

The Problem of dual nationality

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The second part of the programme was heralded in by a March and a selection from Verdi's opera *Rigoletto* played by the Swiss Orchestral Society and followed by community singing in which everybody joined most heartily.

Pastor Pradervand then gave a short and very moving address citing the example of Niklaus of Flueh, who centuries ago, exhorted our countrymen to unity and brotherly love, when disunion and strife threatened the existence of our country.

That the Swiss Colony in London has many talents was proved when Albert Ferber, who in a short time has made a name for himself in the musical sphere in this country, by his regular pianoforte recitals at Wigmore Hall, appeared on the platform.

This gifted musician has only recently returned from a concert tour on the continent where he met with great success.

His playing of Beethoven's Sonata in C sharp minor Op. 27. No. 2 (Moonlight) was exquisite, and earned for him prolonged applause.

Time after time he was recalled to make his bow to an enthusiastic audience, and as an *encore* he generously gave us some Debussy which once again proved what a great artiste he is.

Then the Swiss Male Choir reassembled on the stage. This time they sang Walker-Ackermann's lovely song "Mein Dörflein," and I think they deserve a special mention for their fine rendering, it gave one great pleasure to listen to them, and I am proud of the fact, that in my younger days I once belonged to this choir.

They ended up by singing "Rolling down to Rio" by German, with piano accompaniment, by Miss Uden, who is another gifted and charming artiste. The Colony is indeed lucky to have such a fine choir. There are not many foreign colonies in London which can boast of having an excellent orchestra, a fine choir, a large number of talented artistes and even its own newspaper, and if we had a Club House and centre "everything in the garden would be lovely."

For the second time in the Programme, Mr. Gandon led his accordion players on to the stage and they once more delighted everybody by their lively rendering of popular tunes.

And then came the "Grand Finale," the orchestra and the Swiss Male Choir played and sang Attenhofer's inspiring and patriotic song "Mein Schweizerland, wach auf!" a befitting ending to a really fine and enjoyable afternoon and evening.

There remains for me nothing more to do than to thank, on behalf of a numerous and enthusiastic audience, first of all the organising committee and its untiring President, Mr. Charles Chapuis, then the orchestra, the choir and the various artistes for a really grand performance, which perhaps, if some criticism should be voiced, was just a trifle too long.

They have all given us immense pleasure, and enabled us to wander in thoughts to our beloved country, which we love more than ever.

Before I lay down my pen, I wish to extend also a hearty "merci mille fois" to my old friend E. P. Dick, who has worked so hard to make this 72nd Fête Suisse a real success.

These few sunny hours spent amongst our compatriots will linger for many a day in the memory of your gratefully.

ST.

THE PROBLEM OF DUAL NATIONALITY. Open Meeting of the N.S.H. held on June 17th.

The appeal of the New Helvetic Society to all members of our Colony to take part in an Open Discussion of the question of dual nationality, put before us by the Secrétariat des Suisses à l'Etranger in view of the possibility of legal changes being enacted, has been responded to by a record crowd of over a hundred compatriots. It was particularly gratifying to see many young faces, men and women, who have not hitherto taken much interest in such serious proceedings. Fully competent representatives of all Swiss Societies and other elements in the Colony were present and took an active part in the discussion. It had to be cut short after nearly two hour's duration and it certainly helped enormously to convey a reliable cross-section of opinions for the benefit of the legislators in Switzerland who may have to deal with the problem in the near future.

The President of the N.S.H., Dr. Egli, prefaced the discussion with the observation that we should welcome most warmly the initiative taken by the Secrétariat des Suisses à l'Etranger to consult first of all those particularly and directly concerned before the legislator in Berne puts his hand to the task of revising the present legal position. It was our duty to seize this chance with both hands. If we failed in giving the Homeland proper guidance on our attitude, it would be our own fault if changes of the Law were brought about contrary to our wishes. The President asked the Meeting to bear in mind that first of all we should be clear, whether any change was desirable, what should be aimed at in revising the Law and what particular changes we would recommend. Before opening the discussion the President called on M. Aubaret to give the Meeting a full survey on the questions involved. (*This survey will be published in full in our next issue.* Ed.)

