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## Change at the Head of the Organization of Swiss Abroad



### Resignation of Dr. Alfred Weber, former National Councillor

*Dear Compatriots abroad,*

At the March meeting in Berne of the Commission of Swiss Abroad, it was exactly 5 years since I took on the presidency of the Commission. To look after your interests was a duty, but at the same time also a pleasure. I had set my aims at making the Commission of Swiss Abroad a platform for all Swiss abroad and for all their concerns, so that our compatriots outside Switzerland had at their disposal an organization which could offer a substitute for public and private institutions at home. Approximately 350 000 Swiss are scattered all over the world, and have different problems arising from differing circumstances. Our

Organization has as its task to present all these problems, to discuss them and to formulate requests for their solution to the Swiss authorities and the public.

The objective aimed at is considerable and has to be improved by determined and pragmatic means. Much has been achieved, much is being considered at the moment, and at all times, future concerns will have to be taken into account. In the consultative promulgation procedure regarding the total revision of the Federal Constitution, we set forth clearly the position of the Swiss abroad and the guarantee of their constitutional rights. The legal position of children of Swiss mothers abroad will be submitted to a plebiscite next year, and the question of political rights is in preparation. AHV (old-age pension) and Swiss schools abroad are being discussed and depend on special loyalty and solidarity of the compatriots at home, which may be clearly formulated and demanded.

In this wider context, I regard it as right and proper to present topical problems at the annual congresses and even to bring up contentious issues in order to draw the attention of the authorities and the public to the special position of the compatriots abroad

and thus to sensitize them for necessary solutions. Evolution, particularly the tendency to ever stronger nationalistic action in all spheres, the economic situation, the personal, social, economic, cultural and political existence of the individual, require a much more intensive and differentiated way of thinking and of action than hitherto. For our Organization, this means a more flexible structure. Adjustments have to be carried out in small steps if they are to be realized. This corresponds to the typically Swiss manner of thinking and acting. In this, clear deliberation and conviction are decisive. Our compatriots abroad often forget that we in Switzerland, too, have to play according to democratic rules and that finally, democracy is a form of government by patience, in other words that the majority of the people and the Cantons decide and not the majority of a Cabinet or Parliament. Nevertheless, at the end of my presidential term of office, I may confirm that Confederation, Cantons and Communes as well as the population show a great deal of understanding and are ready to express solidarity with their compatriots abroad. I should like to express here the thanks of the Swiss abroad to their home country.



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The Swiss abroad on the other hand may be assured that the organs and the administration of their Organization are representing their interests with competence. For this cooperation which I found splendid, I should also like to express my sincere thanks.

To the new President, Prof. Dr. Walther Hofer, I should like to wish a happy and trouble-free future.

I remain with my best wishes,  
yours sincerely *A. Weber*

From 1963–1979 member of the National Council, amongst others Chairman of the Commission on Foreign Policy and of the Commission on Exterior Economy. From 1968–1980 member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, including chairmanship for ten years of the Commission of Non-represented Countries, one of the tasks being the preparation of Portugal's and Spain's joining the Council of Europe. Twice General Reporter of the Council of Europe and finally Chairman of the Political Commission. From 1970–1974 member of the Executive Committee of the Interparliamentary Union.

During his stays abroad, Prof. Hofer was active in Swiss circles. While in Berlin, he was a member of the Council of the Swiss Society there. During his stay in USA, he was in close contact with his compatriots there, above all with the Swiss Society in New York. He visited a number of Swiss communities abroad during his time as parliamentarian and gave lectures to them. Member of the «Swiss People's Party» at Berne, he is again candidate for the National Council on October 23, 1983.



**Prof. Dr. Walther Hofer  
New President of the Organization of Swiss Abroad**

At the ordinary meeting on 5th March 1983, the delegates to the Commission of Swiss Abroad elected unanimously Prof. Dr. Walther Hofer as the new President of the Organization.

*Curriculum vitae*

Professor of modern history and Director of the Historical Institute of Berne University. Honorary Professor at the University of Diplomacy in Madrid. He has been professor at the University and at the Federal University of Technology (ETH) in Zurich (1947–50), the German University for Politics and Free University in Berlin (1950–59), the Columbia University New York (1959/60), and since then at Berne University. Author of numerous books and essays, above all on modern history, international relations and human rights, on the history of Swiss neutrality as well as on the philosophy and theory of history.

Various lecturing tours, and visiting lecturer at European universities and similar scientific institutions outside Europe.

## **Citizenship Campaign**

### **Good news**

After the Council of States had accepted the equality of rights for both fathers and mothers to pass on Swiss nationality to their children (June 1982), the National Council, too, considered the matter at its extraordinary session in February 1983 and accepted it.

Thus a further hurdle on the path to a change in the law has been successfully taken. The most important hurdle and the most decisive aspect are yet to come: the verdict by the people and the Cantons in a plebiscite which will most probably take place in the course of 1984.

You will be informed in due course in this publication of the date once it is known. And in the meantime we ask you to fill in the form at the Consulate or Embassy where you are registered, so that you will be able to make use of your political rights provided you are in Switzerland at that time. You will then be able to support the citizenship by voting.