

## **The Goetheanum Executive Council Finalized the Expulsions of over 40 Members**

Registered letters dated March 14, 2007 and signed by Seija Zimmermann and Paul Mackay acting for the Council, tersely announced to the members concerned “that we are excluding you according to Article 5 of the Statutes of the General Anthroposophical Society, effective at the end of the General Members’ Meeting on March 31, 2007.” Members are also informed that they are to leave their membership cards at the office after the meeting.

This letter marks the finalization of a step announced three months earlier, and enables the Council to rid itself not only of inconvenient critics, but also of precisely those members who, by going to court, forced the Council to drop its plans to dissolve the General Anthroposophical Society. At the same time, the Council perhaps also hopes to dispose of the current Dornach District Court lawsuit challenging the resolutions of the General Members’ Meeting of 2006. If the court should decide that the Council was acting illegally on that occasion, too, the motions would have to be presented to the members anew. Yet the members who brought them would by then have been excluded and thus be without a voice. It is still uncertain if expelling members under these particular circumstances is even legal.

To review the events of the past few months: In a letter dated December 5, 2006, the Council recommended to 46 members that they resign from the Society, at the same time stating that, if they did not, they would be expelled. The reason: they had been “attacking the Society from the outside” and “burdening it from the inside” by means of motions and other contributions. None of these accusations were made concrete. However, before the expulsions were to be made final, the Council offered members the opportunity to attend “hearings” in January of 2007.

A short additional explanation was published in the *Nachrichtenblatt* of December 5, 2006, apparently to create the impression that these members formed a splinter group that nobody needed to take seriously which was flooding the Society with attacks and reproaches. This article, like others on the same subject, speaks in very general terms designed to whip up the readers’ emotions without giving any concrete information. The reader comes away with a very foggy impression of the supposed origin and working methods of a small group of members, without learning anything at all about their concerns and requests. The Council has always avoided spelling out and truly responding to these concerns. It seems the readers of the newsletter are not to be allowed to come to any independent position regarding these members, but to trust blindly in the information the Council gives them.

For years, the Council has consistently tried to prevent discussion and an understanding of the issues these members try to bring to members’ meetings, and has closed the *Nachrichtenblatt* to member contributions presenting undesired views, making it instead a safe forum for the publication of “its own” material only. The resulting lopsided infor-

mation was one significant reason why a large majority voted, at the extraordinary General Meeting of November 15, 2003, for what would have been a catastrophic event – the dissolution of the General Anthroposophical Society. Fortunately, this planned Council action proved unlawful, and so could be prevented, even though the lawsuit it took to do this was very costly in money, energy, and time. The suit was only brought because all other methods of discussing or coming to an understanding of, the issues involved were blocked.

All members answered the letters threatening them with expulsion with personal letters<sup>1</sup> in which, while expressing their dismay at the Council's intentions, they also emphasize their strong connection with the Society and state that they will not resign voluntarily. Many asked that their letters be published, but they never had an answer to their request.

Between mid-January and mid-February of 2007, these members were individually invited to the "hearings" the Council had offered them. Their requests that these hearings be made public were never answered. Several foreign members had asked if their hearing could take place around the time of the General Members' Meeting because they live so far away, but the Council did not agree to this, either, because the expulsion was to be finalized by then.

Only some of the members could travel to Dornach for a conversation. They were received by Seija Zimmermann and Paul Mackay and given a half hour to prove why they should not be expelled. But soon it became apparent that Paul Mackay, who led the interviews, was not interested in discussing this subject but only in determining whether the member in question belonged to the Gelebte Weihnachtstagung /Living the Christmas Conference. He stated very clearly at the outset that the Council considers membership in this organization with membership in the GAS incompatible, citing GW/LCC attacks on the Society as proof.

