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Celebrating the 700-year anniversary abroad

Although the main emphasis of the "Jubilee" programme will be concentrated on information about Switzerland, the Coordination Commission for Swiss Presence Abroad (COCO) is preparing a variegated supplementary programme of events for 1991, ranging from academic colloquies, via folklore evening entertainments to fashion shows.

In the report published in 1988 for the 700-year celebrations of the Confederation's existence, no provision was originally made for organising events outside Switzerland. It was soon realised however that the celebrations would offer a rare opportunity for widening the international diffusion of knowledge about aspects of our country which are little known abroad – or are stereotyped clichés in need of correction. They would also provide a facility for furthering cultural contacts and for strengthening links with the 450,000 expatriate Swiss abroad. So at the end of 1989, COCO was granted a credit amounting to ten million francs for setting up a jubilee programme for realisation outside of the national boundaries.

Wide-ranging information

It is not merely a favourable chance of which we should take advantage, but also a good opportunity for at long last credibly correcting the so frequently



Pro Helvetia touring exhibition: face to face with people from all over Switzerland. (Photo: Doris Quarella)

distorted image of Switzerland that prevails in many countries abroad (as well as home, too!) This objective is to be achieved by the preparation of an ample and multifarious collection of documentary material, including for instance:

- Despatch of press releases and photographs regarding 64 different "Swiss" themes, to some

12,000 magazines and newspapers all over the world.

- Inviting selected journalists to visit Switzerland.
- Arranging for regular reports by *Swiss Radio International* (SRI) to be broadcast regarding the more important events taking place, also for general information and comments on the Switzerland of today and tomorrow. *Expatriate Swiss* will moreover be able, through SRI, to make their views known to the *Federal Council* by using a *special telephone number*. (.. 4131-439743)
- 160 copies, in 25 different language versions, of a *touring exhibition* produced by the cultural Swiss Foundation Pro Helvetia under the title "*Face to face with Switzerland*" will be available together with an accompanying programme on the theme of "Federalism".
- A film "*Faces of Switzerland*", also books, compact discs, and video cassettes concerning aspects of Switzerland will be made available.
- Assistance in arranging for special pavilions in trade fairs and exhibitions, in connection with selected "guests of honour"

On the basis of local initiatives...

Apart from the ambitious information campaign outlined above, the COCO commission, in con-

junction with other collaborating bodies, will be coordinating various other major projects, such as the African tour by the famous Swiss mimes who call their group the "Mummenschanz", and tours by Dimitri in South America and by Opera Factory in Eastern Europe. In this way, the 700th birthday of Switzerland will be celebrated "live" in certain foreign countries. But equally important will be the host of cultural events, performances and shows, big and small that will be arranged to take place in many parts of the world, on the basis of local initiatives. This is one of the objects of the jubilee programme for countries outside Switzerland's borders, namely the satisfaction of the manifold wishes and interests as far as possible, and the rendering of assistance and advice in arranging local festivities in an uncomplicated and colourful manner, with, for instance, an exhibition of the work of young inventors, a carnival "corso"-type procession of flowers and floral "floats", a concert of classical music or – why not? – an open-air tent where everybody can enjoy genuine Swiss "rösti" and grilled "bratwurst" with a glass of beer
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Please look out for details of the "Jubilee Programmes" on the "local" pages of forthcoming issues.

"Day of encounter" in your native place

No fewer than 1,100 Swiss communities – towns, villages and rural communes – are inviting their citizens, male and female, who reside abroad, to visit them on the occasion of the celebrations of the 700-year anniversary. If you are trying to trace your "roots" or to freshen up your recollections of the days of your own youth in the location whose citizenship you possess, you will be very welcome.

Your hosts will have prepared a varied programme for you, one

which you will long remember. Thus for instance, Interlaken is inviting its citizens to show up at 8 a.m. on March 17, 1991, to partake of what they term a "Gemeindezmorge", which can be translated as "Community Breakfast Festival". Cressier will be inviting its visitors to sample the local wines of the 1989 vintage. In Diemerswil (Canton of Berne), visitors will be welcomed to the Harvest Festival. And so on, all over the country. You will doubtless want to know

which communities will be organising a "Day of Encounter" for their expatriate citizens, and the dates for such meetings. You will be able to obtain details about the place and time of the various events, from a brochure in four languages under the title: "Begegnungstag am Heimatort - / Journée de rencontre / Giornata d'incontro / Da sa sentupada". Copies can be obtained from the nearest Swiss representation (embassy or consulate).

In the brochure, you will find a

form for announcing your intention to attend: will you please complete this and send it direct to the local authority (e.g., town clerk or similar) of the locality which you regard as your "home" community.

But please remember: don't wait to get an invitation from your native community to attend their "Day of Encounter". In other words you will have to invite yourself!

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