

Recollections of Rudolf Steiner, 1924 —The Christening

By WILLI KUX

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To understand the situation in which Rudolf Steiner found himself, one has to visualize the following. At Christmas of 1923, committing his very being to it, he had founded the Anthroposophical Society anew. It was his intention to create a modern, public Society. In 1923, Rudolf Steiner was sixty-three years old. His slender figure was supple, his hair was black, his posture erect and purposeful, his gait filled with initiative as in a much younger person. From his home situated below the Goetheanum construction site, he walked up the hill every day without any apparent effort.

Now, after the profound events of Christmas, the shattering thing was that this healthy man soon changed into an ailing one. Yet no interruption occurred in Rudolf Steiner's broad scope of activities. Directly after the Christmas Conference he gave a lecture series for medical doctors, which lasted more than a week.

Even though his extraordinary strength of soul became evident through this, Rudolf Steiner was nevertheless marked henceforth by failing health. It was largely due to the lack of understanding on the part of the members of the Society—something he himself said several times—that he could no longer regain his health. With trivial personal problems they sapped his energy by besieging his atelier day after day, seeking his advice. Unceasingly helping everyone, he was thus depleted of his strength.

Often I was in a position to observe how he was driven by car to his place of work, accessible by a primitive staircase of some fifteen steps. Rather than supporting himself, he dragged himself up there—a heartrending picture of physical weakness.

It was difficult for me as a young person to reconcile this image with that of the evening lecturer. Then, Rudolf Steiner stood before us full of energy and lightness, permeated by immortal spirituality. It was the same when he appeared in a eurythmy rehearsal and, as if from inexhaustible sources, imparted the most creative suggestions.

Yet, from then on Rudolf Steiner arrived at his atelier only by car, whereas formerly he had walked. Earlier, many of us had witnessed how he greeted everyone, at times talking briefly with one or the other. Now he had to be driven even the shortest distance to preserve his strength.

His driver was a young Swiss, a Herr Meyer. (As late as 1970, he still drove the Goetheanum *Vorstand*). In May 1924, Herr Meyer was temporarily sick, unable to drive

Rudolf Steiner. Then Dornach was still “out in the country”; no taxi service existed.

I no longer recall how I learned about the problem. I felt alerted immediately; after all, I had a driver's license! Right off, I realized that here was an opportunity to do my beloved teacher a service by becoming his chauffeur. Without delay I asked where his car was parked and rushed there.

At that time, two cars were at the disposal of the Goetheanum. One was an elegant six-seater sedan, a Maybach, donated to Rudolf Steiner for his more strenuous trips. The other was an inexpensive Ford that served for short distances. If I am not mistaken, it was a model T.

To this day I see the black vehicle before me, with its exciting smell of gasoline and rubber. Its roof was high enough for a passenger to wear a top hat. Elevated by its wide wheels, it was equal to any terrain. In those days there was no electric starter. The motor had to be started by turning a crank mounted in front. In addition, the various gears were not engaged by hand but with one's foot—a peculiarity the car I had driven did not possess. But I quickly familiarized myself with everything and soon the motor was running; I rushed back to the driver's seat and boldly climbed in. It did not take long to figure out how to handle the car with my feet. A short test forward and back—after all, I did not want to disgrace myself in front of Rudolf Steiner—and then I roared down the well-known access road from the Goetheanum in the direction of “Villa Hansi” on the lower Zielweg where Rudolf Steiner was to be picked up. Behind me, much to the displeasure of the pedestrians, a splendid white dust cloud arose, for in those days the side-roads were not paved.

After I had announced myself, Rudolf Steiner appeared in his familiar black overcoat and round-rimmed hat, accompanied by worried-looking female figures, who, in contrast to him, placed not much confidence in my newly acquired driving skills. With perfect calm and calming to me—my heart was beating noticeably—Rudolf Steiner got into the car and asked me to drive him to the clinic in Arlesheim (where at that time he was working with Ita Wegman on the book *Fundamentals of Therapy*).

