

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

Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

Band: - (1978)

Heft: 1737

Rubrik: News from the colony

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Some Christmas Messages . . .

First, from our Ambassador, Dr. Ernesto Thalmann

With Christmas just around the corner, it is time for your Ambassador to continue the tradition of addressing you all through the columns of the *Swiss Observer*. This year has been "Jubilee" for everyone living in these islands, and we foreign observers of the scene could not but be impressed by the pageantry, pomp and splendour which still surround the British monarchy, and also by the loyalty, patriotism and affection which link the sovereign to her people, a concept so remote from us republicans but so intimately bound up with the British attitude towards their most cherished institution.

While there are now some encouraging signs in the economic field, we have reason, this winter of 1977, to watch closely certain dangers looming over our free democratic institutions and our liberal society.

During the last few months we have witnessed a number of attacks on those same liberties for which our ancestors strove so hard. The struggle against terrorism, aggression, the taking of hostages, hijackings, etc. has become more and more difficult for our type of state, where the rule of law is uppermost

and the enjoyment of personal freedoms guaranteed, because in fighting these evils governments sometimes have to curtail liberty and may thus themselves be tempted to take measures which could in the long run be detrimental to the democracy they want to protect.

We have been lucky in Britain and Switzerland not to have been confronted yet with this terrible dilemma. I firmly believe that the best way to prepare to face such problems is by renewing our efforts to uphold the true values of our society, and by reaffirming our faith in democratic principles, personal freedom and social justice, to which we Swiss and our British friends have long been dedicated.

That is my message to you all at this season. My wife joins me in wishing you a Merry Christmas among your loved ones and a Happy New Year.

