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Communications of the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad



Ten Years have passed since the Swiss Electorate accepted Art. 45bis of the Federal Constitution

Extracts from the

ADDRESS

by Federal Councillor Pierre Graber, Head of the Federal Political Department, given at Morat on the occasion of the Assembly of the Swiss Abroad on 28th August 1976

I am in the happy position to give you good news: The Federal Council has decided to put in force by 1st January next the legislation regarding *political rights for the Swiss abroad*.

You will no doubt agree with me when I say that this event will be a red-letter day in the history of the Swiss abroad, for it needed patience for over 100 years to reach this goal. To legislate in the field of «Fifth Switzerland» is an arduous task and a difficult art which imply long preparatory work with which the most varied groups have been associated.

Let us consider now what has been achieved during the past 10 years. In the first place we have to mention the federal law regarding *social assistance to Swiss abroad*. It used to fall to the Cantons to look after compatriots in need. And they had hardly the financial nor the technical means to apply their own legislation abroad. From this, many practical difficulties arose, even injustices. Last year, an amount of about 4 million Swiss francs was distributed to more than 2,000 compatriots in need.

The second law which has to be emphasized here concerns the *military exemption tax* payable by the Swiss abroad, a law accepted in 1973 and which has been in force since 1st January 1974. It is an excellent example of the efforts made by the federal authorities to do the best possible for the Swiss abroad and their particular situation. According to this law, Swiss citizens who have been resident abroad for more than three years, are exempt from paying this tax. This solution has contributed considerably to improve relations between our compatriots abroad and the Swiss authorities.

The third law concerns help to *Swiss schools abroad*. These were, without exception, created due to private initiative and organised on the basis of private legislation. But this must not overshadow the fact that these institutions – there are at the moment 19 of them – could not survive without assistance from the Confederation. It is gratifying that Parliament accepted the legal draft proposal made by the Federal Council, for the parliamentary procedure took place at a time when the financial position of the

Confederation forced all authorities to make savings in expenditure.

The fourth federal law, as I mentioned at the beginning, is devoted to the *political rights of the Swiss abroad*. Without doubt, this Constitutional Article was the most difficult task for the federal authorities. It was necessary to take into account various aspects, varied and sometimes even contradictory. Although political rights in federal matters only were under discussion, legislation in the Cantons, even the Communes, played a decisive part. One can't stress often enough that the exercise of political rights is a complicated matter in our country. Procedure is not necessarily the same in Liestal or Lugano as at Morges or at Trogen. That meant coordinating and harmonising the possibilities of our diplomatic and consular representatives with those of the Cantons and Communes.

The first federal plebiscite at which you may take part will probably be the one on 13th March 1977. In order to be able to form a considered opinion, the citizen has to have extensive information available. This is even more important for the citizen who comes from abroad.

Finally, I am anxious to mention that the Constitutional Article regarding the Swiss abroad allowed the Federal Council already in 1967 to promulgate *regulations for the diplomatic and consular service*. These contain several directions concerning the Swiss abroad, notably in the matter of diplomatic and consular protection, important today more than ever. At a time when we have to intervene in conditions often dramatic regarding Swiss citizens arbitrarily arrested or victims of nationalisation, I have to remind you that we must ask of those concerned to take on themselves the defence of their interests in the first place. We grant them our assistance from the moment it is clear that they have exhausted all means at their disposal. The Confederation can, of course, not give any guarantee that their intervention will be crowned with success.

To sum up, it must be recognized that the time of 10 years elapsed since 1966 has not been wasted if one looks at the total legislation since then. Most substantial legislative measures have been taken. They could be undertaken thanks to the goodwill of all and especially due to the constructive and unceasing collaboration which the federal authorities have enjoyed from the part of the Commission of the Swiss Abroad.

