

Forty years of shortwave broadcasts from Switzerland

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Forty Years of shortwave broadcasts from Switzerland

There are several ways to celebrate an anniversary: with pageantry or discretion, joy or sadness, hope or regret. It depends on the nature of the anniversary and on who – or what – is being honoured.



Joël Curchod, Director of the Swiss Short Wave Service since 1965

The 40th anniversary of Swiss shortwave broadcasts is being observed discreetly. Because we are by nature discreet? Possibly. Because of necessity? Without a doubt. Inflation is hardly an appropriate incentive for sumptuous ceremonies. For those of us involved in the daily life of SBC's European and overseas Services, this anniversary is an occasion to assess our position and pay tribute to our predecessors.

To assess our position does not mean to draw up a balance sheet. Balance sheets take into consideration only the assets and liabilities to date, and are often associated with the closing of accounts.

On the other hand, an assessment, while appreciating the past, goes on to analyse, remodel and chart a course for the future. One draws from one's own experience and is inspired by the experience of others. One seizes the moment in order to understand it better, and

then project into tomorrow the essential lessons of yesterday.

In wireless terms, this means to confront the motivations of the recent past with our present environment in order to have a better definition of the basis for future broadcasting.

The one constant factor in our forty years of international shortwave broadcasting always has been the listener. Because of him, for him and around him, SBC was born, grew and continues to expand.

Radio in 1975 is an integral part of the daily life of most human beings no matter where they live or what they do. Although radio has evolved into a companion, its importance as a service continues to grow. No longer a novelty, it can be found everywhere. It is indispensable.

Shortwave broadcasts, transmitted over great distances to listeners in foreign countries defy routine classification. They have a specific purpose, in which ideology is not always absent. For some, shortwave radio is a formidable, tool of propaganda. For others – including SBC – it is a remarkable instrument for the instantaneous and world wide dissemination of information.

Paradoxically, we live at a time when two apparently contradictory phenomena co-exist: one is the extraordinary daily flow of news and ideas, a veritable deluge of over-information, with which the world's mass media inundate their readers, listeners and viewers. The other phenomenon is the enormous gaps in this same information, gaps which are generally linked to the geographical and political situations of certain listeners.

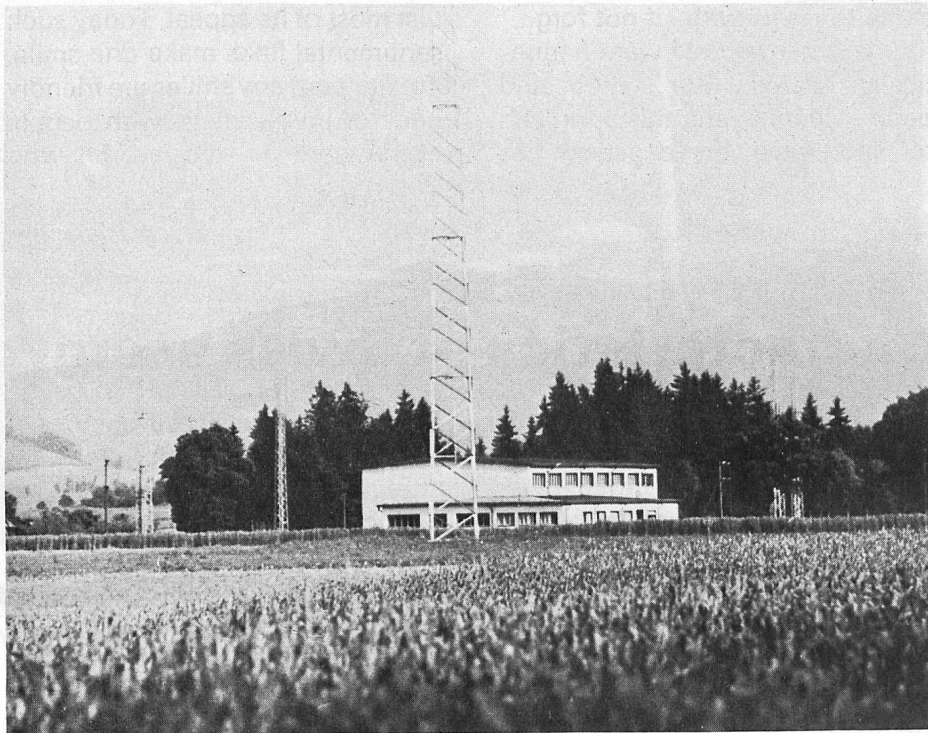
In providing programmes aimed at

closing these information gaps, SBC caters for millions of listeners who are often inadequately served by other sources of information. For the Swiss living abroad, the interest in our programmes springs from several factors. Each, according to his particular situation, needs Swiss radio to inform him about life in Switzerland, international events, and the ideas and opinions expressed by Swiss on major problems of the day.

