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Spring meeting of the Council for the Swiss Abroad (CSO)

Current issues – clear positions

Apart from regular business, the Council for the Swiss Abroad discussed recent changes in diplomatic posts, recognition of diplomas and Switzerland's image abroad at its spring session in Berne.

The changes in the network of Swiss embassies and consulates decided upon by the Federal Council (see page 10) were criticised by the CSO, particularly since there had been little advance notice. Representing the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (EDA), Minister Thomas Füglistner, new head of the Service for the Swiss Abroad, admitted that as the

recognised representative of the interests of the Fifth Switzerland the CSO should have been consulted. He commented on each decision and ensured the CSO that the EDA certainly did take the concerns of the Swiss Abroad very seriously.

In a resolution the Council expressed its understanding of the financial problems facing the federal government

and the setting of priorities with respect to diplomatic posts. It nevertheless called upon the authorities to examine any structural changes with regard to long-term effectiveness and to provide better information in future.

Recognition of diplomas

Those holding foreign school-leaving certificates and wishing to study in Switzerland are still faced with serious obstacles. This also applies to Swiss Abroad. The CSO passed a resolution calling for measures both to provide more information and to eliminate exaggerated admission barriers.

Switzerland's image

Several delegates pointed out that following a number of referendum decisions in the last few years, as well as negative headlines on such matters as Zurich's open drug scene, Switzerland's image abroad was worse than it had been for a long time. It was generally felt that it was indispensable for more money to be spent on safeguarding our image. There was also mention of the many different ways in which Swiss Abroad can play a role as «ambassadors» of our country.

The CSO also again recognised new Swiss associations: this time in West Lafayette (USA), Brescia (Italy), Tipperary (Ireland), Valetta (Malta) and Moscow (Russia).

RL

73rd Congress for the Swiss Abroad

Voting rights

The 73rd Congress for the Swiss Abroad is to take place on August 25–27 in Berne and will focus on "The Voting Rights of the Fifth Switzerland" (see Swiss Review 1/95).

Those wishing to be really well informed in advance of the National Council elections on October 24 should on no account miss this event. Information and registration:

Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad
Alpenstrasse 26
CH-3000 Berne 16

25 years at the service of the Fifth Switzerland

On March 1, Bernhard Kolly celebrated 25 years of work at the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad. A month earlier Benito Invernizzi celebrated his 25 years as head of the Solidarity Fund for the Swiss Abroad, an offshoot of the Organisation for the

Swiss Abroad. Hearty congratulations to both!

RL

Bernhard Kolly, talented yodeller and flag-swinger, has worked for 25 years at the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad. (Photo: SSA)



Summer camps

The multisport summer camps organised by the Youth Service of the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad will take place from July 9 to 22 and from July 23 to August 5 at Tenero, Ticino. Further information from:

SSA Youth Service
Alpenstrasse 26
CH-3000 Berne 16

Third post-Congress trip

In the footprints of Gotthelf

After the Congress for the Swiss Abroad (see box), visit Emmental and the Bernese Oberland; immerse yourself in the world of Jermias Gotthelf, behold the fascinating glacier landscape of the Jungfrauoch, enjoy a cruise on Lake Thun, visit a modern manufacturing plant, and lots more! Three very varied days with a programme containing something for everyone. This is the promise of the third post-Congress trip. And all of it for only about Sfr. 760.– (plus the rail journey up to Jungfrauoch).

From August 28–30 you will be taken by the Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad, in conjunction with an excellent travel agency, to one of the finest tourist regions in Switzerland. The accompanying form enables you to obtain more information. Send it directly to:

Kehrli+Oeler
Transport and Travel
Bubenberplatz 9
CH-3001 Berne
Fax: 41 31 312 21 16

I am/we are interested in this trip and would like to receive detailed information.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel./Fax: _____

Last registration date: July 10

Minimum number of participants: 25 / Limited number of places