I should like now to turn to the future. Although the problems pending for so long have been solved by and large as I have described it, certain questions remain. I am thinking for instance of the revision of the *penal procedure in military matters*. This will regulate in a better way the question of absence of certain Swiss resident abroad. Social insurance, above all the *voluntary AVS* (old-age insurance), presents certain problems too. This insurance has developed considerably since its inception in 1948, as indeed have social insurance schemes in many other countries. The structural problems of the voluntary AVS have to be examined with care. Studies are involved in which, as hitherto, the representatives of «Fifth Switzerland» are consulted.

It is our task to offer our compatriots the possibility of protecting themselves against certain blows of fate. This is the practical and typically Swiss application of the saying «Heaven helps those who help themselves». At present, the most impressive example of what I have said is probably the cooperative body of the *Solidarity Fund of the Swiss Abroad*. This organisation has achieved a real feat: in fact, it offers at most favourable conditions adequate protection against war risk, nationalisation, risks which no insurance company could possibly cover.

Another example which I should like to underline illustrates better than fine words the policy of the Confederation in the matter of the Swiss abroad. I should like to mention *information* to which an increased amount of attention has been devoted during the past few years. We have all felt the need to improve and modernise your information. We have tried to evade everything which could have given rise to the view that such information was official and in a way state-controlled. On the contrary, true to well-tried tradition, we have made use of the already existing publications in a number of Swiss communities abroad.

These bulletins serve the umbrella organisations of the Swiss abroad, but also the local societies. They are also at the disposal of the federal authorities, for they contain official information which our compatriots would do well to read carefully. A gratifying realisation: this bulletin works well without the necessity of creating a complicated administrative apparatus. I am happy to state this and I thank the Commission of the Swiss Abroad for contributing so effectively in this system of information.

Communications of the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad



Badges of the Swiss abroad

The following flags and badges for the Swiss abroad specially made for you, may be had from the Secretariat of the Swiss abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, CH-3000 Berne 16. Details are given below. Prices are in Swiss francs and do not include postage.

Application form

1. Flag with AS sign*

Hemmed edges

	with- out	with swivel hook (Fr. 2.- extra)
a) 30x 50 cm Fr. 40.—	No: _____	
b) 50x 50 cm Fr. 42.—	No: _____	
c) 50x 75 cm Fr. 45.—	No: _____	
d) 75x 75 cm Fr. 52.—	No: _____	
e) 75x100 cm Fr. 55.—	No: _____	
f) 100x100 cm Fr. 60.—	No: _____	

2. Swiss flag*

worked in cotton cretonne, reinforced edges

	with- out	with swivel hook (Fr. 2.- extra)
a) 60x 60 cm Fr. 14.—	No: _____	
b) 80x 80 cm Fr. 19.—	No: _____	
c) 100x100 cm Fr. 27.—	No: _____	
d) 120x120 cm Fr. 34.—	No: _____	
e) 150x150 cm Fr. 46.—	No: _____	

* These flags are available in other sizes, but on special demand only.

