

The Basle fair

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and I should be only too pleased to join your correspondents in any united effort to stop this impossible state of things, if they can convince me that something is going to be DONE at last. I am confident that those who blindly submit to the artificial law the officials are now trying to enforce on their fellow-citizens are, fortunately, few and need not be seriously taken into account: they are generally people who are not slow to benefit by the advantages secured for them by others.

I should be very grateful indeed if Mr. Braga or other correspondents would kindly, through the columns of your paper, give us their views more definitely as regards tenor of petition and collecting signatures, and if any Swiss Society has some plan under consideration. Now can the many Swiss who, like myself, do not belong to such a Society, but are none the less eager to fight for right and fairness, do their bit.

"FAIR PLAY."

NATURALIZATION IN SWITZERLAND.

To the Editor of *The Swiss Observer*.

Sir,—I was rather surprised to read in your issue of the 25th of November last that the "Fremdenfrage" was causing considerable preoccupation to the Federal Council, and I feel positively nervous that they consider it necessary to pull the first paragraph of Art. 44 of the Constitution to pieces, in order to settle this question.

It would be well to know what it is that perturbs them in connection with the question of the foreign settlers in Switzerland. Is it the military, the political, or the economical side of the question which causes them sleepless nights? I have no doubt that many good Swiss in the Federal Palace smile at the anxiety of their colleagues.

The military aspect of the matter can only be aggravated by the wholesale issue of certificates of naturalisation. When the new Swiss form an appreciable proportion of the army and some of them are Colonels, we shall be in danger indeed. I, for one, would rather be alone than in bad company. To my mind it is much safer to provide suitable internment camps and form, if necessary, a special volunteer corps to look after them in case of need.

The political aspect will be very serious when we have provided tens of thousands of nationals from the surrounding countries with most valuable scraps of paper, so that they may act in all safety and from high positions as secret agents for some foreign power, either directly or indirectly. The only way effectively to avoid political danger is to see that the police authorities enforce strict observance of our laws, as well as respect for our national traditions and sentiments. Let all the offenders be taken across the border.

As to the economic side, it does not seem to exist for the Federal Council, because they are proposing the shortest cut to keep the whole lot and increase their numbers, but I think that this aspect of the question is as important as any. As, however, economic problems can be solved thoroughly only by economic means, we must turn the Finanzamt on to the foreign settlers and give attention to the 'Niederlassungsverträge.' If the Federal Council considered it quite a just thing to order the Swiss abroad to give their addresses once a year to Consulates and Legations and pay a fee, why not give the foreign settlers in Switzerland the pleasure of going twice a year to the police stations and paying a tidy amount in Swiss francs each time?

Why not see what they can arrange in connection with the military exemption tax? As matters stand now, every Swiss liable to this tax, even if abroad, and even if underpaid, has to contribute his share towards the free education of the children of foreign residents in Switzerland, who are perhaps occupying the very jobs he would be so glad to secure. No wonder that they like us; we are generous indeed. Why not turn this tax into a kind of "national protection premium" and argue that, as the premium must be in proportion to the benefits, the foreign residents ought to pay more, because they can follow their careers without any hindrance? They can secure those appointments for which "Militärpflichtige" need not apply, and if matters came to the worst they would be carefully looked after, fed and clothed, behind barbed wire, whereas a great many of the present military tax payers would stand the chance of being endowed with a wooden cross.

I must say that I am, in principle, in agreement with the naturalisation of children of mothers of Swiss birth, born and brought up in Switzerland; there is something Swiss in that, and it does not even necessitate any amendment of the Constitution; but I am very much against the proposal to naturalise 12,000 foreigners a year, and remould the first paragraph of Art. 44.

The paragraph reads now:—

"Aucun canton ne peut renvoyer de son territoire un de ses ressortissants, ni le priver du droit d'origine ou de cité"

and the proposed alteration would read:—

"No Swiss can be expelled from Switzerland or from his native canton."

