

Zeitschrift: The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK

Herausgeber: Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom

Band: - (1934)

Heft: 683

Rubrik: Swiss Mercantile Society

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. [Siehe Rechtliche Hinweise.](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. [Voir Informations légales.](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. [See Legal notice.](#)

Download PDF: 05.02.2025

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

NEWS FROM THE COLONY.

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY LTD.

The Monthly Meeting of the Swiss Mercantile Society was held at Swiss House on Wednesday, November 14th.

Mr. A. Steinmann, President of the Society, was in the Chair. A letter from the Circulo Comercial Suizo, Barcelona, was read enquiring of our members whether they had also noticed the bad reception from Beromünster due to almost constant interference of the telegraph. Since wireless is one of the nicest and most direct links between the Swiss abroad and the homeland it would be very regrettable if this interference could not be obviated. The Swiss societies of Barcelona have, therefore, intervened with the respective authorities in Berne. Any members who have noticed such interference should communicate with the Secretary so that if need be, steps may also be taken on our behalf.

The President then apprised the members of the contents of two circulars received from the Central Secretariat in Zurich with reference to the "Taschenkalender für Kaufleute" for 1935 and a special propaganda drive for the recruitment of new members. Members wishing to order the "Taschenkalender" may place their order with the office where they can also get full particulars. In connection with the propaganda drive the Chairman exhorted the members present to try to induce any of their friends and acquaintances who are likely to become members to join the Society.

The main item on the agenda was the sanction of a proposed programme of lectures and social events for the winter season 1934/35, which was circulated among the members present. The programme, after some discussion, was approved in its entirety and will be sent to all members in the form of an attractive leaflet. The General Purposes Committee has spared no efforts in making the programme as varied and interesting as possible and it is hoped that it will receive the fullest support of the members.

The meeting then adjourned into the lecture hall to welcome Dr. G. P. Gooch, Professor in economics at the University of London, who addressed the meeting on "The European Situation."

LECTURE OF PROFESSOR GOOCH.

There was a "full house," packed to capacity and among the audience numbering about 150 there was a large number of students of the College who had been invited to this lecture. No higher tribute could have been paid to the lecturer for it was one of those wet November evenings which are not conducive to large audiences. But they all braved the vagaries of the weather to listen to the eminent speaker who unfolded before them the present European situation. The audience was rapt in attention in listening to a rhetorical treat. The main points dealt with by the speaker were:

That the chances for another European war are about equal; in other words the motive forces of peace and war are well balanced.

That the outstanding feature of the European situation is its steady and rapid deterioration which can be mainly ascribed to the following three factors: Firstly the economic blizzard which started in America at the end of 1929 and swept across Europe from New York, leaving in its wake doubled unemployment figures and filling with dismay and despair the peoples of many countries; Secondly, the example of the successful and unpunished aggression of Japan when seizing the Chinese Province of Manchuria which had a devastating effect upon the morale of the world and affected the prestige of the League of Nations and when Japan finally went out of the League; Thirdly, Germany's exit from the League. Those three factors form a terrible balance against which there is nothing much to set.

That in the relationship of the great powers in Europe during last year the resumption of contact with the outer world of Russia is of enormous importance. The abstention of such a great power as Russia from European politics for over 15 years has no parallel in modern history. This change began to manifest itself when Litvinoff went to Washington last autumn and the ensuing diplomatic recognition of the United States of America of Russia as the outcome of his talk with Roosevelt. There are at present three countries in Europe which do not recognize Russia, viz Switzerland, Holland and Yugo-slavia. The second stage was the rapprochement between France and Russia as a further step of the resumption of contact with the outer world. The third and last important stage was when she entered the League last September. From now we shall have to reckon with Russian activity in everything that goes on in Europe. Why this

great change? The fear of the danger of isolation and the possibility and probability of a Japanese attack which the lecturer considered the likeliest of all possible wars in any part of the world. He noticed with great satisfaction the recent sale by Russia to Manchuria of the Chinese Eastern Railway which was a very good sign, since there were bitter feelings on this subject. He attributed Russia's entry into the League to her desire to improve her international standing and thus be able at least to rely on a friendly neutrality in case of a Japanese attack, if not on actual help.

