

# 20 years of co-operative solidarity fund for Swiss abroad

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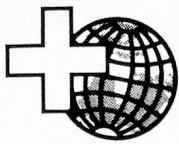
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# 20 years of Co-operative Solidarity Fund for Swiss abroad

## In Retrospect

### Who ventures, wins – not always!

Tens of thousands of Swiss abroad have become victims of war, **strike and political/economical upheavals** since the beginning of the 20th century. No insurance provides cover for such events and resulting damages. It was obvious quite soon that every country looks after its citizens, but is not willing to assist other nationals resident in it. **Interstate agreements** in this field proved to be difficult if they could be reached at all, in which case the results of long negotiations were mostly inadequate. The question of assistance to repatriated Swiss brought about passionate discussions in Switzerland.

### Legal claim instead of assistance

The Second World War meant over 80 000 repatriates for Switzerland. They had lost hundreds of millions. In a number of countries, especially in the colonies, measures were taken in the course of national aspiration (for instance nationalisation, the ruling that natives only should get certain jobs etc.). This meant that many Swiss lost all their goods and chattels. The problem of insuring against the loss of livelihood abroad became once again grievously topical. It became clear that any effective settlement would have to be arranged by the Swiss abroad himself in the first place: for it is by his own free will that a Swiss goes abroad and consequently also on his own responsibility. Such experiences induced the Swiss in Italy to create a «Mutua» during the Second World War. Instead of state charity a **legal claim**: with this, the idea of a world-wide alliance of Swiss abroad for mutual solidarity was born.

### An idea makes its way

This is where the **New Helvetic Society** made an appearance, for the realization of such an idea met with numerous difficulties of financial, legal, political and even psychological nature. In 1950, a **commission** was formed by the N. H. S., to which belonged first-class experts from private industry and representatives of various official institutions and offices. The members of this group showed idealism and a sense of reality, and above all unshakable devotion to their task. They found a most original solution which combined insurance of one's livelihood with savings. At the Assembly of the Swiss Abroad in Baden (Aargau) on 29th August 1958, the «**Co-operative Solidarity Fund for Swiss Abroad**» was founded. Today, it is celebrating its 20th anniversary!

### From a «Golden Vreneli» to 21 million francs

On 1st January 1959, the Solidarity Fund began its activities. Its capital consisted of the founders' strong determination and a «Golden Vreneli» which a Swiss from London had solemnly presented to the Fund as a symbol. «**Mach's nah**» is inscribed somewhere on the Cathedral of Berne («I defy anyone to do the same»). Actually already in the first year, 2725 members from over 70 countries all over the world joined. (Today, 127 countries are represented in the Fund, and the relief fund alone stands at 21 million francs). The idea of the founders had found an echo, and already on 7th July 1960, the first application for compensation was received. Three weeks later, the first lump sum was paid out. In the course of the same year, a further seven people had to be compensated (amongst them a married couple – that is how wise the Swiss were at that time).

