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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.

Switzerland in Europe

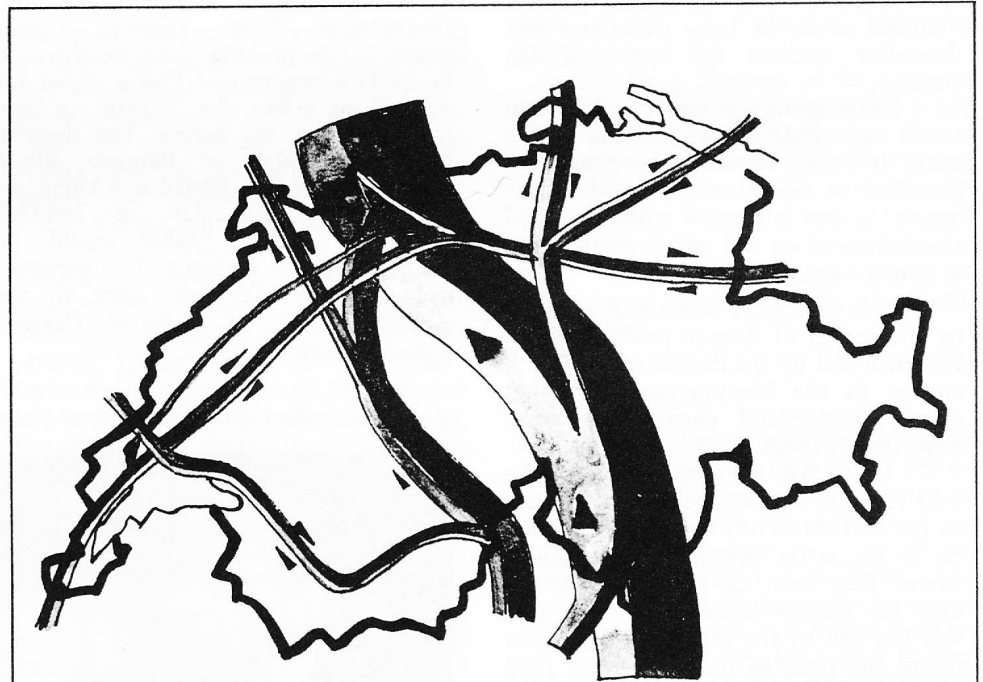
Two Thousand Years of "Integration"
by Paul Keller, Journalist

On 3rd December, 1972, the Swiss people supported by a comfortable majority the Free Trade Agreement concluded five months before between their Government and the European Communities. The first tariff reductions provided for in this treaty, like those of the other EFTA countries which did not apply for membership of the Communities, were made on 1st April, 1973, at the same time as the first tariff cuts occurred within the enlarged Community.

For Switzerland, the new free trade area is in line with her ancient aim of free access to the markets of other countries. This is no ideological matter; it is a necessity for a country lacking raw materials, access to the sea and an agriculture capable of feeding its

population. Only trade with the outside world permits Switzerland to create with the labour of her people the added value on which she must live.

Well before the arrival of the European Free Trade Association in 1960, Switzerland had known periods of free trade with certain of her neighbours. The "perpetual peace", signed with France in 1516, stipulated in articles 5 and 9 that the Swiss merchants in France should not be interfered with by the authorities and should not suffer any aggravation of fiscal or tariff charges. The merchants in question did not hesitate for an instant to interpret these clauses as a pure and simple exemption from import duties. Astonishing though it may seem, this exemption – which was attached to the nationality of the merchant and not



The St. Gotthard Pass, linking the northern and southern parts of the European Community. Today, there is no need to prove the importance of this route which was opened in about 1240. The thickness of the lines shows the relative density of rail traffic. On the St. Gotthard line 200 to 300 trains pass daily. Since saturation point has been reached a new tunnel is being built.

to the origin of his goods – remained in force until 1781; in fact, for 265 years it established a great free trade area between France and the Swiss cantons.

The first “free trade” was an already modern answer for an economy which was farther than any other from self-sufficiency. But the first manifestations of what we now call “integration” are as old as the appearance of a Helvetic unit in history.

