

Letter from Switzerland

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The white man runs the show and the black man is there to work for him and sustain his way of life. However good and forthcoming white employers may be, the system in which they have to operate amounts to glorified slavery. It helps to develop feelings of technical superiority among whites, and stifle all sense of responsibility and enterprise among blacks. A psychological vicious circle develops: the whites are, in effect, better performers and the blacks hardly ever develop pride and responsibility in their work. They are indeed alienated from its purpose. Perhaps 70 per cent of racist feelings among whites stem from the poor performance of the blacks under them. This also helps to perpetuate a kind of relationship where it is natural for a black to cheat his boss when he can and where it is a must for the latter to wield a big stick. Liberalism appears as a false attitude under the circumstances.

There is an immense need for *justification* among the whites, and particularly among the Afrikaner majority. They will go out of their way to show their visitors all the good things they are doing for their black brethren and blush whenever sceptical remarks are slipped in the conversation. The fact is, they *are* doing quite a lot, but it is *for* and not *with* the blacks, and of course, on their own terms. These people are unaware of their dictatorial attitude. It is obvious, in their view, that decisions have to be taken for the blacks because the whites know what is *good* for blacks. It goes without saying that what is good for blacks must also be good for whites.

South Africa is a remarkable economic success. South Africans like to boast that they produce 90 per cent of the steel made in Africa and possess well over half its motor cars. Similar statistics apply to all industrial goods and one cannot deny that South Africa is an outstanding capitalist success due to the enterprise of its white minority and the sacrifice of its black and coloured labour. However, it is true that the black standards of living in South Africa are still among the highest on the continent (wages average £50 a month). One is aware that a revolution or remittance of political power to the majority would put this achievement in jeopardy because the blacks haven't really adopted the white man's entrepreneurial way of doing things. But one of the many contradictions in the whites' attitude is to say: "The blacks will never be able to run the country until they reach our level of civilisation" and despising them because they haven't reached this level while *at the same time* imposing a system of "separate" development which prevents the blacks from being "like the white man".

"See it for yourself . . ."

Defenders of South Africa invariably say to their critics that they have no right to speak if they haven't been there. Having been there myself (admittedly for a short time, but long

enough to see many things the average South African would never dream to visit) I can say that the system is as iniquitous as I thought it was before my journey. However, a journey like this *does* help one to understand the magnitude of the problems of this country and especially the psychological realities involved. Human beings need security and roots. Life is good out there and the whites have worked hard for it. One can well understand that they should strive to keep it. Selfishness is human and I don't think history has shown many examples where enlightened perception of the future has overcome immediate self-interests. History tends to progress under the weight of human passions.

This looks well like being true of South Africa. For the moment, the non-white majority are not organised and not conscious of their condition. The

whites are safe for as long as this lasts and it stands to reason that future progress will come in response to black pressure. Despite its recent declarations, the present government is not in a yielding and altruistic mood. It will require more than an expulsion from the United Nations. One thing is sure, the Nationalist rulers of the country are a little "lost" these days. Prime Minister Vorster's recent interview on the BBC, which was widely reported in South Africa, showed just how touchy Pretoria's leaders are.

A visit to South Africa enables one to have more understanding for human failings. One becomes aware of the psychological chains which entertain a fundamentally unjust system. Because of that, it is no longer possible to condemn South Africa outright like so many of our latter-day radicals.

P.M.B.

LETTER FROM SWITZERLAND

by Gottfried Keller

Some time ago the various agencies abroad of the Swiss National Tourist Office had been asked to establish — in their respective countries — what kind of wishes tourists might have or what kind of amenities might attract them to a particular Swiss mountain holiday resort. Amongst people who uttered such wishes were Germans, Americans, Austrians, Danes, Britishers, South Americans, Italians, Scandinavians and some more. Some very interesting ideas and trends have come to light, which were published in a Zürich newspaper. According to this survey, practically all those asked have stipulated that the ideal Swiss mountain resort should be "small, idyllic, in the chalet style" and without large concrete blocks of skyscrapers. According to a South African there should be Edelweiss and Alpenrosen right in front of the chalet and one should hear the music of the cowbells. Some people have opted for "villages and scenery like on a picture postcard", others want swimming pools and tennis courts, the latter coverable in case of rain, yet others wish for baby sitters and good local maps for excursions, these with distances well marked and indications in foreign languages. One rather amusing reply asked for "a little more Gemütlichkeit" and "a little less business sense" in the shops. A good many replies show a definite trend towards holiday flats and even towards youth hostels and thus away from the hotel with fixed meal times. These, it is stated, should anyway be more flexible. Hotels should offer demi-pension and to each room there should be a WC and bath, or at least a

shower. Some people have asked for organised games and hostesses, others for botanical or geological excursions, yet others for conferences and, in winter, "organised après-ski". Proximity of the resort to airports is also an expressed wish, furthermore "absolute quiet and no building noise". The younger generation has considered first-class hygienic and sanitary installations in youth hostels and camping places as of very considerable importance.

