

Lectures of Dr. A. R. Lindt

Autor(en): **[s.n.]**

Objektyp: **Article**

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

Band (Jahr): - **(1945)**

Heft 1037

PDF erstellt am: **22.07.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-689718>

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LECTURES OF Dr. A. R. LINDT.

Dr. Lindt, one of Switzerland's foremost Journalists, spoke to two large Swiss audiences. His first lecture took place at the Midland Hotel in Manchester, on May 29th under the auspices of the Swiss Club, the second one was given in London, when the City Swiss Club invited the members of the Swiss Colony to meet him at the Dorchester Hotel.

In both places the lecturer spoke on similar subjects, and we propose therefore, to give his excellent *compte rendues* under the one and same heading, making use of the report from our Manchester correspondent, whose account we have greatly appreciated.

The meeting in London, was presided over by Mr. H. Bingguely, Vice-President of the City Swiss Club, the Swiss Minister and Madame Ruegger honoured the company by their presence.

Mr. Bingguely, in introducing the lecturer, expressed his regrets concerning the absence of Mr. Bon, who, owing to illness was unable to take the Chair. After thanking the Minister and Madame Ruegger for having kindly consented to attend, he briefly alluded to the successful ending of the European war, which came as a great relief to millions of people.

"We owe," he said, "deep gratitude to the British Government, which, during these anxious times, has given us their unstinted hospitality." "We also owe," he continued, "gratitude to the Swiss people for the wonderful way they kept the Swiss flag flying during these six years of strain and anxiety"; he terminated his introductory address by expressing the wish, that the bond of friendship between the two countries will become closer and closer in the years to come.

Dr. Lindt, who received a hearty ovation, on rising, gave a definition of our centuries old neutrality, founded on deep convictions and traditions, comparing it against the neutrality of other countries, which in many cases was dictated by the opportunism or even cowardice of their respective statesmen. "Switzerland had," he said, "before this world war started, a clear cut policy of neutrality. The Swiss were neutral because they were, and wished to remain independent. If, however, the country as such strictly adhered to the laws of neutrality laid down by International treaties and conventions, there was no neutrality of opinion imposed, and every Swiss citizen had his own opinions, and could judge for himself about the rights and wrongs of a case. To defend that neutrality, they had behind them a well armed and disciplined army."

The lecturer then at some length reiterated the steps taken previous to the outbreak of the war by the Swiss Government, to build up stock, mainly of food stuffs whilst the markets of the large producing coun-

tries were still open to them. Not relying on any promises, which during a totalitarian war, might not have been kept by any of the belligerents, every household was obliged to store a certain amount of essential household goods. This far sighted policy enabled our people to carry on, when, later on every channel of supply was almost sealed up.

At the same time every effort was made to make the country self supporting. Dr. Wahlen, hitherto an unknown quantity in the Swiss political sphere, laid before the Swiss Government an agricultural plan, which after its adoption contributed in a large measure towards the feeding of the entire population. Mixed farming was introduced, every available piece of land was made use of, both farmers and agricultural experts worked hand in hand to produce the food which, owing to transport difficulties could not be imported any longer.

The speaker highly praised the farmers for their untiring efforts.

Dr. Lindt then spoke about the great efforts and sacrifices the Swiss people had made in building up a great and well armed army. The Swiss General Staff knew, that if Switzerland should be invaded, it would be done by a surprise attack. "Swiss are usually slow", he said, "but they can act at times quickly, and this they did, both the Federal Council in a proclamation, and General Guisan, in his memorable speech on the Rutli to a large gathering of high ranking officers made it clear, beyond any doubt, that Switzerland would fight any invader who might be tempted to cross the borders of the Confederation."

After the shocks which our population received on the occasion of the declaration of war by Italy against the Allies, the downfall of France, the invasions of Norway, Holland and Belgium, every Swiss soldier knew from which side the danger was to be expected; he also knew that no help could be anticipated and that he had to fight with his back to the wall, and that, although Switzerland had not fought a war for the last 150 years, Swiss soldiers were prepared and still able to fight and die.

