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Expatriate Swiss and the European integration

A study of the situation

At a time when Switzerland and the other countries of the EFTA are negotiating with the European Community (the EC) in relation to the setting up of European Economic Area (the EEA) it seems that the time has come for us to report to our readers as to how developments could affect the interests of Swiss nationals who are currently resident in countries of the EC.

Between the EC and the countries of EFTA (European Free Trade Association) attempts are being made to work out a comprehensive treaty for assuring the freeest possible traffic with goods, services and capital, as well as complete freedom of movement of individuals.

The number of Swiss living in the EC countries amounted at the end of 1989 to 253,820, representing 55% of the totality of our compatriots living abroad. 76,391 of these were in possession of Swiss civil rights only (i.e., they did not have dual nationality).

Consequences of the developments expected

Some two years ago, an attempt was begun to investigate the present-day situation of expatriate Swiss living in EC countries, and the possible consequences to them of development of a single European market. For this purpose, inquiries were made by the EDA's Service for the Swiss Abroad, through the Swiss embassies in the EC, and by the Organisation for the Swiss Abroad through the Swiss clubs and associations. The result was found to be that the hoped-for improvement in the status of citizens of the EC countries could involve an indirect discrimination against our compatriots. It seems likely that problems could arise above all in the following areas: legal regulation of residence permits and establishment rights, access to the labour market and to educational establishments, recognition of professional diplomas and academic degrees, social insurance right to purchase real estate, taxes, investments and last but not least, frontier checks

and customs formalities. An agreement, known already as the "Schengener Treaty", will probably come into force in 1991: France, Germany and the Benelux states will abolish their frontier controls. Italy plans its adhesion to this group. These changes will of course have consequences for Switzerland.

Admittedly, one cannot at present report any actual cases of discrimination against our fellow-citizens in the sectors mentioned. On the other hand, there may be some risk of "passive discrimination" developing, i.e., a trend for the citizens of non-EC countries to be increasingly worse off compared with those living in EC countries.

Future negotiations

The whole complex of questions in this respect was discussed at the Congress of the Swiss Abroad at Näfels in 1988, and was in June 1989 the theme of a "colloquium" of the New Helvetian Society in Lenzburg. Furthermore, working parties have been set up by the EDA and the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad, in order to fix our position in the matter. The conclusions drawn from these studies and discussions have proved very useful in connection with the drafting of the attitude to be adopted by the Federal Council.

The Federal authorities are well aware that the interests of the "Fifth Switzerland" will have to be taken into account. Measures should be taken to assist us in adapting ourselves to fit in as far as possible to the requirements of the compendium of EC procedures known as the "acquis-communautaire". This would enable our compatriots in the EC coun-

tries to take advantage of the reciprocity outlined therein. As conditions are today, however, Switzerland is not in a position to demand equal treatment from the EC for our fellow-citizens, as we do not offer such parity of treatment to foreigners living in Switzerland.

The negotiations should however, in view of the creation of the EES, make a useful contribution towards bringing about an amelioration of the present-day and future status of those compatriots residing in EC countries.

Service of the Swiss Abroad

Integration Policy

The Federal Council's Report

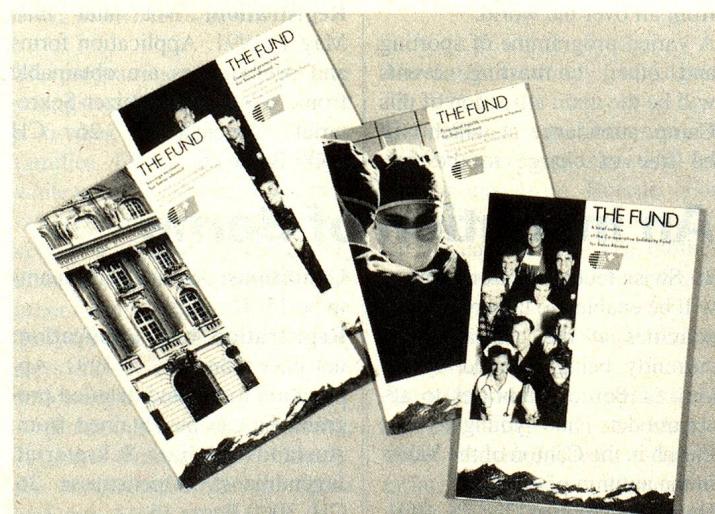
The Federal Council considers that there is still a prospect of a good EEA treaty being concluded despite difficult negotiations.

In its information report of 26th November 1990 on integration policy the Federal Council sees Switzerland's collaboration on the European Economic Area (EEA) project as a response to the rapid development of the European integration process. Although entry to the European Community (EC) would also be a possible course, the EEA treaty option is preferred because it takes more account of the essential Swiss characteristics. In the Federal Council's view, the treaty would be unobjectionable from

the standpoint of both neutrality policy and neutrality law. In the coming months, therefore, the Swiss government will be concentrating "with might and main" on the EES negotiations. The treaty, which might come into force in 1993, must fulfil three conditions:

- A high degree of integration must be achieved through the widest possible realization of the four freedoms (freedom of movement of persons and capital, of services and of goods) and increased cooperation in

The Fund has produced some new background material: A brief portrait of The Fund and three separate prospectuses concerning, respectively, insurance against loss of livelihood, savings opportunities and The Fund-Grütli sickness insurance. If you are interested you can obtain this material, free of charge, from the Solidarity Fund of the Swiss Abroad, Gutenbergstrasse 6, CH-3011 Berne.





the supporting policies (research, development, education, environmental protection etc.).

