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—“guest workers” is the preferred term—have jobs in industry, but their number is receding relative to those engaged in the non-industrial sector.

One worker in three in Switzerland, and one person in six, is a foreigner. The reader can very well imagine what this proportion would mean in his own country. It leaves no doubt about the dimensions of the foreign labour problem on the political and social planes. Even among those who recognise what foreign workers mean and what they have done for our economy, the view is today widely held that Switzerland is too dependent on foreign helpers. The claim that the foreign permeation of Swiss life has gone too far meets with a good deal of support. Discussions about the “right” number of foreigners today constitute one of the most controversial issues of Swiss politics and economics. Most people agree that the number of foreign workers and foreign immigrants generally should not be allowed to rise any further. Since the Swiss labour potential grows only very slowly, the labour market in the country is likely to remain very strained in future unless eased by a recession. Industry is facing up to this situation by investing a lot of money in labour-saving and production efficiency measures and by transferring manufacture to places abroad.

The quality production mentioned at the outset is closely bound up in Switzerland with the traditional economic structure deriving from the trades and crafts, which is of considerable importance even today. It would be mistaken to assume, however, that this structure is purely Swiss in its origins. Even in the very earliest phases of industrialisation Switzerland entertained large numbers of “guest workers”. Some of them laid the foundations of enterprises that today have an international name. The Frankfurt-born Henri Nestle and the American Charles Page, for instance, fathered a food company that now does business all over the world. The Englishman Charles Brown and the German Walter Boveri were the moving spirits in the foundation and rise of one of the country’s major engineering companies. Non-Swiss also played a large part in the development of watchmaking, chemistry and the textile industry. The link between Swiss quality and foreign labour is accordingly one that has its own undisputed historical significance.

Guy Bar in the Swiss Air Gazette.

The Swiss Foreign Trade in July 1974

Switzerland’s Balance of Trade

Period	Imports	Exports	Adverse Balance	Value of exports as a % of the value of imports.
1973 July	3,105.8	2,540.2	565.6	81.8
1974 June	3,558.0	2,884.3	673.7	81.1
1974 July	3 880.9	3 157.3	723.6	81.4
1973 Jan.-July	20,735.8	16,779.9	3,955.9	80.9
1974 Jan.-July	25,806.2	20,717.1	5,089.1	80.3