

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

Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

Band: - (1976)

Heft: 1722

Rubrik: Letters from Switzerland

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 09.07.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

LETTERS FROM SWITZERLAND

The Migros weekly "Brückenbauer" (Bridge builder) has recently published details and figures concerning the federalistic structure of Swiss officialdom which I find well worth quoting. According to this publication the Confederation as such occupies, PTT and Federal Railways included, some 127,800 officials. Of these 38,900 are in the Federal Service proper, diplomats, consular officials as well as military personnel being counted in this category along with the officials who are occupied in the Federal departments and administration.

Additionally the Cantons occupy, all in all, some 121 officials in their own rights and the 3,072 boroughs in their turn boast, all in all, another 126,000 borough officials. This means that 375,000 officials on various levels are deemed necessary to run the administration. Nearly all these officials are – the diplomats, consular officials and military instructors are an obvious exception – elected by popular vote, usually for a period of four years. Re-election, however, is practically assured unless there are reasons for rendering it impossible, such as bankruptcy, total incapacity, loss of civil rights owing to a court trial and verdict. In other words: to be an official means, as a rule, job security. In return the officials have to accept certain restrictions. Above all they are not allowed to strike, nor to induce others to strike. They are not allowed to own a commercial enterprise or a pub as a kind of sideline, nor – honni soit qui mal y pense – are they permitted to accept presents. According to the official guidelines an official can make a career for himself – which means he can count on promotion – if he shows "clear thinking, factual knowledge, a sense of responsibility, mental independence, courage and a sense of justice as well as humour". The latter requirement, however, can hardly be said to be easily discernible in the majority of Swiss officials on any of the three levels.

During the sixties roughly 1,000 new positions have been created in a year, which means that the number of officials grew accordingly. However, the present precarious financial situation of the Confederation and a strictly enforced personnel stop have put an end to the ever present tendency – see Parkinson's Law

by Gottfried Keller

– of officialdom to expand. After all one official to 17 inhabitants of the country – unless my arithmetics are all wrong – seems quite enough. And if one learns that in 1973 the 380,000 officials cost the Confederation, the Cantons and the Boroughs more than 12,000 million francs, this seems quite enough also.

P.S. A Bernese citizen recently guided an American round the Capital. When they reach the Federal Palace, the American wanted to know how many people worked in there. "Oh, about half of them" the Bernois replied.

General arrested

The case Jeanmaire, as it has become known, has thoroughly shocked a good many people in Switzerland. Jean Louis Jeanmaire, up to a few years ago Chief of the anti-aircraft section of the

Swiss Army with the high rank of Colonel-Brigadier – in most foreign armies a Brigadier ranks as a General – has been arrested and accused of espionage in favour of the Soviet Union. According to two short official communiqués issued by the Federal Department of Justice and Police, the arrest is not only wholly justified, but it has also been established that former Brigadier Jeanmaire has been spying for the U.S.S.R. – i.e. passing on sensitive information concerning the Swiss defence system – during a good many years. Jeanmaire is described by those who have known him as a very strict disciplinarian towards his subordinates and at the same time as a very jolly fellow socially who liked his drink. Nothing reliable is known about Jeanmaire's motives but it is thought that the Soviets had been in a position to blackmail him into giving away more and more information. It will probably be some time before the case comes up for trial and it is expected that if and when the ex-Brigadier will be tried, this will happen in camera. In one of the

For a relaxing holiday

OSBORNE HOTEL

AA **** TORQUAY **** RAC

Over 100 rooms with glorious sea and coastal views. Exclusive seafront position away from traffic noise. Offers every amenity, service, cuisine and entertainment for a wonderful holiday. Write or telephone for brochure 0803-22232.



Removals

+ Commercial goods

weekly to and from

**ENGLAND
SWITZERLAND**



FRITZ KIPFER



Bern – Switzerland
Statthalterstrasse 101
Tel. 031-55 50 55 / Telex 32693



In England please call
01-734.6901 and ask for Mr. Bugden

MOVING – PACKING – STORING – SHIPPING

two short, factual communiqués issued by the Justice Department in Berne the Soviet Union has been clearly named as the recipient of Jeanmaire's information. This in itself was rather unusual, for in such cases it is customary to speak of either "a potential enemy" or "a country in Eastern Europe", leaving it to the imagination of the public to guess which country may have been meant.

The fact that Switzerland is the object of espionage by the Soviet Union is, according to the Chief of the Swiss General Staff, Corps Commander Vischer, in itself "highly significant". The former Counter-Espionage Chief of Federal Germany, General Gehlen, has put the issue more plainly by saying that in his opinion it is quite possible that the U.S.S.R., in case of an armed conflict, may well have made plans to occupy the whole of Switzerland. According to one widely read Swiss newspaper, the tip-off about Jeanmaire's activities came from Federal Germany before the Swiss Counter Espionage Service — consisting of a staff of some 30 officers — ever thought of suspecting so high a Swiss Army Officer as a (former) Brigadier. A little more than a year ago a document was signed by a good many statesmen from East and West propagating détente and allegedly putting an end to cold-war tactics and suspicion. The case Jeanmaire and other espionage cases — in Federal Germany, for example — seem to make it quite clear that the Conference of Helsinki was nothing but a gigantic camouflage-exercise on the part of the Communists and that their world-revolutionary aims have not been changed by one iota.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, 6th November, Central Hall, Westminster, BAZAAR of the Swiss Churches in London.

