

Wagner in exile [to be continued]

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It was wonderful to see future doctors, professors, preachers, teachers, students of art and music, toiling with hammer and saw, pick and shovel; washing their dirty faces and dirtier shirts in the running stream, shaving at the pump. Their muscles grew strong, their backs and faces were burnt chocolate brown. The day began at 5 a.m., and up there in Ticino they were building a fine, durable road, so that when the breakfast horn blew at seven o'clock there were neither late-comers nor left-overs. We heard, we ran, we consumed. Work began again until 1.15, then there was a good, solid meal, and the rest of the day was free. The sun was too fierce after the lunch hour, and would have knocked out most of the voluntary labourers, all unaccustomed to toil in such heat.

In the evenings everyone gathered before the huts and sang to the music of the waters and the many and various instruments of the students. Sometimes we danced. It was all very simple and happy. Bunks were sought early, there was no wooing of sleep. The days passed almost too quickly, but the road grew apace. Unquestionably it was a case of "Something attempted, something done," as each batch handed over to the next.

Marjorie Stirling.

L'AMBASSADEUR DES MONTRES GEORGES RAHM †.

Une physionomie horlogère bien connue vient de s'éteindre à Genève, à l'âge de 68 ans. Il s'agit de M. Georges Rahm qui, durant plus d'un quart de siècle, circula et voyagea dans les pays les plus variés pour y faire connaître la bonne montre suisse et en particulier les chronomètres de la maison Nardin, du Locle. L'Asie, l'Amérique, l'Extrême-Orient, la Russie furent visitées un nombre de fois incalculable par celui qu'on appelait avec raison l'"ambassadeur de la montre."

A vrai dire, de l'ambassadeur il avait à la fois la prestance, la diplomatie et les compétences. Grand, fort, l'œil aimablement enjouée et le propos taquin, il savait être un avocat aux arguments, péremptoires, un industriel connaissant admirablement la technique du métier et un voyageur de commerce de qualité. Nombreux sont ceux qui l'écoutaient avec plaisir évoquer ses souvenirs de la Russie des tsars, de l'Italie d'hier ou d'aujourd'hui, de l'Allemagne d'avant-guerre et d'après ou de la Scandinavie de toujours. Georges Rahm aimait les peuples avec lesquels il entraînait en contact et c'est sans doute la peine

qu'il se donnait pour comprendre leurs mœurs et leur mentalité qui faisait chez eux sa juste popularité et ses succès de pionnier commercial.

A plusieurs reprises, le Conseil fédéral, qui connaissait la valeur de l'homme, avait fait appel à ses bons offices. C'est Georges Rahm qui le premier fut chargé d'escorter les Suisses rapatriés de Russie après la révolution. Et cette charge de commissaire fédéral ne fut pas une sinécure, on l'imagine. Non seulement il fallut s'occuper des transports mais encore de la nourriture et des soins aux malades. Avec un esprit d'organisation remarquable, l'"ambassadeur de la montre" pourvut à tout et ramena son convoi à la frontière suisse comme le Conseil fédéral le lui avait demandé.

Georges Rahm s'était également occupé des prisonniers de guerre, plus particulièrement des Français. Les deux premiers qu'il réussit à rapatrier étaient précisément des enfants du Locle. C'est lui aussi qui ramena les trois premiers officiers français qui sont rentrés d'Allemagne. Grâce à ses interventions le sort des prisonniers en Russie fut également notablement amélioré. Le gouvernement français lui avait décerné la médaille de la reconnaissance, distinction assurément bien méritée.

Lors du plébiscite de la Sarre, notre compatriote fut également appelé à une des charges principales et présida un bureau de vote et de dépouillement.

Chaux-de-fonnier, mais surtout romand, et connaissant bien les nécessités et les besoins d'une de nos grandes industries nationales, Georges Rahm n'avait pas vu sans chagrin une nouvelle crise s'abattre sur l'industrie horlogère, les marchés être éliminés pour ainsi dire les uns après les autres et les difficultés d'exportation s'augmenter chaque jour en vertu d'une situation politique troublée. Il en faisait part au journaliste qui trouvait toujours dans sa conversation d'utiles enseignements et des observations pleines de sagacité, d'humour et de vie. Ainsi, même dans le privé, Georges Rahm cherchait à servir son pays, l'industrie qu'il représentait et les intérêts qu'il a défendus avec autant de probité que de talent jusqu'à sa mort.

P.B.

(Journal Suisse d'Egypte).