3. Coloured car stickers « 5th Switzerland »

Swiss flag on blue ground, in synthetic material

Diameter 8 cm, Fr. 2.— per piece

Number required: _____

4. Coloured badges for Swiss abroad

Swiss flag on silver ground

a) lapel badge Fr. 3.—

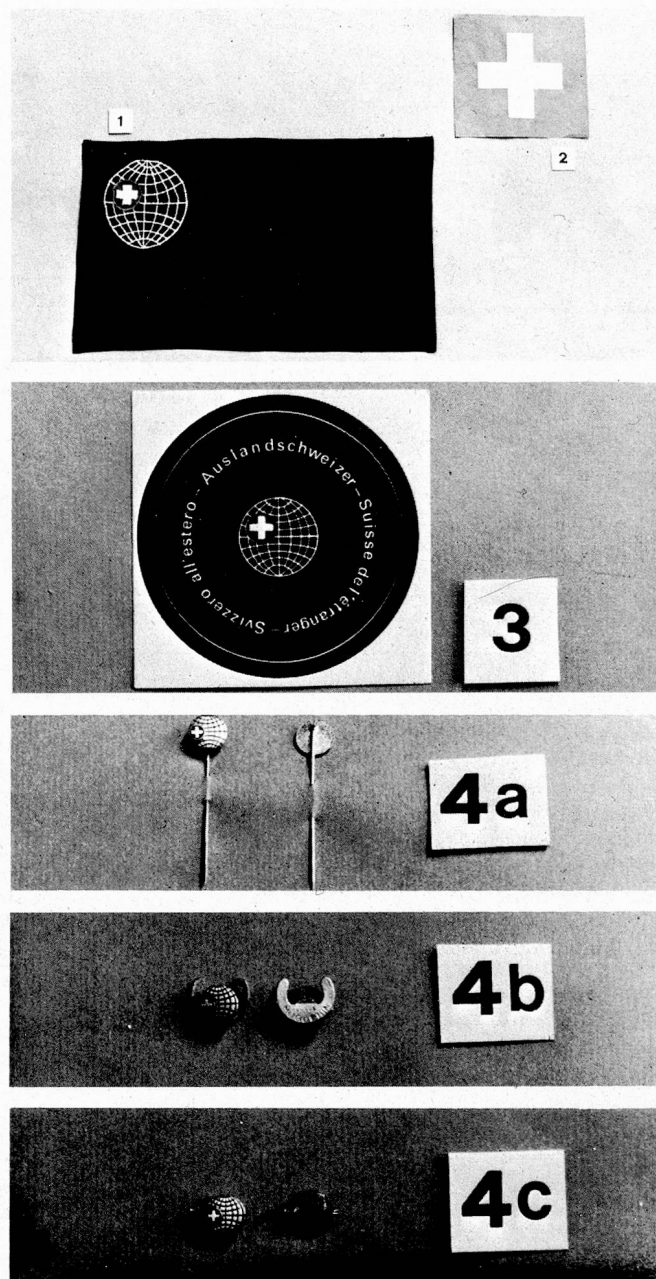
Number required: _____

b) buttonhole badge Fr. 3.—

Number required: _____

c) badge with safety pin Fr. 3.—

Number required: _____



Please write number required on the lines.

Name and Christian name: _____

Address: _____

Postal number / Locality: _____

Date and signature: _____

Communications of the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad



Solidarity Fund of the Swiss abroad

ECHO FROM MORAT Assembly of the Swiss Abroad

Of **300 000**
12 800
equals **4%**

Swiss living abroad
are members of the Solidarity Fund



4 Swiss out of every 100 safeguard for themselves

a **savings deposit in Switzerland** – with interest
lump sum compensation on losing the basis of livelihood
due to political events (war, upheavals, nationalisation etc.)

Please note

In **Lebanon** 5 out of 445 Swiss had joined the
Fund, i.e. **1%**. And the others ...?

Information

to be had from the diplomatic and consular repre-
sentatives or from

Solidarity Fund of Swiss abroad

Gutenbergstrasse 6, 3011 Berne, Switzerland

Is that wise?

Book Reviews

Swiss Uniforms

«Schweizer Uniformen/ Uniformes suisses 1700–1850»

Before a federal law made provision for federal ordinance regulations, every Canton had decreed uniforms for its troops. When, as it happened in 1792 when the frontiers were manned near Basle, there was a concentration of troops from various federal parts, the federal army presented a colourful and most picturesque sight. This bright variety is shown in a book to be published in December 1976.

The Bernese uniform scholar R. Petitmermet

collected material during decades, which then enabled the well-known French painter of uniforms L. Rousselot to create 160 water-colours showing the development of uniforms of the troops provided by the Old Federal Cantons and their affiliated States from 1700 to 1798 and of the cantonal militia army from 1803 to 1850. He did this in a most effective manner. Each of the Old Cantons is given comprehensive appreciation, and captions and detailed comments are attached to the tables (18x25 cm). The quality of the 160 colour pages are guaranteed by the Bernese printing company of Stämpfli and Co, so that the tables alone make the volume a valuable bibliographic work.

