

No more princely postal services

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sheets are called in my home), of relaxed week-ends, more sleep and proper holidays, no more work accompanying me wherever I go, is an attractive one. I shall continue to write as free-lance, to lecture on Switzerland (a job I love, but have had to refuse so often for lack of time), and perhaps I shall even polish my novel and my thriller. But I shall have more time for my home, family and friends, music and other pastimes.

If ever I do write my autobiography, a thing I have often been asked to do, my 7½ years as Editor of the "Swiss Observer" will fill a long and vital chapter. I should be able to talk of all the many friends I made among my readers, of all the kindness and ready help I received from the Publishers, in particular Oscar Boehringer, and the late Fred Stauffer, both of whom gave me much valuable counsel. I should describe the happy co-operation which has at all time existed with members of the Frederick Printing Company's staff, some of whom have been in their service for decades, but treated me, the newcomer, with nothing but respect and useful advice. I should write of my hopes and disappointments, my mis-

takes and failures, and perhaps enumerate with some pride a few successes — if I may be permitted to call them that. I should recall many sad and comic incidents, and I should not fail to express gratitude for all the encouragement and generosity of so many of my readers and advertisers, the backing of the Advisory Council, the active interest of the Embassy and Consulates, the welcoming ever affectionate acceptance by societies and organisations.

My ideals were to do a job to the best of my ability, to continue to serve my readers in particular and the Swiss community in general in the manner I had been taught by my father and my husband. If, through my work, I have helped in a small way my country and Anglo-Swiss relations, I am content. Ideals are like the stars. Though we may never reach them, we chart our course by them in sunshine, in clouds, in fog and storms. I have tried just that.

Thank you, and God bless the S.O. and all who have anything to do with it now and in the future.

Mariann Meier.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

It is with much regret that the Publisher and the Council have agreed to accept the resignation of Mrs. M. Meier from the Editorship of the "Swiss Observer". After a very impressive seven years at the helm of our paper she now wishes to enjoy a well-deserved rest from printers' deadlines. She began her association with the "Swiss Observer" at the tender age of eighteen years and she will continue her support of the Colony's paper in the future with the same keen interest as she has always shewn in the past.

For technical reasons the handing over to the new Editor is unfortunately taking place when most of the "Swiss Observer" Council members are on holiday. The Council and the Publisher are anxious to express due appreciation to Mrs. Meier for her untiring efforts, and this will be done more adequately in a subsequent issue.

In the meanwhile they wish her a happy and well-deserved holiday and to the new Editor the best of luck in his responsible work.

OFB

NO MORE PRINCELY POSTAL SERVICES

The Swiss postal service, generally thought to be one of the best in the world, is just 120 years old.

It was in June 1849 that the law enabling the Federal Government to run a nation-wide postal service was passed.

The law put into practical effect the principle of the federal postal monopoly already included in the new Federal Constitution adopted in the previous year, and it ended more than a dozen separate postal services and scales of charges within the borders of Switzerland.

As elsewhere, the first postal services on Swiss territory were run by princes and ruling families but with the rise of commerce they were extended by private arrangements.

The merchants of St. Gall, for instance, had a regular courier link with Nuremberg in Germany more than five centuries ago and after they started up another one with Lyons, in France.

Most Cantons preferred to let private interests run their services, in return for a payment.

In Berne, Beat von Fischer-Reichenbach was granted a postal monopoly for a twenty-year period with a promise that his descendants would be given special consideration. They were—the von Fischer family ran postal services for two centuries.

Beat von Fischer built up an efficient postal system that extended well beyond the Bernese and even the Swiss boundaries, by making agreements with other cantons and foreign states for delivery and transit of mail.

The beginning of the end came for the von Fischer postal empire with the arrival of the French-run Helvetic Republic.

When the Republic fell, the Cantons got their powers back, although Berne let the von Fischers go on running their service until 1832.

In 1847 there were 17 different cantonal postal authorities while in another Canton, Schaffhausen, the service was actually part of the German postal system run by the Princes of Thurn and Taxis.

Romantic looking relics of those days can be admired in the PTT Museum in Berne postmen's elaborate and handsome badges, posthorns, post-coaches and old letter boxes.

But to anyone who wanted to send a letter, the clash of different systems must have been irritating. To have a letter conveyed from Geneva to Zurich sometimes cost more than to send one abroad.

There, was not even a standard rate for inland items. As each little administration calculated—or miscalculated—its transit charge, the progress of a letter across Switzerland could be painfully slow.

Remote places were neglected, because they did not pay postally. They got their post at irregular intervals and recipients of registered letters sometimes had to fetch them from post offices several hours away.

Postal unity was also not helped by the fact that there were nearly 300 different coins, belonging to several different money systems, in circulation. Postmen on horseback would have to negotiate with some of the 400 customs posts and road and bridge tollhouses.

The chaotic situation was remedied

by the Federal takeover of postal services, though the Cantons had to be compensated for their lost revenue.

At that time there were about 1,500 post offices throughout Switzerland; now there are more than 4,000, many of them offering elaborate services their fore-runners could never have dreamed of.

In 1849 the romantic-looking but uncomfortable horse-drawn post coaches carried nearly half a million passengers. Their successors, the neat and shiny postal coaches, now convey more than 14 million people a year.

And now the PTT is preparing to enter an age of mechanisation and electronic control, of telecommunications assured by satellite. Beat von Fischer would probably have been all for it.

("Weekly Tribune" Geneva)

INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF YOUTH ORCHESTRAS

On 18th August, twelve leading youth symphony orchestras from nine different countries will arrive at St. Moritz in order to participate in the first international youth orchestra festival. The festival will start on the following morning at 11.30 a.m. in the concert auditorium especially constructed for this purpose. An alpine horn blower is to welcome the young musicians at the auditorium which has a capacity of 2,000 seats. The ceremony will start with a flourish especially composed for the festival. It will be played by the appropriate members of all participating orchestras (a total of 36 trumpets, 44 bugles, 26 trombones, 8 tubas, 8 drums with 8 cymbals, altogether 130 musicians) and conducted by the festival's musical director, Blyth Major.

(S.N.T.O.)