

For the gardener

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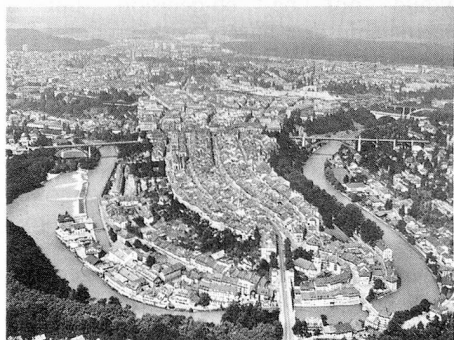
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Basel

truer "visionary" of his age. For he, with a genial humour and exuberance to match the quality of his fundamentally human attitude, brought vividly to light, whether through hymns of praise or social criticisms, the love for his country.



Berne

20th CENTURY CONCEPTS

With the advent of the 20th century came principally a change of belief, in that the values of tradition and emancipation were not necessarily irreconcilable. Thus, novelists such as Moser and Guggenheim, historians and literary men like Burkhardt and von Salis aimed at a sort of "interpenetration" of the forces of both their native country and the world at large — a universal humanism of sorts, but a definite transition towards a really European Switzerland. There was still, of course, a certain minority which held to the values of rural contentment significantly stressing the conservative element in the new age of materialism and prosperity. Others furnished antidotes to the conventional order of things and were alert to the stimulus of international thought. Carl Spitteler who won the Nobel Prize in 1919, for his epic poetry, was certainly of that school.

In answer to an undoubted divisiveness that has occurred amongst Swiss authors, through the question of whether Swiss values should be maintained at all costs or whether they should be sacrificed in the interest of a live and universal literature, one writer has noticeably almost undeniably "stepped out of the crowd" in his convictions: namely Max Frisch.

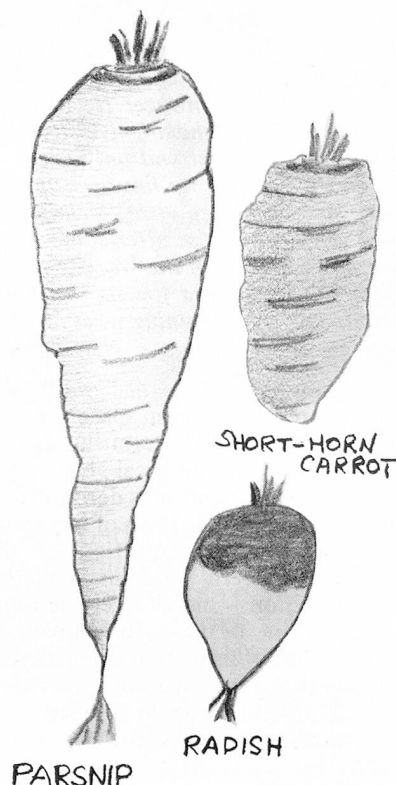
Together with Friedrich Dürrenmatt, who was born ten years after him (in 1921), Max Frisch stands pre-eminent as being fully capable of portraying the dramatist's and novelist's image of contemporary life. Moreover, these two Swiss authors have become the most important German-speaking writers to consistently reach a world-wide audience in the post-war years. Although Frisch and Dürrenmatt have a great deal in common with practically parallel development, Frisch can be characterised by his finer morality, perseverance at the same philosophical problem, and a clarity in style and presentation, especially noticeable in "The Fire Raisers" and "Andorra" (1961), Frisch's most successful play. Dürrenmatt, however, does not possess this, yet he is considered to be more dramatically inventive and imaginative. Yet for their "genre", and those like Jacques Chessex, universalism is their language. This is the road they have chosen to personal achievement and to the wider portrayal of Switzerland as a country not just of cheeses, chocolates and watches, but of books and the arts as well.

WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

Strangely the answer to Switzerland's future contribution to European literature will stem very much from its past history, simply because, without detriment to their connections with European civilisation, many Swiss regard the existence of a manifold national literature with considerable satisfaction. Between the extremes of absolute diversity and absolute harmony there is room for all aspects of expressions of thought and imagination. Since Switzerland has never had a truly cultural centre such as Florence or Berlin were once for Italy and Germany — and Paris is still for France — each group (and sometimes each individual writer) expresses itself according to its character and region. This may have its advantages, but it also has its dangers which can only be overcome on the level of a vigorous communal consciousness. So far this consciousness has proved adequate. A deteriorating structural change could occur only if the minorities were estranged from the confederate whole, or if the majority forces were tempted to exploit their position regardless of tradition which is in any event quite improbable. In fact, although the numerical relationship of the different languages is slightly shifting, there is no serious peril to the balance of the dissimilar cultures. On the contrary, because the underlying ideals are very much alive, they may produce further highlights of national integration. A development of more than a thousand years is at the basis of Swiss literary life and this, more than anything else, will continue to shape what might be called an evergrowing and everlasting "patrimonium Helveticum".

Photographs by courtesy of SNTG.

FOR THE GARDENER



If you have a garden why not make it productive in the way of food. For a comparatively small outlay you can provide yourself with many good fresh vegetables and fruits. Seeds are going to be scarcer this year than previously due to the very dry spell in the early part of 1974 and the later very wet period.

If you have not tried growing your own crops to date, why not have a go at such things as parsnips, carrots, lettuce, peas, onions, shallots and cabbage. They are not that difficult to raise. You may think that you have not got sufficient ground to accommodate these crops, but you know a few lettuces, radishes and so on included in the herbaceous border would not be out of place. Dotted around they can look quite attractive in their own right.

You need a bit more room for growing peas, but if you can choose a variety such as "Meteor" which is a very early grower and quite a good cropper and also has the advantage of growing not more than about 18 inches in height, the amount of space required is cut to the minimum. These peas can be sown in February under cloches and will mature in about 12 weeks, successional sowings can be made right up until August. Very little staking is required.

Shallots and onions can be grown from sets (baby bulbs) which can also be placed out in February. Many of the seeds for the suggested items are sold in pelleted form which makes for easy growing and saves waste of seed.

Don't forget, get your seeds early in order not to be disappointed.