

# The General Anthroposophical Societ/ES!

The Court judgement of 4th February 2004 has again demonstrated the extent of the confusion and lack of orientation with regard to the existence or non-existence of the Christmas Conference Society. For did not the Court uphold the case according to which the Christmas Conference Society of 1923 no longer existed from 1925 onwards, and at the same time the case according to which the Christmas Conference Society and the renamed „Goetheanum Association“ had always constituted a unified whole? (See our commentary below on the reasons given for this decision.)

The confusion with regard to the lawsuits and the litigating parties came to expression in both the Basel daily papers. The reporters made mistakes in their account wherever a mistake was possible.<sup>1</sup>

It seems to us, therefore, that the time has come for us to try to bring unambiguous clarity into these complex issues. We believe this to be possible thanks to a new book on this subject that appeared recently. The chronology and the facts that are brought to light by this book allow clear conclusions to be arrived at especially in the difficult juristic realm, where we have previously had to do with little more than conjecture.

## Studies on the Constitutional Question so far ...

For many years these questions have been researched by a number of specialists, who have attempted to unravel the threads of the situation at that time and the intentions of Rudolf Steiner. It is not unusual, however, for their hypotheses to throw a dubious light on Rudolf Steiner.

## ... and a New Study which brings Clarity

Only the author of the above-mentioned new book has succeeded, in our view, in rehabilitating Rudolf Steiner in every respect. He does so on the basis of a solidly documented and comprehensive chronology of the events, which makes it clear how wilfully Rudolf Steiner's intentions were brought to nothing by certain people close to him. The author has worked at this study for several decades. He has discussed the available documents and the situation at that time with experts in juristic questions. He has succeeded in unearthing a considerable number of new facts, and showing others in their right light.

Rudolf Menzer, the author of this book which bears the title *The General Anthroposophical Society of Christmas 1923 and its Destiny*,<sup>2</sup> is the first to show that Rudolf Steiner was indeed able to solve, correctly and without contradictions, the complex of juristic issues that arose after the Christmas Conference. But he failed through the fault of his co-workers. It was two prominent personalities, first and foremost, who brought his intentions to nothing.<sup>3</sup> With the help of stimulus from this new book, we would like to try once more to clarify a few points which we regard as essential.

## The Confusion of Names

It is the question regarding names that is still the fundamental one. A number of experts subscribe to the view that at Christmas 1923, not the „General Anthroposophical Society“, but the „Anthroposophical Society“ was founded.

In this connection we had already been struck by the fact (see the relevant texts in GA 260) that, during the Christmas Conference, Rudolf Steiner had used the name „*General Anthroposophical Society*“ in addition to the name „*Anthroposophical Society*“.<sup>4</sup> Here the question arose for us: how genuine or exact are the published lecture-cycles or even the shorthand notes in this connection?

Recently we came upon a lecture given by Rudolf Steiner to members in Den Haag on 13th November 1923,

<sup>1</sup> *Basler Zeitung* and *Basellandschaftliche Zeitung* of 6.2.2004.

<sup>2</sup> Available from the author: Rudolf Menzer, Raitbach 7a, D-79650 Schopfheim; Tel./Fax 0049 (0)7622 2211.

<sup>3</sup> We refer to the Treasurer of the GAS, Günther Wachsmuth and Notary Altermatt, official Recorder of Dornach and authorized representative of the Trade Registry, who in this connection played a role that was full of contradictions. We are unlikely ever to know for certain - as some people claimed to do - whether Altermatt was on friendly terms with the Priest at that time, Max Kully, the arch-enemy of Rudolf Steiner.

<sup>4</sup> The regional Societies, the Anthroposophical Societies of the various countries, were intended to be present there.

about 6 weeks before the Christmas Conference. He welcomed the audience with the following words: 'This time we have also come together in order to form the Dutch Anthroposophical Society. The forming of these single Anthroposophical regional Societies is a necessity in the present situation, if we wish to create a basis that is the best possible, the most individual and the most sound, for what we need in our present time. The founding of the international Anthroposophical Society,<sup>5</sup> which is to take place in Dornach at Christmas, will only be possible if the single national Societies are represented in such a way that their representatives are really able to bring to expression the inner substance of the single Anthroposophical individualities. And in so doing we will be able to carry out something at the founding of the General Anthroposophical Society, that is very important and very significant ...'