LONDON SWISS PHILATELIC SOCIETY, Wednesday, 29th September, monthly meeting followed by auction. Wednesday, 27th October, monthly meeting followed by members' display Letter "E". Wednesday, 24th November, Cup Competition.

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY, monthly meeting, Wednesday, 13th October, at 7 p.m. at 34 Fitzroy Square, W.1.

CITY SWISS CLUB, Tuesday, 19th October. Dinner with guest speaker at the Dorchester Hotel.

COME FORWARD

... Friend or foe?

"That depends."

"Depends on what?"

"On whether you regard Arthur Kattendyke Strange David Archibald Gore as a friend or not."

"Who's he?"

"Oh, you probably know me better as the Earl of Arran."

The Earl of Arran is, in all probability, one of the few British people whose name can provoke an instant response from the Swiss — and not always a favourable response at that.

But his Lordship did kindly consent to grant the *Swiss Observer* an interview so that we can take a closer look at this slightly enigmatic man. Not that "Boofy" as he is known by his friends (the name was bestowed on him by his nanny and is reputedly short for beautiful baby!), would regard himself as in any way enigmatic.

He likes to think of himself as a working journalist — which he is. He writes a regular weekly column of the London *Evening News* and it is through this column that Boofy has become known to the Swiss over the years.

Not to put too fine a point to it, he has upset the Swiss more than once through this column. Without elaborating or repeating what he has written, he has accused the Swiss of being unwashed, our President of indulging in ritual cat shoots and our people of eating cats.

Earlier this year he even published a "recipe" for a cat dinner which concluded with the recommendation that moggie should be served with mashed potatoes.

So why does he do it? Because he has an acute, if somewhat bizarre, sense of humour and likes to tease sometimes. And he adds that the Swiss are ideal victims because, in his opinion, they do not have a very highly-developed sense of humour. His earnest hope is that his teasing will make the Swiss laugh at themselves occasionally. "It would do them good" he adds.

So does the Earl of Arran dislike the Swiss? Not a bit of it. He confesses to a special liking for Baslers but claims to have always got on well with Swiss people from all walks of life and places of origin.

The accusation that the Swiss were an unwashed people originated from a tram ride he took in Berne many years ago — during the war in fact. He says that some of his fellow-travellers did "smell a bit" but it was the honest sweat of the Swiss working man.

His connections with Switzerland, if they can thus be called, began during the Second World War. He was a member of the British legation in Berne from 1941 to 1942, working first in the press department and subsequently in the cipher room. He left Berne when he was recalled rather suddenly to London. He is somewhat reluctant to discuss the reasons for his sudden departure (at least for publication) but he does admit that he

did upset quite a few people. One notable quote was that he said publicly that he had picked his wife out of the gutter. In fact she is a noble born lady.

But His Lordship prefers to gloss over this and other incidents which occurred during his sojourn in Berne. He returned to London and was immediately posted to the British Legation in Lisbon where he remained for a year. For the rest of the war he worked in the Ministry of Information in London.

But to return to his sense of humour and, in particular to his onslaughts against the Swiss. He is particularly amused by the fact that following publication in a Swiss newspaper of his article saying the Swiss were unwashed, he was publicly burnt in effigy during Fasnacht celebrations. He has been back to Switzerland only once since — "to lay some ghosts and to look up some old friends" were the reasons he gave.

Although Arran is an Irish peer he is of mixed blood. His mother was half Irish and half Dutch and on his father's side had a Swiss grandmother — a Planta from Kt. Graubünden.

It was Gladstone who elevated his great-grandfather to the House of Lords. He has substantial estates in County Donegal in the Irish Republic but admits that he doesn't return there either. He seems to be running out of places where he can safely go.

Two other events connected with the Swiss and Switzerland still irk him. He says he was particularly surprised when, on his visit to Switzerland after the "unwashed" article he was denied access to Swiss radio and TV (he did not say why he wanted access). He thought this refusal was, to quote him again, "uncharacteristically undemocratic". He also confesses to having been annoyed when, after dining at The Swiss Centre some years ago, he was required to produce his receipt before he was allowed to leave. He has mellowed somewhat since and admits that the man on the door was only doing his duty.

So does he use these rather trivial incidents as an excuse for his rather barbed attacks? Not a bit of it. He insists that he does it only for fun and, having spent a pleasant couple of hours with the man, I believe him.

Perhaps we cannot always agree with the way he goes about teasing but could we deny him the pleasure of his recollection of what happened after his article on the ritual cat shoot appeared in the *Evening News*. He told me that the Swiss Ambassador drove to see the then Foreign Secretary, Sir Alec Douglas Home, to register a formal complaint. His Lordship revels in the fact that Sir Alec is reputed to have laughed.

But the Earl still has a more serious side. Early in 1975 he was asked (perhaps surprisingly) to review *Switzerland*, an important book by the English historian Christopher Hughes, for *Die Tat*.

The newspaper was impressed with