

NEWSLETTER OF THE EMBASSY OF SWITZERLAND IN IRAN

100 years of Diplomatic Presence



Switzerland.

Iran.



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**Dear members of the Swiss community in Iran,
Dear friends of Switzerland,**

It is a pleasure for me to address you via this newsletter, the first such bulletin of the Swiss Embassy. Its purpose is to inform the Swiss community in Iran as well as friends of Switzerland about recent developments in the relations between Switzerland and Iran, and to provide you with a picture of some of the Embassy's activities.

Since we are celebrating 100 years of diplomatic presence in Iran, it is also a welcome opportunity to provide an overview over some of the features and persons who have characterized the relations between the two countries.

As we start the second centenary, we are celebrating with a wide range of activities: music, films, literature, exhibitions, arts...

Don't forget to follow us on [Instagram](#) and on [Twitter](#) if you wish to stay up-to-date! I would be delighted to see you on one of these occasions.

**Markus Leitner
Ambassador**

100 YEARS IS JUST A START...

The early Swiss presence in Persia was economic. In particular, **watchmakers and textile merchants** discovered Safavid Iran during the 17th and 18th centuries. The trade relations expanded in the Qajar era, mainly via Beirut, Smyrna and Constantinople – so much so that the Swiss Trade and Customs Minister proposed to the Swiss government to conclude a trade and friendship treaty “in order to make sure that Swiss traders enjoy the same benefits as other most favored nations” (1857).

Swiss trade consisted mainly in exporting textiles, watches, but also musical boxes and enamel to Persia. A **treaty of Friendship and Trade** – certainly one of the most beautiful documents conserved in the Swiss Federal Archives - was signed during Nasereddin Shah's five-day visit in Geneva in July 1873. It is said that the crowd welcoming the Shah was so dense that it took his carriage more than an hour to pass 700 meters.



Page from the Treaty of Friendship and Commerce between Switzerland and Persia (1873, © Swiss Federal Archives)

While trade intensified further, relations between Switzerland and Iran soon gained in latitude and depth. In the beginning of the 20th century, growing numbers of Iranians started to pursue their **academic studies** in Switzerland. One of the most renowned Iranian students in Switzerland was **Mohammad Mosaddegh**, who studied law at University of Neuchâtel, where, as he felt, he “could study without fearing distraction by other activities or amusements”.

In March 1919, the **first Persian Minister (Ambassador)** submits its letters of credence to the Swiss Federal Council in Berne. Some months later, on 4th November 1919, the Federal Council decided to establish an **Honorary Consulate in Persia**, since the small number of Swiss residing in Persia could not justify the opening of a professional representation. The first Honorary Consul of Switzerland, Heinrich Hildebrand, inaugurated the Honorary Consulate on the Swiss National Day – the 1st August 1920.



LES RÉCEPTIONS DU JOUR DE L'AN A BERNE

Les Missions diplomatiques quittent le Palais fédéral, après avoir présenté leurs souhaits au Président de la Confédération.

Le ministre de Perse, S. E. Emir Sabahhedin-Khan-Ghaffery-Soka-ed-Daouleh.

Phot. Keller, Berne.

Zoka ad-Dowleh (center), the first diplomatic representative of Iran in Switzerland, leaving the Federal Palace after the official New Year reception by the President of the Swiss Confederation. La Patrie Suisse, 7.1.1920



LES SUISSES DE TEHERAN (PERSE)

réunis à l'occasion du 1^{er} août 1920 et pour marquer l'inauguration du premier consulat suisse en Perse.

Au fond, à gauche, M Hildebrand, consul.

Honorary Consul Heinrich Hildebrand (left). The picture was taken on the Swiss National Day, 1st August 1920. La Patrie Suisse, 19.1.1921

The attraction Iran presented for many Swiss is particularly evident in photographs of the 1920 and 1930s. The spectacular aerial pictures that the aviation pioneer and photographer **Walter Mittelholzer** shot in 1924/1925 are of great historical value and were printed in highly popular books. **Annemarie Schwarzenbach** and **Ella**

Maillard have inspired generations with their travels to Iran in the 1930s – both have left impressive texts and photographs. The same is true for **Nicolas Bouvier**, whose opus “*L’usage du monde*” gives an impressive account of his travels through Iran in the mid-1950s.



Women and Child in Shiraz, picture by Annemarie Schwarzenbach (unknown date). © [Swiss Literary Archives](#)

In the 1930s, the **Swiss private sector**, in particular the Swiss machine industry, watchmakers and chemical industry, pressured the Swiss government to upgrade the Honorary Consulate into a full-fledged Embassy. The Swiss companies noted that competitors had better access to the Iranian market because their respective Embassies could support them. In 1936, the Swiss government sent Armin Daeniker as its first professional diplomat to Tehran.

