

Letters from Switzerland

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"foreign workers". We objected to this definition and insisted they were working language students at reduced hours. As such, they must be given the opportunity to follow English language classes, they must be treated as members of the family, i.e. eat with the family, speak in the home as though one of their grown-up children, but NOT to be treated as a "paying guest". As grown-up students, old enough to go into another country, they should be able to organize their free time and private life in an intelligent manner. Unfortunately, many Au Pair girls do not avail themselves of all that London, its governmental institutions and agencies, offer in the way of facilities. Perhaps five per cent of them ever see the British museum. Pubs and discotheques are more in their line. If we are lucky, we can convince about 20 per cent to join one of the many subsidized and extremely varied recreational classes offered by the Education Committee of each borough, classes where they can meet English keep-fit enthusiasts or join in hobbies such as flower decoration, ballroom dancing, ceramics, sports etc.

A last word on the financial commitments of the English hostess: she receives a foreign girl in her household, always an intrusion however nice the girl may be. The Au Pair is willing to help with light housework and the care of children for five and one-half hours a day, six days a week for an average pocket money of £6.00 a week in London. She either will be homesick, have boy friends come to visit her, often make expensive telephone calls to foreign countries on STD, misunderstand instructions in English in the first two months with sometimes disastrous consequences, complain about the food, the upbringing of the children, the distances in a major city. In exchange for these five and one-half hours of untrained help, the hostess must offer a private bedroom, meals, access to television and often basic training in household duties and behaviour which the Au Pair girl's own mother neglected. We all know that a room with three meals, heat and hot water can fetch a minimum of £16.00 and a maximum of £20.00 from a full-time foreign student weekly. Add to this £6.00 pocket money and you could afford an English charwoman without the language barrier five hours a day for five days of the week. This should make it eminently clear that only Mums with small children who either work or have too many children to cope with are in need of an Au Pair or willing to have one. We are living in 1975 and not in the time of the "house daughters" of pre-war.

Since you have been so generous in granting space to TWO articles by amateurs on the subject of Au Pairs in England, please grant me the same generosity in publishing what a professional has to say to keep the record straight.

Yours sincerely,
Mrs. R. H. Reedy
London SW20

LETTERS FROM SWITZERLAND by Gottfried Keller

LOVE WILL FIND A WAY!

During my long term as London Correspondent for a Swiss newspaper I occasionally wanted to get out of the sphere of politics. I then did a number of feature articles. One of these was about odd professions or unusual means of earning a living in England, on top of which I listed the Toastmasters and their guild with whom during my two terms as President of the Foreign Press Association I had had a lot to do. I also mentioned the buskers and queue-entertainers and as the oddest of all a fellow somewhere in Bognor Regis. He specialised in cutting and preparing rattan canes for beating naughty boys with and did, so he claimed, enormous business both inside the United Kingdom and on the export side.

But now I find it amusing to learn about one Christian Roth, aged 30, who has moved from his native Zürich to a small village in the Canton of Aargau and who makes a living by writing love letters for shy males. He is a skilled lino-typist and has written two novels and a number of short stories. Before he sits down to write a love-letter on commission he asks for a detailed description of the lady to whom the letter is addressed. Amongst other things he wants to know her age, the colour of her hair and eyes, whether she is the emancipated type, whether gay

by nature or inclined to be sad, and also if her taste is conservative of if she is progressive in her views and ways.

"No love-letter" Ruth says, "is similar to another one. Love-letters are not mass-produced." However, there has been such a rate of success with his letters, that he has become known and has actually come under some pressure. His tariff varies. Chaps who make a well-heeled impression pay 50.- Francs (approx. \$9.50) per letter, but fellows who are obviously poor pay a nominal fee or nothing at all. And here, taken and translated from a Zürich paper, is an example of Roth's art: "I have only seen you for a short moment, but dreamt of you the whole night. The picture will not fade from my mind: In a blue, thin dress you walked through the street. Your body was swinging lightly on your long, shapely legs. Dark, silky hair played about the face with the two gay eyes. In my mind I followed you step by step and tried to reach and catch you. But you kept escaping until suddenly we found ourselves again in a dreamlike park. And where do we go from here? This I intend to tell you when we meet again, for one thing is certain for me: I just have to see you again and my dream has to become reality. When and where do we meet?"

