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Comments on present

Swiss Economic Problems

by

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The integration problem.

Inflation is an immediate danger. Accordingly, countermeasures are an immediate necessity. But the crucial issue before Switzerland is the integration problem. With the British demand to become a full Member of the European Economic Community and the beginning of the negotiations in Brussels, it has entered its acute phase. It would take too long to present the detailed history of European integration and the part played in this by Switzerland. Some of you may be familiar with at least the overall picture. So I will go straight on to what I consider the hard core of the problem confronting Switzerland: Neutrality. Many times our country has been faced with a situation where it has had to decide between the defence and maintenance of what is considered its most valuable and precious right and tradition, and the relinquishment of neutrality. There are many signs that such a choice may shortly be imposed on the Swiss people and that we shall have to bear the political as well as economic implications of our choice. The extreme importance of what is at stake requires that the matter be most seriously considered.

EEC: its economic and political significance.

First of all, what kind of "Europe"—this term is a many-sided one—is in the making? The EEC is at present a Customs Union in the course of development. Its logical evolution can only lead to a full economic union and ultimately, to a political entity in the form of either a federation of States or a federal State. This process of economic and political unification will take time undoubtedly.

For the present, the Common Market has accomplished but a few steps towards its ultimate goal. The main ones are three successive "internal" tariff reductions, which have lowered protection between the member countries by 30 to 40%, and one move towards the common external tariff. Some decisions have been taken with a view to harmonising certain aspects of commercial and economic policies. Many studies have been undertaken of the problems ahead. Some of them have been completed. In the field of agriculture a set-back has occurred. The Six have been as yet unable to agree—as was prescribed in the Rome Treaty—on certain elements of their proposed common policy. This prevented them at the end of last year from passing to the second stage of the realisation of the Common Market. In the political field, prin-

ciples have been adopted and proposals are being examined which, if accepted, would tend to create a "European Union" establishing a permanent framework for regular discussions between Member Governments on an "intergovernmental"—as opposed to a "supra-national"—basis.

One might think that all this is not very impressive. I believe, on the contrary, that it is, considering the difficulties which co-operation normally encounters in international relations. In fact, the timing prescribed by the Rome Treaty has been respected and even accelerated in some sectors. The sole exception is agricultural policy, a sector, as everybody knew, especially tricky and difficult. As important as, or even more important than, the implementation of the Rome Treaty is the flurry of meetings, discussions, innovations and mergers which are taking place in Europe. They are not confined to economic life: they are making their impact felt in numerous ways in many different domains. Integration has taken root in business practices and has thus become an important aspect and factor of the daily life of the Member countries of the EEC.

But my concern is not so much the actual achievements of the Six as the economic and political implications for a Member Country as seen from a Swiss point of view.

The economic implications.

These can be discovered by reading Articles 2 and 3 of the Rome Treaty:

Article 2: It shall be the aim of the Community, by establishing a Common Market and progressively approximating the economic policies of Member States, to promote throughout the Community a harmonious development of economic activities, a continuous and balanced expansion, an increased stability, an accelerated raising of the standard of living and closer relations between its Member States.

Article 3: For the purposes set out in the preceding Article, the activities of the Community shall include, under the conditions and with the timing provided for in this Treaty:

(a) the elimination, as between Member States, of customs duties and of quantitative restrictions in regard to the importation and exportation of goods, as well as of all other measures with equivalent effect;

(b) the establishment of a common customs tariff and "a common commercial policy towards third countries";

(c) the abolition, as between Member States, of the obstacles to the free movement of persons, services and capital;

- (d) the inauguration of a common agricultural policy;
- (e) the inauguration of a common transport policy;
- (f) the establishment of a system ensuring that competition shall not be distorted in the Common Market;
- (g) the application of procedures which shall make it possible to co-ordinate the economic policies of Member States and to remedy disequilibria in their balance of payments.
- (h) the approximation of their respective municipal law to the extent necessary for the functioning of the Common Market;
- (i) the creation of a European Social Fund in order to improve the possibilities of employment for workers and to contribute to the raising of their standard of living.
- (j) the establishment of a European Investment Bank intended to facilitate the economic expansion of the Community through the creation of new resources; and
- (k) the association of overseas countries and territories with the Community with a view to increasing trade and to pursuing jointly their effort towards economic and social development.

—THE SWISS OBSERVER

Laugh a little . . .

Not truly communist: "The wife of East German boss Ulbricht is in gaol."

"Ah. Why?"

"She let her washing dry in the West wind."

* * *

"It is statistically proven that out of every 200 people, one is taller than 6 feet."

"Oh. I know that one . . . he always sits in front of me at the pictures."

* * *

"Do you know, Peter, what happens to children who tell lies?"

"Oh, yes auntie, they travel half fare on the railway."

* * *

A man comes to the eye specialist and complains that he sees spots before his eyes. The doctor prescribes glasses, and when the patient returns for a check the doctor asks: "Well, is it better now?"

"Yes," says the man, "I see the spots much clearer now."

—From NEBELSPALTER