Eating is also very important when on holiday. The so-called "international cuisine", as offered nearly everywhere, is not much in demand. What some people want is described as "typical local Swiss food", which for some seems to mean Fondue or Raclette, and for some others "Bratwurst mit Röschi". Some propagate self-service, others "service of a more personal kind". What exactly is meant is not quite clear, but it might well mean service by an ever-smiling pretty waitress in a local costume. The ideal holiday resort should also have at least one cinema plus, for the youngsters, a dancing-discothèque.

No doubt these wishes will be studied carefully by many a hotel-keeper and by the managers of tourist offices of many a Swiss mountain resort. Some of the wishes expressed can quite easily be fulfilled at little cost. But some others — no concrete blocks and no skyscrapers, no building noise — cannot. Because, unfortunately, more than one lovely spot high up in the alps — in the Valais, in the Grisons, and in some other regions — has already been spoilt beyond repair.

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Nevertheless, since the hotellerie did not, for obvious reasons, do quite so well in 1974 as it used to do during the boom years, the incentive for trying to meet the more reasonable of the expressed wishes is certainly there.



On Sunday, 8th December, the Swiss sovereign — as the population is called here — has once again been called upon to vote. Several important proposals on the federal level, apart from a number of cantonal ones in various regions, were put to the test. Perhaps the most interesting of these was one with the aim of reducing the deficit in the federal finances which have been accumulating ever since 1971. This aim was to be achieved by raising both the direct and the indirect taxation and in order to make it more palatable to the people it was coupled with a second proposal which would have made spending by the federal departments more difficult. Interestingly enough, the first proposal has been heavily and decisively defeated and the second one equally decisively adopted. However, as the second one, popularly called the “spending brake,” has been linked to the first one, now rejected, it cannot, as it is, be put into force.

Nevertheless, the message sent to Berne by the population is quite clear. It means that the people want the federal government to start economising in earnest before they are willing to pay yet more direct and indirect taxes. And the Confederation can, of course, make economies by cutting down on subsidies of all kinds: such as subsidies to cantons, subsidies for universities and others. In other words: Mr. Chevallaz, the Finance Minister, has clearly been told by the electorate that in order to reduce the federal deficit, he should start by reducing expenditure before looking for

more revenue. This means that the Federal Council will, in the new year, first have to work out a new budget for 1975, which will then have to be dealt with by the two chambers of parliament in an extraordinary, or special, session early in 1975. As both the national councillors and the councillors of state have to face new elections in the autumn of next year, it is to be expected that the mood of the population will be taken into consideration in their decisions in chamber. On the whole it can be said that while the rejection of Mr. Chevallaz's proposals may have been a disappointment to him personally, it is certainly no national tragedy. It simply means that “Berne” will have to think again and come up with something more palatable. The proposal and its rejection show up a striking difference between the British and Swiss democracies: whereas in the British parliamentary democracy the Chancellor and Parliament decide what national taxes the people have to pay, in the Swiss system of direct democracy the people can — and just did — say “No” and throw the ball back into the State's court.

In a different field yet two more proposals have been rejected. It concerned health insurance. Two sets of schemes were submitted to the population. Both were based on the generally recognised fact that the existing Swiss health insurance laws, dating from 1911, were out of date. An initiative launched by the Socialist Party and supported by the Trade Unions and others postulated a health insurance scheme in some ways similar to the British National Health Acts to have its anchor in the Federal Constitution. The Federal Council and the two chambers of parliament in Berne then worked out a set of counter-proposals — both incidentally based on compulsory wage-percent contributions, which were not quite as radical as those proposed by the Left. It can often be observed in Swiss politics that the Left proposes

something quite drastic and is then quite content if a milder version is proposed by somebody else and goes through. Probably the Swiss Socialists and Trade Unions would have been quite content in this instance if the Federal Council's and Parliament's counter-proposals had been adopted. However, both proposals have been rejected and it remains to be seen what happens next. Probably nothing for a while — except for the premiums for those who are insured going up in the new year.

The percentage of those who did vote in these national issues was small, but small percentages on such occasions are due to the fact that the Swiss system of direct democracy has, apart from many advantages, the disadvantage of calling the people of voting age altogether too often to the polling stations.

FOR THE GARDENER

Peas: These valuable and nutritious vegetables respond to generous treatment. In the normal relatively small garden, the peas would be grown in well-prepared rows. Main crop peas some 18" to 2' between the rows, but the earliest dwarf varieties need only be 12" apart. Other suitable crops can be grown between the rows (lettuces and other fairly quick maturing things). The best method of preparing the ground is to take out a trench about 15" wide and 2' deep. Into the bottom of the trench put a good dressing of manure or compost, some wood ash if available and a little bonemeal. The earth should then be returned to the trench and then left to settle. Peas need some lime so a dressing of this at the rate of about 4 oz. per square yard should be put on. In favoured

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