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LETTER FROM SWITZERLAND

by Gottfried Keller

LORD ARRAN AMENDS HIS WAYS

"For some reasons I am looked on as an enemy of Switzerland. This I am not. In 1940 at least it was an absolutely magnificent country." This quotation stands at the very end of a long article, written by the *Earl of Arran*, and published on 19th February by the Zurich daily paper *Die Tat*.

His Lordship's contribution begins as a very positive review of Professor Christopher Hughes' recently published book about Switzerland. Halfway through his article, having read Professor Hughes' book from beginning to end and having done it justice, Lord Arran then proceeds to describe, at some length, the time he spent in Berne as Assistant Press Attaché in the British Legation during the early part of World War II. He gives a vivid illustration of the atmosphere of uneasiness and anxiety after the fall of France, and has some very positive things to say about the important part played by General Guisan and the Swiss Army. According to Lord Arran, both Switzerland and Great Britain had their greatest hours in 1940. Each of the two countries, not allied as they were, stood alone. Both suffered under intensive pressure from the power which, factually, was the enemy of both. "It was," says Lord Arran, "a proud moment for an Englishman to live in Switzerland."

If Lord Arran concludes his article with the remark that — as quoted at the outset — for some reasons he is looked on as an enemy of Switzerland, he writes, as it were, with his tongue in his cheeks. For it is only a few years ago that his Lordship used his Wednesday column in the London *Evening News* to utter remarks about the Swiss which many people, both English and Swiss, thought very offensive and which left a distinctly nasty taste behind. What he has now written should, I think, be looked on as his "amende honorable." It should, as such, be acknowledged and welcomed and deserves being put on record in the

Swiss Colony's paper in the United Kingdom.

In an introductory remark to his article in *Die Tat*, it is stressed that Lord Arran's observations are "astonishingly mild," which, it is said, is perhaps due to his getting older and perhaps also "to the growing crisis in his own country."

Whichever it is, the mildly sensational fact that Lord Arran has not only denied being our enemy, but has had some very positive things to say about Switzerland, gives cause for quite some satisfaction.

CAN THE PLO BE ALLOWED IN SWITZERLAND?

The Federal Political Department and the Federal Council in Berne will in the near future be confronted with a very delicate problem. The Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) whose chief, Mr. Yassir Arafat, has been given a standing ovation by the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York, wishes to establish a permanent office in Geneva.

Legally the PLO does not, as yet, represent either a state or a government. Yet the PLO has been acknowledged by an all-Arab Summit Conference as being the sole representative of the Palestinian population. Moreover if and when the Geneva Peace Conference meets again to try to end the Arab-Israel conflict — before mid-summer, according to the expressed hope of the Egyptian Foreign Minister — there can be no doubt that the Arab delegates will only attend it if Yassir Arafat is in their midst. Obviously the Federal Authorities will not only have to take the legal aspects into consideration, but also the political ones. Nobody can deny that the PLO is a party to the near-eastern conflict — quite apart from the fact that its methods of combat are highly debatable.

The case of the provisional revolutionary government of South

Vietnam, which has been given permission to open a "liaison office for humanitarian affairs" in Geneva, can, it seems, not serve as a precedent for the PLO. The United Nations in New York thought it useful to have a direct line of communication with the provisional revolutionary government (PRG) in South Vietnam, but was unable to obtain the necessary visa from the USA Government for an office in New York. Hence the accreditation to the UNO's European Headquarters in Geneva, to which the Federal Council has consented.

Yet another aspect of this delicate problem: Yassir Arafat and his PLO are by no means the only organisation which claims to represent the Palestinians. There is also a Marxist group, led by Dr. Habash, which has accepted responsibility for a number of ghastly acts of terrorism, and there are, I think, one or two more wings, all claiming to be the only true representatives of the Palestinian refugees.

A NEW WAGER

A totally new publication has just made its appearance and published its first issue. It is a tabloid and will, until further notice, be published fortnightly. Its name is *Lesser Zeitung* — or freely translated *Paper for Readers*. One of the novelties consists in the fact that only a few numbers are guaranteed to appear — the continuation depending on whether a sufficient number of subscribers can be recruited. Those interested in this somewhat daring venture are asked to remit 50 Swiss francs *a fonds perdu*, as it were, since no money will be refunded if the paper has to fold up after a few trial issues. Those who are prepared to risk 50 francs (approx. £8.20) automatically become members of a newly-formed society, unless they expressly stipulate that they do not care for membership. Some 30 active journalists, several of them quite well known, have contributed



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articles free of charge, but the hope is expressed that in due course future contributors can be remunerated. One third of the space – the first issue has 32 pages – will always be reserved for readers' contributions, which they are asked to send in "on any topic of their choice" and written "as they please, even as poetry".

