

Official Communications

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Notice

concerning the notification of claims for compensation for Swiss interests in Hungary not regulated by the agreement of 19th July 1950.

The compensation agreement between Switzerland and Hungary concluded on 26th March 1973 came into force on 6th September 1974. Under that agreement Hungary undertakes to pay to the Confederation a total sum in final settlement of all the claims for compensation arising from Swiss property, rights, interests and claims affected before 26th March 1973 by a Hungarian nationalization measure or any other measure connected with changes made to Hungary's economic structure (expropriations after 19th July 1950).

I. Under that agreement the following are entitled to claim compensation:

- a) individuals who possessed Swiss nationality at the time of both the expropriation measure and the conclusion of the agreement (26th March 1973) and throughout the intervening period and who never concurrently possessed Hungarian nationality;
- b) corporate bodies and commercial companies in which the Swiss interest predominates, on condition that they furnish proof of the predominance of Swiss interests during the period in question.

II. All claims notified must contain the following particulars:

- a) in the case of individuals: name, address, date of birth, commune of origin, date of acquisition of Swiss nationality (with a certificate of citizenship proving Swiss nationality from the time of the expropriation measure until 26th March 1973), any previous nationality, dual nationality;
- b) in the case of corporate bodies and commercial companies: name, head office address and proof of the predominance of Swiss interests in the undertaking during the period mentioned under I a);
- c) place and nature of the nationalized properties, area or volume, detailed description of the property and of the state of buildings, mortgage liabilities, date of acquisition (with extracts from the land registers, contracts of purchase, heirship documents), any movable goods forming part of the properties (furniture, machines etc.), with detailed inventories and proof of ownership;
- d) estimate of compensation demanded in the original currency and in Swiss francs (indicating the exchange rate) and detailed justification of the amount (taxation, insurance value, value based on annual return etc.).

III. Compensation claims must be sent without delay but in any case not later than 30th November 1975 to the

Commission des indemnités de nationalisation
c/o Département politique fédéral
Eigerstrasse 80
CH-3003 Berne

This is the final date for the lodging of claims. Claims notified after 30th November 1975 will not be considered.

The attention of interested parties is drawn to the fact that after payment of the total sum by Hungary all claims arising from the above-mentioned Swiss property, rights, interests and claims will be considered as finally settled.

Commission for compensation arising from nationalization

Special stamps II 1975

Day of issue: 11.9.1975



Fr.—15 Special building features for the disabled. Inadequate house design often is an added complication in the daily life of disabled people. The special stamp designed by Celestino Piatti, Basle, shows a physically handicapped person in a wheelchair being dragged up a flight of stairs. It appeals to architects, engineers, house owners and authorities to plan and design buildings with the needs of the disabled in mind.

Fr.—30 The Helping Hand. This stamp highlights the dedicated work of the inter-confessional organization for pastoral care by telephone. This institution, which can be contacted in 12 Swiss towns over the telephone around the clock, comes to the aid of people in affliction or despair with spiritual comfort and words of advice and sympathy. The official emblem of the Swiss Association for Pastoral Care by Telephone designed by the Zurich artist Walter Beutter has been chosen as the stamp picture.

Fr.—50 European Year for the Architectural Heritage. Under the motto «A future for our past» the Council of Europe in Strasbourg has declared the year 1975 «Year for the Architectural Heritage». Through a special postage stamp an awareness of the importance of preserving historic or distinctive buildings and architectural ensembles is to be roused and kept alive. The Lausanne artist Pascal Besson has adapted the official emblem of the «European Year» so as to make it suitable for a postage stamp picture.

Fr.—60 300th anniversary of the foundation of the Fischer Post. This special stamp, which will no doubt receive particular notice in circles interested in postal history and philately, draws attention to the foundation, in 1675, of the Fischer-Post. It shows the portrait of the great Bernese postal pioneer and town-councillor, Beat Fischer von Reichenbach (1641–1698), designed after a privately owned oil painting. The postal privilege of the Fischer-Post lasted from 1675 to 1832. The Impimerie Courvoisier SA in La Chaux-de-Fonds provided the graphic design of the stamp picture.

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Political Rights of the Swiss Abroad

Federal Council's «Message» and draft law of 3rd March, 1975

In this «Message» to the Federal Assembly the Federal Council recalls that ever since the Constitution of 1848 the Swiss abroad have been concerned with the question of political rights. In 1935, by way of exception, they were able to vote on the crisis initiative. During the two world wars, moreover, the Swiss abroad who performed military service in Switzerland were allowed to exercise political rights. To this day there have been no other exceptions. The basis for this legal position is Article 43 of the Constitution, according to which only those Swiss who are domiciled in Switzerland can take part in ballots and elections.

Not until the insertion of Article 45 bis into the Constitution was the legislature empowered to provide for the exercise of political rights by the Swiss abroad.