The introduction containing information on uniforms and the interesting comments on military history (in German and French) also bear testimony to the development of the Swiss defence spirit. Often influenced by foreign models and also in connection with

the technical side of military development, one tried already in earlier centuries to find the best possible solution for Swiss circumstances. Thus the pictures of the troops of the various Cantons are a true reflection of the federalistic diversity of Switzerland. But they also show how the development gradually moved on towards a Swiss army of the new Confederation in the 19th century. Thus a piece of Swiss history is brought to life in this book in a manner which will be easily understood also by the reader not historically trained. It is therefore to be hoped that the Swiss abroad, too, will be interested in this book. Thanks to a noteworthy subsidy, the Historic Society of the Canton of Berne is able to offer this volume at a price which, in comparison with the 160 colour reproductions, may be called reasonable. The book can be ordered from the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, Postal Box, 3000 Berne 16, Switzerland, at the price of Fr. 260.—.



Swiss women who married non-Swiss and whose children would like to be also Swiss citizens, as may be the case when the father is a Swiss, can write, without obligation, to the Secretariat of the Swiss abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, CH-3000 Berne 16, which will refer your correspondence to the committee of a group of Swiss from Great Britain who is treating this problem.

Communications of the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad



Pro Juventute News



Dear Swiss families abroad
Schweizerhilfe, Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad and Pro Juventute would like by their activities to provide an opportunity for as many children as possible to get to know and love their homeland and their compatriots. Our holiday campaign once again is at the disposal of your children.

Eligible for participation:

- children of Swiss nationality or
 - children of a Swiss mother looking after the family on her own.
- Age groups 1963-1970 (invitees 1961-1970)

Duration of holiday:

- approximately 5 weeks within the months of July and August, according to holiday dates in country of residence.

Summer Holidays 1977

This form to be sent to:

- * Swiss Embassy
- * Swiss Consulate General
- * Swiss Consulate

in _____

road _____

* Please delete which is not applicable

Please send us _____ application form(s) and information regarding the Holiday campaign Pro Juventute 1977 for Swiss children living abroad.

Family: _____

Exact address (in block letters please): _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Possible questions: _____

Holiday possibilities:

in Swiss families

- for children from 7-14 years (invitees 7-16) whose parents are able to make a small or no contribution.

in children's homes

- for children in bad health
 - for children of 7-10 whose parents, according to their income, are able to pay the whole or main part of the cost.
- Cost per day and child: 17 to 27 Swiss francs, everything included.

in camps

- children from 10-14 who like simple holidays, happy companionship, sport and hiking and whose parents are able to pay all or nearly all the cost.
- Cost per day and child: 17-27 Swiss francs, all included.

Travelling:

- in Europe in accompanied groups by train. In case of necessary air travel children are met at airport in Switzerland. Travelling cost borne by parents or by arrangement.

Application forms:

- obtainable from Embassies and Consulates.

Latest application date:

- to reach your Embassy or Consulate: 15th March 1977.
- applications received after that date cannot be considered.

Registration fee:

- per child 12 Swiss francs on application.

Further information:

- from Embassies and Consulates.

We wish happy Swiss holidays to your children already now and send you kind regards.

Pro Juventute

Abteilung Auslandschweizerkinder
Seefeldstrasse 8, 8022 Zurich, Switzerland

Dear Skiing Fans



If you would like to do some skiing this spring, you could take part in one of the two skiing camps organised by the Youth Service of the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad in the coming spring.

The two camps will take place at Les Crosets in the Valais (Val d'Illeiez). This pleasing district at an altitude of 1600 m provides innumerable opportunities for beginners as well as for «professionals». The leaders are looking forward to acquaint you with the various *pistes* and to showing you little tricks which will make you into good skiers. We shall stay at the Chalet «Rey-Bellet», a homely house which has the great advantage that it is just next to the ski-lifts.

For further information and application forms, please apply to the following address: Youth Service, Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad, Alpenstrasse 26, CH-3000 Berne 16, Switzerland.

A few references:

Date of the first camp:

29th March to 7th April 1977

Date of the second camp:

12th April to 21st April 1977

Age of participants: 15 to 25 years