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Swiss Radio International – sight and sound!

How radio gets into television

Under Swiss Radio and TV law, SRI is to “promote the presence of Switzerland abroad”. It has done this successfully for over 50 years as the “Voice of Switzerland”. But since 1987 it has been endeavouring to show a picture of Switzerland abroad with TV programmes too.

In 1987, CNN indicated its interest in Swiss contributions for its “World Report”, and who could say “No” to the chance of broadcasting to an audience of millions on every continent? But how could we say “Yes” without having an English-language TV service of our own? SRI did not hesitate and took on the production of a weekly contribution. Admittedly it did not have any TV experience but it did know a lot about the international media market and had an English-speaking editorial team. The Coordinating Commission for the Presence of Switzerland Abroad (COCO) which is interested in an efficient portrayal of our country to the world, agreed cover the cost.

Once a weekly TV news programme was well in hand, it seemed natural to

progress to a monthly magazine. COCO was enthusiastic about this idea and gave the go-ahead in 1990 for the production of the English-language “Swiss World”. Within a year, this half-hour monthly magazine was being beamed on over 30 networks with over 200 million potential viewers.

But there were still none of the oft-requested TV programmes for Swiss living abroad. Here again SRI took the plunge: Together with the 3Sat editorial team of the German-Swiss Television, it developed a version of the weekly magazine “Bilder aus der Schweiz” (Pictures from Switzerland) tailored to viewers outside Europe. It is now broadcast by ATN Los Angeles “German TV in America” for some 10 million German-speaking viewers in the USA. We did

not stop there, however: Since May 1993, SRI has been producing a French-language version of “Swiss World” reaching major audiences mainly in North America and French-speaking Africa.

What happens now?

SRI is a radio station and, by law, that’s what it has to remain. However, that self-same law does not prohibit it from using its special skills and expertise in the field of television provided that it doesn’t use any of the funds allocated to it for its radio programmes. So SRI will continue to take as literally as possible its mission of helping to show a picture of Switzerland to the world. Its partners are the TV studios of SBC (Swiss Broadcasting Corporation) as well as companies and institutions with specific interests abroad. First and foremost of these is COCO, on which SBC and SRI are represented. On its instructions and with its financial backing, SRI contributes to a Swiss TV presence in the world that meets the growing demands of Switzerland’s self-portrayal all over the globe and the interests of Swiss living abroad.

Walter Fankhauser, SRI ■



Paracelsus (1493–1541), seen in a contemporary wood engraving. The background is idealised and the sword oversized!

Born 500 years ago

Switzerland remembers Paracelsus

On December 17, 1493, Philippus Aureolus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim, better known today as Paracelsus, was born near Einsiedeln, Schwyz. As the son of a doctor, Paracelsus learned about medicinal skill – as it was then known – and soon applied himself to the mysteries of alchemy. In contrast to most alchemists of the day, however, he was not interested in turning base metal into gold but in helping to reduce suffering. He gradually worked out a scientific system of his own, becoming one of the founders of modern medicine.

Paracelsus was at once famous and an object of suspicion. He was invited to teach at the University of Basle but was soon forced to leave the city. For as soon as he got there he sent out leaflets to tell allcomers that it was his intention to turn the world of medicine inside out. He was not there to teach dry theory from old books but to give useful in-

struction in practical matters. His language of teaching was no longer to be “dead” Latin but “living” German. These revolutionary ideas put his colleagues and superiors against him to such an extent that he had to flee the city to avoid arrest.

Paracelsus spent the rest of his life wandering from place to place throughout the German-speaking world. His wanderings eventually ended in death at the age of 48 in circumstances which have never been unveiled. He is supposed to have written more than 350 treatises, but very few have survived. His most famous studies were on the subject of syphilis, which had reached Europe from America and was spreading like a plague.

Franz Auf der Maur ■

A memorial exhibition for the 500th anniversary of the birth of Paracelsus will be held at Einsiedeln from August 1 to November 14, 1993.