

Comment

Objektyp: **Group**

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

Band (Jahr): - **(1970)**

Heft 1584

PDF erstellt am: **22.07.2024**

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Inhalten der Zeitschriften. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern.

Die auf der Plattform e-periodica veröffentlichten Dokumente stehen für nicht-kommerzielle Zwecke in Lehre und Forschung sowie für die private Nutzung frei zur Verfügung. Einzelne Dateien oder Ausdrucke aus diesem Angebot können zusammen mit diesen Nutzungsbedingungen und den korrekten Herkunftsbezeichnungen weitergegeben werden.

Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. Die systematische Speicherung von Teilen des elektronischen Angebots auf anderen Servern bedarf ebenfalls des schriftlichen Einverständnisses der Rechteinhaber.

Haftungsausschluss

Alle Angaben erfolgen ohne Gewähr für Vollständigkeit oder Richtigkeit. Es wird keine Haftung übernommen für Schäden durch die Verwendung von Informationen aus diesem Online-Angebot oder durch das Fehlen von Informationen. Dies gilt auch für Inhalte Dritter, die über dieses Angebot zugänglich sind.

greatly helped the reaching of an agreement to activate the S.D.R. scheme. There can be no doubt that special drawing rights will have a fundamental influence on the adjustment process. Like an increase in world monetary gold holding, the allocation of S.D.R.'s allows countries to add to their reserves without putting pressures on other countries' balance of payments; permitting, as it were, an excess of surpluses over the deficits in the world, helping thereby to smooth the adjustment process raising the reserve-backing to a satisfactory level.

"If", to quote Professor Day, "the I.M.F. system is to work successfully, all countries must hold substantial reserves of foreign currency", adding that, "one of the most important provisions of the I.M.F. arrangements called for an increase in the total reserves on which countries could draw, when they were in balance of payments difficulties". Today, the Fund expects to play an increasing rôle in this policy and to exercise in this way a useful influence in safeguarding the effective operation of the S.D.R. scheme, thus to foster the future growth of the world economy and international transactions in accordance with the purpose for which the International Monetary Fund was established.

Acknowledging the intensive work that Switzerland had undertaken as the only really "positively constructive" non-member adviser of the I.M.F., M. Schweitzer remarked that it would only be a matter of time before they would contribute in a more direct manner. He euphorically anticipated that the polemics over the Swiss national financial structure and all its trappings should be waged on a deeper-sighted level.

M. Schweitzer was particularly conscious of orientating us all in his address to the achievements and most certain future success that the Fund has now assured for itself. "I think it fair to say that the efforts which countries have put into international monetary matters over recent years have at least given us a greater chance of achieving a more stable monetary system than we have had at any time in the postwar period. In the end, of course, our success depends on our ability to continue the fruitful co-operation that we have gradually developed during the postwar period. I am convinced, myself, that countries will in fact continue, and strengthen this co-operation. If my view is correct, then I believe that, whatever temporary difficulties may arise, we shall have an international monetary system that can properly serve the needs of all countries and help promote their economic well-being".

Geoffrey H. Buchler

COMMENT

ZURICH AND THE AVANT-GARDE

They've been having some difficulties at the "Schauspielhaus" in Zurich. For over a generation, the administrative council of Zurich's most important theatre had customarily searched for new stage directors on the other side of the Rhine. For once, they fell on a theatre-man of Swiss blood, Peter Loeffler, who had already proved himself in directing the Festival in Berlin.

The "Schauspielhaus" had run into material difficulties. The number of seats sold during the 1968-69 season had dropped by 48,000 and the kitty was uncomfortably low. Peter Loeffler, the Council thought, would be the ideal man to give the "Schauspielhaus" a new swing. He was therefore hired for three years and his programme, based on the theme of "Reality of Society and Utopia", was accepted.

Unfortunately, it turned out that Loeffler's artistic renovation went rather too far for the taste of Zurich's theatre-going public. The première of "Early Morning" — with its scene on cannibalism, a representation of the "cannibalistic nature of capitalistic society" — produced a scandal unique in the annals of the theatre's history. Half the public rose and left the hall, raving against the immorality and blasphemy of the play.

Unlike his colleague of the Basle stage, Walter Duegelin, who showed some diplomacy, Peter Loeffler insisted on carrying his programme through. But the attendance to his plays dwindled and the rows of "Schauspielhaus" seats were left vacant. Critics, who had been crying out for years in favour of more contemporary plays at the "Schauspielhaus", were now condemning the excesses of Peter Loeffler. From "progressism" to the creation of a "neo-Marxist Institute" there was but one step, which they were not prepared to take.

