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CORRESPONDENCE.

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LA RUSSIE ET NOUS.

To the Editor of the *Swiss Observer*.

Dear Sir.—On reading the letter of "Citoyen X" in your last issue, I could not help feeling he must have looked through a pair of highly distorted glasses at what "Un Citoyen" had to say on this subject. He sets out to correct a supposed expression of partisanship, but in doing so he himself commits the error a hundredfold.

It seems incredible that, while priding himself as a follower of the latest and, naturally, only pure brand of Swiss patriotism, "Citoyen X" is so little enlightened as to have the courage—I let it go at that—to assert that the jury which acquitted Conradi made itself guilty of a grave error in the dispensing of justice. He forgets, first of all, that it was the duty of the jury to disregard every other consideration, direct or indirect, except the facts of the case, in arriving at the conclusion whether, in the circumstances, Conradi deserved punishment or not. Then he does not realise the fact that the verdict given was, no doubt, well within the law which the jury was called upon to administer.

Taking Federal legislation first, "Citoyen X" must keep in mind that Switzerland has for generations prided herself on providing a safe refuge for foreign political criminals; that in the application of that law, Conradi having been entitled to Russian nationality, by pleading to the satisfaction of the jury that he acted in his quality of a Russian and for political motives, the law directs that he should be set free, it being immaterial as to whether the crime was committed in Switzerland or outside. Nobody, undoubtedly, knows Swiss law, in this respect, better than the Bolsheviks themselves, because so many of them have sheltered under it. No apology whatever is needed in respect of the verdict.

If it is contended that Conradi should have been punished as he held also Swiss nationality, I think that even in common law he was fairly entitled to his freedom. According to "Citoyen X" one would think that the law is, or should be, that if a gang of men ruin, torture and murder members of a family, without there being the possibility of bringing the culprits to book, a surviving member of that family, on meeting one of the gang, should invite him to the nearest bar and treat him to a double Scotch.

The penal codes of the French-speaking Cantons, and of the Ticino, being mainly based on Roman law, no doubt make allowance for the fact that human beings have feelings, failings, tempers and temperaments, and if an individual is driven, through criminal action of others, into such a state of mind and temper as to induce him to take revenge, the blame for the crime does not really rest with him. It is assumed that, in a rough way, he exacts the punishment which would otherwise have been meted out by a court of law. It is true that this line of thought is acted upon only in exceptional cases, but how can "Citoyen X" say the jury was wrong, and even wilfully in error, in considering that this was a case where the actual blame and responsibility for the crime did not rest with the person brought to trial? The after effects of the verdict did not enter into the case at all.

If your correspondent is at a loss to find justification for the decision in this case, when discussing matters with his English friends, let him call to mind the verdict in the Mme. Fahmy Bey case, here in London. There was no doubt about her having murdered her husband by shooting and not, strictly speaking, in self-defence, yet unerringly severe as English justice is, the jury pronounced her not guilty. The verdict was hailed as a "great" one, and that because it was based on the fundamental facts of humanity.

"Citoyen X" is certainly taking a big bite when he considers that, when centralised, the penal code of Switzerland will be like a sausage machine, turning out "Bratwurst" by the yard. All the fundamental principles of justice in force in the Latin Cantons will have to be in it, if it has to become the law of the land. I am certain, however, that even if we had had a most rigidly centralised penal code, there would have been plenty of room for such divergent verdicts as the one of the Conradi and that of the Riedel-Guala case. The two crimes are as different from one another as day is from night.

The majority of those who are apprehensive or criticise the action of the Federal Council would, no doubt, be only too pleased if satisfactory relations between Switzerland and Russia could be brought about, provided it is not at the price of national dignity or security, nor at the bidding of opportunists, like "Citoyen X," who would subvert the administration of justice, diplomacy and national self-respect to suit the requirements of the pockets of individual citizens. Furthermore, to go out of our way, as a nation, and create or risk internal dissension in order to favour the schemes of foreign powers, is the surest way eventually to reap trouble and contempt.

Yours faithfully, O. BRAGA.

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A thing done right to-day means less trouble to-morrow.

* * *

A compositor, finding himself out of work, was lucky enough to secure a job as a waiter. One of his first customers, whom he served with soup, called him back and said "Waiter, there's a button in this soup." "Very sorry, sir," replied the waiter, "printer's error—should be mutton."

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 6.30.—12e Etude du Symbole: "la rémission des péchés."
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TAUFE.
 Pauline Eunice SCHUERCH, Tochter des Theodor Schürch von Rohrbach (Bern) und der Henrietta Emma geb. Chapman von London.—geb. am 11. März, getauft am 1. Mai.

Sprechstunden: Dienstag 12—1 Uhr in der Kirche.
 Mittwoch, 3—5 Uhr, im Foyer Suisse.
 Anfragen wegen Amtshandlungen etc., an den Pfarrer der Gemeinde C. Th. Hahn, 8, Chiswick Lane, W.4. Telefon Chiswick 4156.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Wednesday, May 11th, at 8.30 p.m.—SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY: Monthly Meeting at 34-35, Fitzroy Square, W.1.

Friday, May 13th, 8 p.m. to 2 a.m.—UNION HELVETICA: Grand Ball in aid of various Hospitals at 1, Gerrard Place, W.1.

Saturday, May 28th, at 2.30 p.m.—SWISS SPORTS at the Herne Hill Athletic Ground.

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SWISS CHORAL SOCIETY.—Rehearsals every Friday evening. Every Swiss heartily invited to attend. Particulars from the Hon. Secretary, Swiss Choral Society, 74, Charlotte Street, W.1.

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