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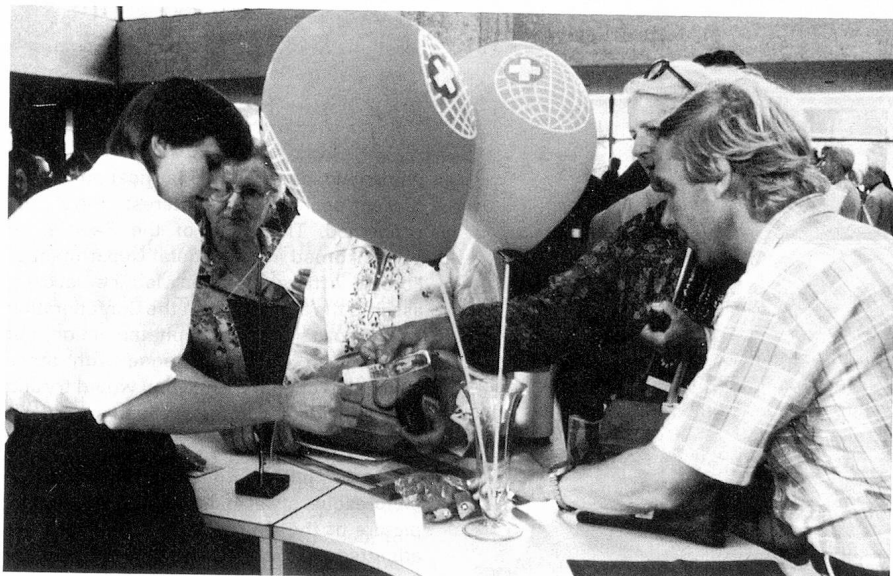
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Communications from the NSH Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad



Assembly of the Swiss abroad 1980: Swiss schools abroad in the centre of discussion



The 58th Assembly of the Swiss abroad was marked by splendid summer weather, a participation of almost 600 and a plenary session in the light of threatening cuts in federal subsidies by the Confederation. The assembly took place in Lugano from 22nd to 24th August 1980. Originally, the theme was to have been «Education and training of young Swiss living abroad» in general, but in effect, it was confined almost entirely to the future of the Swiss schools abroad, towards which there has been a change of attitude by the Confederation in recent months.

Just how opposed the views are on one side of the Organization of the Swiss Abroad and the Auxiliary Committee for the Swiss Schools Abroad (HKASS) and on the other of the federal authorities, was plainly shown by the addresses of the OSA President, Dr. Alfred Weber, the Director of the Federal Office for Culture, Mr Frédéric Dubois, and the President of the HKASS, Mr Philippe Garraux. These speeches opened the plenary session.

The Organization of the Swiss Abroad considers the Swiss schools outside the homeland – 19 are recognized by the Confederation – of utmost importance for the presence of Switzerland abroad. As places of contact, these institutions can make a contribution towards development aid, and by «exporting» educational services, much goodwill for Switzerland can be

created. They play a specially important part in countries where there is a new kind of emigration from Switzerland, viz. a limited stay abroad, and where it matters greatly that the children will have the kind of schooling which will allow them to continue their education without much difficulty once they are back in Switzerland. The Organization of the Swiss Abroad agrees with the

A much appreciated act.



Confederation that the Swiss schools abroad must be adapted to today's needs and requirements, but emphatically does not question the existence of these institutions as such. Here, as well as with the Swiss abroad in general, is not the place where savings should be effected. The OSA has already handed in an explanation to the Confederation that conditions at home cannot be compared with the possibilities and opportunities abroad.