So, three months after being hired, Peter Loeffler was dismissed from both the stage and artistic direction of the "Schauspielhaus". All the local papers commented favourably on this dismissal. According to "Die Tat": "The theatre's board has taken the right decision and prevented a further debacle. Loeffler's departure creates a clear situation in which our mystified public can again have faith". The "New Gazette of Zurich" said that "the public of Zurich wants more than what the last stage-efforts had to offer, and we can be glad that the theatre's responsible management has put an end to the experiment in time. The more it had waited, the more the reputation of the stage would have suffered. It was precisely to give the theatre international appeal that Loeffler's services had been

called for in the first place". The "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" believed that Loeffler's dismissal was motivated by politics more than by anything else. "The time at which the theatre management decided to intervene" it said "was surely not due to chance, considering that the Municipal Council will shortly have to fix the 1970 budget. A theatre living on public money must take some political realities into account."

Many of Loeffler's collaborators, actors, playwrights and stage-managers, all considered as "progressists", may follow his path and take leave of the "Schauspielhaus".

But they have some defenders who have been protesting loudly against the dismissal. A number of reputed leftist writers, painters, architects and judges have called for a public support to Peter Loeffler who, they said, had given a new artistic impetus to the life of the theatre. The public would have to decide whether the "Schauspielhaus" was there for the benefit of the "group of privileged bourgeois who frequented the theatre" or for everybody. Loeffler and his team of 29 have also protested against the dismissal and said that the management's communiqué had contained a number of lies. Moreover, they had been described as "dilettantes with a confused political intelligence" in the local press and threatened with extradition for their political opinions.

This episode reflects the presence of two ways of life strongly represented in Zurich. On the one hand the staunch, hard-working and right-thinking middle-class, and on the other, an increasing population of artist-types and beatniks determined to enjoy life and shake the stilted society of their parents. Zurich has really more to offer in the way of cultural entertainment than any other Swiss town. It has an opera house presenting four or five programmes on an average season, the "Congresshaus" with its three concert and recital halls, and besides the "Schauspielhaus", a string of smaller theatres, such as the "Winkelwiese", the "Theatre am Hechtplatz" and the "Neumarkt". The "Schauspielhaus" usually has classical and high-brow productions. The Old Vic and the Comédie Française stop there almost every year. The plays never outreach Brecht or Dürrenmatt in their modernity, and Schiller comes back practically every year. Although the "Schauspielhaus" may not risk getting too modern because it has to please the backbone of the theatre-going public (and at the same time, the people who count in the town) the smaller theatres have in the past produced ultra-modern things. It is therefore unjust to tax Zurich as a whole of narrow-mindedness in the cultural field. Only, the big theatres are run and paid for by the middle-class, that same middle-class which runs the town, and it is understandable (though perhaps not excusable) that they must offer bourgeois-accepted art.

THE WEBER REPORT

ON THE SWISS

ARMAMENTS BUSINESS

In the wake of the "Buehrle Affair", the Federal Council appointed a commission, headed by the former federal councillor Max Weber, to enquire into the doings of the Swiss armaments industry. It has now come up with its findings, which in fact have little new to bring, other than suggestions pointing to a stronger control in the granting of manufacturing and trading licenses. The 41st article of the Constitution lays down that the commerce and manufacture of arms is subject to Federal control, the modalities of this control being fixed by decree of the Federal Council. It is now proposed to devise a law which would specify more in detail how the 41st Article is to be obeyed, and this law would include penal provisions. Other suggestions brought forth by the Commission are that traffic in Swiss arms abroad should be watched with a sharper eye; a more stringent customs' check into the outgoings of arms should henceforth be practised; the definition of "war material" should be revised for practical purposes; export-licenses should only be granted when the importing country is proved to be peaceful and politically stable — a specially wary eye should be kept on the developing countries; export licenses may only be granted to firms with an irreproachable business and managerial record.

These recommendations will doubtless seem insufficient to those who, in the heat of the Buehrle scandal, had claimed for a complete Federal control in the arms industry. The Weber report says, quite to the contrary, that nationalisation of the arms industry would go against the technical progress borne of the dynamism of the private sector. It would also mean a considerable public burden. On the other hand, a prohibition of exports would impair the quality of production.

In the meanwhile, the Buehrle inquiry trudges on, silently.