That the conclusion of a 10 years' pact of non-aggression between Poland and Germany caused strong resentment in France. Further, that Poland is showing her independence of France. The lecturer referred to Monsieur Barthoud's pact of guarantee to which the latter devoted all his energy and influence in trying to effect a guarantee of frontiers by the formation of an East European Pact. Both Poland and Germany replied in the negative. The extraordinary change in the orientation of Poland all these years since the war is the axiom in the study of European affairs: The 10 years' pact of peace and non-aggression of Poland and Germany, the cessation of the press feud, the cessation of frontier incidents, these happened last winter. This summer, the refusal of the East European Pact with which Monsieur Barthoud and the French identified themselves, this was something for the French to think about.

That the rapprochement of the Bulgars and Serbs on the Macedonian question was one of the very few happy events of the last year.

That when he spoke on the same subject a year ago the most dangerous spot in Europe was the Polish Corridor which is no longer the case now. This question has been put on the shelf. The most dangerous spot, therefore, is Austria, Vienna, and that Austria is a greater danger to peace than Macedonia. Now what has happened. When Hitler came into power at the beginning of last year there is no doubt at all that he felt the time had at last come when the dream of his early years in Vienna as builder's labourer could be put into effect, viz. the unity of teutonic Austria with the German fatherland. Hitler believes in the nations state. But he could not carry out his policy of unifying Austria with Germany without war. But his idea of the unification (Anschluss) it not meant in a juristic sense, but a practical sense, sharing the Weltanschauung, the doctrine of ideology, and he thus launched a campaign against the independent Austrian government in the press, on the wireless in Munich, which is entirely a government monopoly, by scattering seditious and inflammatory leaflets from aeroplanes over Austria and by painting the Swastika on the "hind-quarters of cows" grazing in the fields and by freeing prisoners. So it went on all last autumn and winter. "When is he going to strike?" was the question. The extraordinary thing was that he did not strike. The dramatic change took place when Mussolini intervened in the process of bullying. Mussolini held his shield over little Austria and invited Dollfuss to Rome. "I will stand by Austria to the end," said Mussolini. The words echoed all over the world. Hitler lost his bus. Then came the Putsch in Vienna in July when Dollfuss was murdered. This was much too big an enterprise that Germany could not have had a hand in it. If the Putsch had succeeded Mussolini's troops would have been over the frontiers that same night. Mussolini is now in command of the situation in Austria. So long as he holds on, Hitler can do nothing. How long can he keep it up? Mussolini and Hitler are alike in many things. They both believe in a unitarian state, they believe in suppressing the freedom of the press, the wireless, etc., and whereas Hitler has a fanatical hatred of Jews, Mussolini scorns the fusion of races. The present Austrian government is very weak and this weak government which depends on foreign help, is divided into two distinguished parties, the Agrarian and Heimwehr parties, the former under Schuschnigg, the latter under Prince Starhemberg, and there is no love lost between the two. What can be done for Austria? That is very difficult to say. Mussolini will not be able to keep up his hold indefinitely. He is a foreigner. Hitler is the strongest card in his hands. The Austrians are Germans in culture and in the long run Hitler will win. There is a possible solution, which is, however, theoretical, viz. the neutralisation of Austria, England, however would not guarantee such a neutrality. British people will not fight unless they are attacked or unless France is attacked. England would only fight under the following conditions:

1. To resist direct aggression against herself.
2. To carry out support to France if attacked.

England can do nothing at all and Hitler knows that perfectly well. He does not take the slightest notice. He only takes notice of people who are prepared to fight and one who is prepared to fight is Mussolini. The struggle between Hitler and Mussolini is the trouble of Austria. Is there no way out except to let the two dictators fight

over the prostrate body of Austria? The only way is the neutralisation of Austria. But the lecturer did not feel sure if Germany would undertake to recognise the neutrality of Austria. Austria cannot stand alone. She is too weak and is a pawn of Italy. In a few years it may belong to Germany in all but name. Austria should be governed by the Austrians themselves, it should be neutralised. No British Government could or would or ought to promise military support and it is, therefore, most unlikely that the neutralisation will make any further development whilst the struggle between the two dictators is going on.

