ich nie bedacht,
Glück, das ich nie erhofft -
sie kamen beide über Nacht.
So irrt der Mensch sich oft.*

Mascha Kaléko

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CBT PSYCHOLOGICAL

Dr. Veronika Isler
PhD, PGDip(Clin)Psych, Member of NZ Psych Soc and NZICP

REGISTERED CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGIST
Ph: (07) 8238190 (Hamilton)
Cell: 021 457 944
Offices in Ohaupo and Hamilton

Southern Zucchini

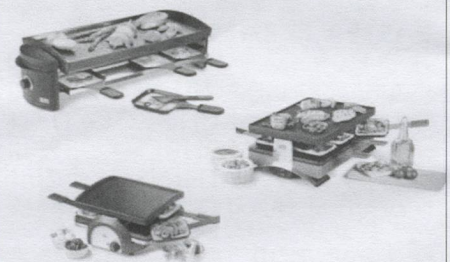
800 g zucchini, cut in thick slices
2 tomatoes, diced
some olives
some sardines (or bacon, if you don't like sardines)
1 onion, chopped
parsley and other herbs, chopped

Sweat the onions and herbs in a bit of oil
layer the onions in an ovenproof dish
distribute the zucchini over it,
sprinkle with pepper and salt
add the tomatoes, sardines, olives
dribble some oil over it.

Bake in a pre-heated (180°) oven for about 20-30 minutes,
serve hot or cold with meat, rice, pasta.

En guete!

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