

Political rights for the Swiss abroad

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Political Rights for the Swiss Abroad

THIS is by no means a new question. Already in 1874 the Swiss Colonies of Milan and Mulhouse wanted to take part in the voting on the revision of the Federal Constitution. The Federal Council refused this request because according to the law voting took place at the place of residence. In 1907 the Swiss went to the poll regarding military re-organisation. For the same reason the Swiss abroad were again barred from taking part. In 1925 the Federal Council altered its attitude and allowed voting to Swiss from abroad whilst temporarily in Switzerland. Thus, some 500 Swiss from abroad cast their vote in a plebiscite on the so-called "Krisenartikel" on 26th June 1935. They voted in whatever commune they had deposited their passport. Two years later these rights were again withdrawn.

At the Assembly of the Swiss abroad in 1947 it was the London Swiss Colony which asked for voting rights for Swiss abroad temporarily in Switzerland ("Aufenthalterstimmrecht"). Though, in March 1961, when the Swiss Societies in U.K. were asked for an opinion in the matter, most of them were against it, but stipulated that the ASK (Commission) should be consulted more freely.

When Parliament reconsidered the Swiss law of 1872 regarding elections and polls in 1951, it was felt premature to settle the political rights of the Swiss abroad, but the Federal Council was asked to study the question.

The ASK (the private Parliament of the Swiss abroad) has now taken the first steps towards the realisation of such a wish, Dr. Halbheer, the Director of the ASS (Secretariat of the Swiss abroad) reported in an excellent speech at the Assembly at Sion. He knows from his close work with the Swiss Colonies abroad what a lively interest they take in the happenings at home and he feels it is understandable that Swiss who have been paying military tax or doing military service should feel badly about not being allowed any political rights. He mentioned over 150 young Swiss who came to Switzerland every year for their "Rekrutenschule."

The majority of the Swiss in foreign lands do not wish to make use of political rights from their place of residence abroad. It is only a few Auslandschweizer close to the borders who would be in favour of this. At Sion, one of the Swiss delegates from France reminded the Assembly of a proposal which was still lying in Berne regarding voting by correspondence. Dr Halbheer was of opinion that only a minority would want this, but that all of them would welcome effective representation at home and would possibly

appreciate an "Aufenthalterstimmrecht," the right to vote when in Switzerland.

Some forty National Councillors and half as many Councillors of State constituted a group of Swiss parliamentarians disposed specially well towards us Swiss abroad. This group has been re-activated and they see no difficulty in the realisation of such a project. As one of them, National Councillor Ph. Schmid-Rudin, until recently Central President of the Swiss Mercantile Society in Switzerland (SKV) and a champion of our cause for decades, wrote in the "Schweizerisches Kaufmaennisches Zentralblatt," it seemed to him such an innovation would be easy to introduce and he considered it fully justified.

Nobody expected far-reaching consequences of such voting rights. Much more influential would be an effective representation of the Swiss abroad in the mother country itself. It seemed strange, Dr Halbheer said, that the 600,000 foreigners working in Switzerland influenced merely by their presence the ratio of representation in the National Council whereas the 265,000 Swiss citizens abroad had no influence whatsoever.

We Swiss abroad know full well that we are a long way from having our own representative in Parliament, though some are incurable optimists who seem to have forgotten how slowly things mature at home.

Today the most effective representative of the Swiss abroad is the ASK, which is more and more consulted by the authorities. This forum of the Swiss living away from home has developed into a recognised body, and its executive, the Secretariat, keeps close and well-founded relations with Parliament and the Federal Authorities. The ASK is making a demand to be consulted compulsorily in any questions touching the Swiss abroad.

As one of the recent examples of close co-operation Dr. Halbheer gave the Solidarity Fund, which was able to delegate its President, as an expert on to the parliamentary commission. The ASK is also consulted in all questions relating to the Old Age and Invalidity Insurance for the Swiss abroad (AHIV) and the big subject of Technical Assistance.

The ASK was **not** consulted, however, in the unfortunate decree regarding the purchase of land by persons not resident in Switzerland, which has created much indignation and bad feeling.

The ASK has also asked that the Swiss abroad should be allowed to have a representative in parliamentary commissions which dealt with questions of policy concerning Swiss citizens abroad. Whilst agreeing to the demand for consultation, the Parliamentary Group

is against having a representative on all parliamentary commissions, though there is no reason why such a representative should not be co-opted in individual cases.

What the ASK is now asking on our behalf is that we should be granted voting rights in Federal matters when temporarily in Switzerland. We would have to deposit our passport and a declaration by our consular agency that we were registered and of good reputation. This could be done wherever we are in Switzerland, and our voting papers would afterwards be sent to our respective commune of origin. During military service the Swiss from abroad would be allowed to vote by correspondence. We should not be allowed to sign any initiative or referendum demands.

The second request concerns the compulsory obligation of the Swiss Federal Authorities to consult the ASO (Auslandschweizer Organisation) in all questions affecting the Swiss abroad.

There is no doubt that our interests are well taken care of by the ASO and it is up to us to support their efforts and to strengthen the Commission by sending well-briefed delegates to its meetings.

MARIANN, SWISS OBSERVER

● RECIPE

MAYONNAISE

Are you one of the lucky ones with a liquidiser? If so, you can make your mayonnaise in a very few minutes. Place in liquidiser 1 whole egg, 2 dessert spoons of vinegar, salt, pepper, mustard, to taste. Blend for a moment then turn to speed No. 2 and add $\frac{1}{2}$ pint salad oil in a thin stream. Have all ingredients at kitchen temperature. If you have to make the mayonnaise by hand you can only use the egg yolk. If you have a handy man who can make a dripper for your oil bottle, or if you can buy one or get one from Switzerland, it will make the procedure much easier.

Put into deep crockery bowl 1 egg yolk, mustard, salt and only a few drops of vinegar. Blend this then add $\frac{1}{2}$ pint salad oil, drop by drop during the first 5 minutes, stirring vigorously all the while. When finished taste mayonnaise and add more seasoning as desired.

Should mayonnaise curdle, you have to start again with an egg yolk (no seasoning) and pour curdled mixture equally as slow as before over second yolk. To vary mayonnaise: add a medium-sized onion, very finely chopped, equal amount gherkins, also finely chopped, and also some chopped chives and parsley. —H.B.

(Please send us your favourite recipe for publication.)