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Swiss Radio International

Still more information in French

Broadcasts on Swiss Radio International (SRI) in French, and intended for Swiss Abroad, have made considerable progress over the last six months. Within the framework of intercontinental news bulletins, the Swiss section has increased from 50% to 66% in relation to international news. Every last Saturday of the month, "Swiss Contact" offers assistance to Swiss Abroad by replying to their questions (on old age insurance, illness, education for children, etc.).

The preparation, production and broadcasting of SRI's programmes in French are carried out by a team of 17 persons employed in Berne and Geneva. Some forty cor-

respondents provide material for the international section of the news. Modern editorial methods are used, and the journalists specialise in their specific areas. The team works with state-of-the-art technical equipment. The change from analogue technology (recorders, magnetic tapes) to digital technology (networks, computers, absence of hard copy) took place in 1995, making it possible to release internal staff in order to carry out reports and interviews in the field in Switzerland.

SRI's overriding mission is to inform Swiss citizens abroad, and its second priority concerns the country's image. To provide support for this image, SRI naturally

talks about Switzerland, but also seeks to give the Swiss viewpoint regarding world news. Its French channel is currently highly successful in its search for partner radio companies interested in receiving world news "made in Switzerland", i.e. precise, timely, independent and of excellent quality. The channel has created a network of partner radio companies in France, Belgium, Guyana, Guadeloupe, and the islands of Mauritius and Mayotte. It signed its first African partnership with Sud FM in Senegal and has made initial contacts in Haiti and Canada.

In Africa, on the strength of Switzerland's experience in the field of political, cul-

tural and religious diversity, SRI wishes to play a major supportive role in stabilising democracy and political diversity. For some ten radio companies, SRI's French channel will supply news aimed at promoting dialogue and opening up African audiences to world developments. Cooperation between Africa and Switzerland will also include training for radio staff in Africa and a magazine programme produced jointly with its African partners and broadcast via SRI's carriers.

Philippe Zahno,
manager of the French-language channel ■

150 years as a federal state

Visit Switzerland in 1998

Seven years after the 700-year anniversary Switzerland will soon have another reason to celebrate. In 1998, modern Switzerland will be 150 years old. In contrast to 1991 when the whole of Switzerland honoured the founding of the old confederation, in 1998 there will be several jubilees. The Peace of Westphalia in 1648 marked the first international recognition of Swiss neutrality, and the founding of the Helvetic Republic in 1798 brought the Old Confederation to an end.

But the time of the Helvetic Republic in particular is not a reason to celebrate for all cantons since it is associated with painful recollections of defeat at the hands of the French army and a new political order imposed from abroad. On the other hand, some cantons owe their existence to French intervention or were freed from their status of underdogs. So it is not surprising that opinions about the 1998 commemorative year diverge

greatly. In consequence, it will be only 1848 which is celebrated at the Swiss national level, and individual cantons will be left to change their focal points as they like.

The festivities will open in January 1998 and will extend throughout the entire year. The main event, a huge festival, will be held on September 12. In addition, there will be regional and cantonal celebrations as well as a series of projects involving publications, travelling exhibitions, etc.

1998 will see two events of particular interest to the Swiss Abroad: the Congress of the Swiss Abroad, to be held on August 20-23 in Aargau (see page 19) and the Ping-Pong Scheme. Born in 1991 with the name Encounter, Ping-Pong permits Swiss Abroad to stay as guests in a Swiss family or to receive a Swiss family in their own homes. This year's sponsor canton is Schwyz, and next year it will be the turn of Aargau.

1998 should allow a particularly large number of our compatriots to take advantage of this valuable and enriching opportunity for encounter, enabling them to take part in the Congress of the Swiss Abroad and/or the jubilee events. You may obtain more information by sending in the accompanying form.

RL ■

Request for information

Please send me an information kit and an application form for the «Swiss Ping Pong» scheme (do write clearly).

Mr./Mrs./Family: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Country: _____

Preferred language: _____

Please send to: Stapferhaus Lenzburg, «Swiss Ping Pong», Schloss Lenzburg, CH-5600 Lenzburg, fax: 41 62 892 07 57