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THE COLLECTED PAPERS OF

Albert Einstein

VOLUME 1

THE EARLY YEARS, 1879–1902

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. E.', with a small flourish at the end.

Princeton University Press

1987

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SWISS CITIZENSHIP

Einstein had been stateless for almost four years (see Doc. 16) when he began the intricate process of applying for Swiss citizenship toward the end of 1899. He completed it well over a year later. According to his sister, Einstein's decision to become a citizen was prompted by his admiration for the Swiss confederation's political system.^[1] More practical reasons may have played a role in the timing of his decision: he was nearing graduation, and Swiss citizenship would make positions in the civil service, including teaching positions, available to him. He had also saved enough money to pay the required fees^[2] and met the federal and Zurich cantonal residence requirements.^[3]

Anyone who acquires cantonal and municipal citizenship automatically becomes a Swiss citizen. But an application for the former two can only be made with the approval of the Federal Council (*Bundesrat*), the highest executive in the confederation.^[4] Einstein requested that approval on 19 October (Doc. 60), enclosing a certificate of residence and good conduct (Doc. 59). These were the first in a sizable collection of documents pertaining to his citizenship application that accumulated in various government dossiers over the next sixteen months.

On 27 November 1899 the cantonal police submitted the required report of good conduct, dated 9 November, to the Federal Prosecutor's Office (*Bundesanwaltschaft*), which noted that the report was "günstig."^[5] Hermann Einstein gave the notarized permission required of a minor's guardian,^[6] which Einstein transmitted to the Department of Foreign Affairs (*Politisches Department*) (see Doc. 62). The Federal Council

^[1] She states that he did not become a citizen for utilitarian reasons, but "mit der innerlichen Übereinstimmung seiner politischen Überzeugung mit dem Geist der schweizerischen demokratischen Verfassung" (see *Winteler-Einstein 1924*, pp. 19–20).

^[2] He had been saving money from his allowance during his years at the ETH (*ibid.*, pp. 17, 20; *Kayser 1930*, p. 53).

^[3] Two years of regular ("ordentliche") residence were required (*Sammlung 1877*, p. 511, states the federal requirement; *Gemeindegesetz 1875*, p. 530, states the cantonal requirement).

^[4] See the Swiss federal statute of 3 July 1876, Article 4 (*Sammlung 1877*, p. 511).

^[5] The cantonal police report of 9 November by Corporal Emil Schlumpf, the covering letter of 27 November by Dr. Johann Stoessel, director of the Cantonal police, and the "favorable" report of the Prosecutor's Office are all in Sz-Ar, E 21/23560.

^[6] His declaration of 10 January 1900 is in *ibid.* The stipulation appears in *Schweizerisches Bundesblatt* 32, no. 47 (6 November 1880):272.

approved his request on 10 March and transmitted the decision to the canton of Zurich.^[7]

The process of obtaining Zurich municipal citizenship lasted six months. Einstein petitioned the Zurich City Council (*Stadtrat*), the municipal executive body, for citizenship on 26 June (see Doc. 65). Three days later the Municipal Chancellery (*Stadtkanzlei*) requested information about the petitioner from three municipal offices.^[8] Einstein again needed a statement of approval from his father, which he submitted with a copy of his birth certificate, to the Naturalization Section (*Bürgerliche Sektion*) of the Zurich Greater City Council (*Grosser Stadtrat*), the municipal legislature.^[9] A police detective's report (Doc. 66) was placed in his file at the beginning of July. In the fall, Einstein filled out a questionnaire (Doc. 82) for a commission of the Naturalization Section, which conveyed it to the Greater City Council.^[10] The commissioner handling Einstein's case requested more information about the applicant on 11 December.^[11] Three days later Einstein made a personal appearance before the commission of the Naturalization Section (see Doc. 84). On 19 December the Greater City Council granted municipal citizenship contingent on cantonal approval and payment of a fee of 400 francs.^[12]

Cantonal deliberations took place in January and February 1901. On 9 January the City Council informed the Cantonal Governor's Office (*Statthalteramt*) of its favorable decision, imparted six days later to the cantonal Department of Internal Affairs (*Direktion des Innern*).^[13] On 21 January this department requested more information on Einstein's financial situation from the municipality of Zurich in order to set cantonal citizenship fees.^[14] Three days later the department commissioned a report on Hermann Einstein's financial status from a detective agency in Zurich,^[15]

^[7] The announcement of approval and the letter of transmission to the canton of Zurich, both of 10 March and signed by Federal Council president Walter Hauser, are in SzZSa, N 14.12.

^[8] The office of residence records, the police, and the tax office. This request, with notations by the recipients, is in SzZ-Ar, Akten des Stadtrats Zürich, Bürgerliche Sektion, 1901, no. 7.

^[9] Hermann Einstein's declaration of 4 July and a copy of Einstein's birth certificate, dated 6 July, are in *ibid.* The Naturalization Section was composed of those members of the Greater City Council who were municipal citizens and hence responsible for naturalization procedures.

^[10] On 26 October the Naturalization Section advised the Greater City Council of Einstein's application (printed letter, signed by Municipal President Hans Pestalozzi, SzZSa, N 14.12).

^[11] The letter of commissioner Gustav Weber to fellow-commissioner Arnold Kuhn also states that Prof. Herzog of the ETH gave Einstein "ein gutes (schriftl.) Zeugnis" (SzZ-Ar, Akten des Stadtrats Zürich, Bürgerliche Sektion, 1901, no. 7).

^[12] See the printed "Auszug aus dem Protokolle des Grossen Stadtrates von Zürich vom 19. Dezember 1900," SzZSa, N 14.12.

^[13] The city council's favorable decision, signed by its president, Pestalozzi, and the letter of transmission to the Department of Internal Affairs of 15 January, signed by Zurich Governor J. H. Müller, are in *ibid.*

^[14] This document, signed by the secretary of the Department of Internal Affairs, Dr. Arnold Bosshardt, and the reply of Municipal Secretary Heinrich Wyss of 23 January, stating that he has no information on Einstein's finances or those of his father in Milan, are in *ibid.*

^[15] Bosshardt's letter is in *ibid.*

and its report followed on 30 January (Doc. 88). The same day cantonal fees were set at 200 francs.^[16] On 7 February the Governing Council (*Regierungsrat*), the cantonal executive body, granted cantonal citizenship.^[17]

Twelve days later the municipality took note of the cantonal decision and stated that citizenship would be conferred upon payment of the fees. Einstein met this condition and became a Swiss citizen on 21 February 1901.^[18] He soon began to explore the job possibilities that were now open to him.

^[16] See the petition of Emanuel Grob, Director of the Department of Internal Affairs, to the Governing Council (*Regierungsrat*), 30 January, requesting citizenship for Einstein on condition that he pay municipal and cantonal fees within a month (in *ibid.*).

^[17] A docket on the Grob petition by Can-

tonal Secretary Dr. Albert Huber on 7 February indicates approval.

^[18] Wyss notified the city council of the cantonal decision on 19 February. His docket two days later indicates final conferral (SzZ-Ar, Akten des Stadtrats Zürich, Bürgerliche Sektion, 1901, no. 85).