Apparently, from the 4th century B.C., Etruscan and Greek merchants went all through Switzerland by the two branches of the “tin road” by which tin from the mines of Cornwall arrived in Etruria and Greece and which also joined the merchants of Etruria to south Germany and the Danube. It was only in 1954 that the French archaeologist, René Joffroy, was able to trace the route of this great artery of commerce, which is blazed with objects whose origin permits Mr. Joffroy to say that the tin road crossed the pass of the Great St. Bernard, took off across the Swiss plateau towards Berne, crossed the Jura and at Viz, near the present town of Châtillon-sur-Seine, joined the waterway to Le Havre which led across the Channel to Cornwall. The second branch passed through the Tessin, the passes of the Grisons and arrived at the upper reaches of the Rhine, which it followed as far as Lake Constance and thereafter reached the banks of the Danube.

Switzerland was therefore linked to world trade both on the east and on the west. It seems that relative prosperity prevailed at that time in the Helvetic region. It was integrated with the world economy and by this means participated in strong currents of trade.

This prosperity was brutally cut off by the arrival of Roman power as far as Provence and by the decline of the Greek empire in the Mediterranean. In that epoch, Switzerland encountered grave economic difficulties.

In 107 B.C. the people of one of the four Helvetic regions decided to emigrate to the south-west of France. They pushed on as far as the present town of Agen, where they won an important victory over the Roman legions. However, that was the end of the exodus. The women found the trials of the voyage too hard and persuaded the men to return to their homes.

During the EFTA Ministerial meeting in Stockholm in March 1967, Mr. Hans Schaffner, then the Minister of Public Economy of Switzerland, cautioned those of his partners who were anxious to substitute for the little EFTA

a free trade area embracing all of Western Europe. He asked them not to burn their boats, as did the Swiss of olden times. Wishing to leave a poor country for good – and to avoid succumbing to the temptation to return which could emerge in their ranks while on the way – they had burnt their houses and their fields.

The episode referred to by Mr. Schaffner occurred about 61 B.C. A second exodus was tried, this time by the four regions comprising, according to Julius Caesar, a dozen towns and some 400 villages. The plan was to conquer the more fertile country of the present Saintonge in Charente. The exodus was carefully prepared by legislative measures. For two years the cereal crops were increased to the limit, abundant means of transport were made and the voyage well organised.

On 28th March of the year 58 B.C., the Helvetii assembled on the banks of Lake Geneva for their great exodus, under the leadership of the old chief Divico, who, 50 years before, had already led the Tigurini as far as Agen. Of their total of 368,000, a quarter were warriors. Caesar, who hastened from Rome to Geneva by forced marches, prevented them from crossing the Rhone and obliged them to take the rocky and difficult route along the right bank. Downstream from Geneva, Caesar succeeded in pushing them northwards. In the first engagement, Caesar wiped out one of the tribes, the Tigurini, as they were crossing the Saône. The decisive battle took place at Bibracte. Blood flowed in torrents; Divico was killed. At the end of that day, of 368,000 emigrants, only 110,000 could be counted by the Romans. The survivors had to make their way back to the scorched earth of Helvetia, Caesar's legions at their heels.

In retrospect, the disaster of Bibracte does not seem entirely negative, since it marked the dawn of a new prosperity. In fact, the Romans in their turn began to use the eastern and western Alpine passes for commercial purposes. They established a trading system, equipped the country with a road network on which moved not only men and arms, but also a new culture and the Roman law.

Switzerland was finally born in 1291 by the joining together of the valleys and communes of Uri, Schwytz and Unterwald. In fact, if William Tell and his crossbow are doubtful history, it is undeniable that the oath of allegiance taken in 1291 followed the opening up of a highway for vehicles through the St. Gotthard. Until then, the north-south currents of inter-European trade went by way of the Grisons passes to the east or the Great St. Bernard to the west. The bridge of Schöllenen, on the south slope of the St. Gotthard, built about 1240, made possible the shortening by several days of the link between Germany and Italy. It is striking to note, moreover, that the direct administration of the St. Gotthard route by bailiffs installed all along its length was not established by Austria until after this great route was open to traffic.

It was against this direct administration that the first Swiss joined together in August 1291. Their rebellion was only the final act in a whole network of agreements and treaties on the technical level which had been previously concluded between them. In fact, the inhabitants of the valleys were far from being ignorant peasants, hiding at the foot of their mountains. Numbers of them were traders, dealing in exterior markets in Frankfurt, Geneva, Lyons, Milan... We know that one of them,

Ambassador Paul Jolles and Federal Councillor Ernst Brugger at Brussels negotiations.



Official Communications

Attinghausen, had made a commercial agreement with the town of Como in 1270 which already carried a kind of most-favoured-nation clause. These ancestors of Switzerland knew perfectly well the importance which the St. Gotthard highway would hold for their own economy and that of Europe. The powers of the time, the Hapsburgs in the forefront, also realised this and it was from that source that sprang the collision of interests and ambitions which found their outlet in the wars of independence and the battles of Morgarten and Sempach.