The Confederation is of different opinion. As was made clear by the speech of the Federal Councillor Willi Ritschard, Head of the Federal Department of Finance, in the afternoon, the federal authorities have one aim in view: saving. Relating to the Swiss schools abroad, it means that the 14.3 million Francs which were given by way of subsidies in the past year, will no longer be increased. On the other hand, the authorities want to work out a new mode of support and a different way of distributing the subsidies, which are more flexible and will consider the interest of all and not only a few privileged Swiss children abroad. (At the Swiss schools abroad recognized by the Confederation, about 6000 pupils are instructed in ten countries, of whom 2000 are Swiss, dual nationals or children of Swiss mothers. Except in two cases, teaching is in German). This means that the Confederation wants to withdraw its recognition and support to all those schools where the legally stipulated 30% of Swiss pupils is not reached (Bogotá, Florence, Genoa and Naples). The role played by the Swiss schools abroad in Swiss cultural presence is not considered of importance by the federal authorities for culture; they are of opinion that supporting young Swiss abroad should be the task of economic promotion.

At a round-table discussion led by the Director of the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad, Mr Marcel Ney, the viewpoint of the Swiss abroad was once more underlined. As representatives of a Patron Canton, of Swiss schools abroad and of the HKASS, the following speakers expressed their opinions: Mr Alberto Wirth (Rome), Mr Werner Weber (Singapore), Mr Josef Berger (Curitiba), Mr René Siegenthaler (Bogotá), Mr Alberto Angehrn (Milan), Mr Walter Brunner (Madrid), Mr Moritz Buehlmann (Mexico-City), Mr Sergio Caratti (Bellinzona), Mr Joerg Ruprecht (Hong-Kong), Mr Ugo Guidi (Milan), and Mr Philippe Garraux (Berne). All these speakers expressed conviction that the Swiss schools abroad provided an education of high quality and that they had an important part to play for Switzerland, cultural, economic and politi-



During the plenary assembly.



Committee session of the solidarity fund.

Best foot forward for the «Polonaise».



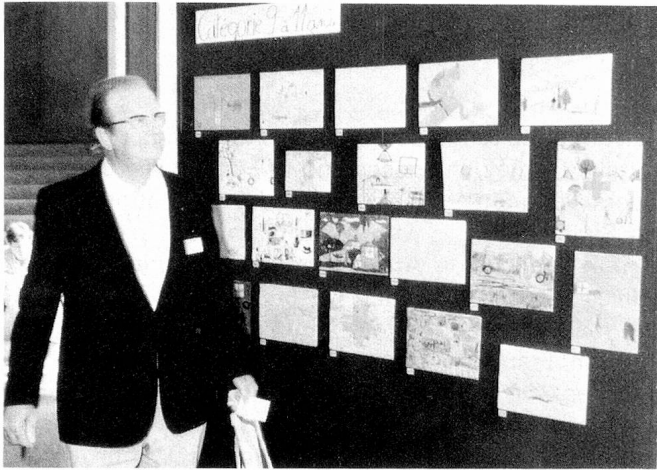
cal, and which could not be expressed in monetary value. It was pointed out that the teachers were feeling insecure by the present situation. The President of the HKASS, Mr Garraux, stated that this should be remedied by an active and well defined long-term policy of the Organization of the Swiss Abroad.

Before the concluding speech by Federal Councillor Ritschard, more Swiss from abroad had an opportunity of voicing their opinion regarding Swiss schools abroad: Mrs Friedel Volz (USA) appealed for the creation of a vocational training schools with general educational courses in North America, whilst Mr Kurt Bruggisser (Florence) pleaded for the continuation of the Swiss school in his town, and Mr Alberto Wirth demanded once more clarification of the present position in the interest of everyone concerned. The Head of the Service for Swiss Abroad in the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Minister Maurice Jaccard, assured the audience that the Confederation would not take any precipitated action, but would keep up the dialogue with those concerned and interested and would try and find individual solutions which would be acceptable to all.