The old text represents one of the most important passages in the Constitution, and the most outstanding fact in it is that there is not even a hint at Federal authority in the matter. It was not an oversight. As the Confederation, or the Federal authorities, have competence only in matters specifically transferred to them by the Constitution, the withdrawal or curtailment of our national birth right never having been so transferred, it would have been a legal inconsistency to put on record limitations to powers which have never existed.

As matters stand now, we are quite safe; but the proposed new paragraph is nothing more than a clever piece of camouflage, and it is in any event not good enough for the Swiss abroad. I feel sure the Swiss people will not have it, as there is no limit to the legislation and ordinances which may be barricaded behind those innocent or even attractive sounding words. We, who are already outside the territory of the Cantons and Confederation, are thereby virtually deprived of our national rights and could be dropped in mid-Atlantic. I would, therefore, like to know what is to be the constitutional standing of the Swiss abroad under the new scheme.

What the Federal Council is proposing is nothing less than the commandeering of the national rights of the old Swiss for the sake of the foreign settlers, and this so soon after the rejection of the capital levy. I really do not see why the citizens of Buerghen and the patricians of Geneva and other centres should give up their birthright for the sake of allowing a few officials to do wholesale business in cheap certificates of naturalisation with the Gentlemen of the Bahnhofstrasse.

If the trouble be that the rectangular stones of the Federal Palace are too uninspiring, or the atmosphere of the Café du Théâtre too foggy, let the Federal Council and the National Assembly proceed to the Grübli and debate the 'Fremdenfrage' there, among the fir-trees and the rocks, in sight of the Tellsplatte and of Buerghen.

I am convinced the Federal executive is doing a disservice to the country in endeavouring to centralise our national rights, and more so because it would give an unmistakable impression of weakness to the foreign element in our midst; they would feel that they have ruled Switzerland by fear. It is not weakness, but strength which we want, especially at a moment when conditions are in a state of flux in the surrounding countries. The solution of the 'Fremdenfrage' along the lines proposed by the Federal Council is a defeat for Switzerland, and I am against it.

Yours faithfully,

78, High Street, Teddington. O. BRAGA.

THE BASLE FAIR.

The Seventh Swiss Samples Fair will take place at Basle from April 14th to 24th, 1923, and there is every indication that it will be a great success. According to the latest reports, additional space has been secured by a large number of last year's exhibitors, while several prominent Swiss firms who were not showing during the last few years are now participating on an extensive scale.

To encourage and facilitate the visit of British business men, a party trip is being arranged by *The Swiss Observer*, and those who wish to take advantage of the saving in rail fares and to avoid the more or less troublesome necessity of making their own personal arrangements should send in their names. Further particulars as to price of tickets and day of departure will be published later.

The "Auslandschweizertag," one of the many patriotic manifestations to be held during the exhibition, has been fixed for April the 16th, 1923, and it is sincerely hoped that, in view of the marked progress and the official recognition which the movement has now obtained, the large Swiss Colony in Great Britain will be adequately represented.

Mr. RODOLPHE GAILLARD'S CONCERT.

An interesting recital of songs was given on Wednesday, at Wigmore Hall, by Mr. Rodolphe Gaillard, a baritone who can be listened to with genuine pleasure. One could frankly enjoy his voice for its agreeable quality, and not less his singing for its finish and good taste. He has a most sympathetic voice and a clear enunciation.

The words of the songs were printed in the programme, but, as happens only on rare occasions, one was never under any necessity to refer to them. Mr. Gaillard is sincerely interested in what he sings, the chief impression is that of one who believes song to be picturesque, dramatic and impressive, and who possesses the necessary power of voice to demonstrate all this.

The programme was very well chosen and enthusiastically received by the very large audience, who called for several encores, and the general impression was that Mr. Gaillard even exceeded himself, if it were possible.

The artist was ably assisted by Mademoiselles Maja Barina and Marga Stella. N. W.

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14th to 24th April, 1923

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