It may perhaps suffice to recall the importance attached to the St. Gotthard pass by the present European Communities, for whom it represents the principal north-south communications route, to understand the major economic importance and consequently political importance, which this route still has for Switzerland.

As for the opening of the east-west route, it was at the centre of policy in the second half of the 15th century. The ambition of Charles the Bold was the rebuilding of the Lotharingian empire from the North Sea to the Mediterranean, the realisation of which would have reduced Switzerland to the level of a buffer state between the powers and moreover, would have practically denied her access to the markets of the West, that is to say of France and of Spain – which was to open up towards America. It was the interminable trade wars between the Confederate States and the Burgundy of Charles the Bold which finally led the Swiss to take up arms. Their war against Burgundy was infinitely more decisive than those conducted by the King of France and the Emperor of Germany against the same enemy because their war was vital; 40 years after the victory over Charles the Bold and his Lotharingian ambitions came the perpetual peace with the King of France and that forbear of the free trade area of which mention was made earlier in this article.

The search for integration and trade, it is true, do not constitute all of Switzerland's history. But to the extent that this search is closely related to the constant economic factor in her existence, the need to use her only natural resource – the labour of her people – is a dominant principle.

Some Explanations Concerning the New Federal Act on Welfare Payments to the Swiss Abroad

The Police Division of the Federal Department of Justice and Police states as follows:—

Origin of the Act

For years various interests, such as the Welfare Directors' Conference and the New Helvetic Society's Commission of the Swiss Abroad, have been urging that the Confederation should take over welfare for the Swiss abroad, so as to ensure uniform treatment of welfare cases, which is not guaranteed by the present arrangements for assistance through the cantons and the communes. Both houses of the Swiss parliament have also had to concern themselves with this matter on various occasions.

In 1966 the electorate approved an article of the Constitution empowering the Confederation to promote a closer relationship among the Swiss abroad and between them in their homeland, and to issue regulations dealing, in particular, with the exercise of political rights, the fulfilment of military obligations and welfare benefits. Among other things it enabled the Confederation to regulate welfare for the Swiss abroad.

On 12th August, 1970, the Federal Council empowered the Federal Department of Justice and Police to convene a commission of experts for advance consultations on the Police Division's preliminary draft of a Federal Act on welfare payments to Swiss abroad. The commission started its work on 16th September, 1970. At the end of January, 1972, the preliminary draft of a Federal Act, together with an explanatory report, was submitted for their judgement and report to the cantonal governments, to the Federal Political Department for transmission to the Swiss diplomatic and consular representations, to the New Helvetic Society's Commission of the Swiss Abroad and to a number of other especially interested organisations. In September 1972 the Federal Council was able to submit to parliament the "message" and draft of a Federal Act on welfare payments to Swiss abroad. The bill was amended by the Council of States last winter session and by the National

Council in the March session 1973. On 21st March, 1973 the Act, which is the first one to be based on the Article 45bis of the Constitution, was accepted by the National Council by 169 votes to nil and by the Council of States by 36 votes to nil.

Basic Principles

Under the new Federal Act, which contains 26 articles, welfare for Swiss abroad will become largely a matter for the Confederation. The cantons will still have to bear the costs of repayment which another country can demand from Switzerland on the basis of a welfare agreement. Such agreements exist at present with France and the Federal Republic of Germany. All other costs, including expenditure for the reintegration of Swiss abroad who return home, will be borne by the Confederation.

The main purpose of the Act is to assist financially or to repatriate needy Swiss abroad, while taking care not to undermine the individual's independence or readiness to help himself. Of considerable legal and practical importance is the fact that this Act gives needy Swiss abroad a legal claim to assistance if certain specific conditions are fulfilled.

Content of the Act

Swiss citizens who are domiciled abroad, or who have been living abroad for more than three months, qualify as Swiss abroad within the meaning of the Act. Thus, Swiss citizens who are abroad temporarily or who have been living abroad for less than three months do not come under this Act; as hitherto, they are to be helped, on the basis of a Federal Council decree, by small repayable sums. The Federal Council will issue the necessary directives. In principle it would have been desirable for all assistance to Swiss citizens abroad to be regulated in the Act. However, this would be incompatible with the definition of the Swiss abroad which emerges from the history of the constitutional article.