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Revision of the Swiss citizenship act

OSA wants improvements

This autumn, the Government presents the message relating to the second stage of the revision of the citizenship act. Its object is the legal assimilation in status of man and woman in regard to the acquisition of Swiss citizenship through marriage. In a submission, the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) has called for substantial changes for the better in favour of the Swiss abroad.

The federal law of 1952 on the acquisition and loss of Swiss citizenship is undergoing revision by stages. The first stage, introduced through the initiative of the OSA, concerned the acquisition of citizenship by children of Swiss mothers abroad and foreign fathers, and came into force on 1st July 1985. It gave children born after 31st December 1952 the possibility of applying for recognition of Swiss citizenship. On the basis of this provision, over 40,000 applications for recognition, affecting a total of 70,000 to 80,000 persons, were submitted up to the middle of 1987.

Equal rights on naturalization

The second stage of the revision concerns the conditions under

which the foreign husband of a Swiss woman or the foreign wife of a Swiss man acquires Swiss nationality. In accordance with the concept of equality of rights as between man and woman, which has been embodied in the Swiss constitution since 1981, the automatic transference of citizenship to the foreign woman entering into the marriage is to be revoked. Instead, the Federal Council – the government – will grant foreign marriage partners (of either sex) facilitated naturalization. The main prerequisite for this is a certain length of time of the marriage, which, according to the draft proposal of the EJPD, should be three years in the case of matrimonial domicile in Switzerland. Fur-

ther, the applicant must live in Switzerland for one year and must have lived for at least five years in Switzerland. In the case of domicile abroad, however, a marriage duration of twelve years and, in addition, close links with Switzerland are stipulated. This would mean, for example, that the foreign marriage partner would have to have lived for at least five years in our land and should be able to speak one of our national languages.

Switzerland would not be breaking new ground with such a solution. A number of states have already introduced similar criteria to prevent marriages of convenience for the purpose of acquiring nationality.

OSA against the 12-year clause

The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad has full understanding for the broad outlines of the changes planned but is resolutely opposed to the envisaged provision relating to the naturalization of foreign

Against discrimination

The planned waiting period of twelve years also met with criticism at the annual meeting of the parent organisations of the Swiss clubs in several European countries. The association of the Swiss clubs in the Scandinavian countries and the conference of the Swiss clubs in West Germany and West Berlin each passed a resolution protesting the discrimination against expatriate Swiss and calling for an adjustment of the conditions for the Swiss at home and the Swiss abroad.

Youth ski camp 1987/88

The skiing camp at Christmas/New Year for young Swiss abroad will be at Zweisimmen.

Date: December 26, 1987 to January 3, 1988.

Fee: Sfr. 370.-, voucher for ski lifts not included.

Conditions: Age: 15 to 25 years. Either your father or your mother must be a Swiss passport holder. If you want to join, write for more information and the necessary forms to our Secretariat.

Our address:

Secretariat for the Swiss Abroad
Youth Service

Alpenstrasse 26
CH-3000 Berne 16

Deadline for enrolment:

December 4, 1987.

spouses of Swiss nationals living abroad. As the OSA stated in its written reply to the EJPD (following the submission stage), the period of twelve years proposed in the case of domicile abroad is clearly too long. Such a settlement would be contradictory to the principle of the unity of citizenship within the family. And a new discrimination against the Swiss abroad, *vis-à-vis* the Swiss at home, would be created thereby. Quite apart from the length of the prescribed periods, the OSA considers the association of duration of domicile with duration of marriage superfluous. It therefore advocates a uniform qualifying period, independent of domicile.

However, other amendments to be introduced would be welcomed: for example, the waiver of a special declaration for the retention of nationality by descent for Swiss women who marry foreign nationals.

The OSA will continue to exert its influence on the handling of this important bill in parliament and to work towards the best possible solution for our fellow-citizens living abroad. R. W.

Whoever says: Swiss schools abroad...



... says: Katrin Wyss. Frau Wyss has been running the Secretariat of the Committee for Swiss Schools Abroad (formerly the *Hilfsskomitee*) since 1981 – capably and with deep commitment.

Set up in 1951, the Committee supports the seventeen schools abroad, recognized by the Confederation, in an administrative

capacity and also represents their interests at home. It fosters contacts between the schools and provides many services for them. Thus the Committee – which always means Frau Wyss – acts as a clearing office for government subsidies, organizes the selection of teachers, looks after social security matters on behalf of the teaching staff, advises the schools on legal questions, and finances courses in Switzerland for school principals.

Katrin Wyss joined the SSA, first as book-keeper, in 1972. Today she possesses an unmatched store of knowledge and experience of which the Secretariat gratefully avails itself – time and time again. SSA