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Autor: Ehrler, Peter
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middle of the city - and no sooner had we come to a stop when at least 50 fully armed policemen came on board and dispersed on the decks. We were ordered over the PA system to label all photographic equipment and deposit it into the transit container - taking photos whilst in transit through the canal was looked upon as an act of treason, and punishable by death. But, to this day, I have two pictures I took of two burnt-out personnel carriers stuck in the sand at the top of a 10m high cutting!!

The middle section of the canal formed the front line - Israeli and Egyptian forces, with tank turrets and other guns pointing at us - were dug in everywhere. In this tense situation, a 'loose trigger-finger' could easily have sparked a local or even international conflict. At one point, we faced a line of at least 20 artillery gunners, ready to fire at point blank range!

Once past the front line, we all breathed a sigh of relief. Then whilst waiting at anchor in the Great Bitter Lake for the north bound convoy to come past, we were 'visited' by a flight of four MiG aircraft from a nearby airfield. They circled the anchorage several times before disappearing behind a sand cloud, but only to return in attack formation. We were on deck for our afternoon break as they came diving down towards our position, with the rockets and bombs strapped under their wings clearly visible, even from a distance. Some 200m from the ship, they pulled up, turned around, and repeated their manoeuvre from the other side. After that, they just left and we were finally left alone.

In these 'attacks', we all automatically dived for even the flimsiest of covers - not that it would have been of any use to us at all !!

About six weeks later, we returned to the Suez Canal. By then the forces had all retreated - even the two burnt-out personnel carriers I photographed had been removed. Coming out of the canal, we were diverted to Cypress to pick up 200 military personnel - which turned out to be another 'tragically comic' situation. There had already been simmering hostility between the Greeks and Turks for some time, and a British garrison tried to keep them apart. From 160 miles out, we were escorted by two Royal Navy Corvettes and two fighter aircraft to give us all the protection we might require. Big pontoons were

shipped out into the Bay. Passengers from land were transported to this point in boats - but before they could board the ship, all of their belongings were emptied out onto the pontoon to make absolutely sure no terrorist explosive devices could be smuggled on board.

Some evenings later, a few of the galley crew met with some of the NCO's, and during a conversation with an Airforce Sergeant we learnt something about life in Cypress. We were told that over one weekend (in July 1957) the Airforce was on red-alert! The bomber squadron was fully fuelled and bombed up, ready to take off at a moment's notice. It was lucky for us, in the middle of all this drama, as well as for the rest of the world, that everyone involved in this conflict was able to keep cool heads and their emotions in check!!

I made another four trips to Hong Kong, before returning permanently to shore in 1958.

Article compiled by Beatrice Leuenberger



Shopping in Hongkong



Berthed in Hongkong

Payment of the Swiss Pension (AHV) in New Zealand

While over in Switzerland to attend the Council of the Swiss Abroad Conference, our President Hans Vetsch asked me to clarify rumours and uncertainties concerning the Swiss Pension (AHV). He has apparently been approached over this issue on numerous occasions. There seems to be the arbitrary assumption or misconception by some people that the Swiss old age pension (AHV) can also be paid out in one large sum to Swiss citizens immigrating to New Zealand.

To obtain a satisfactory answer which I could also understand and pass on, it took me 3 emails and a longer phone call with the people in Geneva, as the legal wording I got back in the emails was so difficult and abstract even for me to understand.

The situation is straight forward and as follows:

- What is relevant is the nationality of the person receiving the Swiss Pension (AHV). If they are **Swiss** or have the **nationality of an EU/EFTA** country, they will receive a monthly pension, wherever they live.
- If they have the **nationality of a country with which Switzerland has signed a social security agreement**, they may be entitled to a monthly pension, to a payment in one sum (for small pensions) and/or to the reimbursement of their contributions, depending on the agreement.
- Persons that have the nationality of a country with which Switzerland has not signed any social security agreement and live outside of Switzerland, only have the possibility to get their contributions reimbursed.

In other words, a Swiss citizen living in New Zealand will only be able to receive a monthly pension, whereas a citizen of New Zealand will only be entitled to the reimbursement of his contributions.

Peter Ehrler
Elected Council Member of the Swiss Abroad
Representing New Zealand