- Switzerland must participate in the EEA decision-making process and thus be able to assert her interests effectively.

- The country must preserve the essential elements of its special characteristics.

If one or other of these three conditions were not fulfilled, howe-

ver, EC entry or a return to the pragmatic, case-by-case approach might come to the fore again.

On the other hand, the Federal Council clearly demonstrates the risks involved in "going it alone", whose economic consequences would probably be acceptable only in the short term.

BEA/

Service of the Swiss Abroad

Travelling to Switzerland

In view of the celebrations of the 700th anniversary of Switzerland's foundation, many Swiss from abroad will be coming here for a few days. Anyone who has not booked accommodation already should do so in the very near future. There seems to be a likelihood of a strong demand for inexpensive accommodation. There is unfortunately no comprehensive list of such facilities, but a number of small hotels, mountain chalets and tourist hostels have joined forces under the name "E+G" (or in full "Einfach und gemütlich" meaning roughly "simple but cosy") with the subtitle "Guest Houses of Switzerland". They offer overnight accommodation at an average price of 45 Swiss francs per person for bed and breakfast. This voluntary association has at present 225 members.

A catalogue of the members can be obtained from: E & G Hotels & Restaurants, CH-3818 Grindelwald, Switzerland. Telephone: 036 53 44 88, Telefax: 036 53 44 84.

This brochure can also be obtained from the agencies of the

Swiss National Tourist Office, who have branch offices in the following cities: Amsterdam, Brussels, Buenos Aires, Chicago, Düsseldorf, Frankfurt on Main, Hamburg, London, Los Angeles, Madrid, Milan, Munich, New York, Paris, Rome, San Francisco, Stockholm, Stuttgart, Sydney, Tokyo, Toronto and Vienna. Also from Swissair representatives in Cairo, Johannesburg, and Tel Aviv. From all these sources, one can likewise order the latest edition of the official Swiss Hotel Guide published by the Swiss Hotel Association in Berne.

It will probably be unavoidable for "bottle necks" to occur as a result of the influx of visitors, above all in the summer months, and especially in the centrally located parts of Switzerland. We advise you, if you are seeking accommodation in the region of the Urnersee to contact the following address without delay:

Informationsstelle 700-Jahr-Feier, Postfach 700, CH-6430 Schwyz, Switzerland, Telephone: 043 23 19 91

We wish you "bon voyage"!

SM

Cost of living supplements to the OAI/DI pensions approved

After the Council of States, the National Council also gave the go-ahead, on 5th December 1990, to the Federal Council's proposal (see "Swiss Review" 4/90).

Thus, all OAI/DI pensioners will receive in two instalments, in April and in August 1991, a special cost of living supplement amounting altogether to about 6 per cent of their present pension.

A message for our readers

In April 1991, the Secretariat of the Swiss Abroad and the Service of the Swiss Abroad will as a further contribution to the 700th anniversary celebrations jointly publish a "Jubilee" issue of "Swiss Review" (without the section for official announcements and local news), thus bringing the number of this year's issues up to five.

In this festive issue of the magazine readers will inter alia find much information and comment about the past, present and future of the Confederation, together with details of the simultaneous celebrations of the 800th anniversary of the City and Canton of Berne, as well as articles dealing with such themes as those of the Swiss National Anthem and of the White cross which has become the national symbol.

Your Editorial Staff

For organisational reasons, each of this year's five issues of "Swiss Review" will consist of only 20, instead of 24 pages, but will in other respects remain unchanged.

The Gulf War: Switzerland's Attitude

In its statements of 17th January 1991 the Federal Council expressed its consternation at the outbreak of war and condemned Iraq's inflexible attitude.

It resolved to maintain strict neutrality in the military sphere. To this end it is also adhering to the prohibition of overflying by foreign military aircraft. Permits for the export of arms for Turkey were also suspended.

In continuance of her humanitarian tradition Switzerland wants to help relieve the distress caused by the Gulf War. Above all, financial and logistic assistance to the organizations of the United Nations System, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the Swiss Red Cross is envisaged as a first step. The Swiss Disaster Corps is available as an operational means. The Federal Council will also press for the holding of a Middle and Near East conference. Switzerland is ready to host it.

At the beginning of January the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs had already advised Swiss nationals in the countries

of the Gulf region to leave the area of tension. In the meantime most of our compatriots have returned; only in Israel are there still over 4000 resident Swiss, most of whom are dual nationals.

BOD/SSA

Federal Ballots

3rd March 1991

- Lowering the voting age to 18
- Popular initiative in favour of promoting public transport

2nd June 1991

- Subjects not yet decided

20th October 1991

- National Council elections

8th December 1991

- Subjects not yet decided

Editor (Official Communications), Service for the Swiss Abroad, Federal Department of Foreign Affairs.