In this case he is calling upon the representatives of the „*Anthroposophical Society*“ of Holland (and of course those of the other countries such as Germany, Switzerland, etc.<sup>6</sup>) to be present in Dornach at Christmas 1923 in order to take part in the founding of the „*General Anthroposophical Society*“. Correspondingly, membership cards to this day (with few exceptions) bear the words: '[Name] is acknowledged as a member of the Anthroposophical Society in G. B. ....'

And on the reverse side the note appears quite correctly: 'In case of death or upon resignation this card is to be sent back to the „*General Anthroposophical Society*...“ [thus the card goes, not to the group, but to the GAS to which the group is subordinate].

Contrary to the intentions of Rudolf Steiner, this „*General Anthroposophical Society*“ of Christmas 1923 was not entered in the Trades register. Günther Wachsmuth tried decades later to cite the journeys and the illness of Rudolf Steiner as an excuse for this. But it was this very circumstance which provided the opportunity for another association to be entered in the Trades register as the „*General Anthroposophical Society*“, because the name „*General Anthroposophical Society*“ of Christmas 1923 had remained without protection through the fact of non-entry in the register! This forces us to the conclusion that through the non-entry of the Christmas Conference Society the deception perpetrated on 8th February became possible.

## **The 3rd extraordinary General Meeting of 29.6.1924**

In his study Rudolf Menzer has also clarified the phenomena connected with June 29th 1924. For this purpose he consults the report of Notary Altermatt and compares it with Helene Finckh's shorthand notes. This investigation shows that at this 3rd extraordinary General Meeting of the „Association of the Goetheanum, Free High School for Spiritual Science“ Rudolf Steiner intended to make changes, which were not realized and were turned into their opposite on February 8th 1925.

One of the decisions intended was that Rudolf Steiner would be President and Emil Grosheintz vice-President, and the existing Executive Council (Vorstand) would be expanded to include „the entire Vorstand of the *General Anthroposophical Society*“. The Vorstand of the Christmas Conference Society was thus meant to complement (and not replace!) the Vorstand of the „Association of the Goetheanum“. Through these decisions Rudolf Steiner would be able, amongst other things, to act for the „Association of the Goetheanum“ in connection with the rebuilding of the Goetheanum.

In addition, §1 of the Statutes was changed as follows: „Under the name 'Association of the Goetheanum' there exists as a sub-division of the '*General Anthroposophical Society*' [i.e. of the Christmas Conference Society] an association...."

## **How Rudolf Steiner was the Victim of a Deception**

But this 3rd extraordinary General Meeting of the „Association of the Goetheanum“ came to nothing. The decisions were not entered in the Trades register, and Rudolf Steiner remained unable to act for the

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<sup>5</sup> One can only be amazed at the courage of the publishers in attributing to Rudolf Steiner the words „*international Anthroposophical Society*“, when he had always resisted the use of this term. (It was Wachsmuth and Steffen who invited members to the founding meeting of the „*International Anthroposophical Society*“!) - In the original version of this lecture-cycle (1937) the words are „*General Anthroposophical Society*“! This „correction“ may have to do with the (allegedly extreme) Marxist background of the editor, Dr. Ruth Moering.

<sup>6</sup> The national Societies should of course retain their complete autonomy as a group. The appointment or replacement of General Secretaries by Dornach in some countries is, as is well known, not a practice that only began recently.

„Association of the Goetheanum“. The reports of this meeting were kept secret. Only after February 8th 1925, on March 3rd 1925, were they presented and invoiced. The decisions of the 8th February, on the other hand, were put into effect straight away, and made known to the members (in a misleading formulation).