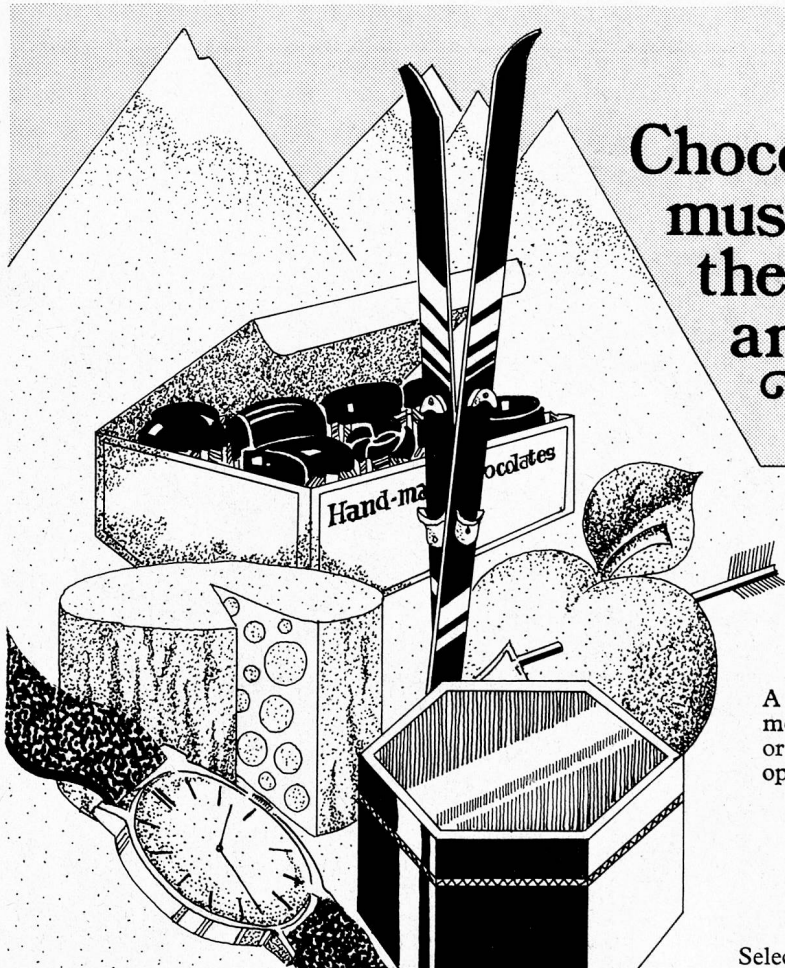
And from one of our padres

Christmas-decorations, Christmas-sals, Christmas-box, Christmas-accounts,

NEWS FROM THE COLONY

Christmas everywhere — it could give you the creeps. Why can't we get away from all of it and celebrate this feast alone, in a forest, in the desert or in a mountain hut covered in snow? How often have we dreamt of spending Christmas in this way, and how little has come of them? And what about the numerous — often quite serious — resolutions? Is this real life? A way to hell paved with good intentions? Or is it, after all, a way to heaven, littered with broken ones? Let us see.

A cynic once described the human person as somebody who always wants the best and does the worst. The present situation of our world is apt to prove him right. Look at all the promising philosophies and social theories: a paradise on earth! And what a shattering result: strikes and terror, violence and power cuts that plunge us into darkness. And all this near Christmas time. Is there, perhaps, a hidden relation with the



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message of peace, something we have overlooked or have lost sight of because it was "religious" and smelt of church and insinuation? It could well be.

God has become man and has dwelt among us: a little child — a simple boy — a poor carpenter — a famous preacher — a man for others (not a do-gooder), but what he said and did was good. And he fared the worst, was slandered and rejected, denounced as drunkard and a friend of prostitutes and tax collectors. As atheist, as enemy of religion and subversive character he was crucified with common criminals. How could that happen, if there is a God, if there is justice in the world?

Or did it happen because he was God? God so incomprehensively just and merciful that he has fully accepted the contradictions in being human, frail and sinful. God who turns the worst to good, to hope, to salvation. This is, in fact, the real Christmas Message: "Do not lose heart, have faith in me! Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee! Seventy times seven you should forgive as well!"

It seems as if he said to us: "My dear, you will never find the perfect human person, the ideal partner, the faultless friend, the perfect neighbour, a holy priest, and even less will you be able to build a perfect world, or have an ideal family nor find a faultless church. But still, life is worth living. You can forgive because I do the same. This is the only way I, being God, can stand the human race. If I had found a better way, I would have shown you. Demolition and destruction is the way of my adversary, the fallen angel, called diabolos."

Do you see the point? Is it really that easy and that simple? Or better, is it so hard? I am afraid, there seems to be no other way out of the human dilemma. The words of Christ and his entire life point in this direction only. Remember one of his last words, uttered when he was crucified, debased and tortured, just before his death: "Father forgive them, they do not know what they are doing!"

With that he "pulled the carpet right from under the feet of everyone" who wants to see a perfect world, a faultless church, an ideal social system, since such a thing could not exist without hypocrisy despised by him and every thinking man. And it would be a blatant contradiction if one asks a person to believe in the forgiveness of sin if it did not exist, if it could be eradicated. So all attempts of puritanism are condemned by him. Perfectionism is the way that leads to destruction of the human person and the world around him (or her).

Why is it so hard for us to forgive in real life? Perhaps we have never or very seldom experienced real forgiveness, because it would mean to recognise and accept sin in oneself as something that should not be but still is. How humiliating this is! And even to confess it as such, put it into language, especially if it concerns one's deep conscience in a concrete situation and touches the feeling of shame and blame. This, of course, would have nothing to do with cheap "confessions" (of a window-cleaner) and easy absolutions. It would need great courage and a deep faith in the real forgiveness, but it would make forgiving others much easier.

This is the true message of Christmas which has been expressed and concentrated into a touching legend about a man who came to visit the holy infant in Bethlehem and wanted to bring him a present. "Give me something I haven't got," the child said, "you know, the whole world is mine, and everything in it!" He was puzzled and asked: "What would that be?" And the child smiled: "Give me your sins, so that I can forgive them!"