Another impressive aspect of our common history is the **academic and scientific interest** for Iran. **Fritz Meier**, the Swiss Islamic scholar, gained his doctorate at the age of 25, with a thesis on Shaykh Abu Ishaq al-Kazaruni, in 1937. He traveled to Iran the same year

and presented his research on Najm ad-Din Kubra the year after, just to embark on a major work on the Persian poetess Mahsati in 1941. Meier was the first academic to describe the daily activities and spiritual experiences of a mystic. At the age of 34, Meier was appointed maître de conférences for Persian philology at the Farouq University of Alexandria, where he taught Persian in Arabic. His handwritten course is still conserved at the University of Basel, where he continued to teach for 33 more years. His editions of medieval Persian and Arabic texts, his studies of the mystics Abu Said-i Abu I-Khayr and about Mawlana Rumi's father Baha-i Walad, about sufism, Persian poetry, popular culture, literature and linguistics were groundbreaking in their fields. In 1974,

he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Tehran. Other Swiss researchers such as **Hermann Landolt**, **Rudolf Gelpke**, and a German professor at the University of Bern, **J.Chr. Bürgel**, contributed to the knowledge and outreach of Persian literature and Persian mysticism. **Micheline Centlivres-Demont** contributed to the development of the – now famous – Meybod pottery through her doctoral thesis of 1971. **Alexandre Moser**, a

Swiss architect, helped to plan and supervise the construction of the University of Tehran's Faculty of Fine Arts in the 1940s, and the Swiss linguist **Georges Redard** was a pioneer in studying the linguistic diversity of Iran and Afghanistan.

In the 1950s, Swiss geologists invited by **Arnold Heim** were entrusted by the Iran Oil Company to carry out research and expeditions – and ended up discovering an important oil field in 1956 close to Qom.

Pour le philologue d'aujourd'hui, la jeep remplace les bibliothèques

Un professeur de l'Université de Neuchâtel a traversé les déserts d'Iran pour étudier les dialectes persans

M. Georges Redard, professeur de linguistique à l'Université de Neuchâtel, vient de passer neuf mois en Iran où il était l'hôte du gouverneur de M. Mossadegh. Le jeune professeur neuchâtelois, qui s'est voué plus particulièrement à l'étude des langues orientales, s'intéresse aux dialectes iraniens modernes et son désir était d'en avoir une connaissance directe. Aussi l'invitation lui-elle bienvenue et M. Redard visita Téhéran en se fixant trois objectifs : se perfectionner dans l'usage de la langue parlée, établir des ressources de travail et, enfin, entreprendre des recherches dans le centre de l'Iran.

M. Redard a bien voulu nous recevoir et évoquer pour nous son séjour et ses voyages en Iran. Ce pays, certes, ne nous est pas inconnu. L'actualité se charge de nous en parler chaque jour, mais il s'agit surtout de politique intérieure et extérieure et c'est là un sujet sur lequel M. Redard ne peut qu'être discret...

Notre compatriote passa d'abord deux mois à Téhéran, où il put entreprendre divers travaux à l'Université et à l'Institut franco-iranien. La vie dans la capitale se ressent des événements internationaux. Il fut une permission pour tout, pour photographier, pour filmer ou pour s'éloigner de Téhéran au delà de 40 kilomètres. L'anglophobie est virulente. Mais, en dépit de cela, l'existence des étrangers n'est pas menacée. La culture française, par con-

tre-coup, est solidement implantée dans la capitale, où un journal paraît même dans notre langue. On s'intéresse à la Suisse puisque M. Redard fut prié de donner une conférence sur : « La Confédération suisse et le fédéralisme ».

Le professeur neuchâtelois mit à profit ces deux premiers mois pour préparer un voyage qui devait le mener dans le désert central d'Iran et jusqu'aux frontières de l'Afghanistan et du Pakistan.

D. B.

(Lire la suite en 8^{me} page)



Un campement de la mission Redard-Frye-Barr dans le « désert de sel » entre les localités de Djandag et Khur.

(Phot. R. N. Frye)

Article on Swiss linguist Georges Redard, studying Persian dialects in Iran. Feuilles d'Avis de Neuchâtel, 27.6.1952

During the Second World War, Iran asked Switzerland to **represent its interests** in Germany and Italy (1941), mandates that were later extended to the countries occupied by Germany, and that ended with the end of the war. This early mandate underlines that by the 1940s, Switzerland and Iran had developed a trustful relationship, which continues to prevail to this day. Iran has entrusted Switzerland with representing its interests in Egypt (1979), in Saudi Arabia (2017) and in Canada (2019), whereas Switzerland represents the USA and Saudi Arabia in Iran.