Our compatriots living in neighbouring countries and benefiting from easy access to information, (including up-to-date Swiss newspapers) in principle, have nothing in common with Swiss residents in a distant country where communications are less easy and there are problems in the free-flow of information. Nevertheless, there are times when the broadcasting requirements of all Swiss abroad do converge. Such is the case when international relations deteriorate or when Switzerland's political or economic well-being is at stake because of important events. All Swiss also are eager to hear news from their country when Switzerland becomes a participant or privileged witness to important international events.

No matter what the circumstances, our compatriots have to know that, at times of serious international tension, SBC on shortwave is a direct and immediate source of the kind of information they need.

Whilst observing this anniversary and paying tribute to our former directors and colleagues for their foresight and accomplishments, I should like to underline one aspect of our activity which used to play a preponderant role in SBC's relations with its listeners abroad: the «sentimental» presence of the Voice of Switzerland. In dark periods of contemporary history, this sentimental presence enabled numerous of our compatriots to



Picture above:

The shortwave transmitters at Schwarzenburg (an early photo).

The transmitters were installed there in 1938. Until then the League of Nations' shortwave transmitters at Prangins were used for overseas transmissions.

In addition to the installations at Schwarzenburg, there is another overseas transmitter at Sottens and transmitters at Beromünster have been used since the very early days of the Swiss shortwave broadcasting for transmissions to neighbouring countries.

Photo below:

The two former directors of the Swiss Shortwave Service. Paul Borsinger (left) and Dr. Gerd H. Padel (right). Paul Borsinger was director from 1935 to 1960 and Gerd Padel from 1961 to 1964.

come to terms with (if not forget) the fact that borders were hermetically sealed. But times and people change, and this approach to shortwave broadcasting has

lost most of its appeal. Today such sentimental links make one smile. For our part, any smiles are friendly ones of involvement with people everywhere in the world who

listen to SBC on shortwave. Without them, we would cease to exist. With them, we can look forward to a future of service.

Characteristics of Swiss energy

The peculiar characteristics of Swiss energy economy are the result of specific geographic, climatic and other natural conditions of our country, as well as the marks of economy and society within the political structure of our state. The characteristics of Swiss energy production refer therefore not only to the various levels of energy supply and energy sectors but also to organisation and problems of the energy field.

A first consideration in connection with the economic development is the fact that the consumption of energy has increased at a positively turbulent pace. Since 1950, it has quadrupled, largely as a result of an equally strong economic growth of the last decades. This corresponds to an average annual rate of growth of roughly 6%. In absolute figures and expressed in the energy equivalent of crude mineral oil, the total consumption of energy rose from 4.2m tons in 1950 to roughly 16m in 1974.

Within the framework of total energy consumption in Switzerland, the strong position of mineral oil products attracts attention. The following particulars show the proportions of the individual energy sectors in 1974.

Mineral oil	77.4%
Electricity	17.2%
Earth gas	2.2%
Coal	1.9%
Wood	1.3%
	—————
	100.0%

The different physical properties of the above-mentioned types of energy apparently not only influence the volume of demand, but also the form of distribution, i.e. the organisation of allocating energy to the consumer. The liquid fuels contain a very high specific energy contents and offer great handling advantages in transport, storing and consumption. This large range of easily storable, transferable and tradable kinds of energy is particularly suitable to organisations dependent on market economy and thus represents the actual domain of the private enterprise sector in energy production. Provisioning with wood and coal, which, with the exception of handling advantages, show the same characteristics as liquid fuels, is largely based on methods of distribution in private enterprise.

On the other hand, public enterprises dominate very largely in the sector of gas and electricity which are not suitable for storage, or only with difficulty. As far as electricity is concerned, its final distribution rests almost exclusively in the hands of communes, whereas at transport level and that of energy production regional, cantonal and also private enterprises come into play. A similar situation applies to the gas sector whose smallest unit is the communal gas-works.

If one compares the above-mentioned characteristics of energy supply to that of energy demand, it is useful not only to examine the energy sources, but

the practical application. What the consumer, i.e. the final user needs is not fuel oil, electricity or gas, but warmth, mechanical power, chemical energy or light. Warmth above all can be produced by all primary and secondary energy sources. It is thus of crucial importance that by far the largest part of energy is needed for heating. In 1974, 78% of the total energy production was used for warmth. Of this, about 60% went to heating houses and factories, whereas the remaining 40% was used for cooking and industrial production processes. That means that almost half of the total energy consumption went to space heating. 18% of energy used went to mechanical work, i.e. communication and transport first of all, then to appliances and machines in households and industry. Chemical energy used a mere 3.8% and lighting even only 0.2%. This summary shows clearly that the strategic factor in any energy policy must lie basically with all those forms of energy which produce warmth.

With reference to energy consumers, it can be said that industry requires roughly one third of the total energy output, and households, trade and agriculture two thirds. In other words, this means that a very large percentage of energy consumption is directly disposed of by the behaviour of the individuals who also have to carry the responsibility.

Significant characteristics of Swiss energy consumption may