

Letter from Switzerland

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ZURICH'S REFUGEE SMUGGLER

The continental press are as interested as ever in the remarkable and intriguing activities of Mr. Hans Lenzlinger, a Swiss who specialises in bringing individuals, or whole families, from behind the "Iron Curtain" into the West. A full-page report was devoted last April to Lenzlinger and his company "Aramco AG" 116 Ackersteinstrasse, Zurich (nothing to do with the petrol company of the same name) in the mass-selling French weekly *l'Express*. Lenzlinger, who has been in this business for only two years, claims that, during the past twelve months, his organisation has staged the escape of over a hundred people to the West, mainly from East Germany. The average cost of the operation is 35,000 Swiss Francs. A contract is signed with families wishing to be reunited with their relatives still living in Eastern Europe where by this sum is entirely refunded, after deduction of expenses, in the event of failure. Some methods used are conventional: double-boots, forged passports, agents in the East, etc. Others are secret. The Swiss authorities who, as the *Express* says, do not believe in James Bond, are nonetheless astonished by the results obtained by the "Aramco". Although Lenzlinger is not one for modesty (his claims have been widely reported in the West-German Press), it is not questioned in official circles that he has effectively brought people to the west in hardly believable circumstances.

Recently, Lenzlinger mounted a noisy publicity stunt by dropping one of his former agents, a Mr. Hans Fahrni, 23, laced like a sausage, in front of the Federal Parliament in Berne. He had been brought there in a wheelbarrow and Lenzlinger had covered four press photographers to fix the event.

Fahrni was alleged to have betrayed the Lenzlinger organisation and brought about the arrest of another agent in Czechoslovakia. So far, nothing more seems to have been proved against Fahrni than his East-German origins. But another former Lenzlinger agent is presently under arrest for having given away the names of other members and associates of the organisation to Communist authorities. He was arrested under charges of breaking commercial secrets — something which the Confederation does not take lightly. Nor does it allow any tampering with individual freedom: After a short period of detention, Mr. Lenzlinger will probably face a Swiss court for his manhandling of Mrs. Fahrni.

Letter from Switerland

There was a time, not so very long ago, when Swiss Federal Councillors did, on principle, not travel abroad. This was particularly strictly adhered to in the case of the Federal President who may possibly have left the country unofficially, but never in his official capacity.

Today, in the age of the so-called travelling diplomacy, things have changed considerably. Federal Councillor Celio (Finances) has recently participated in the Paris Conferences about the world currency crisis. His colleague Tschud: (Interior) has been in Vienna for a conference on environment protection and

Federal Councillor Brugger (Public economy), having just returned from an official visit to Moscow, has Paris (OECD) and New York (with a courtesy visit in Washington) on his programme. The Head of the Federal Political Department, "Foreign Minister" Pierre Graber, is scheduled to be in Cairo early in May, where he will be the official guest of his Egyptian counterpart and where he is also summoning the Swiss Ambassadors in the Middle East and North-Africa to a conference. A little later, at a time not yet fixed, Mr. Graber will also visit Israel. Federal Councillor Furgler (Justice) is participating in a Stockholm Conference of European Ministers of Justice in June and Federal President Bonvin in one of European Ministers of Transport in the Hague, also in June. This leaves the Head of the Military Department, Mr. Gnägi, who, it is rumoured, is presently paying an official visit to the Swedish Army, which shows that members of the Swiss Federal Government do travel abroad nowadays.

This flurry of travel-activity has evoked an article in the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung". While acknowledging, it says, that mobility in international relations corresponds with the needs of a neutral small power, a certain reticence would nevertheless be indicated, if only for optical reasons. Above all, it continues, it should be avoided that members of the Swiss Federal Government become, as it were, the principal actors for big photographic and television shows on a folcloristic level about a host-country. This, says the author of the article, wagging a finger in the direction of the Federal Palace, is neither their part, nor does it correspond to the Swiss style of Government.

A consultative conference on PTT problems, which has recently been held, has recommended that, from September onwards, there should only be one postal delivery per day as against the present system of two a day and one on Saturday. Now the Union of postmen have protested violently against this proposal.

In a resolution, which they have published in a communiqué, they insist on the continuation of the present system, in addition to the introduction of the 5-day week. One delivery per day would, this is their contention, lead to larger delivery areas, to an increase in the number of households served and thus automatically to additional items and weight to carry. It would also be more strenuous regarding working time.

The Swiss PTT are, in fact, suffering from an acute shortage of labour, no doubt because in this boom-country private industry can and does offer conditions which appear to be far more attractive. How the problem is going to be solved is by no means certain as yet.

On 9th April Zurich has celebrated its famous "Sechselauten". This is a grand fete for young and old to mark the end of the winter. An enormous costumed procession with bands playing, marches

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