Shortly before the Weber report had been made public, the Federal Council, said in a written answer to a question by a socialist national councillor from Geneva, that total exports of "war material" to third-world countries had amounted to 17 million francs in 1967 (1.7 m) and risen to 33 million francs (3.3 m) in 1968, including 9 million francs' in actual weapons. That figure did not include the illegal exports worth 13 million francs by the firm Buehrle.

Last year, students of the London School of Economics in London, lodged and generously subventioned by the bourgeois tax-payers which they aim to overthrow one day, damaged property in their school and invaded the rector's office. In the same way, an iconoclastic Zurich stage-director takes the risk of saying that capitalists are cannibals in a theatre founded and inspired by a people believing precisely in the virtues of capitalism.

Last year, the L.S.E. dissenters were scorned by most "right-thinking" persons as being the destructive and spoil children of a too generous society. Loeffler's case has similarities. The Zurich theatre, after all, owes its existence to the hard-working capitalism of the Limmat. The town wouldn't have become so rich had it not been blessed by so many diligent enterprising and civically-minded bourgeois; had it not been so rich, it would not have been able to afford the quality of entertainment which the "Schauspielhaus", the "Stadttheater" and the "Congresshaus" can offer. This wealth and smooth life could not have been acquired without law, order and a stable society; social stability itself could not have been achieved without an accepted morality. All is thus tied together: the ornate theatre and the gilt concert-halls of Zurich owe their very existence to the efforts and enlightenment of a hard-working society. They are the pleasures offered after a hard week's work, but not any kind of pleasure. It must, like everything in the capitalistic tradition, serve a purpose, and that is to perpetuate the good society that had borne so many valued fruits. The bourgeois society is not held together by any dictatorial decree, but by a civically-minded consensus and by conformity. It is traditionally liberal (a business necessity) and therefore gives playwrights plenty of opportunity for self-expression. Indeed, what socialist civilisations have produced worthwhile works of art? But senseless, or seemingly senseless lashings

against a society in which not only the privileged elite, but the great majority, firmly believe in is not only destructive: more than that, is is ridiculous. The censors of Zurich were not primarily concerned with saving their social scheme of things, it was far too strong to have had anything to fear from Loeffler and his likes. They don't fear his destructiveness, neither are they criticising at his dissent as such (although Zurich is a particularly conformist city) They just find him laughable in his irrelevancy and in the unreality of his conceptions. The rift in understanding between the "silent" majority and the dissenters is particularly wide in Zurich, where both camps stick hard to their conceptions. There is a strong circle of dissenters in Zurich, who feel that the whole "system" is rotten and must be wiped out. They have given strongest support for "Early Morning" jeered the loudest at the dismissal of Loeffler.

It follows from the reality that theatres owe their existence to, and are frequented by, the middle-class that they are there to please it. Art is partly dependent on the holders of power in capitalistic society, and this is a main source of scandal for left-wing writers. For one camp, Loeffler is viewed as a herald of the new art and a prison-breaker, for the other, he is just an obstreperous disruptor.

Naturally, we ought to debate whether Loeffler's controversial play was any good. But it is hard to agree on the aesthetic quality of a play when there is no agreement whatever on its message. For the board of the theatre, the play *could not have* been any good since it portrayed something which was not only disruptive, but which reflected no reality whatever. For the beatnicks, the message of the play was so packed with truth that the play *must* have been good. A work of art is appreciated in relation to a belief and a way of feeling life. For these reasons, it is difficult to decide whether the failure of the play was due to its warped political message or its innate artistic defects. Loeffler claimed that the disagreement was aesthetical, the theatre's board said it was political: they were both right.

For the time being, the bourgeois have won. Even the Union of Actors have fallen on Loeffler, attacking his political intransigence and the unbearable atmosphere he had brought about in the "Schauspielhaus" stage-community. They have clearly refused to join Loeffler's attack on the establishment. Max Frisch, the renowned Swiss author, took a middle stand and said that he approved of every attempt at innovation in art, but dissociated himself from deliberate and unpsychological provocation. These words were probably the most balanced in this whole impassioned debate.

THE PERSONAL TOUCH

—that's what counts

FOR ALL TRAVELS

—by Land, Sea and Air

let **A. GANDON** make
your reservations

TICKETS issued at STATION PRICES
NO BOOKING FEE

HOWSHIP

TRAVEL AGENCY

188, UXBRIDGE ROAD
Shepherds Bush W.12

Telephones: 01 - 743 6268/9 and 1898

(PMB)

(ATS)