Gently, I shifted the little car's gears and commenced driving very slowly. Rudolf Steiner seemed to observe everything carefully. He sat behind me at an angle and leaned forward, better to look at me from the side. Then he said in a worried manner, “I really don't like it, Herr Kux, that you now have to drive me. After all, you are in Dornach to study eurythmy.” These heartwarming words have always stayed in my mind. First, he called me “Herr” Kux, whereas the older colleagues at the Goetheanum usually called me “Kuexchen” (Kuxie). Though this was a well-meant diminutive, it placed me on a childlike level, as it were, a position one did not like to occupy as a young and also somewhat conceited student of the arts. Secondly, this remark was uttered by Rudolf Steiner in such a genuine manner, as if apologizing, that it brought to awareness his unique modesty. He was grateful to

anyone who did him a service (and who can get by without the services of others in this age of work specialization?); one could experience this every day if one observed his relation with the people around him. The gratitude of him to whom all of us owed so much inscribed itself indelibly in my heart.

Today, almost half a century later, when I think of these "golden days" with Rudolf Steiner, a certain sadness overcomes me for two reasons. First, because with few exceptions, my memories have paled or vanished. Like so many others, I lived as in a dream when I was young. Second, because I did not keep a diary during that time so rich in experiences.

One event from this spring of 1924, when I was, in a manner of speaking, promoted to Rudolf Steiner's "court-chauffeur," has remained vivid in my memory because I have often told it as an eloquent example of his humanity and kindness.

Among the older acquaintances of Rudolf and Marie Steiner was the family of Count Polzer-Hoditz. The elder son was married to a charming and graceful eurythmist. A son had arrived to them. He was to be christened these May days, his name chosen by Rudolf Steiner who was invited to the ceremony. I had to drive him there. It was only a few hundred yards from his house; yet, because of his weakness, he had to be driven.

When I arrived with my black motor-coach in the courtyard of the Polzer home, a colorful throng of people in light summer clothes streamed out of the house in a festive mood to welcome the guest. Surrounded as if by a cloud of spring, everyone disappeared into the house that was decked out for the celebration.

I prepared for an extended waiting period in the car, just as a proper chauffeur is wont to do. But only a short while later I saw the door of the house open again. The young Count, whose child was to be christened, rushed over to the car. I already turned around, thinking perhaps a baptismal gift had been left behind. Count Polzer yanked open the car door, "Herr Kux, please come immediately into the house. The Doktor said, 'But you can't leave young Kux sitting outside while we are celebrating!'" I was touched that in all the bustle Rudolf Steiner had remembered the young student-chauffeur he had left behind. (After all, I was not acquainted with this family and, being an unknown youth without special merits, had not been invited.)

Thus I entered the house with the young Count and was received by the festive group as another guest, something that made Rudolf Steiner's eyes light up. As I found out later, it was a special and in a sense historically significant celebration. The priest who performed the ritual was Friedrich Rittelmeyer, the leader of the Christian Community. This was the first time that, clad in vestments, he performed a sacrament in Rudolf Steiner's presence, a sacrament that had been entrusted by Rudolf Steiner, out of spiritual worlds, to the Movement for Religious Renewal.

Of the original *Vorstand* members of the General

Anthroposophical Society, aside from Rudolf Steiner, Ita Wegman, Lilly Vreede, Albert Steffen and Guenther Wachsmuth were present. Frau Marie Steiner was on tour with the eurythmy group.

After the ritual, having been listened to quietly with concentration by all—except for the newly arrived little citizen of the earth—Rudolf Steiner went up to the young mother who carried the baby in her arms, and looked lovingly at both of them. Suddenly he smiled and asked the mother teasingly, "Didn't you notice anything during the christening?" Surprised, the young mother thought for a moment and then replied hesitatingly, "Yes, the baby cried!" Rudolf Steiner: "Right—and at what point?" The mother: "When the Lord's Prayer was said." Rudolf Steiner: "That's correct, and at which passage?" Silence. Rudolf Steiner then went on: "When the priest said, 'and give us our daily bread,' because the little boy is hungry!" Saying that, he smiled mischievously when he saw the look of consternation on the mother's face. She, however, could not pocket this remark and explained that she had received exact instruction from the doctor, strictly adhered to by her, concerning the daily amount of food to be given the baby. Rudolf Steiner nevertheless insisted that the child was hungry and had cried for this reason. He then took the baby into his arms and the mother had to fetch a bottle of milk. When she returned, she wanted to feed the child herself. Rudolf Steiner, however, did not allow it; he took the bottle, went over to a chair in a corner, sat down and fed the little fellow himself. The child did not hesitate on account of the strange nurse but proceeded with obvious relish, while Rudolf Steiner observed his charge smiling warmly. In no time at all, the bottle was empty and Rudolf Steiner held it up to the mother, who showed no little surprise over him and the satisfied infant. Rudolf Steiner said, "The baby was hungry after all! And now give him one extra bottle every day in addition to the amount prescribed by the doctor. That one I have prescribed!"