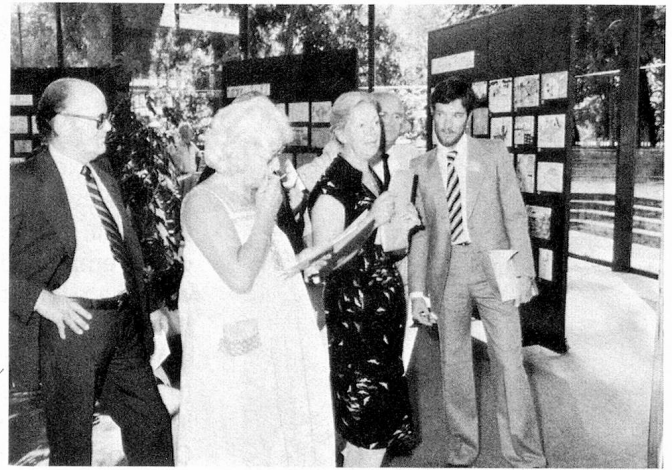
Finance Minister Ritschard in his usual picturesque style, painted a most gloomy picture of the state of federal finances. He admitted that it was not only difficult for foreigners, but also for the Swiss abroad to understand the bad financial situation of «rich Switzerland». He was not going to raise the hopes of the Organization of the Swiss Abroad that their subsidy would be exempt from the general 10% cut made on all subsidies by the Confederation. This was left to President Weber who, in his final speech, expressed the conviction that there was much goodwill in Government and Parliament for the Swiss abroad, more in fact than was obvious from the present situation, and that in the end spiritual values would prevail rather than material ones.

The result of the 58th Assembly was indeed that the public at large and the representatives of the authorities were made aware of the importance of the Swiss schools abroad, so often misunderstood at home, and that the whole problem should not be viewed only from a financial and material aspect. The representatives of the schools could return to their countries with an assurance that the Organization of the Swiss Abroad would concern itself resolutely with the future of the schools and that the federal authorities would not make decisions over their heads.

This, however, does not yet bring the report of the Congress 1980 to a close. For it is not only the memory of the plenary session that participants took back with them – it is the picture of a brilliant week-end in Southern Ticino, of a venue which presented itself from the best possible side, of many con-



An admirer of the drawings of young Swiss abroad.



The special jury at work.

tacts and lots of lovely hours in the company of compatriots from all parts of the world. There were so many opportunities: the official opening in the courtyard of the Palazzo municipale, the meeting of «new-comers», the buffet in the luncheon interval during the plenary session, the dinner and dance with folklore entertainment by the «Otello» group at the congress centre on Saturday evening. The ecumenical service on Sunday morning at the Church of Santa Maria degli Angeli was well attended, followed by an outing by boat to Morcote where a risotto lunch brought the 58th Assembly to an end.

The 29th Congress of the Swiss Abroad will take place in Solothurn in August 1981. It will be devoted to the new form of emigration.

Nelly Haldi

And what about the others?

Of the 19 Swiss schools abroad recognized by the Confederation, eight are in Italy (Milan, Luino, Ponte San Pietro near Bergamo, Genoa, Florence, Rome, Naples and Catania), two in Spain (Barcelona and Madrid), six in Latin America (Mexico-City, Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, Santiago, Lima and Bogotá), one in Africa (Accra, Ghana) and two in East Asia (Singapore and Bangkok). The Swiss school in Curitiba, Brazil, which was founded in the spring of 1980, has not yet been recognized by the Confederation. Regarding the schooling of the large majority of Swiss children abroad who have no Swiss school to attend, the Deputy Director of the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad, Mr Lucien Paillard, gave detailed information based on a questionnaire sent out to Swiss organizations. In Europe as well as in North America, basic schooling opportunities are generally good to satisfactory. This applies also to university studies, whereas conditions are less favourable regarding vocational training in the Swiss sense. In Africa, Asia and Australia, primary and secondary schooling whose quality is satisfactory, can generally be had at foreign private schools only. With few exceptions, the only other possibility is schooling in Switzerland.

Preparation of an excellent risotto.



Very warm welcome in Morcote (Photo Rodo)