The lecturer said there were many other things he would have liked to talk about, had the time allowed him to do so, viz. the coming plebiscite in the Saar and the awful and tragic failure of the disarmament conference, but he thought it best to mention the most important changes in Europe during the last twelve months. There would be many more changes during the next twelve months since there was no stability whatever in the relations between powers and changes were taking place with lightning rapidity. Nothing, however, in the lecturer's opinion that is going on was quite so appalling and dangerous as the race of armaments and he knew as little of where it was going to lead us, as those present.

A hearty ovation was accorded to the lecturer on the conclusion of his wonderful oration.

* * *

Mr. E. Hardmeier, Chairman of the Education Committee, then had a very pleasant duty to perform. He presented, amid loud applause, Miss Rose Pfaffenberger, member of the London Section, with a bronze medal. The latter was awarded her by the National Union of Teachers as second prize for the examination in "English for Foreigners," Advanced Stage. 283 candidates presented themselves for this examination and the result speaks for itself.

This concluded a memorable evening.

WB.

UNIONE TICINESE.

The year's second Annual General Meeting of the *Unione Ticinese* was held at 74, Charlotte Street, W.1, on Sunday, 18th November, 1934, the attendance being remarkably numerous.

After all the official business, such as the reading and approval of the minutes of the last General Meeting, the election of Auditors, had been safely cleared away, the Assistant Secretary rose to read a paper on "Ticino through History."

The lecture contained a lucid account of the salient events in the history of our Home Canton. The first inhabitants, the Lepontii; the conquest by Rome; the Lombards and the Saracens. Later, in the year 948, through the forced donation of Atto, Bishop of Vercelli, the whole Ticino, as it is to-day, falls under the direct domination of the City of Milan, which it endures well over five centuries. In the sixteenth century, yielding to the persistent incursions and attacks of our Confederates on the other side of the St. Gotthard, the Dukedom of Milan cedes most of our important valleys to the Swiss, mostly in payment for soldiers. Thus Ticino becomes a Swiss possession, and is administered — none too efficiently — by "landvogten" on behalf of the Thirteen sovereign Cantons. Finally in the era of liberty, following upon the French Revolution, we are received into the Swiss Confederation on equal footing with the other sovereign Cantons.

Of course, it is all not so simple as this; only the rendering of the lecture "in extenso" could reveal the amount of suffering, fighting and bloodshed that cost our ancestors the grand heritage they have bequeathed us, of which we are justly proud.

The President, Mr. W. Notari, thanked the lecturer for the interesting effort, and the Vice-President, Mr. O. Gambazzi, in seconding the vote of thanks with a short speech full of patriotic fervour, said that the present generation of "Ticinesi" should always live and act in the true Swiss spirit as symbolised in our National motto — which the Society has also made its own — "One for all, all for one". The Treasurer, Mr. C. Berti, ventured to hope that it was not "a flash in the pan," but would be followed by other just as interesting lectures.

The tit-bit of the evening, however, was provided by Mr. Elvezio Albertolli, who had run up from Portsmouth, in order to show us an authentic eight page document of A. D. 1500; nothing less than an Act of Allegiance to the Sovereign Cantons of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden given by the people of the Valley of Blenio. Amongst the various drastic provisions laid down we noted: every citizen to pray before laying himself to rest, five "pater noster" and three "ave maria," non-compliance fined 5 soldi; blasphemy cost 3 soldi per word (No wonder then that Ticino was so poor in those days).

eusj.