

**RECEPTION AT LEIR HOUSE  
FOR CLARK UNIVERSITY STUDENTS ATTENDING  
THE MAY TERM PROGRAM IN LUXEMBOURG**

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**REMARKS BY ARTHUR S. HOFFMAN**

A few words about Luxembourg itself, and then about why Henry Leir thought that you should go there.

It is a country which appears to be both small, peaceful and quiet – rolling green farmland and deep forests. But it has had a violent past. It is the invasion route of choice for ancient and modern armies moving between France and Germany and Belgium for centuries. That rolling green farmland is perfect for both military horses and tanks.

To illustrate, Margo and I and my wife were attending a “Leir concert” In a beautiful Gothic church in eastern Luxembourg in a town called Echternach. The concert was also attended by the Grand Duke. “Beautiful old church”, I said to him. “Not old,” he said. “It was destroyed by the German army in World War II, and we rebuilt it.”

I also admired a building in Luxembourg City until I was told that it was Gestapo headquarters while Germany occupied Luxembourg.

Just off of the Western border, a few kilometers inside France, is Bastogne, the center of the Battle of the Bulge, the last attempt by Hitler to destroy the U.S. army.

And if you want to see the remnants of ancient history, there is a deep canyon through the city; go to the edge and look down at the stone walls. They were the defenses against invading armies on horseback, much like the Great Wall of China.

By the way, Luxembourg is one of the few countries (if any exist at all), to have a Grand Duke as an active ruler. Lucky for Luxembourg, the Dukes have been benevolent monarchs, and very effective at repulsing enemies. There are castles in Luxembourg with torture chambers where invaders stayed on lengthy vacations. My children were thrilled by their brief visit.

I haven’t told you what Henry Leir had to do with Luxembourg -- why he promoted it and wanted you to go there. Simply stated, he loved Luxembourg. In 1933 and through 1938, Luxembourg and its tough and generous people saved the lives of the Leirs.

Henry Leir was a man of great foresight in business, with people, and as to world events such as pending war. The Leirs lived in Germany, and in early January 1933 they crossed the

border into Luxembourg. He knew that Hitler would come to power soon, and it was very soon; it was later in that same month of January that Hitler became Chancellor. Little Luxembourg, a Catholic country, had welcomed two Jewish refugees and unlike several other European countries, defied Hitler in the process.

Henry Leir proceeded to repay Luxembourg for the next 65 years, as long as he lived; and we, who run his foundations, have continued to do so for the last 10 years since his death at age 98 in 1998.

- Right after the war, he returned to Luxembourg, made it the European headquarters for his international companies, and helped make its economy prosperous.
- The Clark program is there, as you know. Sacred Heart University of Fairfield, Connecticut has a Leir Luxembourg studies' program.
- Mr. Leir formed a foundation which only contributes to Luxembourg charities.
- In the recently opened Luxembourg modern museum, there is a "Leir Pavillion". It is a beautiful museum right near the new Philharmonic Concert Hall just over the "Red Bridge" (go see it if you get the chance).
- For over 30 years, Henry Leir funded concerts in Luxembourg. In September, we are sponsoring the Leir 10<sup>th</sup> memorial concert with Jessye Norman singing Duke Ellington.

That is a shortlist of the Leirs' efforts to repay Luxembourg.

So, to answer my first question: Why did Henry Leir think you should go to Luxembourg? Because he loved it, and he thought it would be a great location with a dramatic history for an interesting experience in international education for students from the United States.