CITY SWISS CLUB.

The Committee of the City Swiss Club wishes to inform their members and friends that the date of the Cinderella Dance has been changed from the 15th of February to the 29th of February.

WEITGEREISTE EIDGENOSSEN.

Wenn man die Statistik unserer schweizerischen Luftverkehrsgesellschaft Swissair durchgeht, so ist wahrzunehmen, dass diese Gesellschaft wohl die relativ weitestgereisten Eidgenossen unter ihrem Szepter vereint. Der Streckendienst der Swissair wird insgesamt von 10 Piloten geführt. Diese haben in der Saison April bis Oktober 1935 total 1,025,925 km in der Luft zurückgelegt, wozu sie 4647,48 Stunden brauchten. Diese 10 Mann haben also alles in allem 193 Tage und 15,48 Stunden in der Luft zugebracht. Mit 543,17 Stunden oder rund 22 Tagen und 15 Stunden steht Flugkapitän Nyffenegger an der Spitze. Bei einem Stunden-durchschnitt von 227 km entspricht diese Flugdauer ungefähr 123,300 km Distanz. An zweiter Stelle steht mit 527,18 Stunden Flugkapitän Ackermann, dessen Flugdauer ca. 120,170 km entspricht, an dritter Stelle Flugkapitän Gerber mit 520,49 Stunden oder rund 118,151 km. Aber noch weitere fünf Piloten haben in dieser Saison mehr als 100.000 km zurückgelegt. Es sind dies die Flugkapitäne Heitmanek (502,58 Stunden), Borner (500,18 Stunden), Zimmermann (479,18 Stunden), Schaer, welcher in dieser Saison seine erste Million Kilometer erreichte (475,03 Stunden) und Künzle (446,17 Stunden). Pilot Wegelin flog 349,10 Stunden und Direktor Mittelholzer 303,20 Stunden. Diese Leistungen beziehen sich ausschliesslich auf den Streckenflug nach dem Flugplan des vergangenen Sommers. Die meisten dieser Flieger haben aber überdies noch Sonderflüge und Alpenflüge ausgeführt, sodass sich diese Zahlen noch erheblich erhöhen. Während Flugkapitän Nyffenegger also insgesamt mehr als 3 Mal so viele Kilometer zurückgelegt hat, wie die Erde an Umfang misst und dies im Verlaufe von ca. 7 Monaten, entspricht die Flugstrecke Direktor Mittelholzers immer noch 1½ Mal dem Erdumfang.

Auch die bei der Swissair beschäftigten 4 Stewardessen (Bruggmann, Voegeli, Weber und Oberholzer) haben weite Reisen gemacht. Sie flogen während der Saison 1935 total 2866 Stunden, was ungefähr 650,582 Kilometern entspricht. Es dürfte kaum andere junge Damen innerhalb unseres Landes geben, welche eine ähnliche Reiseleistung aufzuweisen haben, ergibt sich doch pro Stewardesse ein Durchschnitt von rund 162645 Kilometern, was mehr als 2 Mal dem Erdumfang entspricht.

"Verkehrsflug."

WAGNER IN EXILE:

The Story of the first Five Years in Switzerland. As told by Max Fehr in "Richard Wagner's Schweizer Zeit" (Erste Band: 1849-1855). (Aarau und Leipzig: Verlag H. R. Sauerländer & Co.)

(Musical Opinion, January, 1936).

So far the only English work which succeeds in uniting the multitudinous details of Wagner's life is that written by Ernest Newman, the first volume of which was published a few years ago. Newman has the initial advantage of a critical knowledge of Wagner's music and the inborn sense of a reliable historian. However, Newman has left Wagner at the time of the Dresden rising, and while awaiting the appearance of the next volume, many will welcome the opportunity of following the composer on his pilgrimage to and his sojourn in Switzerland. A most interesting work (1930) was written by Waldemar Lippert on this period of Wagner's career, based on the Wagner dossier in the archives of the Saxon police. Now comes another book, a first volume, in which we are told the story of the first phase in Switzerland, covering the years 1849-1855.

Readers have already been made aware of the flight from Riga, and the detours to London and Paris, whither he was drawn by knowledge of the emotional qualities of the music of Meyerbeer, which he probably felt had some affinity with his own exuberance, as shown later when he made that speech at Dresden before the Vaterlandsverein, demanding a Republic with the King as first president. Lippert evidently thinks such a proposition strange in the mouth of one who was at least officially master of the king's music: but not so strange when we remember that Wagner was born in a year of tumult, at Leipzig (1813), when Napoleon's boasted empire crumbled to dust.

