

An unwelcome visitor

Autor(en): **WGS**

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AN UN- WELCOME VISITOR!



Visitors are either invited, arrive unexpectedly to the delight of those visited – **OR** they turn up at the most inconvenient moment!

Most of us have received unwelcome visitors at one time or another. But how many of our unwelcome visitors literally “burst” in on us?

This unfortunate fate happened to one of our Lucerne-born compatriots only a few weeks ago. A Volvo car driven by the manager of a local furniture and antique store actually “parked” itself in Mrs. Odette Vassallo’s front room following a collision with a car parked outside her home in Twickenham, south-west London. Her parents, on a rare visit, photographed the scene.

The visit might sound comical but it might easily have been tragic. Odette had left her 17-month-old son Simon playing in the kitchen while she went to the living room.

There she heard a crash – not unnaturally she looked up – only to see the car careering across her front garden. It demolished her bay window and ended up **INSIDE** her front room.

Almost unbelievably nobody was hurt. The driver was treated for shock, as was Odette, who is expecting her second child in a few months.

Odette and her Maltese-born husband John described the incident as “something out of a horror story”.

Damage is estimated at £2,000.

WGS

Yorkshire Swiss and human rights

As a result of an interview published in the *Swiss Observer* in September 1975, “And now let a Woman Speak!” the Yorkshire Swiss Club at their monthly meeting in Leeds on the 6th February had the delightful experience of being addressed by Dr. Christine A. Pickard, M.B., ChB., the youthful lady doctor who had been interviewed by George Sommer, the editor.

Dr. Pickard has lately made a careful study of Swiss nationality laws and more especially of present efforts in Switzerland to bring such laws in line with the finally accepted fact that women are entitled to equal rights as men.

Dr. Pickard reminded her listeners that while Switzerland may be considered a rather conservative country, events have shown again and again that once a new principle has been accepted as valid, both government and people are often ready to move with rapidity and thoroughness in bringing their institutions and structures up to date. She had no doubt that the traditional role of the Swiss male citizen as head of the family, having the final say in the affairs of his dependants, was coming to an end.

Undoubtedly the Swiss nationality will in future be handed on to children through a mother as well as through a father, and even the easing of naturalisation of non-Swiss marrying Swiss women is being given serious consideration, despite considerable opposition on grounds of the excessive liabilities that could be incurred. Dr. Pickard reminded the audience that the Swiss abroad are most cordially invited to submit their thoughts and suggestions to the commission sitting at this very moment in Berne and charged with finalising the necessary revisions.

The discussion brought out the uniqueness of the Swiss nationality, rooting as it does in a local citizenship. Obviously the contradictions between nationality laws of countries jealously guarding their sovereignty will in the future result in an increased number of double or triple citizenships. As one listener pointed out: the myth of nationalities may have to end when we realise that in fact we are citizens of the world, endowed with fundamental human rights and duties and with specific ones in a given locality where we happen to reside. The practice of linking citizenship to a community, as Switzerland knows it, may show a way out of the jungle of outdated pretensions.

Professor J. Ph. Inebnit stressed the importance of consultation between Swiss abroad and the authorities in Switzerland before fundamental changes

are undertaken. He demonstrated this in recounting an incident during the conference of the Swiss Abroad in Lausanne in 1959, when events finally took a different course, because of a forceful intervention by a member of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain. By good fortune, Federal Councillor Rubatel and General Guisan were present during that particular session and influenced by it. The timely intervention proved an important factor for approximately 30,000 women throughout the world who had lost their Swiss nationality by marrying non-Swiss as, subsequently a law was passed, enabling them to regain their former nationality.*

Professor Inebnit advocated therefore that Swiss societies abroad should certainly take an interest in politics in the best sense of the word, while naturally abstaining from partisan politics which tended to lead to dissension. He also suggested that the Yorkshire Swiss Club might consider at its next general meeting to elect a lady president, thereby letting deeds speak for themselves.

An interesting and thought-provoking evening ended with light refreshments and informal discussions, and members went out into a cold and wet night assured that the evening had been well spent.

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*Apparently the Lausanne decision was instrumental in changing the official attitude mid-stream.

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