

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: 1718: 2

Artikel: Trouble over "Mystical" Connections
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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-688792>

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TROUBLE OVER 'MYSTICAL' CONNECTIONS

Mr. Emmanuel Meyer, President and General Manager of the industrial giant Alusuisse, has found that the shareholding community wasn't completely in agreement with his connection to the "Divine Light Centre" in Winterthur, in Canton Zürich. Mr. Meyer, whose job places him at the head of 35,000 people employed all over the world, also had a seat at the Board of the Swiss Credit Bank, at which he had begun his career as a trainee. At the last Annual Meeting of the Bank, a group of shareholders managed to persuade a majority to vote Mr. Meyer out of office on account of his relations to the highly controversial group of truth-seekers in Winterthur.

It was apparent that Mr. Meyer's enemy seized on this fact to remove him from the Board. A similar situation was expected at the forthcoming AGM of Alusuisse, but Mr. Meyer was assured of the complete support of the Board.

He is prepared to go and declared lately: "If one has to pay for one's convictions, I am prepared to pay."

That a leading and respectable Swiss industrialist should be so committed to a group that has been the

target of much reprobation from the establishment is the result of reading a book, in 1969, by Swami Omkarananda, the Spiritual Father of the Divine Light Centre. Fascinated by what he had read, Mr. Meyer decided to meet the Guru and later said that he was the most remarkable person he had ever met. After that first encounter, the boss of Alusuisse frequently came to see the Indian sage without, however, seeking counsel on business matters.

The Swami's involvement in company affairs went no further than to give a lecture to Alusuisse employees on how to become "cosmic beings, full of inner happiness".

Mr. Meyer gave generous personal support, amounting to a hundred thousand francs a year, to the Divine Light Centre, of which he was made Honorary President without ever becoming a fully-fledged member. He later had to give up this honorary status when the Centre got itself a bad name with the misbehaviour of some of its members.

In 1974, a feud had developed between the Centre and its residential neighbourhood. Straight thinking

middle-class residents of the area didn't appreciate being woken up by religious chants at four in the morning. The Divine Light Centre's letter-box campaign and its general attitude to the world did not help to ingratiate its members with the local population. It was sued on various occasions. Things degenerated to the point that members of the Centre committed bomb outrages during the Autumn of last year.

Well before the situation had reached that stage, Mr. Meyer had intervened with the Mayor of Winterthur on behalf of Swami Omkarananda, who was threatened with expulsion. Former Federal Councillor Nello Celio, an old friend of Mr. Meyer, also brought his influence to bear in favour of the Swami.

After the bomb incidents, Mr. Meyer paid a last visit to the Swami as he was about to return to India and definitely ended his links with the Divine Light Centre.

Mr. Meyer recognised that his acceptance of the Honorary Presidency of the Centre had been a mistake, but he said: "I could just not believe that people who get up at four in the morning, who work hard and who pray could be capable of such criminal behaviour".

FOOTBALL: SERVETTE TAKES CUP

Servette won the Swiss Football Cup Final by beating Zürich FC by one goal to nil in Berne. The Geneva side will therefore represent Switzerland at next year's European Cup Winners' Cup contest.

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