

# Interview with Mr. Louis Guisan about the eighth revision of the old-age, survivors and disability insurance scheme

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function, the ground plan is entirely free. The idea of standard industrialised dwelling units as the foundation of all housing, from the small building to the gigantic block, has since been adopted in countless variations. Its most convincing expression was in the *unité d'habitation de grandeur conformes* for 1,600 residents, which Le Corbusier built in Marseilles for the French Ministry of Reconstruction (building begun in 1945). With a two-storey living-area and a garden of its own, each flat is a sort of self-contained, single-family house largely adapted to the individual needs of its occupants. This *unité d'habitation* which was the first of its kind, was followed by others in Nantes, Meaux, Briey-en-Forêt and, as part of the international building exhibition in Berlin in 1957.

In itself, industrialised building can do little to redress the chief evil of the big city, the lack of light and sunshine in the residential districts, or to remedy bad traffic conditions. This is the task of town planning whose function is to give back to the town its open spaces and to regulate its traffic. Le Corbusier exhibited his first great town planning project for a town of three million people at the *salon d'automne* in Paris in 1922. His scheme contained all the features of modern town planning, viz. separation of traffic from residential district, of residential district from place of work. All the houses are sited in open countryside, residential areas being garden cities forming a belt around the town. Twenty-four high buildings house the administration, are used as business premises, or serve as hotels. Typical of a later project, the *Ville Radieuse*, is the detailed consideration which Le Corbusier gives to the problem of traffic, a subject which was to be very much in his thoughts in the future. His ideas about town planning find expression in his building plans for Algiers, Sao Paulo, Buenos Aires, Stockholm, Antwerp, Paris, Marseilles, etc., which, however, have not yet been realised. In 1950, the India Government commissioned him to build a new capital in the Punjab. This was his first chance to put his town planning ideas into practice. Chandigarh, an administrative centre with a population of 500,000, will be built in stages. The first stage, for 150,000 residents, has been under construction since 1951. Le Corbusier assumed responsibility for the overall plan as well as for the "Capitol" as he called the group of administrative and ministerial buildings. The Parliament Building, the ministry buildings and the Law Courts, which have already been built, bear the unmistakable stamp of Le Corbusier's artistic personality.

Always new, always indicative of new trends, were Le Corbusier's designs for individual buildings. To mention only a few, the Constosoyus built in Moscow in 1928, the design for the League of Nations Building in Geneva (1928), the Paris Salvation Army shelter for the homeless (1932-33), the factory he built in St. Dié in 1945, the design which

received first prize for the United Nations Building in New York (1945), the Pilgrim's Chapel at Ronchamp (1956), the de la Tourette Monastery near Lyons, are landmarks in a new architecture which, in addition to meeting contemporary needs, are superlative works of art.

The range of his work extends from the "dwelling machine" and buildings made of prefabricated elements to ecclesiastical buildings. Two major projects for which he was responsible in the last few years of his life, are the vast group of hospital buildings in Venice and the French Embassy in Brasilia.

The most recent Le Corbusier building to be erected for which plans were completed only a few weeks before his death, is the exhibition building in Zurich. Completed in the summer of 1967, it is intended by Frau Heidi Weber by whom it was commissioned, to be a "Le Corbusier Centre" exclusively devoted to the great architect's work. All his life, whether as architect, painter, sculptor or writer, Le Corbusier was first

and foremost an artist. So comprehensive are his achievements that we might doubt whether his work is really that of one man, were it not that in its clarity of conception, inner logic, refusal to compromise and boundless imagination, everything he created bears the unmistakable stamp of his personality. Though reason and logic may determine his work to a large extent, they are never decisive. What mattered to him most is best expressed in his own words: "*C'est par le rayonnement spirituel, par le sourire de la grace, que l'architecture doit apporter aux hommes de la civilisation machiniste la joie et non pas une stricte utilité... L'architecture doit siéger dans le coeur et dans la tête, dans la coeur avant tout*".

When Le Corbusier died, he was admired by many people as the greatest architect of the century. The French Government rendered him the last honours at a funeral ceremony held in the courtyard of the Louvre.

Collection *Pro Helvetia*  
Hans Girsberger

## INTERVIEW WITH DR. LOUIS GUISAN ABOUT THE EIGHTH REVISION OF THE OLD-AGE, SURVIVORS AND DISABILITY INSURANCE SCHEME

The eighth revision of the old-age, survivors and disability insurance scheme came into force on 1st January, 1973. It was deemed useful to ask Dr. Louis Guisan, Councillor of States, some questions on this important matter.

*We now have an eighth revision of the old-age, survivors and disability insurance scheme which provides important changes for the Swiss abroad. Could you tell us who were the initiators of this last revision?*

The eighth revision tries to conciliate the wishes, partly contradictory, of the different political parties and other organisations which have asked for the settlement of the old-age, survivors and disability insurance scheme. For this reason, it was necessary to consider all the initiatives of the Swiss political parties concerning old-age insurance as a whole.

*What was the aim of the eighth revision of the AVS/AI, and does the result correspond to the needs of the Swiss abroad who, for the most part, have already joined a similar insurance scheme in their country of residence?*

The aim of the eighth revision of the old-age insurance scheme is that of offering the Swiss at home a pension which covers their vital needs. It tends to abandon the system of the basic pension. The increase in contributions raises the cost of the voluntary insurance scheme for Swiss living abroad, and especially for those — they are a majority — who have joined a similar insurance scheme in their country of residence.

