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Service for the Swiss Abroad

Two new staff members

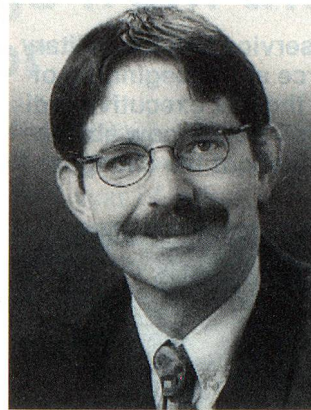
Within a relatively short time two staff changes have taken place at the Service for the Swiss Abroad of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. On June 24 Dieter Gru-



ber took over from Walter Baumann, who has been posted to Dublin. Our new colleague was previously first secretary and consul at the Swiss embassy in Quito, Ecuador, and his post at the Service for the Swiss Abroad is deputy to Minister Füglistler. Dieter Gruber was born in 1945 in Basle where he was educated and obtained a business diploma. After working in the private sector in Basle, Neuchâtel and Portsmouth, UK, he joined the then Political Department in 1970. He has held diplomatic posts in Barcelona, Buenos Aires, Hamburg, Rome, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria and Santiago de Chile. He is married and has two grown-up daughters. His hobby: the world.

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The second change took place on September 18 with Robert Nyffeler taking up the post of legal officer at the Service for the Swiss Abroad. He succeeds Paul Andermatt, and one of his duties will be to edit the



Swiss Review's Official News section. Robert Nyffeler has a law degree from Berne University and has held positions with the Swiss Foundation for Federal Cooperation, as well as in the administration and the courts of cantons Soleure and Berne.

Service for the Swiss Abroad

News from the Foreign Ministry

Something worth reading

A new publication by the Integration Office of the Foreign Affairs and Economic Departments has recently appeared. The brochure, "Europa wächst zusammen" (Europe grows together), is aimed at the general public and gives an overview of the post-Maastricht European Union and Switzerland's position in the European integration landscape. As many copies as desired will be sent free of charge by the EDMZ, CH-3003 Berne, on receipt of a sticky label with your address together with mention of the ordering number and title:

- 201.335 d Europa wächst zusammen
- 201.335 f Faisons l'Europe ensemble
- 201.335 i Facciamo l'Europa insieme

The Foreign Affairs Department also publishes the magazine "Die Schweiz + die Welt" (Switzerland + the World). This comes out three times a year in German, French and Italian, and each number examines Swiss foreign policy issues current at the time. For a sample copy or a subscription (free of charge) write to: Die Schweiz + die Welt, c/o Schaefer Thun AG, Industriestrasse 12, CH-3661 Uetendorf.

ANP

EU gives notice on exchange programme

ERASMUS without Switzerland?

The European Union will not renew the treaty on Swiss participation in the ERASMUS student exchange programme for the academic year 1996/97. The reason given is the linking of ERASMUS to the more comprehensive EU education and training programme SOCRATES, in which Swit-

zerland cannot take part. Those responsible are hoping that an agreement can be reached for Switzerland to join SOCRATES as soon as possible in the bilateral negotiations with the EU.

In the meantime possibilities are being examined of how the federal government might replace the ERASMUS

programme temporarily. They might provide exchange scholarships and take other flanking measures. In this way Swiss education and training bodies could continue the exchange programmes within the existing framework.

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1995 Swiss Abroad statistics

13,265 new registrations

At the end of June this year 528,148 Swiss citizens were registered with Swiss embassies and consulates. This is an increase of 13,265 – or 2.58% – over the same date the year before. 364,182 Swiss Abroad (about 69%)

are dual nationals, and 6 out of 10 live in European Union member states.

56,875 Swiss Abroad entitled to vote (over 14%) have registered to do so at their diplomatic post. According to the Federal Chancel-

lery, on June 25 of this year as many as 59,868 Swiss Abroad were listed on the voting registers of Swiss municipalities. The discrepancy between the two figures arises from the fact that Swiss citizens resident in the

Principality of Liechtenstein as well as a few special cases are not included in the official Swiss Abroad statistics.

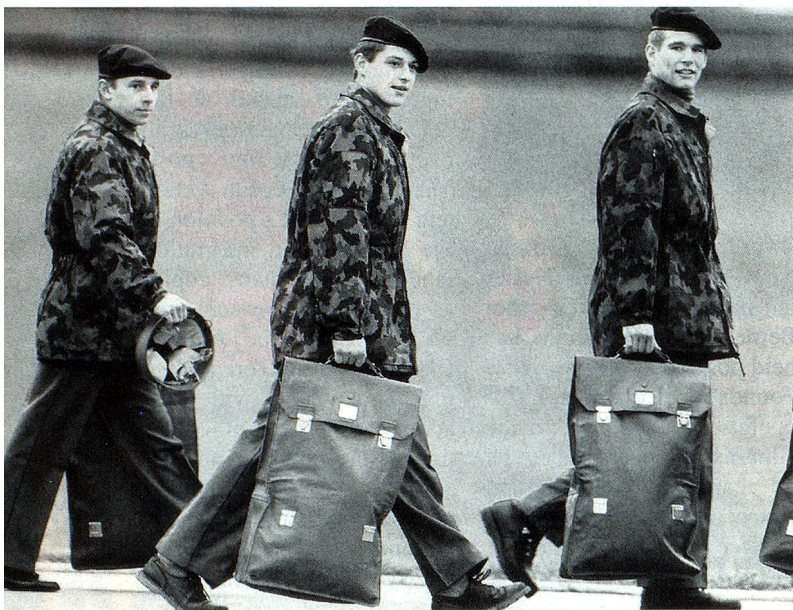
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Military service and the military exemption tax