The first speaker in the discussion was Pasteur Pradervand. He pleaded most strongly against any excessively nationalistic approach to this question, but declared that the retention of dual nationality was of use only in cases where the holder really feels that he belongs to both countries and is prepared to shoulder willingly the obligations of both nationalities including the payment of military tax. Dr. A. Lindt reinforced M. Pradervand's plea for a liberal treatment of this question. Provided the obligations as well

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as the privileges of Swiss citizenship are properly realised and fulfilled, we should keep the doors wide open for descendants of Swiss parents born abroad to retain their Swiss allegiance. Only those Swiss who become naturalised elsewhere by free choice rather than necessity have no claim to continue Swiss citizenship. Mr. *Boos*, former President of the Swiss Mercantile Society, agreed with this latter view and pleaded also most decisively for facilitating the resumption of Swiss nationality by Swiss-born women who have married foreigners. On the other hand, he thought that youngsters of dual nationality should be required to exercise a definite option for one or the other of the two countries at the age of twenty-one. He also thought that the naturalisation of foreigners in Switzerland should be as carefully restricted as possible. Mr. *Tall* interposed the information that widows and divorced women can re-acquire Swiss nationality after only six month's stay in Switzerland without payment of the usual high naturalisation fees. This holds good, however, as Mrs. *Hint* added to Mr. *Tall*'s statement, if the return to the home country is not delayed beyond ten years after the death of the husband or the divorce. This speaker pleaded strongly for allowing Swiss women marrying foreigners to retain their Swiss nationality. At this point Mr. *Boehringer*, jun. asked for permission for a friend of his, Mr. *Joffé*, to speak, a Balt married to a Swiss lady, and who since then became a Stateless person. Mr. *Joffé* paid the warmest compliments to the way our country managed to unite peacefully various races and languages. He was thereby encouraged all the more to hope that in this question Switzerland would seek to pay due regard to the human aspects rather than merely formalistic considerations. It seems clear that for similar cases some special provision to facilitate the resumption of Swiss nationality is desirable. The next speaker, Mr. *Schüpbach*, urged that the present position should not be altered radically, as dual nationals were generally rendering excellent service to both countries and that cases of abuse are relatively rare. He thought that the mere declaration of a dual national that he wished to retain Swiss citizenship should be sufficient. Another speaker, of dual nationality, Mr. *Sterchi*, a young man in the early twenties, however, considered that a clear option for one or the other country should be required at the age of twenty-one.

The new President of the S.M.S., Mr. *Meier*, thought that the privilege of belonging to the Swiss nation implies obligations which should be accepted by a positive declaration on the part of dual nationals coupled with proof of a genuine allegiance. He supported, on the other hand, the case made out by previous speakers for facilitating the resumption of Swiss nationality by women married to foreigners. It was rather hard to require their return to Switzerland within ten years for this purpose. Another speaker, Mr. *Schlatter*, proposed outright that Switzerland should follow the English example and allow Swiss women marrying foreigners to remain Swiss, an opinion which was widely applauded by the Meeting. Mr. *Arpel* made an even more startling proposal, that the question of dual nationality should be treated differently according to which other country was in question. It was one thing being British and Swiss at the same time and quite another being e.g. German and Swiss. Swiss citizenship should on no account be

sold to any foreigner but rather granted as a great privilege which it in fact constitutes. Foreign children growing up in Switzerland and thus acquiring the Swiss mentality should be treated particularly sympathetically in this regard.