When Wagner left Dresden he made the best of his way to Liszt, who advised a retreat into Switzerland: and so, on the evening of May 28th, 1849, at Zürich, there stepped from a railway carriage a rather thick-set man seemingly in the middle thirties. Max Fehr, with marked precision, says that the man was wearing a brown overcoat of light texture, and in his hand he carried a carpet bag strengthened with green

bands. That was Wagner, and straightway he went to the house of an old Saxon friend, Alexander Müller, who practised the art as composer, pianist, teacher and conductor. But Müller was abroad: so Wagner had to hold himself in patience until the evening of the next day, and when he did call found that his friend had retired to rest. "Who comes so late in the night?" came answer to the violent ringing of the bell. "It is I, Richard Wagner: open quickly." The door was opened, whereupon Richard bounded upstairs, fell upon the neck of his friend, saying "Alexander, I am in flight from Dresden, so thou must keep me near thee: my wife and my all are taken from me," or words to that effect. But Wagner did not tarry long with Müller: like poor Jo, he seemed always to be moving on!

An article on "Tannhäuser," written by Liszt, had been published in the *Journal des Débats* of Paris, and of that paper Berlioz was the music critic. Liszt's article was at least solace to Wagner who besought the aid of his friends in Zürich to secure a passport to France. The details of that passport are now of more interest to us than probably they ever were to the French gendarmier: "Herr Richard Wagner of Leipzig — compositeur de musique — age 36 — height 5ft. 5½in. — hair, brown — eyebrows, brown — eyes, blue — nose, medium — mouth, medium — chin, round — destination, France — duration of pass, one year."

Wagner was not long for Paris: cholera was rampant, so he got back to Zürich, travelling with Belloni, the agent of Liszt in Paris. Still, there appears to have been some necessity for Wagner to be a self-supporting institution: so his two Zürich friends, Müller and Baumgarten, did their best to secure acknowledgment of his talents, probably by way of performing fees for the use of an act of the "Flying Dutchman" by the Zürich Choral Society, of which Müller was conductor. A sum of money paid to him by the Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar, remitted through Liszt, enabled him to settle an old account with Breitkopf & Härtel for a piano, to send for his wife Minna and to bring along furniture sufficient to establish a home in Zürich. The ménage was first one room, and then expanded to an apartment with some sort of place where Wagner could put his books and find room to write. They moved again and again: but he worked on and on,

always planning that "Nibelungen."

As a political refugee, Wagner was at first under police supervision: but his facility in making friends enabled him soon to secure the confidence of Bollier, chief of the Zürich Police, who relieved Wagner of so many restrictions that he was to all intents and purposes a free man. His wife was with him, he had undisturbed opportunities for work, and he kept a dog; above all, he had found a trusting friend in Dr. Jakob Sulzer, a solicitor, who was to play an important part during this time of exile. But the Saxon police were taking no chances, for Herr Lippert tells us how they watched over him in Switzerland, shadowed him to London, and even contrived to be present at rehearsals. Wagner may not have been aware of this close attention, but the police dossier is clear on the point.

In a little while, circumstances became staidened, and Minna found herself again bearing the cross of poverty, with all its attendant indignities, as she had known them in Paris after the escape from Russia. These things and others are documented by our author by letters from and to Wagner, by extracts from Zürich newspapers, and from concert programmes and theatre bills of the time. Wagner implored help from Liszt, saying that he lacked even wood for a fire; but Liszt delayed to answer, and then only enclosed a suggestion about concerts in Zürich, with Wagner as conductor. Somehow they were given, and we notice that the circumstances were not unlike those he had had to face in Dresden, when his opponent was Reissiger, composer and Kapellmeister. At Zürich dwelt at the time Franz Abt, whom we in England remember by his songs for children and the ever-popular "When the swallows homeward fly." Abt was Kapellmeister at the theatre, and conducted choral and orchestral concerts; but opportunities could not have been many in a town of thirty-three thousand inhabitants. However, Wagner was able to join the orchestra of the theatre to that of the choral society, though he continued to deplore the inefficiency of his players, a number of whom were amateurs. Some of his amateurs were good, notably the clarinetist Konrad Ott-Imhof, a railway director by profession, whom Wagner thought superior to the first clarinetist in the orchestra of the London Philharmonic Society. (One may surmise that the player indicated was Henry Lazarus.)

(To be continued).