That this *3rd extraordinary* General Meeting of June 29th 1924 - where Rudolf Steiner had wanted personally to give things a right direction after the Christmas Conference - had actually taken place, could only be inferred (on the 8th Feb. 1925) from the fact that on this 8th February the invitation had been sent out for the *4th extraordinary* General Meeting. The form-giving decisions of 29th June 1924 initiated by Rudolf Steiner were - in his absence - turned into their opposite on 8th February 1925. They were not only passed over in silence, but they were overridden in the most callous way.

## A Gethsemane Event of 1925?

All this was orchestrated and carried through with such subtlety, that the personalities directly involved - and even more so the ordinary members - were unaware of the deception that had taken place. The close associates of Rudolf Steiner who had not been involved were obviously not in a position to carry these processes in full consciousness. Their consciousness was „dimmed“, and decades later, when the events came out into the open, they could remember hardly anything. To this extent we would point to a similarity with the Mount of Olives and the Garden of Gethsemane. But it was with this that the tragic destiny of the Society took its course. Through the event of 8th February the good spiritual powers (that were still remaining<sup>7</sup>) were driven irrevocably out of the Society and the doors flung wide open for the demons to enter.

In the light of these events the subsequent esoteric decline in the Society is quite understandable. However, our aim in drawing attention to these things is not to criticize, but merely to try to bring clarity into these complex issues with the help of a study of the facts and the phenomena. Tragic and far-reaching errors were made (not only then), and power structures were created, perhaps simply in the spirit of Judas, at a place where they can only work destructively. Let us therefore try, without bias of any kind, to arrive at a deeper understanding of these processes, for if we do not it will be impossible for us to overcome the anti-spiritual manipulations of the powers that oppose Anthroposophy.

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<sup>7</sup> One should not forget that in 1923 the conflicts within the original Anthroposophical Society had reached a climax (see GA 259, „The Year of Destiny 1923“). Only in this situation did Rudolf Steiner decide, as one of the last possibilities open to him, to refound the Society with himself as President.



## A Questionable Legal Judgement

The lunacy in and around the GAS seems to have no end. We have already referred above to the contradictory court judgement of 3.2.2004. The „Living Christmas Conference“ (Gelebte Weihnachtstagung) association is jubilant over its „victory“. But what is the „Living Christmas Conference“ actually celebrating? No more and no less than that the Dorneck-Thierstein lawcourt has reaffirmed the correctness of the claim first made by Albert Steffen and Günther Wachsmuth and carried down by each successive Vorstand until a few years ago, according to which: The General Anthroposophical Society of today stands in a line of continuity, also from the legal point of view, with the historic founding impulse of Rudolf Steiner.

The court explains this as follows: „There is only one General Anthroposophical Society, since it is indeed the case that in 1925 a conclusive merger (konkludente Fusion) took place between the General Anthroposophical Society founded at the Christmas Conference 1923/24 and the Goetheanum Building Association, which was renamed the ‘General Anthroposophical Society’ on 8th February 1925, as described by Prof. H. M. Riemer in his report.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rudolf Menzer comments as follows on 17.3.2004: „Most of the members genuinely believed that the ‘GAS’ of Christmas 1923 would be provided with ‘Statutes for the Trades register’ on 8th February 1925 and, with the Principles ‘given to it by Rudolf Steiner’ and the Esoteric Vorstand ‘appointed by him’, would live on as the ‘Christmas Conference Society’. In the ‘Nachrichtenblatt’ (Members’ Newsletter) articles kept on appearing, whose intention was to explain this „fact“ to the members. The members who gradually ‘awoke’ to the reality of the situation were, however, not allowed to express their views in the „Newsletter“, or they were straight away excluded from the GAS with no reasons

