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The Contradictions of the EEC

(By Wilhelm Ropke)

This article criticising certain aspects of the EEC especially in the agrarian sector is condensed from a detailed discussion contributed to the Neue Zürcher Zeitung by Wilhelm Ropke, professor of economics in the Geneva Graduate Institute of International Studies and a well-known authority in his field.

It has become increasingly clear that the EEC suffers from a number of contradictions. The result is a malaise the greater as these contradictions are generally passed over in silence by the advocates and beneficiaries of the organisation.

In contrast to other forms of European economic integration—the former OEEC and the present EFTA—the EEC aspires to crowning the fusion of the various national economies by the supranational direction of important parts of these economies and to making economic integration a vehicle for the political unification of Europe.

In support of such an emphatically political character of the EEC the history of the United States and that of the German **Zollverein** or customs union are frequently cited. Actually it is not difficult to show that far from strengthening the case for the EEC these comparisons on the contrary weaken it. For in the case both of the United States and the German **Zollverein** it was the political integration within one and the same nation which made economic integration possible, at least as much as economic integration made the political possible. It was Americans who joined in the one case, Germans in the other, not Dutch and Italians, Germans and French. In the United States, integration was the work of a common government, in the German **Zollverein** the work of a leading—the Prussian—government.

But in their blindness to the differences between the EEC and its alleged models the advocates of the former together with their ideological obstinacy prove their failure to recognise the true nature of the nation and of the society of nations. The idea to achieve political fusion by way of economic integration can be entertained only by people who have never given the nature of the nation any serious thought. "A customs union makes no fatherland," wrote Ernest Renan in his "**Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?**" in 1882. The attempt to make such a customs union into a fatherland nevertheless, and into an international fatherland at that, has become a source of enormous tensions in the case of the EEC.

It is becoming evident how ill considered it was to underestimate the extraordinary and socially indispensable vitality of the nation, and to try to immediately replace this stage of political organisation by a "European state." Falling from one extreme into another, many believed that the sins of a destructive nationalism could

be washed away in the milk of a pious Europeanism. They failed to see that this meant merely substituting one ideology for another, whereas the sound reality lies in the middle. In the struggle between the European ideology of the EEC and the self-assertion of its ruling group on the one hand, and the will to life and individuality of the resisting national states on the other, tensions have arisen which not many had expected. Rarely in the course of history have we been offered such a spectacle, and just as rarely has the outcome been quite as certain. If the United States of Europe is ever to come into being it will most certainly not come into being **this** way. A common interest in the price of milk, the increase of the price of rice and of oranges in favour of some marginal group of producers, the common surveillance of cartels—such things in any event have never yet been state-forming elements capable of making the hearts of men beat higher.

It is certain also that the unification of the currencies of the EEC countries, constantly demanded by some, would be bound to fail. Those who demand it do not understand that a European currency system, in our time in which money and credit policy is inseparably meshed with the rest of the economic and financial policy of a state, more than ever pre-supposes a genuine European state, a state which neither exists nor appears probable for the near future. Nor can it be doubted that the negotiations on agrarian integration have reached a critical point, a point at which a government like the German can no longer fail to realise that it cannot simply abandon the right to regard the form and volume of its agriculture as a vital political interest of the nation, or fail to assume the defense of this right as its duty. This is the deeper meaning of the German Government's refusal to yield in the question of the price of wheat.

It will be interesting to see whether the natural vitality of the individual nations involved will eventually be tamed by that provision of the EEC treaty which says that after the period of transition unanimity among the member states will not always be required. Will a state, in a matter considered vital by its parliament or its voters, be willing to submit to a majority?

That such a possibility has been provided at all can be understood only when the tremendous confusion is recalled in which the nations suffering from the consequences of a hateful nationalism found themselves a decade ago. Will the juridical mechanism prove strong enough in the event of a showdown? That remains to be seen. For the time being we have not only President de Gaulle's extremely skeptical attitude on this question and the official denial by the French Premier of the possibility of overruling in a vital matter the EEC government by a majority vote, on the concrete point of the price of wheat we have a statement made by the leading German newspaper ("Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung," March 20, 1964) that "the EEC will not be able to afford to outvote a partner in a

question that he considers vital," and another statement by Professor A. Muller-Armack, one of the most deserving builders of the EEC, that "it is an illusion that at some future time a supranational form could so simply be asserted against individual vital national interests" (quoted from a lecture in Vereiniger Wirtschaftsdienst, Europa, March 12, 1963).

One asks oneself what contribution can be made to the unification of Europe by the fact, for example, that the Italian output of oranges and of rice is given a privileged position within the EEC, the price-boosting effect of which can no longer be hidden from the consumers of the northern EEC countries. It is impossible to see how the still young friendship between Germany and France is to benefit from the EEC's giving the French farmers any hope of selling their output on the German market at the expense of the German farmers. Should Paris prevail in this matter, thousands of German farmers would make it responsible for the threat to their livelihood. If on the other hand the German farmers succeeded in defeating the measure, the French farmers will be disappointed and embittered.

(To Be Continued)

NEWS OF THE COLONY ● ● ● ●

Auckland Swiss Club

OVERSEAS VISITORS

A Swiss party of five of the world's top skiers arrived on the 10th August by B.O.A.C. Comet from Australia at Whenuapai to stay for about seven weeks in New Zealand. Television and the Press were present when the plane touched down, also the organiser of the visit, Mr Collins and several other members of the N.Z. Ski Association.

Members of the team are.—Jos Minch, triple Swiss champion; Willi Favre, winner criterium; Dumeng Giovanoli, second in slalom and down hill race combined, in Italy, and gold cup of Davos; Edi Bruggmann, winner of FIS A giant slalom in Germany; and Stefan Kaelin, Swiss champion 1964 and second best slalom man in Switzerland. The manager of the team is Mr Walter Haensli, a former Swiss team member and ski instructor in North America and New Zealand, and Andreas Hefti is the coach.

Staying only one night in Auckland at private places, the N.Z. Ski Association gave the visiting team a big reception with dinner at the "Sorrento." Louis Mueller, representing the Swiss Community in Auckland, welcomed them with a short speech and thanked the N.Z. Ski Association for the very warm reception extended to our countrymen. He wished them both, the Swiss team and the New Zealanders, very successful competitions on the snowfields in New Zealand. "Ski-Heil!"