

ICASSI 2000 Zuoz, Switzerland

The Site:

A former participant was so excited to hear that ICASSI 2000 was to be held in Switzerland that he not only donated money, but also helped us to find a very special location for our summer school: the famous Lyceum Alpinum at Zuoz, 1750 meters above sea level. This beautiful 19th Century boarding school is located in the middle of stunning mountain scenery, overlooking the alpine village of Zuoz. Although an internationally renowned school for the sons and daughters of the very rich, the Lyceum has quite modest boarding facilities. Those who wanted to be more comfortably housed had to stay off campus in one of the charming little hotels nearby, but meals for all participants were served in the dining hall of the Lyceum – Swiss food at its very best. The drawback: most of us gained weight.

Our sponsor knew about the importance of informal gatherings after bloc 4 – that is why he arranged for a spacious bar at the Lyceum. There we could sit, drink and sing all night long, while a professional barman fulfilled our most sophisticated wishes. (His mojito is unforgettable.)

The Plenary Sessions and the Courses:

Every morning at 9 o'clock the auditorium was jam-packed. From previous years we knew that the participants were not always that eager to leave their beds at 7:30 in the morning, so what was the reason for such a miracle? The reason was very prosaic: The auditorium did not have enough room for everyone and so those who wanted to attend Bloc 1 had to be punctual – it was like playing the party game 'musical chairs' – nobody wanted to be the one left standing.

The large faculty of 41 members consisted of the well-established old hands, strengthened by several newcomers. The classes, as always at ICASSI, were greatly enjoyable: Multicultural groups of students learning from their teachers and from each other in the spirit of true equality. The feedback was correspondingly enthusiastic.

The Participants:

ICASSI 2000 was one of the largest: 358 participants from 23 nations: 3 Australians, 4 Austrians, 1 Bulgarian, 15 Canadians, 1 Chinese, 1 Estonian, 55 Germans, 3 Greeks, 2 from Hong Kong, 1 Hungarian, 9 Israeli, 4 Japanese, 2 Latvians, 8 Lithuanians, 4 Maltese, 2 Dutch, 4 Norwegians, 8 Puerto Ricans, 2 Romanians, 114 Swiss, 1 Turk, 10 from the UK and 104 from USA. Together the combined total of participants and faculty came to 399!

This of course meant a lot of work for the Chairs, the Board, the administrator, the secretaries, as well as for the friendly, highly professional staff of the lyceum. Working together in a truly Adlerian way, all the various problems, complaints and wishes could be met to satisfaction, and the summer school became a big success.

The Cabin:

A great number of scholarship students attended, twelve of them from former Soviet countries - an impressive result of the ICASSI outreach program.

A Swiss member of staff who had given workshops in Eastern Europe, and knew of the difficult financial situation intellectuals faced there, organized a cabin with inexpensive lodgings. The worries of the organizers that the boarders might feel cut off, and slighted, turned out to be unfounded. In the end it was quite the reverse: The spacious cabin kitchen became the site of the young and the wild, famous for its international al cooking, international drinking, international music, and international flirting.



The Weather:

At the opening ceremony the participants were informed that the Engadin valley, where Zuoz is situated, was by reputation the 'sun-chamber of Switzerland'. But I am afraid that the weather was just disastrous! It was wet and cold, and the beautiful scenery was hidden behind dark clouds. From time to time a dramatic thunderstorm would break, forcing the teachers to stop their lecturing until they could be heard again. As a Swiss representative, I felt personally responsible for the weather and felt badly about this. Fortunately, just in time for the weekend, the weather cleared up and the excursions were all a big success.

The Excursions:

Switzerland is so small – if you take a big leap you end up in Italy. For those who wanted to take it easy this is exactly what they did. They just climbed onto the red world heritage train, enjoyed

the gorgeous scenery of lakes and mountains, crossed the border, had an Italian meal, and were back in time for the opening ceremony of the second week. The tougher and more adventurous ones went hiking over rocks and through creeks, and even over a glacier. Those interested in cultural events could explore the splendid villages in the locality, rich with historical monuments, or go to a concert at St. Moritz.

First of August:

ICASSI had an unofficial support group of enthusiastic Swiss Adlerians who were active long before the summer school started. It is impossible to do justice to all of their wonderful planning concerning weekend excursions, cultural ventures and folkloric events. Of course, we celebrated our Swiss national day with all the frills: Yodeling, dancing, alphorn playing, and fireworks.

It seemed however, that many of the non-Swiss participants found the silent fires, burning high up in the mountains through the night, even more impressive and awe-inspiring. For us Swiss it was very touching to celebrate the birth of our nation in the company of friends from the world over, all with a strong belief in democracy.