The least that can, so far, be said about this *Readers Paper* is that in the present time of Press concentration and small newspapers dying this is both an interesting and daring experiment in co-determinative journalism. For whoever contributes his 50 francs can, as a

member of the society, take part in its meetings and can assist in electing editors and determining editorial policy. Some very topical problems are touched on in the first edition: 'Democracy in the Swiss Army', 'Women in Politics', 'Does Switzerland contribute enough to Development Aid?', 'Kissinger's Foreign Policy' – to mention only a few of them. The paper stresses that it does not owe allegiance to any political party, or financial group, in short that it is totally independent. Its first number gives one the impression of a leftish trend. Its further existence is guaranteed if 5,800 supporters part with 50 francs and, in

addition, if at least 1,000 copies at 3 francs a piece are sold in the bookstalls. One of the declared aims of the paper is to "work for humanitarian and democratic alternatives in society, economy and state, where present mentalities and existing structures do not correspond any longer to the needs of the individual and of society as a whole".

Advertisements, it is stated, "are not on principle refused, but whether they are accepted or refused will be decided in each single case".

Whether the new publication can live, and perhaps even grow, remains to be seen within this year.

NEWS FROM THE COLONY



APOLOGIES

We apologise to our readers for the dreadful mix of copy which appeared in our last issue. Part of the article on "Efficiency" by Mrs. Gee Lebon was inadvertently printed with the article "A Premiere by the Lake", by Mrs. Yole Bowman and vice versa. We hope that readers will have managed to piece the puzzle together and made sense of the two stories. We also apologise to the two contributors whose works have been so appallingly mangled.



Concert at the Wigmore Hall

It was a pity that the quality of the performance by the Swiss cellist *Alfred Knuesel* and the British pianist *Russel Lomas* at the Wigmore Hall on Tuesday, 11th March, wasn't matched by the strength of the audience. The Wigmore Hall was about a third full. The first two rows appeared to be reserved to an invited audience. The next few rows were taken by students coming apparently from the various schools of music of London, and behind them members of the general public were sprinkled across the hall.

There was, however, nothing particularly dramatic about the poor attendance. Most Swiss artists who have made their London debut in the Wigmore Hall have had to contend with a diminutive attendance. This is the lot of

all unknown artists, and the Wigmore Hall is not always a stepping stone to fame. This rather lugubrious building with its garish and old-fashioned decorations often marks the end of the London ascent of budding artists.

But Alfred Knuesel and Russel Lomas were hardly that at all and their virtuosity found a loud echo among the young musicologists who had come to appreciate them. Their performance of Beethoven's piano and cello sonata in F major (Op 5, No. 1) was brilliant and loudly applauded. London's première performance of Sonata Op 225 by the American composer Hovhaness was particularly well noticed and the two musicians visibly translated Anglo-Swiss friendship into the harmony and entente of their performance. Alfred Knuesel had a remarkable instrument which students went to examine after the performance. It was a pity that its rich sounds were lost to the thousands of concert-goers who missed the evening but we hope that Mr. Knuesel and Mr. Lomas will one day become a duo of international recognition.

SCHWEIZERBUND

The AGM season among London's Swiss societies began with that of the Schweizerbund (Swiss Club). It took place in the congenial setting of the Presscala Club, Fleet Street, under the good care of Mr. John Albert Gluck and son. Mr. Virgil Berti, the President, raised the problem of the Society's Centenary Celebrations in 1979. He said that with the rapid flight of time, this was not as far away as it seemed. He called on ideas for the future celebrations and suggested that we prepare for these financially by raising the annual subscription fee from £1 to £2 as from next year.

The meeting was followed by drinks at the club bar, and it was a pleasure to meet several guests and members never seen at other Swiss gatherings in London. Dinner was simple and generous. Mr. Gluck moreover brought from his cellar an excellent claret. In his welcome address, Mr. Berti mentioned the presence of Vice-Consul Werner Reutlinger and Mrs. Reutlinger, who were representing the Embassy. He read a letter from Mr. Fritz Adams,

departing General-Consul, in which he regretted his absence and wished the Society a prosperous future. Mr. Berti asked the attendance to stand in silence in remembrance of Mrs. Emily Delaloye, a regular member who died at the beginning of the year.

Although the Swissair song books had been distributed by Mr. Jurg Schmid, the Secretary, there was no singing that night. But that certainly didn't reduce the pleasure of a very friendly function.

P. M. B.

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY

The 1975 Annual General Meeting of the Swiss Mercantile Society took place on Wednesday, 12th March, on the top floor of a renovated Swiss house in the presence of a great many members. The meeting was opened by the President, Mr. André Jaccard after a get-together in the Canteen. Much of the proceedings were devoted to an examination of the accounts. These were far more complicated than hitherto because of the separation of the Swiss Mercantile Society into the Society proper, now a registered charity, and the Swiss Mercantile Society Ltd., a company handling the business side of the SMS, namely the school of English. This has undergone a complete face-lift during 1974, the year under review.

The President regretted the absence of the auditors to present the figures but managed remarkably well to explain the financial situation of the school. A balance sheet and a profit and loss account may be something familiar to many. In fact, such documents are presented to members of every society at every AGM. But as far as I am concerned, these lists of figures remain Chinese to me, and for this reason I will not attempt to report on them. Suffice it to say that the school's expenditure in 1974 totalled £101,884 against £68,285 in 1973. This expenditure was not covered by receipts and a deficit of £39,946 had to be carried to the general fund. With the various transfers and federal donations to the school, the deficit was converted into a loss of about £6,000.

Mr. Jaccard explained that the enormous increase in expenditure was in part due to rising costs, particularly in