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Official Communications

Revision of the Nationality Act

Wives will no longer become Swiss automatically...

Foreign women who marry Swiss men automatically become Swiss citizens. But foreign men who marry Swiss women do not automatically obtain coveted red passport.

This unequal treatment will not go on forever: foreign men and women who marry Swiss are to be enabled to become Swiss citizens on the same terms but in any case not automatically.

Change in two stages

At the end of 1983 the people and the cantons agreed to a revision of the nationality article in the Federal Constitution. The Act is now being adapted accordingly. The first stage saw the introduction of new provisions governing the transmission of citizenship through Swiss mothers living abroad (in force since 1st July 1985).

In a second stage the spouses' nationality rights are now in the process of being revised: an inter-departmental working group under the central control of the Federal Department of Justice and Police (EJPD) has prepared a draft which will undergo a consultation procedure in the cantons, political parties and interested organizations (including the New Helvetic Society's Organization of the Swiss Abroad) by the end of this year.

The proposals

According to the draft, the foreign spouses of Swiss men and women will acquire Swiss citizenship only upon application and

through the facilitated naturalization procedure. The authority which takes the decision is to be the EJPD.

In addition to material conditions (the spouse must be integrated into Swiss society, be familiar with Swiss habits, manners and customs and values, fulfil his or her public and private duties, accept the democratic legal system and not constitute a danger to the internal or external security of Switzerland) the following formal conditions will have to be fulfilled: three years' marriage and five years' residence in Switzerland, one year of which must have been immediately before the application is made. The period of residence will be reduced to four years where the marriage is of at least six years' duration and to three years where the marriage is of at least nine years' duration.

What about the Swiss abroad?

Only in very rare cases will husbands and wives of Swiss residents abroad be able to fulfil the formal conditions. A special provision has therefore been drawn up to enable them to be granted facilitated naturalization after 12 years of marriage even if they are not resident in Switzerland provided close ties with Switzerland can be proved, e.g. if the applicant has lived in Switzerland for at least five years and speaks one of the national languages.

*Federal Department
of Foreign Affairs
Service of the Swiss Abroad*

Marriage of a Swiss woman

A Swiss woman wishing to retain her Swiss nationality on marrying a foreign national *must* make a declaration in writing to that effect, *before the marriage*, on a form obtainable from the Swiss diplomatic and consular missions abroad.

Exchange of old driving licences

(announcement in Swiss Review No. 2, 1986)

The Federal Office for Police Matters informs us that the time-limit at the end of 1986 refers to an administrative instruction for the Cantons and it is therefore **not necessary** for Swiss abroad **to exchange** their driving licences.

All Swiss licences issued since 1st October 1959 and older ones validated with the 1959 rubber stamp will remain valid indefinitely and will be recognized on the holder's return to Switzerland. Switzerland also recognizes all valid foreign driving licences.

*Service of the Swiss Abroad
Federal Department of Foreign
Affairs*

Next Federal Ballots

28th September 1986

- *Change in the Sugar Decree*
- *Initiative on apprenticeships*
- *Culture initiative with counter proposal:*

the initiative requires the Confederation to spend one per cent of its budget on promoting culture, whereas the counter-proposal simply contains a discretionary formula but at the same time obliges the Confederation to have regard to cultural concerns in its overall activity.

7th December 1986

Subjects still open

For the Diplomatic Service?

What training opportunities has Switzerland to offer me? Can I get scholarships? Where can I obtain information? We shall deal with these and other questions in several instalments. First of all, we shall describe the careers available in the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (EDA).

The EDA uses its missions abroad to carry out the Federal Council's foreign policy – they are the «eyes, ears and mouth» of Switzerland. It is their job to safeguard our country's interests abroad, to cultivate and further its relations with other states and to protect Swiss citizens abroad. A distinction must be made between diplomatic and consular missions. The former are the official representatives of our government in their host country, the latter are first and foremost a connecting link between the Swiss abroad and the authorities in Switzerland. Today our country has at its disposal a network of 148 missions abroad.

Extremely varied

The tasks of a diplomatic mission are very varied. They include, among other things, cultivating relations with the authorities and political organizations of the country of residence, explaining Swiss policy, promoting exports and tourism, preparing and supervising trade and payments agreements and cultivating cultural relations. In third-world countries there is also the task of supervising development co-operation projects. An essential activity is reporting to headquarters on political, economic and other developments in the coun-

try of residence. A further task, which falls principally to the head of mission and his deputy, is representation. This includes attending their host country's important social functions and organizing receptions at which contacts with important personalities can be fostered. Vital elements in the work of our consular missions are the welfare and protection of the Swiss who live abroad and help for Swiss tourists in difficulties. They also cultivate contacts with the local authorities.

When one considers this varied field of activity it is clear that routine scarcely plays a part in EDA careers. Hardly does any other profession offer such opportunities for broadening one's horizons: in the course of his career the official is brought into contact with the most varied countries, people and cultures. So, wide interests, coupled with personal dynamism, initiative, adaptability, the ability to get on with people and to be at ease with them, plus a willingness to be transferred every three to five years, are essential conditions for these careers. But we must not forget the drawbacks: the varying and constantly changing living and working conditions, which put the physical and mental health of the official and his family to a severe test; being constantly uprooted;

complications in the children's education; and the inroads made into one's spare time by representational duties.

Varying requirements

The conditions for entry to the diplomatic service are: completion of university studies; age, under 32 years. For the consular and chancery service: completion of commercial or middle school («Mittelschule») studies, maximum age 30 years, one year's practical experience. For the secretarial service: three years commercial or equivalent education, one year's practical experience, shorthand in two languages, minimum age 20 years. Further conditions for admission to all the services are: exclusively Swiss nationality, unblemished reputation and good health.

After passing an entrance examination, diplomatic and chancery trainees receive two years' training at headquarters and abroad. The final step is an examination.

Further information can be obtained from:

Sektion Rekrutierung und Ausbildung, Generalsekretariat EDA, Eigerstrasse 73, 3003 Bern. (Recruitment and Training Section, EDA General Secretariat, Eigerstrasse 73, 3003 Berne.) ●



The diplomatic candidates 1986. Center: Head of Training.
(Photo: W. Rutishauser)

