

# Letter from Switzerland

Objektyp: **Group**

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

Band (Jahr): - **(1974)**

Heft 1679

PDF erstellt am: **21.09.2024**

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accumulated up to 556 billion dollars by 1980. Comparing this figure with the 200 billion dollars which the world's central banks hold at present, Mr. Fellowes stressed that such a situation was "ludicrous" and liable to upset yet further the world's barnacled monetary system.

Echoing the views of the experts who had spoken the week before at the City Swiss Club, he said that a way must be found to channel this money constructively. He expressed the hope that the oil producers would now take part in talks on monetary reform held so far by the IMF Committee of 20. But the economic situation resulting from the new oil prices must be handled by concerted action, he said. Individual barter deals such as those concluded by France and Britain with Saudi Arabia and Iran could not possibly solve this situation and restore confidence in the international monetary system. Mr. Fellowes also stressed that these were small deals in comparison with the magnitude of the monetary exchanges involved.

To end his exposé, the Speaker referred to President Nixon's pledge to free his country from dependence on outside petrol by 1980. Mr. Fellowes expressed some reserve over the chances that this aim could be realised, but he said that it was a worthy venture and an example which the other countries of the West should follow so as to "get off the hook". Mr. Fellowes spoke of the "challenge" set to us by the new situation and urged a national effort in securing our own energy supplies (oil, nuclear and other) which, he said, could begin to bear its fruits within five years.

Opportunity was then given to the attendance to ask questions. This question-time was lively and added a few complementary points to what the speaker had said. In particular, Mr. Fellowes welcomed the idea that producing countries should use some of their earnings to buy part of the petroleum distribution network in consumer countries.

Lord Onslow, who became Earl of Onslow on the death of his father in 1971, answered most appropriately on behalf of the guests. Of the pointed remarks made during his address, one which deserves mention is that the Jews had never been persecuted in the Muslim World until the creation of the Hebrew State, which is considered all over the Arab world as a national insult. While Jews were persecuted and segregated in nearly every country of Europe, they had lived peacefully for centuries from Morocco to Iraq. Israel could therefore be considered as "a creation supported by the West in an effort to clear its conscience".

PMB

## LETTER FROM SWITZERLAND

It is to be hoped that the worst will be past and done within Britain by the time this is being read by the readers of the *Swiss Observer*. Just how difficult things may be or have been in the United Kingdom is extremely difficult to gauge from Switzerland. If one were to believe certain German publications, for example "Der Spiegel", Britain was, or still is, more or less "down to the last candle". The two correspondents who, at present, report from London for the "Basler Nachrichten" are also painting a rather gloomy and bleak picture, as gloomy and bleak as the one which is being painted in the "Zürichsee-Zeitung". If, on the other hand, one listens to Theo Haller and his excellent factual reports on the radio and reads the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" as well, one gets the impression that while the situation is certainly serious, it is nevertheless not hopeless.

Perhaps even more confusing are some of the private letters we have recently received from London. One lady writes that her milk, her mail — mostly bills! — and her newspaper arrive punctually and regularly and that the extent of the crisis must have been exaggerated abroad. But another lady, also from London, speaks of a blackmarket in petrol (so un-British!) and of prices in the shops which are going up from week to week. In yet another letter we have been told the pathetic story that during Christmas electric tree-illuminations were only allowed for an hour at a time. A friend from Hampstead has stated that last year he bought a pair of shoes of a good make in one of the large stores for £7 and that the same pair of shoes now costs £15. Some correspondents speak of dark and dangerous streets, some of toilet paper

rolls being in short supply, some of people in bus queues getting edgy and snappy and yet others mention enormous difficulties in connection with their work. To crown it all we have read that a junior minister, Patrick Jenkin, has appealed to the population to brush their teeth in darkness — a remark which he himself has apparently since regretted and acknowledged as being rather stupid.

What is one to make of all this? In a recent issue of the well known German weekly "Die Zeit", one of its editors who is also a former London correspondent, described a weekend visit he made to London with the sole purpose of looking at the crisis. But, said he, he could not find it. Life looked to him more or less normal, with the exception perhaps of the lighting in certain restaurants where some chandeliers were not lit.

Some Swiss one meets who have unfortunately long since forgotten what Britain did for the free world, including Switzerland, during the last war, tend to sneer about present day Britain and the difficulties the United Kingdom is going through. They have, of course, had it too good for too long and have become accustomed to sitting on a high horse. If the so-called oil crisis with its various consequences has the effect of waking people up a little and teaching them that there are also different values in life apart from the material ones, then this crisis, which quantitywise has never existed, will have been a blessing in disguise. At any rate: if my long stay in Britain has taught me anything then it was that it is dangerous and stupid to underestimate the Britishers and their ability to pull through seemingly impossible difficulties.

Gottfried Keller

## Jurassians tried at Délémont

Two leading members of the *Groupe Bélière* were sentenced in Délémont for having occupied the Swiss Embassy in Paris in July, 1972. Mr. Jean-Claude Montavon, principal organiser of the Bélières, was fined 900 francs and given a 20-day prison sentence which was suspended for three years. An un-named friend of his, a 26 year old engineer, was sentenced to a 600 franc fine. Five other members of this extremist Jurassian organisation appeared in court but two were acquitted and three were non-suited for lack of evidence but had to pay costs. Observers considered the sentences deliberately mild in order to keep spirits cool in Délémont's strongly separatist area. The trial was opened following a complaint by the Federal Council for the demonstration at

the Swiss Embassy of 13th July, 1972. Some 28 Jurassians took part in it but not all of them occupied the Embassy. There were no scuffles and the demonstrators agreed to leave the premises after talks with the first counsellor, Mr. Ernest Bauermeister, who had told them that the French police would be called in after that time. An Embassy door was locked for 20 minutes but charges of "sequestration of personnel" were dropped on the recommendation of Mr. Bauermeister.

Mr. Montavon had already been given a suspended jail sentence following a sit-in at the Federal Palace in 1968. Although the Prosecutor has asked that this suspension should be revoked, the Court opted for clemency and decided to ignore this first offence.