To be forgiven and to forgive is the only way of creating a better world within and around us. May Christmas bring us this experience and it will be a happy Christmas. If something goes wrong in your best of preparations (or because of that) for the feast, think of it — and smile.

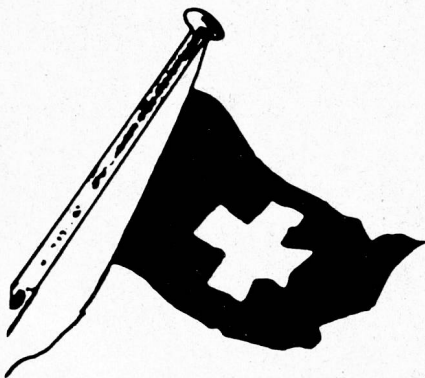
Paul Bossard.

And from your editor

Almost unbelievably Christmas and the new year are upon us again. Can it really be a whole year since we were last turning our thoughts to this much loved time of goodwill, warmth and peace?

At this time we think naturally more of our friends and family here and elsewhere. It is a time when we like to give gifts, to maintain long-standing contacts and, as often as not, to see the ghosts of times long gone in the flickering firelight after a good meal.

At least that is the traditional and, perhaps, somewhat romanticised picture



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many people like to conjure up of this season. But is it really all it is cracked up to be or, better put, all it should be? Unfortunately not. As soon as the decorations have been taken down, as soon as the daily work routine is re-established we tend to revert to being our old selves.

Would it not be a nice thought if the one really sincere new year's resolutions we tried to make was that we would, each and every one of us, try to carry our charitable and peaceful Christmas thoughts with us right up to

next Christmas, and then to do it again?

It would not be easy, let us not fool ourselves for a moment that it would. Think only how difficult it would be not to harbour uncharitable or envious thoughts about our neighbours for a whole year, not to be irritated by someone we perhaps regard as less perfect than ourselves. But think also what a better world we would have if even a few of us succeeded.

With every best wish for the festive season and 1978.

George Sommer

Swiss Conductor for BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra

It was announced in October that the Swiss conductor Karl Anton Rickenbacher had been appointed principal conductor of the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra. He takes up his post on 1st January, but is conducting ten of this year's season of public concerts in Glasgow.

Mr. Rickenbacher was born in Basle in 1940. His musical studies at the local Conservatoire included theory and the piano. In 1957 he began conducting performances of church music and chamber opera. Further studies followed, this time in Berlin, where he qualified as a conductor. There were complementary courses with Herbert von Karajan, and a friendship with Otto Klemperer also proved fruitful. His first major public appearance took place in Berlin. He was appointed assistant conductor at the Zürich Opera House in 1966, a position which he gave up in 1969 to become principal conductor and deputy musical director of the State Theatres in Freiburg

in Breisgau. Since 1976 he has been musical director and chief conductor to the Westphalian Symphony Orchestra.

Mr. Rickenbacher has also had many engagements as guest conductor with leading orchestras and opera companies. He has a wide repertoire. Although nurtured in the German musical tradition he has a particular affection for the French composers.

In 1970 the Canton of Solothurn awarded him one of its art prizes.

Mr. Rickenbacher is married to the ballerina Gay Fulton, of the Zürich Opera House Company.

