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Foreigners in Switzerland

The letters published in Swiss Review 1/94 on "Foreigners in Switzerland" themselves elicited many new letters. We are publishing some of these below. The debate on the subject is now closed, since we also have letters on other matters.

The editors



How open should Switzerland be towards foreigners? This question has provoked much discussion amongst Swiss Review readers.
(Photo: Keystone)

Most of the readers' letters in No. 1/94 stunned me. If the opinions expressed are representative of the Swiss Abroad, I am ashamed. I am particularly depressed by the fact that some of the words used have a racist character and the "average Swiss of sound mind" – who on earth is that? – is someone very special and worth more.

Verena Kuhn, Brussels, Belgium

It was with considerable astonishment that I saw the xenophobia of some of my compatriots. I had always thought that Switzerland's privilege was to enable people of different religions and cultures to live together and that its call was to be a link between them. Are we not proud that Switzerland was once a refuge for exiles?

Cécile Blanc, St. Genis-Laval, France

How can someone who is "himself a foreigner at home" think in such a racist way? The Swiss are not some special race that the whole world has just been waiting for. I expect particularly from the Swiss Abroad more compre-

hension and solidarity with other foreigners.

Barbara Merki, Khania, Greece

The articles in the said issue of Swiss Review were very objectively written, leaning neither right nor left. I myself love my homeland, with all its

stomach. I would never have expected so much ignorance and idiotic Swissness from people who know from their own existence what it is to be a foreigner.

Andrea Dahli, Hamburg, Germany

Iam also 100% Swiss and proud of it. I have lived in various countries and have never seen discrimination as a foreigner. Why should foreigners in Switzerland enjoy less respect?

Margrit Schneebaum, Tel-Aviv, Israel

My illusion that the Swiss Abroad would have suggestions about local people and foreigners living together which could help forward the debate on integrating foreign cultures – based on their experience in a foreign country – was shattered by the readers' letters.

Pierre-Alain Blanc, Munich, Germany

The arrogance and selfishness with which my dear narrow-minded compatriots regard Switzerland is a riddle to me. Did any of these people choose Switzerland for their birth? I, for example, am grateful for it. All people who grow up in war or disaster areas deserve compassion and help where necessary.

Heidi Gulatee, Montreal, Canada

Europe: A democracy deficit?

European integration is surely a process which can be neither held up nor accelerated by means of referendums. The Maastricht Treaty and the European Union are now in force. It should not be forgotten that this was possible mainly as a result of parliamentary decisions rather than referendums. As a veteran Swiss Abroad, I often ask myself whether all those Swiss at home who complain about the No to the EEA know enough about political and administrative conditions in EU countries... During the Maastricht ratification difficulties, quite a few politicians and journalists began wondering about the danger of a democracy deficit in the EU. Whether this is only a danger or actual state tutelage and lack of citizen power anchored in constitutions is best examined with reference to the various countries, autonomous regions and municipalities.

Aroldo Gamper, Berja, Spain