Call up until 25 only

New provisions on military service and the military exemption tax came into force at the beginning of 1995. After final approval of the last executive ordinances by the Federal Council we are now able to provide concrete information about the changes.



On January 1, 1995, a Swiss Abroad liable to military service who has resided abroad without interruption for longer than six years and is no longer required by the army will be called up upon returning to Switzerland only on request. A young Swiss Abroad who takes up residence in Switzerland may be called up until the end of the calendar year in which he completes his 25th year (previously 28). If he is found fit for military service on call up

he may be required to do basic training until the end of the calendar year in which he completes his 27th year (pre-

viously 30). It is possible on request to defer basic training until the age of 32.

From fiscal 1995 fixing and paying the military exemption tax takes place in principle either before or after the period of residence abroad and is a matter for the canton of residence. This means that Swiss diplomatic posts abroad (embassies and consulates) are no longer responsible. The previous regulation by which the military exemption tax does not need to be paid after three years spent abroad is maintained. In principle, the military ex-

Recruits on basic cycle training in Romont, Canton Fribourg.
(Photo: Keystone)

emption tax amounts to 2% of taxable income, but not less than Sfr. 150.-.
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Initiatives in brief

“Yes to Europe!”

The popular initiative “Yes to Europe!” wants Switzerland to join the European Union and demands the immediate opening of negotiations to this end. When these have been concluded the people and the cantons should have the final say on whether Switzerland should become a member.

During the negotiations and the adaptation of Swiss law appropriate measures should be taken to maintain fundamental democratic and federalist values and social and ecological achievements. In addition, the powers of the cantons must be taken into

account and their interests protected.

This initiative was started by five pro-European associations, including the youth movement “Born on December 7”, which has already handed in an initiative aimed at joining the EEA. In addition, collection of signatures has now been completed for a third initiative on European policy by the Swiss Democrats and the Ticino League. This demands that the people and the cantons should decide whether EU entry negotiations should be started at all.

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Current popular initiatives

The following popular initiatives are still open for signature:

To reduce by half motorised road traffic in order to maintain and improve living space (traffic reduction initiative) – until March 20, 1996

Beat Schweingruber, Seefeldstr. 102, P.O. Box, CH-8034 Zurich

For a flexible state pension scheme (AHV) – against raising the pensionable age for women – until May 15, 1996

Rita Schmid Göldi, Hans-Huber-Strasse 4, P.O. Box 687, CH-8027 Zurich

For a flexible pensionable age for men and women after 62 – until May 22, 1996

Green Party of Switzerland, Bernhard Pulver, Waisenhausplatz 21, CH-3011 Berne

For guaranteeing the state pension scheme (AHV) – to tax energy instead of work – until May 22, 1996

Green Party of Switzerland, Bernhard Pulver, Waisenhausplatz 21, CH-3011 Berne

Halt to the debt economy! – until July 31, 1996

National Association of Independents (LdU), Rudolf Hofer, Gutenbergstrasse 9, CH-3011 Berne

Yes to Europe! –

until August 21, 1996
Reto Wiesli, P.O. Box 22, CH-3000 Berne 15

No hydroplanes on Swiss lakes! –

until October 25, 1996
Franz Weber, Helvetia Nostra Foundation, P.O. Box, CH-1820 Montreux (SR 6/95 Urnengang)

For a Swiss army equipped with livestock (the carrier pigeon initiative) –

until November 23, 1996
Thomas Fuchs, Niederbottigenweg 101, CH-3018 Berne-Niederbottigen

Against an unjust VAT on sport and in the social field (the Swiss sport and charities initiative) –

until November 23, 1996
Marco Blatter, Haus des Sportes, Laubeggstrasse 70, P.O. Box 202, CH-3000 Berne 32

For a people's value added tax – until January 11, 1997

The Ticino League, Giuliano Bignasca, via Monte Boglia 3, CH-6900 Lugano

Moderation in immigration! – until March 12, 1997

The Swiss Democrats, Bernhard Hess, P.O. Box 8116, CH-3001 Berne

New from January 1996

Age of majority at 18

The age of majority will be reduced from 20 to 18 as of January 1, 1996. This means that contracts, marriages, etc. may be legally concluded under Swiss law from the age of 18.

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