

# Without comment - excerpt from a letter written by a Swiss abroad

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velle Société Helvétique's Organization of the Swiss Abroad, the Executive Committee looks after the running business and prepares the work of the Commission. The theme includes not only education and training as such, but also problems which may arise in the various countries, as well as the difficulties which may arise on return to Switzerland. In this connection, the future of the Swiss schools abroad was discussed and their special tasks. The need was stressed that the Swiss communities abroad should get involved more closely in the running of these schools.

The main theme of the Assembly of the Swiss Abroad which is taking place in Solothurn from 21st to 23rd August, will be «New Forms of Swiss Emigration». This will again give an opportunity to consider the most important aspects of education and training as these are of special significance for short-term emigrants.

Political rights of the Swiss abroad and the possibilities of a simplified manner of making use of them gave renewed cause for discussion. With the proposed more generous attitude towards foreigners resident in Switzerland, several objections held hitherto regarding postal vot-

ing from abroad might be reconsidered.

Regarding the question of citizenship of Swiss mothers and foreign fathers in the framework of equal rights between men and women, the Commission of the Swiss Abroad and its Executive Committee are awaiting with great interest the opinion of the Federal Council given to Parliament after the Initiative by the President of the Organization of the Swiss Abroad, former National Councillor Dr. Alfred Weber, Altdorf, had been accepted.

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## Without comment – excerpt from a letter written by a Swiss abroad

### **I would never have believed it . . . but it happened**

In 1965 my family and I had been living for some time in a Latin American country, where we were getting on very well. Then one day I heard about the Solidarity Fund for the Swiss Abroad. Yes, of course, I too was a Swiss abroad, but we had no intention whatsoever of returning home for good.

All the same, I thought to myself, I ought to join for the sake of solidarity. For a small sum, an annual payment of 100 francs, for example, I could become a member of that cooperative society and help a good cause at the same time. I, together with thousands of other Swiss abroad, would be building up a fund to assist less fortunate people trying to make a fresh start in Switzerland. Fantastic! And what about me? What do I stand to lose? Nothing, because after a given period I can withdraw my contributions, they will have earned interest and will even be exempt from withholding tax. I shall also be able to claim a lump-sum as compensation if I lose my livelihood as a result of political events in my second home. But, of course, that will never happen to us.

Fifteen years later – in 1980 – I am on the run. As the representative of a foreign group of companies I am in danger of being abducted and held to ransom. Our world is in ruins. My wife is in despair. The children are disconsolate because, of course, they speak the language of our host country better than «Schwyzerdütsch» and they don't want to leave their friends and their schools . . . Things look black, but we shall get over it; I am full of confidence, and I'm a realist. That is to say, I try to be!

But there is worse to come. On returning to the old country I start to look for a flat – but that doesn't work; first I must have a job. I don't mind where, it can be anywhere in Switzerland, I'm so flexible! And I'm not petty-minded, so I'm prepared to accept a subordinate position. But alas, at 52 the possibilities are limited. The parent company promises me a new post – as soon as something suitable becomes vacant; but that may take years. Up to today I have written between 120 and 150 applications – all in vain. What shall I do? I am desperate. In the middle of this tough period I hear from the Solidarity Fund of the Swiss Abroad, in Berne, that I am entitled to the lump-sum compensation. The contributions I have paid annually will also be refunded to me. This is wonderful after all the disappointment I have had since I got back. It gives me fresh courage.

Swiss abroad – we live in dangerous times. I would never have believed it, but it happened . . . Thanks to my solidarity since 1965 I have become a beneficiary in 1980. The Solidarity Fund is fantastic. Why don't you join – who knows, one day it may turn out to your advantage – or to that of one of your friends. I shall stay in it, out of solidarity with all of you, all over the world. Perhaps I shall be one of you again one day!

*N.N.*

*(This letter reached the Solidarity Fund on 22th July 1980.)*

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