

Double citizenship

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The situation on the Swiss labour market remained satisfactory, save in trades where the cold weather exercises a seasonal influence, as in the building trades, for instance, during January. Statistics show that the proportion of unemployed, per 100 members of unemployment funds, was 3.4 (4.2 in 1946) and that of part-time unemployed 0.8 (0.6). In the industrial field, the co-efficient of activity, as based on managerial estimations, was evaluated at 140 early in January as against 126 a year previously. (Co-efficient of trade activity - 150 = good, 100 = satisfactory, 50 = bad). A greater number of executives now consider prospects in their particular branch uncertain, especially in the watchmaking industries; this opinion seems to confirm the views expressed above. Nevertheless, a favourable outlook still appears to predominate.

In the catering industry, official statistics show a far larger number of registrations for hotels, boarding establishments, sanatoria and hydros than in 1946. On the other hand, Swiss Federal Railway returns for January 1947 revealed a slight regression in passenger traffic, which is still intense, however. Goods traffic returns followed their steady upward trend. Federal Railway returns for March showed an overplus of receipts in the amount of 15.85 million francs, as compared with 17.65 million in March 1946.

There was good news for the Swiss at the end of March 1947. A few days before Easter, it was announced that the 1946 Budget closed with a profit of roughly 80 million francs, whereas a deficit of 775 millions had been anticipated. These results are due to a concourse of circumstances. Owing to the industrial and commercial boom, the Customs and Purchase Tax have yielded far more than usual. Many taxpayers made advance payments on their National Defence Sacrifice Capital Levy and Tax. On the other hand, it has proved possible to cut down on Government expenditure. In view of the situation, the Federal Council has decided to transfer 100 million francs to an account styled "for coverage of doubtful credits, grants and subsidies outstanding to the Confederation." Thus, when all redemptions and the decrease in investments are taken into account, the original 80 million francs profit becomes a deficit in the amount of 2.7 millions and the results of the 1946 Budget should not raise any false hopes. This year's results will doubtless be less encouraging. Revenue is not likely to exceed anticipations, and expenditure will be increased in the amount of the credits which were not employed in 1946. If the Old Age Pension Scheme is adopted and comes into force in 1948, it will mean a still heavier burden on the Government. The emergency debt will not therefore be redeemed as quickly as it was hoped.

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DOUBLE CITIZENSHIP.

The question of the Right of Double Citizenship will come under discussion shortly, as a modification of our Laws concerning the citizenship is planned, in our Mother country. We are confident that you have, in the course of time, acquired some valuable experience concerning this question, an experience which could be of great service to the legislator for his work of drafting certain paragraphs. We would therefore ask you to let us know your ideas and conceptions about the problem of a double nationality, and we hereby submit several possible solutions to your consideration.

1. THE PRESENT POSITION.

The Swiss citizenship is acquired either by birth, if the father is a Swiss citizen, or by naturalization. This citizenship is imprescriptible, however it can be renounced by a written statement (and the consequent dismissal from citizenship by the competent authorities). A disfranchisement, i.e. a deprivation of citizenship, by a decision of our Federal Council, was introduced some years ago for cases of serious offence against the Confederation. Thus a Swiss citizen, who acquires the citizenship of a foreign State, retains on principle his original right of citizenship, and this rule holds good for all his descendants.

On the other hand, Swiss Women, who marry foreigners, can retain their Swiss citizenship only if they do not acquire the nationality of their husbands by marriage.

2. SOME POSSIBILITIES OF MODIFICATION.

- (a) Inconsistency of the Swiss citizenship with that of another country. Whoever acquires a foreign nationality would automatically lose the Swiss citizenship.
- (b) Declaration of Option. Whoever acquires, or has acquired a second nationality, would have to give a written statement to the effect, that he or she desires to retain the Swiss nationality. By neglecting to make such a statement one would lose the Swiss citizenship.
- (c) The Swiss person, who acquires a foreign nationality, will retain the Swiss citizenship if he does not duly express his renouncement of the same. He should, however, be obliged to enrol at the competent Swiss Consulate and to renew this enrolment regularly. The person, who neglects to renew this enrolment, would renounce the Swiss citizenship. The same would hold good for the descendants also.
- (d) Legislation might also pay regard to the domicile of the person possessing two citizenships. For example, special Regulations could be laid down for citizens of two nations, who are domiciled in neighbouring countries (or in Europe and the Mediterranean countries). These regulations would differ from those applied to Swiss citizens living in other countries.

With regard to this question you may possibly consider other solutions or combinations as appropriate. We should be much obliged if you would also let us know, if you consider measures, intended to prevent a further increase in cases of double citizenship, or the abrogation of this institution, to be in the interest of the Confederation. We could imagine, that above all in your group of countries such measures might alienate from Switzerland a large number of well-meaning personalities, who may have been citizens of another country for generations, while maintaining certain connections and sympathies, which find their expression in the retention of their hereditary citizenship.

It cannot be the purpose of Legislation to trifle with sympathies, existing abroad, by a clumsy procedure in the question of double citizenship. For Switzerland, as a small State, very much depends on her friends all over the world, whose comprehension of and sympathy for the principles, governing our Home and Foreign Policy, may aid us in maintaining our independence and existence.

We should be grateful for a frank expression of your opinion concerning these problems, and we can assure you, that your proposals will meet with great interest in the mother country.

May we ask you to let us have your reply by the 31st of May 1947.

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25. AU SL A N D S C H W E I Z E R T A G .
1947.

An die
Schweizervereine und NHC-Gruppen im Ausland

(an Gesandtschaften und Konsulate zur Kenntnissnahme)

Liebe Landsleute,

Wir haben uns entschlossen, auch dieses Jahr einen Auslandschweizertag zu