

Letter from Switzerland

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SWITZERLAND IN BRITAIN'S CULTURAL LIFE

Manola Asensio dances leading roles with the London Festival Ballet: Week 31st Oct. — Norwich, Mon.-Sat. (Wed. Mat.) Nutcracker; Week 7th Nov. — Birmingham, Mon.-Wed. M&E Swan Lake/Thur.-Sat. M&E Romeo & Juliet; Week 14th Nov. — Blackpool, Mon.-Wed. M&E Swan Lake/Thur.-Sat. M&E Romeo & Juliet; Week 21st Nov. — Leeds, Mon.-Wed. M&E Swan Lake/Thur.-Sat. M&E Romeo & Juliet; Week 28th Nov. — Newcastle, Mon.-Wed. M&E Swan Lake/Thur.-Sat. M&E Romeo & Juliet; Week 5th Dec. — Liverpool, Mon.-Wed. M&E Swan Lake/Thur.-Sat. M&E Romeo & Juliet; Week 12th Dec. — Bristol Mon.-Wed. M&E Nutcracker/Thur.-Sat. M&E Romeo & Juliet.

Tuesday, 1st November — University of Glasgow, evening; Wednesday, 2nd November — University of Leeds; Thur./Fri., 3rd/4th November — University College of Wales, Aberystwyth; Monday, 7th November — University of Warwick, Coventry (provisional); Tuesday, 8th November — Welsh Arts Council Gallery-Bookshop (in conjunction with University College), Cardiff, lunchtime; Wednesday, 9th November — Taylor Institution, Oxford, 5 p.m.; Thursday, 10th November — Swiss Embassy, 16 Montagu Place, London W1, 6 p.m. (a limited number of

free tickets available from the Cultural Counsellor); Friday, 11th November — The Queen's University of Belfast, evening — *Dr. Andri Peer* gives talks on the *Raeto-Romance Languages and Literature*, with reading samples in English and Romansh.

Friday, 4th November — Queen Elizabeth Hall, 7.45 p.m. — *Frank Martin's Harpsichord Concerto* is one of the works played by the Northern Sinfonia Orchestra conducted by George Malcolm, who is also the soloist.

Wednesday, 9th November — Royal Festival Hall, 5 p.m. — Organ Recital by *Lionel Rogg* (Buxtehude, Grigny, Bach, Reubke).

Friday, 18th November — Royal Festival Hall, 8 p.m. — *Tamas Vasary* is the conductor and soloist at a concert given by the London Mozart Players.

Thursday, 24th November — Purcell Room, 7.30 p.m. — The *Trio for oboe, harp and viola* by *Heinz Holliger* is one of the works played by the 20th Century Ensemble of London.

Wednesday, 30th November — Royal Festival Hall, 8 p.m. — *Tamas Vasary* plays Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4 with the Philharmonia Orchestra, under Günther Herbig.

AWARD—WINNING BOOKS AND POSTERS

An impressive exhibition of Award-Winning Books and Posters from Switzerland has been circulating in Britain since the autumn of last year. Made available by the Pro Helvetia Foundation in Zürich, it has so far been seen in Scotland, the North of England, and as part of the Bath Festival. It will go, before Christmas, to Birmingham, Coventry and, for a return visit, to Edinburgh. In January it will begin touring Southern England, with a first showing at Dartington College of Art in Devon.

The Federal Department of the Interior organises annual competitions to select the Finest Books and the Posters of the Year. Standards are stringent. In 1976, for instance, when the poster competition was held for the 36th time, 19 out of the 719 works submitted were deemed worthy of the award. These posters are then shown in every major town in Switzerland. The 50 included in the present travelling exhibition are those which won prizes in 1974 and 1975.

There are also 144 books, judged to be the finest published in the years 1971 to 1975. This particular competition was set up to foster quality in book production. The features appraised by the jury are layout, typography, binding, materials used and general design, but not the contents of the books.

ANDRI PEER

Born in the Engadine in 1921, Andri Peer studied at the Universities of Zürich and Paris and obtained a Doctor's degree in Romance studies in 1951. From 1952, he taught French and Italian at the Cantonal High School at Winterthur. Although he has worked mainly in German-speaking Switzerland, Andri Peer is one of the outstanding poets and writers of contemporary Raeto-Romance literature. He is also regarded as one of its foremost literary critics. Andri Peer has several volumes of poetry, some of collected essays, various collections of short stories and radio plays to his credit, all written in the Raeto-Romance language. Since his student days, he has also shown a particular interest in the visual arts.

Andri Peer is a member of the Swiss National Commission for UNESCO and Chairman of its cultural section.

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Letter from Switzerland

BY GOTTFRIED KELLER

A defeat for the Federal Government

Way back in 1975 the Federal Council decreed that from 1st January, 1976 onwards all motorists (taxi drivers and lorry drivers excluded) and front-seat passengers in cars would be compelled to wear seat belts. Whoever would be caught driving without wearing a seat belt would be liable to a fine of at least 20 francs. In itself this decree was undoubtedly sensible and statistics have proved that since January 1976 the accident rate with fatal consequences has gone down.

So far so good. Recently, however, a motorist in the Valais who had been caught driving without wearing his seat belt was fined and promptly appealed to the Federal Court in Lausanne. His contention was that the Federal Council in Berne in its capacity as Federal Executive had no power to issue a decree which infringed on the individual's liberty. Moreover he submitted that if the wearing of seat belts was to be made compulsory a new law would have to be enacted for this purpose, which would fall into the competence of the two chambers of the Federal Parliament.

The Supreme Court in Lausanne decided in favour of this contention. In other words: it told the Federal Council that its decree was without legal basis and this in turn meant that the Federal Department of Justice and Police had to advise all the police forces in the land to stop fining motorists who refused to wear their seat belts. Both Lausanne and Berne stressed that the wearing of seat belts was undoubtedly in the interest of all motorists and their front-seat passengers and that it was hoped that a majority of them would continue using the belts voluntarily.

The important thing about the Supreme Court's decision was, of course, that it clearly told the Federal Government in Berne where the limits of its powers are. Thus Montesquieu's doctrine about the separation of the powers has once again been upheld. It is a fact that governments in general tend to strengthen their position by arrogating more and more power to themselves. Quite apart from the problem of the usefulness of wearing seat belts it is therefore an extremely healthy occurrence that some judges in Lausanne have told our magistrates in Berne what they can and what they cannot do.