OF INTEREST TO MUSICIANS AND MUSIC LOVERS

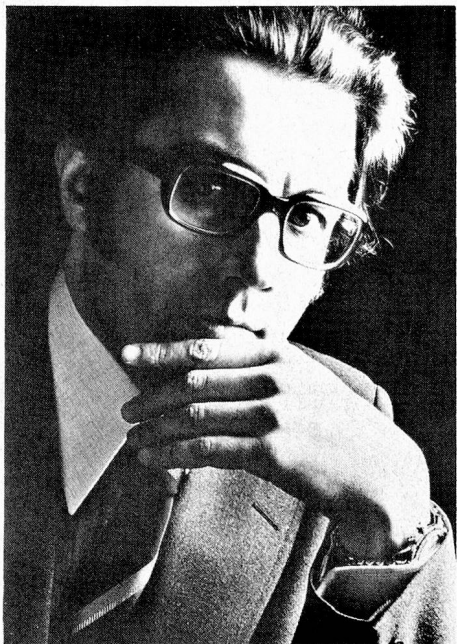
Music students and music lovers may be interested to learn of a special course on interpretation of piano works of the nineteenth century. It will be held at Deal in Kent from 26th June to 8th July, 1978. It is organised by the International Liszt Centre for Nineteenth-Century Music in London. The classes will be conducted by Prof. Stina Sundell, Stockholm, and the pianist Lennart Rabes, London.

The course is open to a limited number of students who will be able to perform at concerts. Some observers may attend classes and lectures. Details may be had from International Liszt Centre for Nineteenth-Century Music Ltd., 53 Priory Road, London NW6 3NE. Applications will have to be in by the end of February 1978.

The famous Swedish musician and music scholar Stina Sundell studied with Emil von Sauer and a pupil of a Chopin pupil.

Lennart Rabes studied with Prof. Stina Sundell in Stockholm, Magda Tagliaferro in Paris and Julian von Karocyi in Munich. He is the Musical Director of the ILC and he is well known as a brilliant pianist, not least in the Swiss community in London.

This course will provide an unique opportunity of appreciating piano works and especially the later works by Liszt.



Karl Anton Rickenbacher

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Step right this way...

Sulzer Unitop for Lloyd's Bank, Birmingham

Lloyds Bank has ordered a UNITOP Water Chiller from Swiss-founded Sulzer Bros (UK) Ltd. for their branch in Comore Row, Birmingham. The water chilling set was to be installed in a plant room on top of the bank to serve the air-conditioning system. This meant lifting the UNITOP, weighing 4 tons, 30 m vertically and traversing across the bank and depositing it on the roof.

At 5.00 a.m. on the day of delivery Colmore Row, in the centre of the city, was closed by the police as the "Sparrows" (crane and plant installation specialists) complete with 150-ton mobile crane base, 10-ton mobile hydraulic crane and two lorries carrying the 55-m crane tower and 45-m crane jib had arrived with a lorry carrying a Sulzer UNITOP.

At 9.00 a.m. with its 55-m tower already erected in the vertical position and the jib stowed, the complete crane was driven to the correct position for the lift. The UNITOP was then lifted and traversed across the building and deposited on the roof of the bank out of sight of the driver.

Although the unit only weighed 4 tons, at the jib radius of 43 m the crane was almost at its limit of capacity.