Mrs. *Stachelin*, the Russian-born wife of the Representative of the Swiss Trade Office in London, urged a strictly realistic policy in this matter. Too many cases of abuse of dual nationality were known and it was time to put an end to them by requiring a definite option being exercised at a suitable age. Another speaker, Mr. *Marfurt*, thought that it should no longer be possible for any Swiss to acquire nationality and yet retain his Swiss citizenship. On the other hand, he regarded the suggestion as impracticable, that dual nationals should be required to make a declaration if they want to remain Swiss. Swiss women should on no account lose their nationality automatically when marrying foreigners. Mr. *Ritter*, Secretary of the Swiss Benevolent Society, spoke from a long and intimate knowledge of conditions in our colony in stating, that a majority of children born in this country of mixed marriages did not feel Swiss. It seemed desirable, therefore, to require a definite option being exercised at the age of twenty-one. Mr. *Renou*, the Secretary of the Swiss Council, however, asked how it was possible to expect an intelligent and responsible decision of such far-reaching consequence at the age of twenty-one. He deprecated all tendencies of a narrow nationalism and pleaded most insistently for maintaining an attitude of charity, tolerance and service in this question, according to what is best in the Swiss spirit and tradition. Mr. *Ferraris* spoke in

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favour of permitting women married to foreigners to retain Swiss nationality, while, on the other hand, demanding that Swiss nationality should be renounced on naturalisation in a foreign country. Mr. *Berti*, President of the Unione Ticinese, pleaded urgently for the greatest caution being exercised in considering any changes of the present position. Generally speaking it would be better to be too lenient than to make undue difficulties for many worthy dual nationals who retained a great love and devotion for the country of their origin. The next speaker, Mr. *Jobin*, who has lived a long time in this country, spoke in a similar sense, declaring that no one should be deprived of the possibility of remaining Swiss. It was, however, desirable to clarify more precisely the obligations of Swiss citizenship. It should be borne in mind that as many young Swiss as possible ought to be encouraged to go abroad. The last speaker, Mr. *Bircher*, pleaded also for the greatest tolerance and freedom in dealing with this matter, reminding the Meeting of the heartening example of some Swiss émigrés, such as the family Ammeter, who have remained loyal to Switzerland through generations.

At this point the President, Dr. Egli, had to put an end to the discussion in view of the late hour, although there were many others who would have liked to speak. He summarized the general impression of the discussion and the reactions of the Meeting to the various speakers, stating that a majority was apparently favouring a careful liberal-minded approach to the problem, that there was an almost unanimous plea for a specially considerate treatment of women married to foreigners and that on the question of the option or a declaration being required, opinions differed rather widely.

Highly illuminating though the discussion proved, it is not possible to conclude more clearly from it what advice to offer to the authorities in Switzerland for dealing with this question. It seems, therefore, desirable to try and elucidate the opinion of the Colony as a whole a little more fully. For this purpose we append a detailed questionnaire, addressed to all Swiss readers of the Swiss Observer, requesting them to fill it in and send it to the Hon. Secretary of the London Group of the N.S.H., 18, Montagu Place, W.1, within the next week or so. It is hoped that every Swiss with an interest in this question will take part in this attempt to crystallize views and that also those who attended the Meeting will use this opportunity to convey more precisely what they think about the problem.

Not all the readers are likely to wish to answer all these questions in detail. They have been put down rather as a short guide and summary to the possible alternatives. Let us respond to the invitation from the Homeland to express our views as fully as possible.

HELVETICUS.

* * *

QUESTIONNAIRE ON DUAL NATIONALITY.

1. Are you satisfied with the present position?
2. If not, why not?
3. Do you know any cases of gross misuse of dual nationality?
4. Indicate nature of such misuse
5. Do you see any advantages in the continuance of dual nationality from the national point of view?
6. Indicate nature of such advantages, illustrated with complete cases
7. Do you consider that changes in the Law are necessary or desirable?
8. Do you advocate a stern or a lenient and cautious treatment of the question?
9. What particular changes of the Law would you advocate?
10. Should Swiss citizens acquiring citizenship or only where naturalisation was a matter of free choice?
11. Should Swiss women married to foreigners lose their Swiss nationality automatically?
12. Or should they be allowed to retain it optionally?
13. Should Swiss children born abroad or otherwise in possession of dual nationality be allowed to retain Swiss citizenship:—
 - (a) indefinitely?
 - (b) by declaration?..... at what age?.....
 - (c) by opting for Swiss nationality?
 in the first or second generation born here?.....

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