The opinion of „Living Christmas Conference“ is based essentially on the announcement of the Vorstand on May 3rd 1925, where the following claim is made: „The leadership of the Anthroposophical Society is being conducted further in the way that was proposed by Rudolf Steiner at the Christmas Conference. As it was possible shortly before his death to settle the final arrangements regarding the regrouping of the institutions which arose out of this Conference (see ‘Mitteilungsblatt’ 22nd March 1925), and in the absence of any later indications that would cause us to change this situation, the Vorstand appointed by him sees it as its duty to remain within its functions and to work further in the spirit of Rudolf Steiner, whom it knows to be present in its midst, continually, as leader ... The Vorstand has made it its task, above all, to bring to practical realization the thought that was closest to the heart of Rudolf Steiner, namely, the building of the Goetheanum. It is confident that the members will participate in this with enthusiasm. The Vorstand of the General Anthroposophical Society“ - and it concludes with the names of the five Vorstand members.<sup>2</sup>

Rudolf Menzer has kindly written for us a commentary to these statements of the „Living Christmas Conference“ association:

„para. 1: A completely non-committal and woolly sentence that can mean everything and nothing.

para. 2: At Christmas 1925 Rudolf Steiner did not speak of a ‘regrouping of the institutions’, and what he arranged on 29th June 1924 with regard to the restructuring of the „Association of the Goetheanum, Free High School for Spiritual Science“ was not carried out. No further concrete indications were given by Rudolf Steiner on 29.6.1924; here there are only speculations of many different kinds. On 31.12.1924 Rudolf Steiner said in written correspondence to Felix Heinemann that everything must stay as it now is, especially the financial administration must be in his hands alone (does this mean he was still counting on the realization of the 29.6.1924 arrangements?). On 8th February 1925 these arrangements were not carried out, but were abandoned, possibly without Rudolf Steiner’s knowledge, because the ‘signatures’ are falsely certified. In the ‘Mitteilungsblatt’ of 22.3.1925 the members were misled and lied to. It would have been the Vorstand’s duty to resign, as the ‘spirit of Rudolf Steiner’ was certainly no longer present after lies of this kind had been propagated.

How could the ‘spirit of the Christmas Conference’ also live on in the ‘GAS of 8th February 1925’ when the change of name of the ‘Association of the Goetheanum’ had taken place in an unlawful manner and the altered statutes of the Goetheanum Building Association were in contradiction with both the Statutes of the Christmas Conference 1923 and also the Statutes of 29th June 1925 proposed by Rudolf Steiner? Where in the ‘Statutes of 8.2.1925’ were the ‘association of human beings’, the ‘Free High School for Spiritual Science’ and the autonomous groups of the central World Society to be found?

The true motive behind 8th February 1925 was the power to dispose over the Goetheanum assets, which otherwise were to remain in the hands of the ‘ordinary members’ of the ‘Association of the Goetheanum’, to which none of the members of the Christmas 1923 Vorstand belonged.“

To this we have nothing to add.

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given.

Judge Markus Christ judged rightly on 3.2.2004 that the ‘GAS’ founded at Christmas 1923 no longer exists as a legal body. But his claim that it lives on in the ‘GAS of 8.2.1925’ by virtue of a ‘conclusive merger’ is not correct. In reality the association of Christmas 1923 was abandoned on 8.2.1925, and continued its life within the ‘Association of the Goetheanum’ known as the ‘GAS’ as no more than a semblance.

Moreover, the ‘Association of the Goetheanum’ itself was, on 8.2.1925, robbed of the ‘spirit of 29th June 1924’ and thus of Rudolf Steiner’s intention. In this way Albert Steffen and Günther Wachsmuth were able to secure for themselves the control over the Goetheanum assets and the ‘spiritual leadership’ of the Society. But was this really the ‘wish and the will’ of Rudolf Steiner?”

<sup>2</sup> Even though this zealous pronouncement is signed by all five Vorstand members, it has the distinctive ring of the ‘eternal’ Vorstand members Steffen and Wachsmuth. There is written testimony from both Marie Steiner and Ita Wegman that would preclude them as authors of such a presumptuous statement. Marie Steiner writes concerning the time in question: ‘We took the path of the lie’; and Ita Wegman believed in 1927 that Klingsor’s threads extend ‘deep into the heart of the Anthroposophical Society’ (‘Flensburger Sonderheft’ on Ita Wegman, Nr 17, p. 143).