A Study Commission set up by the Federal Political Department examined the various aspects of the problem and submitted its recommendations in a report of 21st May, 1973. The Federal Council then directed that there should be consultations with the cantonal governments, the political parties represented in the Federal Assembly, the New Helvetic Society's Commission of the Swiss Abroad and other interested circles; the results have in the main been positive. The draft law submitted to Parliament provides that the Swiss abroad shall be able to exercise political rights (federal matters alone are involved here) on Swiss territory only. Unlike other countries, Switzerland holds numerous ballots requiring special knowledge and certain local ties. To some extent a stay in Switzerland will be regarded as replacing the

condition of domicile which the Swiss abroad are unable to fulfil. If the Swiss abroad were allowed to exercise political rights from outside Switzerland, reciprocity would have to be granted to foreigners domiciled in our country. The consequences would be much more weighty for us than for a foreign country acting similarly with respect to foreigners who had settled on its territory.

The draft law also provides that a Swiss abroad can freely designate the commune in which he wishes to exercise his right to vote («political domicile»). This accords better with the principle in force in Switzerland of voting at the domicile than the Study Commission's idea of linking the vote with the place of origin.

To be able to vote, the Swiss abroad must apply through his Swiss representation before the ballot to the commune he has designated. The latter will then be in a position to prepare the ballot and election material and keep it at the disposal of the Swiss abroad. Administrative control is kept to a minimum.

Switzerland's Policy on her «Presence» abroad

Federal Council's «Message» and draft law of 9th April, 1975

In its «Message» to the Federal Assembly on coordination in the sphere of Switzerland's presence abroad, the Federal Council sets out the broad lines of an over-all concept of the Swiss presence beyond our frontiers.

It emphasizes the role played by our exchanges with other countries, whether in the field of economics, culture, tourism or population (emigration); it deduces that, in view of this growing inter-

No distinction will be made between Swiss citizens who possess no other nationality and dual nationals. The only persons excluded from the right to vote are those who are legally incapacitated under Swiss law because of insanity or feeble-mindedness. The range of political rights (participation in federal ballots and elections, signing of petitions for federal initiatives and referendums) is not restricted. The cantons and communes retain the right to regulate the exercise by the Swiss abroad of the right to vote in cantonal and communal matters and their participation in the election of the Council of States.

Finally, the federal law empowers the Federal Council to provide for special regulations in certain cases. This applies, for example, to countries in which Switzerland has no representation; it also refers to officials and other employees of the Confederation stationed abroad who, for service reasons, cannot travel to Switzerland to take part in a ballot or election. It is now up to Parliament to take a decision on the Federal Council's draft law.

dependence of countries and people, we cannot be indifferent to Switzerland's image abroad and we must not neglect to take any action that might help to project it. This matter is of interest to many state organizations (for example, the Cultural Affairs Office of the Federal Department of the Interior, the Division of Commerce, diplomatic and consular representations), semi-state organizations (for example, the Swiss National Tourist Office, Pro Helvetia) and private organizations (Swiss Office for the Development of Trade,

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Swiss Radio and Television Corporation), which were created independently of one another during the last few decades and which differ widely in legal form, financing method and functions.

In 1970, when Parliament debated the granting of a subsidy to the Swiss Office for the Development of Trade, several members expressed the opinion that there was insufficient coordination between institutions concerned with promoting the Swiss presence abroad; in view of the size of the grants made to those organizations by the Confederation, they wanted an over-all concept to be developed in this sphere.

In 1972 a commission drawn from interested circles, under the chairmanship of Mr. Willy Spühler, former Federal Councillor and President of the Council of the Pro Helvetia Foundation, was given the task of studying this problem. It submitted its report to the Federal Council at the end of last year. In order to improve coordination between state, semi-state and private institutions, the Federal Council proposes to Parliament that it should give effect to the suggestions contained in that document. Thus, the draft law submitted to the Federal Assembly envisages:

- institutionalizing the commission;
- charging it with important tasks of coordination (establishment of geographical and subject-matter priorities, harmonization of the programmes of the various institutions, preparation of medium- and long-term plans etc.);
- entrusting it with the examination of certain concrete projects not falling within the specific province of any of its members (for example, Swiss participation in exhibitions of a general

nature and particularly in world exhibitions, preparation of written or audio-visual material presenting the various aspects of our country);

- putting at its disposal the special credit granted provisionally to the Swiss Office for the Development of Trade during the past few years «for general publicity campaigns about Switzer-

land»: it would thus be possible for the commission to give financial support to projects aimed at spreading general information on our country for which, as things are at present, no institution is really responsible.

These suggestions correspond to the wishes expressed by many parliamentarians in 1970.

PHILATELY



This merry jester has been tirelessly shaking his bells for centuries; he is to be seen on a monument which has always been an authority in Berne: the Clock Tower. In fact, until well into the 19th century all the other clocks in the city had to be set by the chimes of the «Zytglogge».

It was also by reference to this tower, standing in the centre of the city, that the «hourstones» were placed along the cantonal roads which lead to all points of the compass.

The Clock Tower was really an authority, in the truest sense of the word, when the units of length valid throughout the whole of the Bernese territory – the ell and the fathom – were marked under its porch for the use of all the citizens. Today's units of length – since the adoption of the decimal system 100 years ago – can now be seen there in the form of solid iron bars measuring one and two metres respectively.

The introduction of the decimal system was extremely important for international trade. The so-called «Metre Convention», defining the «standard metre», was signed in Paris in 1875.

A special Swiss postage stamp shows this standard metre. The artist has also sketched in reddish orange the spectral line of krypton, by which the exact length of the metre was recently established.



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