

Welfare Office for Swiss girls

Objekttyp: **Group**

Zeitschrift: **The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK**

Band (Jahr): - **(1974)**

Heft 1695

PDF erstellt am: **27.04.2024**

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which meant depositing the Certificate of Origin (Heimatschein)—this had to be got beforehand from the authorities of the place of birth, costing some 32 francs—in order to get a “Certificate of Settlement” (Niederlassungsschein). Armed with this document and within 3 days my wife and I then proceeded to the Zürich Customs Office where in the meantime the van containing our furniture and chattels had also arrived. The official in charge wore a pince-nez, but turned out nevertheless to be quite human. Gottfried Keller, he said, looking through heaps of accumulated paper, was this my name? And then he added—and this was his attempt at showing a sense of humour—that on the banknote Gottfried Keller wore glasses, why didn’t I wear any? To clear the contents of the van took a few minutes, but to clear the car, a new one—it had to be put on the scales, as one pays duty per kilo—took about an hour and much writing. After this we were able to proceed to our new home and to start settling in.

Not very long did the peace last. One day a letter—without a “Dear Sir”—from the Cantonal Road Traffic Office (Strassenverkehrsamt) arrived. In it I was asked “forthwith” to answer a number of questions, “in order to prevent me from committing serious offences against the Swiss Road Traffic Regulations, which could have grave consequences”. How old was the car, where was it bought, what model was it, what h.p. had the engine and how long was the British Road Traffic Licence valid? Shortly after replying to this, a new letter came. In this I was ordered to present the car at such and such a place at such and such an hour for inspection. The car had, it was added, to be in top condition, “inside and outside clean”, as otherwise its owner would be sent home and would receive a new summons. The car was first given the works by a garage and a CH-sticker was attached and it finally passed the inspection. Zürich number plates were then issued and the Swiss Road Tax—assessed according to the cubic capacity of the engine—was duly paid.

Having passed the age of 65, I then had to have medical fitness examinations in order to obtain a Swiss driving licence. All in all I was examined by two eye specialists, by an official doctor of the Cantonal Road Traffic Office and by my own doctor. I had several electro-cardiograms, one after 22 knee-bends, my blood went to a laboratory in Basle, I was X-rayed, I had hearing and balance tests, I had to stand still on one leg and to walk blindfolded on a straight line. All this lasted several months, during which time I was allowed to drive, armed with a provisional kind of certificate.

So far so good. As I do not drive a great deal at night, the “Great Check-ups” (Grosskontrollen) which the Police—nowadays with the aid of the military police—are carrying out frequently, have not affected me at all.

When this happens some 200 to 250 men seal off whole areas at about ten o’clock at night, casting a control-net several miles wide. Any driver running into this area then has to show his driving licence, his road traffic certificate (Fahrzeugschein) and his accident triangles, which must under no circumstances be carried in the luggage boot. If there is any suspicion of alcohol he has to blow into a bag and a police doctor is on the spot to take blood samples. Thereafter follows a minute inspection of the car: tyres, brakes, lights, exhaust fumes, steering and God knows what else are tested. If the car is found not to be in roadworthy condition, its number plates are taken off and confiscated on the spot and the driver can either walk or see how he gets home. Some thousands of drivers and vehicles are thus tested during these operations which usually last to about 2 or 3 in the morning. And should any driver try to escape—the exit roads are barred by huge contraptions spiked with nails.

All this is, according to the official formula, done in the interest of increased road traffic safety.

A chimney sweep comes along twice a year, ordered by the local authorities to do so. A lightning conductor inspector calls and yet another official comes along to inspect the burners of the central heating. The rubbish or refuse collection is ordered down to the tiniest detail concerning the “when may what be disposed of” and when not.

It goes without saying that in so well-ordered a community the Income Tax people take an immediate interest in any newcomers. Their tone, however, is somewhat less curt and if one pays them forthwith one is even allowed to deduct 2% of the sum due.

Some of the Swiss Customs Officials seem to be amongst the worst offenders against the rules of courtesy. In a letter to the editor of the “Tages-Anzeiger” a reader complains bitterly about “dictatorial methods, offensive language, arrogance, conceit” on the part of Swiss Immigration and Customs Officers. Bad experiences with little tin-pot Hitlers at the frontier seem to occur fairly frequently, not so much to Swiss people who re-enter their country, but to many of the foreign workers whom they like to show up for “the nuisances they are”.

term of office last September. Mr. Raison was invited to sit at a normal session of the City Council in the presence of 25 Aldermen and 159 Councillors. He was invited to address them and conveyed the warm greetings of the people of Geneva. He said that Geneva wished to keep good relations with every city in the world and was particularly proud and happy of its long-standing relations with the City of London.

BRITISH WORKERS FOR SWISS SOLUTION

The great majority of the 7,000 employees of the George Kent Group, whose process control interests had attracted the interest of Brown Boveri, have voiced support for a deal which would place their company under the wings of the Baden-based Swiss industrial giant. This consultation, which was probably the first attempt of its kind conducted on a large scale in a takeover-bid situation, was organised at the request of Mr. Tony Wedgwood Benn, Secretary for Industry, who wanted to know the workforce’s position on a choice involving either a takeover by the British firm GEC with Government backing, or a takeover by Brown Boveri of Kent’s process control division, by far the most important sector of the Group. The Government was known to back the “British” solution although it would have cost at least £6 million of tax-payer’s money, but the majority of the workers realised, following the opinion of the majority of specialists, that their future would be more secure if Brown Boveri took over. The great majority of the 600 workers of Cambridge Instruments, a part of George Kent which Brown Boveri would hive off, were in favour of the GEC and Government alternative, but 84 per cent of those employed in the factories which Brown Boveri is seeking to take over were in favour of this eventuality.

Brown Boveri’s original intention was to have a controlling stake in George Kent’s process control division, whose production would be complementary to its own. The new company would be called Brown Boveri Kent. But it now seems that the Swiss firm would settle for less than a controlling stake in order to overcome Government opposition.

WELFARE OFFICE for SWISS GIRLS IN GREAT BRITAIN

(For Information, Advice or Help)

31 Conway Street, London, W.1

(Nearest Underground Station:

Warren Street)

Telephone: 01-387 3608

RECEPTION HOURS

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday

2 p.m. to 5 p.m. or by appointment

ANGLO-SWISS

Lord Mayor of Geneva
invited at Mansion House

Mr. Pierre Raisin, Mayor of Geneva, and his wife were for three days the guests at the Mansion House of the former Lord Mayor of London, Lord Hugh Wontner, just before the end of his