Lovely, isn't it—but 50.- Francs still seems a little steep to me.

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HOW CAN A FOREIGNER BE NATURALISED IN SWITZERLAND?

It was at a recent tennis tournament that I made the acquaintance of a "Neo-Swiss", a Hungarian refugee, by profession a dental surgeon, married to a Swiss lady, with a well established practice in one of the sleeping-suburbs of Zürich. Meeting him gave me the impulse to find out what requirements a candidate for Swiss citizenship has to fulfil and what kind of formalities he has to go through until he is finally handed a document establishing his Swiss identity and enabling him to receive the red passport.

The legal requirements are laid down by a Federal Law concerning the acquisition and loss of Swiss Citizenship (1951) and by a number of regulations worked out by one Marc Viro, formerly Head of the Cantonal Alien's Police of Berne, some ten years ago.

To begin with the candidate has to prove 12 years practically uninterrupted residence in Switzerland, 2-12 of them in one and the same canton. Next more than 20 documents, issued by and circulated amongst the borough where the candidate lives, the canton and the confederation have to establish that he is considered suitable and worthy. It goes without saying that one of these documents has to prove that the candidate has an absolutely clean sheet legally, or in other words, no criminal record whatever. Another one has to establish that he has no debts and has never had to appear in a bankruptcy court. The local policy of his

borough of residence then has to issue an official certificate which establishes that "nothing negative" is known about the candidate. Before issuing such a certificate, the local police will have made all sorts of enquiries and will have consulted the candidates' neighbours. Detectives of the Federal Police will then find out to what kind of newspapers the candidate subscribes and when this is known, they will, one day, suddenly turn up on the candidate's doorstep in order to have a close and scrutinizing look at the books in his bookcases. Extreme left or subversive literature is, of course, frowned on.

The authorities, who are, of course, fully aware of the financial situation of the candidate and who know what assets and investments he may possess, then fix the so-called naturalisation-fee, which, depending on the circumstances, can vary between 300.- and 70,000 Swiss francs.

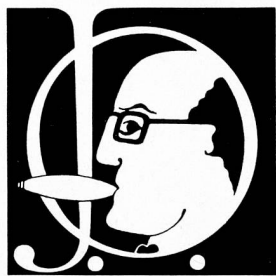
According to the regulations laid down by the said Marc Viro, the candidate has to go through a thorough process of assimilation, during which he is watched at his work, and he has to live and behave in such a way that he does not attract attention and become conspicuous. And finally, when all these hurdles are overcome, the candidate has to appear before a cantonal Commission for an oral examination during which he has to show sufficient knowledge of Swiss history, law, institutions, customs, as well as geography. Some candidates study and read, I am reliably told, during months in order not to fail this examination. It is, as

the reader will have seen, not exactly easy to become a Swiss citizen and the image of our country does not appear to be a very welcoming one. Is this a good or a bad thing?

In praise of Liechtenstein

A majority of readers of the *Swiss Observer* will, I presume, think of an income tax paradise first and foremost if I dedicate a paragraph to the principality of *Liechtenstein*, which borders on eastern Switzerland with its 157 square kilometres of territory and roughly 20,000 inhabitants. Yet the hereditary Monarchy of Liechtenstein constitutes an interesting speciality in Swiss foreign policy in so far as the Swiss Confederation looks after the Principality's interests abroad. The Swiss Ambassador — to the Court of St. James's for example — does not only represent his own country, but also, owing to agreements concluded between the two countries, His Serene Highness the Prince ("Fuerst" in German Language) of Liechtenstein. He in turn maintains one single Embassy abroad, namely in the Swiss Capital of Berne.

For all intents and purposes the Principality, which chiefly consists of the two old counties of Vaduz and Schellenberg, could be and is in many



DISCARDS people like orange pips. His charm is similar to a rattlesnake's. That week he'd hurtled through Europe like hurricane Nelly causing devastation to three of my counterparts and now it was my turn.

On the way to Heathrow, I steeled myself to watching ten years hard labour go down the waste disposal of big business. After three hours of talks, J.O. still hadn't pronounced sentence.

We lunched at the Four Seasons. It was there he produced the picture of his wife and kids. Invited me to his Idaho ranch.

Such is the power of good food.



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