In more recent times, the relations of our two countries have continued to deepen. The **Swiss President Johann Schneider-Ammann** visited Tehran in 2016, while the **Iranian President Hassan Rouhani** visited Bern in 2018. Both countries have agreed on a road map addressing issues of mutual interest. Over the past 100 years, solid foundations have been built. The Swiss Embassy in Tehran continues to foster the relations between the two countries.

... AND IT'S STILL GROWING: SOME MILESTONES IN 2019

In **February**, the first Swiss-Iranian workshop on **intellectual property** took place, followed by a seminar in April, and by the signing in October of a Memorandum of Understanding on a common project starting in 2020.

In **March**, Bernard Lehmann, Director of the Federal Office of **Agriculture**, signed a Letter of Intent to deepen collaboration in the field of agriculture.

The severe **floods** that affected Iran in **March and April** triggered quick **Swiss support**. Water and sanitation material as well as Swiss experts were dispatched to assist Iran in coping with the catastrophe.

In **May**, UNICEF Iran in collaboration with Iran-Switzerland Chamber of Commerce and Tehran Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines, and Agriculture with the support of the Embassy of Switzerland in Iran conducted a one-day technical session for businesses in the food industry on **improving child nutrition** in Iran. The objective of the session was raising awareness and inspiring positive action among Iranian food companies.

Equally in **May**, the first Swiss-Iranian workshop on **water diplomacy** brought experts from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and of Energy, as well as from the Geneva Water Hub together. Swiss and Iranian participants shared experience in dealing with transboundary water management.

In **June**, an official **science delegation** from the Iranian Ministry of Science, Research and Technology, from the Ministry of Health and chancellors of different Iranian Universities visited Switzerland. A delegation of Iranian researchers accompanied them. They participated in a joint research workshop, organized by the *Zürcher Fachhochschule für angewandte Wissenschaften*. The aim of the visit was to deepen the bilateral scientific relations between Iran and Switzerland.

The water theme continued in **July** with a “**water week**” around start-ups and innovation in the water sector, where the Swiss organization CEWAS partnered with the Ministry of Energy’s Satkab, and explored ways for further cooperation, bringing water, innovation, and youth together.

August started – as it should be – with the celebration of the Swiss National Day and the launch of the 100 years jubilee of diplomatic presence in Iran.

In **November**, the Joint Economic Commission between Switzerland and Iran that took place in Berne. Both delegations exchanged about economic relations of the two countries.

In **December**, we inaugurated an **exhibition at the Institute for Political and International Studies (IPIS)** showing diplomatic reference documents and photographs, with a roundtable on the history of our bilateral relations.



Pegasus members Stefan Brønner, Noah Veraguth, and Gabriel Spahni on stage at the Swiss Embassy in Tehran, 2019 © FDFA

CONSULAR AFFAIRS

The *Foyer Suisse*, the **platform for Swiss citizens living in Iran**, offers different activities, some with the support of the Swiss Embassy. If you are interested to join the Foyer during one of their meetings, please contact Mrs. Denise Ghalaey (+98 912 295 2903)

The **opening hours** of the Embassy desk and the Visa section remain unchanged.

	Embassy Desk	Visa Section
Monday	8.00-12.00	9.00-10.00
Tuesday	8.00-12.00	9.00-10.00
Wednesday	8.00-12.00	9.00-10.00
Thursday	8.00-12.00	9.00-10.00
Friday	<i>closed</i>	<i>closed</i>
Saturday	<i>closed</i>	<i>closed</i>
Sunday	8.00-12.00	9.00-10.00

In case you need more information, please visit the embassy's [website](#).

A new service of the Swiss Government for its citizens is the **revised [Travel Admin App](#)**. Persons travelling or living abroad may register their location or travel itinerary in the app. In case of

crisis, the app sends a warning to the person's mobile phone and provides the location and contact details of the nearest Swiss representation. Apart from those features hopefully never

needed, the app provides further assistance such as checklists before travel or the attachment of a copy of the passport or insurance.

An important change that took place in the day-to-day business of the embassy concerned the **Visa Section**. As of September 2018, the Swiss Embassy in

Tehran entrusted the handling of visa applications to [VFS Global](#). This proved to be a fruitful step, for the Embassy as well as the applicants. Waiting times could thus be reduced. A further innovation is the new design of the **visa sticker**, which came into use on 1 December 2019.

LET'S STAY IN TOUCH!

This Newsletter can also be read on the [Embassy's webpage](#). If you would like stay updated on the latest news and activities of the Embassy of Switzerland in Iran, feel free to follow us:



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