However, when members questioned Paul Mackay, it became apparent once again that the reasons for the expulsions are not valid. It became clear again and again that the Council members refuse to distinguish between attacks on the Society and criticism of present conditions *within* the Society. In adopting this attitude, they refuse any meaningful discussion about the issues involved, simply calling any opinion other than the Council's own an attack on the anthroposophical impulse. Instead of jointly seeking to come to an understanding of differences, they just brand them all as fundamentally hostile, so as not to have to deal with them. Thus, even after all these interviews, the Council's accusation of GW attacks against the Society still emerged as an empty claim.

On January 17, 2007, the members concerned set down their joint reaction to the planned exclusion, asking that it be published in "*Anthroposophie weltweit*", so that as many members as possible might follow this important issue, but once again, the Council showed it was not interested in allowing the members to inform themselves and come to their own conclusions on the weighty issue of the exclusion of over 40 members. When

---

<sup>1</sup> These letters were published in the February 27, 2007 issue of *GELEBTE WEIHNACHTSTAGUNG* and are available on 888GOYA.org. in German.

asked about this during a hearing, Paul Mackay said evasively that the expulsion process was still incomplete and the members would be hearing from him. But after more than a month, the Council had to be asked again why the letter was not published. Eventually it was published, but not until the finalization of the expulsion on March 31 had been announced, and not in the worldwide publication, but only in the more local *Nachrichtenblatt* of March 16 – too late for members to come to an understanding and possibly intercede. This way of informing members *pro forma*, after the decision has been made, has become common in recent years.

The members' statement regarding their expulsion appears in the *Nachrichtenblatt* after a lengthy Council letter announcing and explaining the decision to exclude 44 members. Two motions for the upcoming members' meeting are presented, as well. This article goes even farther than past articles in defaming, slandering, the dissenting members; it is designed to raise anger over these members, without saying anything at all about their concerns and requests. Readers are to be made angry at these disturbers of the peace without realizing that basically they know nothing about them and their "incessant attacks". Emotions are aroused, while thought and judgment are passed over entirely, an approach that is in deep conflict with the nature of Anthroposophy, which is based on coming to one's own understanding on the issues.

The Council claims to be interested in different points of view and in "the culture of dialogue for conflict resolution," distinguishing between "constructive" and "negative" criticism – hardly a very original point. It is of course very easy to brand every criticism one does not want to deal with as "negative" and thus brush it aside. As to the claim of practicing a "culture of dialogue" – to anyone who has witnessed the way, at members' meetings, members are cut off in mid-sentence, ridiculed, or simply left standing without being allowed to speak, this is simply a mockery of the facts. The dissenting members who have felt the sting of such treatment are not all adherents of the GW/LLC, by any means. How many members have left the Goetheanum auditorium in regretful resignation in recent years, because they were missing the very "culture of dialogue", the practice of listening to one another, of trying to approach and understand one another, which the Council claims to espouse.

The Council speaks of "years of repeated attempts" to "communicate with the members connected with the Gelebte Weihnachtstagung/Living the Christmas Conference". But objectively and dispassionately speaking, we must declare that this statement has nothing to do with the truth. We have no idea when and how these claimed attempts took place, since, to this day, the Council has always refused conversations with us. It was always the members who have now been accused of refusing talks who in reality begged for more time for discussions, made motions requesting conferences for such discussions; it was they who asked that members might speak spontaneously at members' meetings, rather than being limited to contributions sent in advance, who asked that there might be actual exchange about the points raised by members.. All these requests were denied by the Council, Paul Mackay primarily. The text states "One example [of trying to have a dialogue] is our attempt to arrange a discussion in the first half of 2006," which suggests that there were numerous other such examples. Yet this was the only offer of its kind the

Council ever made over the course of years. As documented in the Pentecost of 2006 issue of *Gelebte Weihnachtstagung*, the talks failed to materialize primarily because the Council refused to open them up to interested members of the Society.

We see the Council members using another populist technique here: Criticism directed at them is simply reversed and directed back at the critics; cause and effect are reversed. Seeing themselves accused of refusing talks, they simply accuse their critics of exactly that, emphasizing how many attempts *they* had been making to arrange such talks. Facts that can easily be checked out are simply reversed and, once again, instead of information about the actual important issues, readers are only presented with additional “proof” that the critical members are nothing but a nuisance and a hindrance.