All those present enjoyed Rudolf Steiner's humor in bringing about a joyous and relaxed atmosphere. Refreshments were passed next. The priest, who had changed in the meantime, returned and spoke a few words with Rudolf Steiner. A while later Rudolf Steiner said good-bye by waving cordially both hands to those present. And I was glad when I had returned our teacher, whom we all esteemed so highly, safely to his house.

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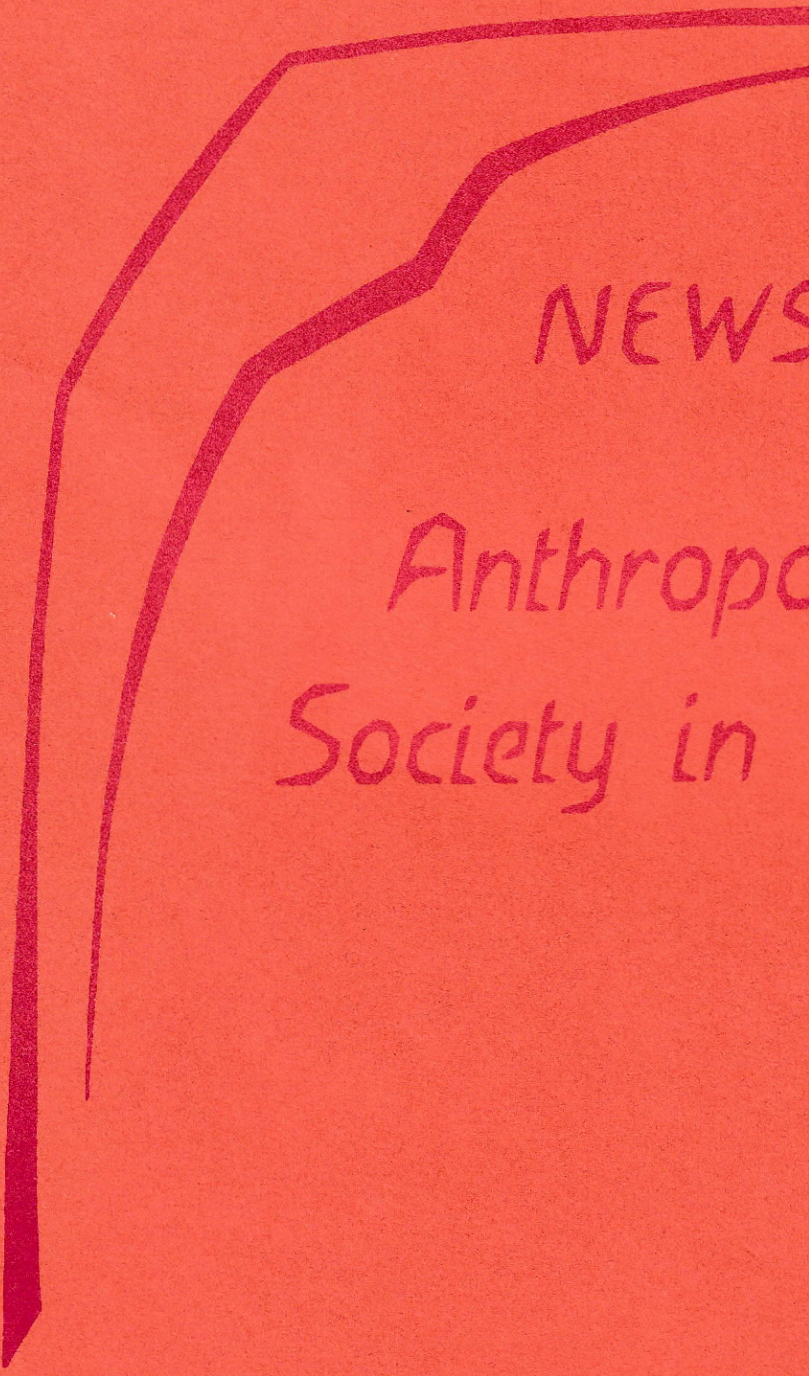
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Translated by Frederick Amrine from the German, Der übende

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