

# Letter from Switzerland

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company, the "Kernkraftwerke Gösigen-Däniken AG", at the end of February, 1973. This company will represent the owners during construction and later operate the plant.

### Leibstadt Nuclear Power Plant

After a long series of delays the project of a power plant at Leibstadt is finally on the way again. Three major developments helped this situation to come about last December. Planning permission was given by the Commune of Leibstadt, the contractor was chosen and application for a construction permit was submitted to the Commune. Although strong opposition to the project is expected, the positive attitude of the Commune of Leibstadt will help overcome difficulties standing in the way of final clearance to start works. Five tenders were received from Combustion Engineering/Brown Boveri, General Electric/Brown Boveri, Kraftwerke Union (2 bids), and Westinghouse. Final negotiations led to the choice of the Brown Boveri/General Electric Consortium with Brown Boveri as the leading partner offering a water reactor plant with a net output of 940 MW. (Bulletin of the Embassy of Switzerland in Washington).

### YOUNG SWISS APPOINTED GENERAL MANAGER OF THE PORTMAN HOTEL IN LONDON

A Swiss, Mr. Michael Favre, 32, has recently been appointed General Manager of the Portman, a Pegasus/Inter-Continental Hotel.

Mr. Favre, born in Lausanne, married with two daughters, was formerly General Manager of the Hotel Inter-Continental Gabon, West Africa. He joined Inter-Continental in 1964 as Assistant Sales Manager of the Hotel Inter-Continental Geneva. He subsequently became Banquet Manager and in 1967 was promoted to Executive Assistant Manager at the Hotel Inter-Continental Jerusalem. In 1970 he returned to the Inter-Continental Geneva as Resident Manager.

Prior to joining Inter-Continental Mr. Favre served in various responsible positions in hotels in Switzerland, England and Italy.

Mr. Favre is fluent in English, French, German and Italian. He is Master of the Chaine des Rotisseurs, Officer of the Order of Gabon, and has been awarded the gold medal of the Greek Orthodox Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem. He is a member of the International Hotel Association, La Société Suisse des Hoteliers, Skol Club International and the Lions Club.

Mr. Favre is presently one of three compatriots running major London hotels, the other two being Mr. E. Wagner (Inn on the Park) and E. Michel (Prince of Wales). The Portman is a fine, luxurious

hotel of 30 rooms rising above Portman Square, just off Oxford Street. It was inaugurated in February 1971. Inter-Continental Hotel is one of the world's

most important hotel groups and is a wholly owned subsidiary of Pan Am. The Portman in London is also partly owned by BOAC.

## LETTER FROM SWITZERLAND: THE BRITISH BEST KNOWN FOR THEIR STRIKES

by Gottfried Keller

Describing what the average Swiss thinks about Britain is more difficult than imagined at first thought. Generalisations are dangerous and can be as misleading as public opinion polls! Nevertheless, I have come to know a good many Swiss, some belonging to the educated classes, others exercising the profession of shopkeeper, hairdresser, garage attendant, handymen and other useful trades. In the following considerations, it is to those belonging to the second group that I refer to as "average Swiss" and not to those who listen to the B.B.C., read English newspapers, are in regular contact with English people and even travel to the United Kingdom from time to time.

Overall it strikes me forcibly how little the average Swiss — let us call him Hans Schmied — knows about Britain, about its institutions, its system of parliamentary democracy, its moral and political influence for good in the world and its many other positive aspects and achievements. What he does know is, unfortunately, about strikes, Carnaby Street and Kings Road, permissive society, crime in Soho and Northern Ireland. He also knows something about the Queen and Princess Anne since the latter's picture is in every cheap or not so cheap illustrated magazine which he glances through while waiting at the dentist's.

In other words, there is a yawning information gap about Britain. Those excellent despatches from London one finds in several Swiss papers seem to be written for — and read by — an elite all over the country, but regrettably few on the local level. What Hans Schmied in Kusnacht reads is neither the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, nor the *National Zeitung*, nor the *Bund*, but *Der Blick*, possibly the *Tagesanzeiger* and the *Zuri-Leu*, which is distributed free (living as it does from advertising) and is mainly concerned with local and regional affairs. It is true that Theo Haller is listened to widely on the radio and has a regular audience, but to create a favourable image of Britain in Switzerland he would have to broadcast more frequently. Lord Arran's name still occasionally crops up in conversations and it goes without saying that the noble peer has not endeared himself to the Swiss public, nor done much to create a favourable image of Britain.

I said last time that there was a

craze here for English names. Even villages suddenly put up road signs with the inscription "To the City". It also strikes one that English is invading the advertising columns of many newspapers. Whole adverts are sometimes written in English, which in a way is a compliment to that language, but single words or half-sentences in English are sometimes inserted in the German text. This can look atrociously silly. "Bars" of all kinds have cropped up in many towns. Apart from milk-bars, such weird things as "shoe bars", "jeans bars" and other miscreations have made their appearance.

Two English makes of cars seem to be in demand here: Rolls Royces and Jaguars. The former are for those who can afford fantastic prices, whereas that sleek Jaguar XJ 6 (or even 12 now) seems to have a definite snobbery value. I heard someone call it the "poor man's Rolls"!

Unfortunately, this letter cannot be written without stating that Hans Schmied just can't understand why Britain should have to suffer from all these strikes. Why, have I been asked several times, does the British Government not react more firmly and send in troops wherever a strike breaks out? And when I try to explain the social and psycho-political situation in Britain, and remind him that the bulk of British troops are anyway in Germany and Northern Ireland, Hans Schmied still fails to understand.

As a counter-argument, I ask him: Why does the Swiss Army not protect its Chief of Instruction, Colonel Hirschy? He was recently invited to give a lecture at Berne University after two anti-army conferences had been authorised and held there. But some left-wing students and, apparently, a mob of street demonstrators coming mainly from behind the Iron Curtain, created such an uproar that the lecture had to be abandoned.

The question here is the same as in the case of strike-breaking in Britain: Would it be wise to put in troops? Politics is still, after all, the art of the possible.

Talking of image-creation, it is perhaps not very fortunate that the Forsyte Saga should at present be holding Swiss T.V.-viewers spellbound. Excellent and beautifully got up as the serial is, with its marvellous acting, it does show the Forsyte clan, on the whole, as greedy money-makers, snobs and social-climbers.