Next, the Council’s text describes at some length the supposed genesis of the GW/ LCC. Here, too, the Council consistently avoids saying anything about the intentions and concerns of the group. All that is said is that a small group formed around someone whose only goal it is to attack the Society and criticize the Council. The group is described as a self-absorbed, querulous, but insignificant little sect with whom it is impossible to have any dialogue. The genesis of the GW/LCC, incidentally, is not presented truthfully in this article. Those who are interested in the true genesis and nature of the group may trace it in the GW newsletter, which has been in existence for 14 years.

The Council accuses the group of disturbing and hampering meetings by “pushing motions” onto them, of thus creating a “formalization” of meetings. This absurd accusation again reverses cause and effect. The “formalization” was not *caused* by the motions, but by the way in which every open discussion was prevented. It is the *effect* of restricting free discussion that makes motions (which are legally bound to be heard) the only way to present concerns to this autocratic Council. This would not be necessary if the Council allowed free discussion, and were actually open to member concerns. Incidentally, one of the Council goals in reactivating its claimed inactive society, the General Anthroposophical Society (Christmas Conference), was to limit the members’ right to bring motions. Though it never came to that, the Council is still drastically limiting the motions heard (which usually turn out to be ones questioning the legality of Council actions) by the questionable means of “countermotions” – *Nichteintretensanträge* –, and also frequently presents motions to end a verbal exchange that is not going the way the Council would like it to.

The article ends by presenting two proposals for the April 31, 2007 General Members Meeting. One of them requests a new ruling that members of the GW cannot be members of the GAS. But Rudolf Steiner’s declared, “The Anthroposophical Society is in no sense a secret society...Anyone can become a member, without regard to nationality, social standing, religion, or scientific or artistic conviction, who considers as justified the existence of an institution like the Goetheanum in Dornach, in its capacity as a school of spiritual science.” Excluding a group of members on the basis of their membership in a different society would be totally out of keeping with the spirit in # 4 of the original statutes, or Principles, and out of keeping with the spirit of the Christmas Conference. The

society called upon to be the freest in the world would have succumbed to judging individuals not as individuals but according to what groups they belong to.

The second proposal concerns the costs connected with the lawsuits of 2004 and 2005 to prove the nonexistence of the GAS(CC). Apparently the proposal is intended to legitimize after the fact the payment of this sum, which the Council sets at 800,000 Swiss francs, out of GAS funds, when the judgment clearly states that the Council members are jointly responsible for paying it. The GAS, our existing society, was not one of the defendants, and had nothing to do with the suit. Apparently the Council got a little unsure about this action, after the March 6<sup>th</sup> police and legal search of the Goetheanum offices, although on page 7 of the March 16<sup>th</sup> *Nachrichtenblatt*, it is declared that the search was “much more extensive than the circumstances warrant”. The criminal court’s actions do not seem so uncalled-for when we remember that for a long time, the Council never told the members what the court costs were, naming a concrete figure only a year ago, when pressured by a member motion, and further, that the bulk of the sum was never itemized for members.

The expulsion of the 44 members raises much wider issues, and ultimately the question who and what is still able to live in this AS. The exclusion issue goes deeply to the heart of the society Rudolf Steiner founded at the Christmas Conference in 1923. How can this Society endure when members are excluded without ever a discussion of their concerns? How could members of this free society voluntarily give up its free character to the wishes of a Council with different plans? The GAS is in danger of forsaking its foundations, putting the life of the anthroposophical impulse here on earth in jeopardy.

As much as we might like to deny it, that is how serious the situation is. We must rise above feelings of hurt, annoyance, or anger in order to fulfill our responsibility of healing the Society in whatever way we can.

Dr. Gian Bischoff

for the members to be expelled

Translated by Christiane Marks