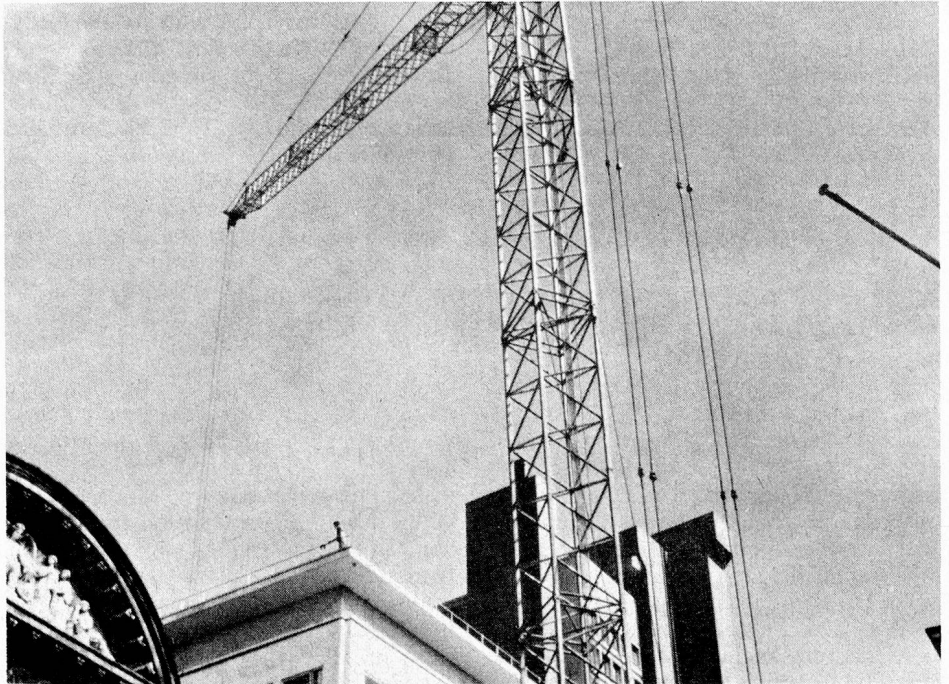
The 5-m UNITOP unit was transferred from the mobile crane to a monorail and angled at 45 degrees to enter the 3-m square opening in the plant

room roof. Eight changes of lifting arrangements had to be made in mid-air before the unit finally arrived on the plant room floor.

The motor/compressor was partially assembled under the monorail and

the complete unit rolled on four skates across the kitchen-type vinyl floor to its final location 6 m away.

Work was completed by 2.00 p.m. just in time because shortly afterwards it poured with rain.



The 55-m crane tower and jib lowering the UNITOP on to the bank roof.

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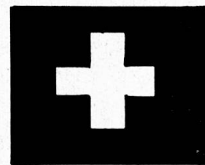
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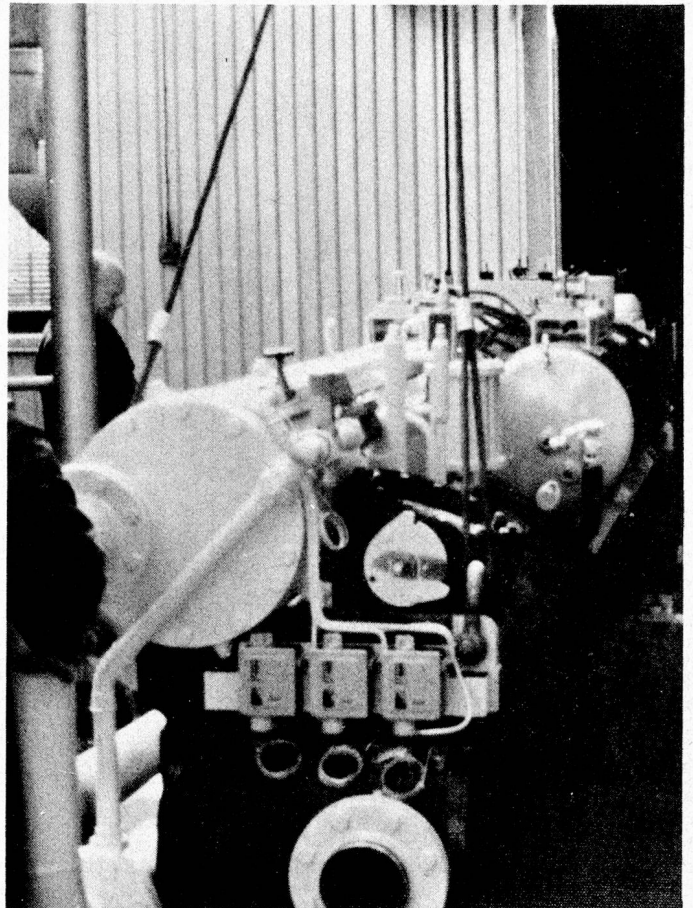
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The UNITOP being lowered to the plant room.



The UNITOP in position in the plant room.

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