*Does the eighth revision of AVS/AI, the revision of the Constitution concerning social security and the Bill on assistance to Swiss abroad make one comprehensive subject?*

No. The eighth revision of the old-age, survivors and disability insurance scheme and the revision of the Constitution concerning social security constitute an essential contribution to our social security system under which pensions are generally related to contributions. The law providing assistance to Swiss abroad does not rest on the relation between contributions and benefits, but represents a system of aid granted by the State to those who have no means, no income or capital and no AVS/AI pensions.

*What effect will the eighth revision have on the Swiss abroad?*

With this eighth revision, contributions will increase considerably. This will be difficult to bring into line with paying contributions to the social security scheme in the country of residence. In return, the Swiss abroad will enjoy increased benefits.

*Does a person who is entitled to a pension owing to age or on account of widowhood receive automatically a pension or should he ask for it?*

The person who is entitled to a pension has to ask for it. In Switzerland, the request has to be sent to the Swiss Compensation Office, and abroad to the Swiss Embassy or Consulate concerned.

*It happens that citizens, members of the voluntary insurance scheme, live in*

countries where the transfer of AVS contributions to Switzerland is prohibited for political or reasons of exchange control. On returning to Switzerland, these compatriots face problems. In fact, if they want to receive a sufficient pension they sometimes have to pay high sums to the Swiss Compensation Office in order to recover their arrears within the regulation period. Some have lost everything. Which procedure do they have to follow in order to maintain their rights to the AVS/AI?

When members of the voluntary insurance scheme have lived in countries where it is impossible to transfer contributions, their pensions will be calculated on the basis of the number of years during which they should have paid contributions as if they had actually paid them. This procedure only concerns those Swiss who are prevented by the law of their country of residence from paying contributions, and only if they are members of the voluntary insurance scheme.

*Does someone who lived in Switzerland for several years before taking up residence abroad and who had therefore paid contributions to AVS/AI during those years, and who did not join the voluntary insurance scheme abroad, lose his entitlement to contributions paid before his departure once he comes back to Switzerland and works up to pensionable age?*

No contribution paid is ever lost. The person who pays contributions for some years in Switzerland, then goes abroad and does not pay contributions any more, comes back to Switzerland and pays again is entitled to receive a partial pension which is proportional to all

contributions paid before his departure and after his return.

*A person who, owing to his work, spends two or three years in different countries without paying contributions to the Swiss voluntary insurance scheme, but who paid contributions to the respective social security schemes of his countries of residence, happens to be in a delicate situation when he returns to Switzerland, as the payments made to foreign social security schemes cannot be taken into account in Switzerland. He will therefore receive a smaller Swiss pension at retirement age. Should one not try to find a solution first with Switzerland's neighbours?*

This solution already exists. Switzerland has bilateral agreements on social security schemes with all her neighbouring countries, and even with some others. Consequently, with reservations regarding an agreement under review, Swiss citizens who have paid contributions, even for a short time, to the social security system of those countries, are entitled to receive benefits in return. At pensionable age, they will enjoy different partial pensions. If they have joined the voluntary insurance scheme, they will be entitled to a full pension in Switzerland.

*Does this new extension seem to you of great importance to people who have not yet reached retirement age, i.e. the opportunity to join the voluntary scheme till the completion of the 61st year (women) and the 64th year (men), considering that the pensions they are entitled to will be minimal if they have paid contributions for only a small number of years?*

I believe that this new extension is

important even if the pension will not be high. Up to the present, the size of the pension has followed the curve of the cost of living and of wages, so that partial pensions will also increase. On the other hand, we must not forget that the insurance also gives benefits in case of disability.

*Is there any provision for a pension to people who have passed the age limit without ever having paid contributions?*

Not if the person is resident abroad. But if the person comes back to Switzerland and if his income does not reach certain fixed limits, he will receive an exceptional pension.

*Do people who actually receive a pension benefit under the eighth revision of the AVS/AI or does this only concern future pensioners?*

The present pensions have been newly calculated in order to reach the level of future pensions.

*Contributions paid by the Swiss abroad were about 11 million francs in 1970. Pensions paid to Swiss abroad in the same year amounted to 80 million francs. Is there not a problem at federal level under these conditions and may the voluntary insurance scheme not have to balance its accounts one day?*

There certainly is a problem at federal level. The Federal Commission on AVS/AI has decided to create a sub-commission which will examine the voluntary insurance scheme of the Swiss abroad. But I do not think that we shall have to balance accounts between pensions and contributions for this particular category of insured persons. Also in Switzerland, although in a lesser proportion, contributions do not balance with pensions. The difference is made up by contributions from public bodies.

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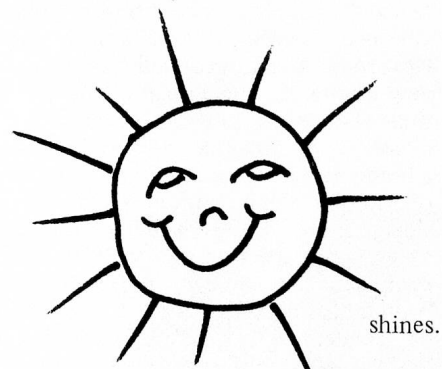
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