Switzerland was at that time absolutely isolated and surrounded, the German armies were marching forward on all fronts; certain fanatics, impressed by a clever and persistent German propaganda, propagated that the moment had come to surrender the country's independence in return for the promise of security, but the great majority of the Swiss people were more than ever determined to defend, if necessary, their soil, inch by inch, yard by yard.

The Swiss General Staff worked out an entirely new plan; the bulk of the army was, in case of an invasion, to withdraw into the mountains, mobile troops were to

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be left along the frontiers to harrass the invader. Factories were to be destroyed, the civil population were ordered to stay put so as not to hamper the troop movements. All tunnels were mined ready to be blown sky high at a moment's notice. These preparations and the determination of the population to sacrifice their all for a survival did not fail to come to the notice of the German General Staff, and if the victorious German hordes and their satellites kept off it was due entirely to our army and our people who stood steadfast and true in one of its direst hours."

Dr. Lindt then spoke of the great efforts made in helping the civil population; the old age pension was introduced, unemployment relief was granted, families who were deprived of their bread winners, owing to mobilisation, were supported. Employers and employees alike voluntarily surrendered two per cent of their income for relief work both at home and abroad. The *Don National* was created, and hundreds of million francs were collected, and large quantities of food and clothing were sent to France, Holland, Norway and Belgium and other needy populations.

Mention was made of the Swiss Merchant Navy, which unprotected faced dangers by day and by night in order to carry the food to the one or two ports which were put at our country's disposal.

Dr. Lindt concluded his address by paying a high tribute to the valiant Swiss army, to the civil population, especially the women, and last but not least to our Government which by its farsighted policy, its firm attitude had been successful in warding off the dangers of an invasion, which would have crippled the country for generations to come.

The Swiss Minister then spoke a few words, thanking Dr. Lindt for his able address.

After a short discussion, the Chairman, in conclusion warmly thanked the speaker for his extremely interesting *exposé*, and the Swiss Observer heartily joins him in expressing our appreciation to Dr. Lindt for having given us an opportunity to hear about Switzerland in war time.

TO "GALLUS"
the Poet-Laureate of the Swiss Colony—
on his sixtieth birthday.

Where mighty Saentis rears its noble head
And where St. Gallus dwelt in times gone by,
In that fair land, so pleasing to the eye,
Your cradle stood; there were you born and bred.

Throughout your life, like as a golden thread,
Has run the love of things that beautify
The human mind, enrich it, lift it high,
And no less precious than our daily bread.

The Fates debated, sixty years ago,
As they beheld that infant newly born,
What gifts they might upon the child bestow
Wherewith his life to brighten and adorn;
Should it be riches, fame, prosperity?
They gave him more: the soul of poetry!

J.J.F.S.

FROM THE LIVERPOOL COLONY.

The Consulate in Liverpool has always been fortunate in being able to count on the interest and friendship of some of the ladies who lost their Swiss nationality on marriage but who retained their attachment to the country of their birth. It was a privilege that the Consulate could direct our young countrywomen to them for advice and sociability. For years now this has been the position with Mrs. Macquarie (Schaffhausen), Mrs. Davidson (Geneva) and Mrs. Cheetham (Basel). We used to talk of having an excursion when the war was over and it came off at last on 13th June to Chester, the ancient Roman fortress of Deva. It is true you do not see much of Roman remains above ground but there is a good deal below if once you begin to dig. Chester is fortunate in having living in the City an eminent student of Roman remains in the person of Professor Robert Newstead, F.R.S., who follows any opening of the ground with diligent care. The reason why there is so much broken and buried material is apparently due to a swift and violent destruction when the power of Rome collapsed in the fourth century. A medieval town arose on the ruins and the wall surrounding it is carefully preserved and is to-day a pleasant circular walk of the inner part of the modern town. Within these walls is the Cathedral, built of red sandstone as red as the Minster of Basel which looked to Victor Hugo so infamous that he thought the colour was applied by human hands. It is, however, the natural colour of what is sometimes termed the German trias, a formation which stretches from Cheshire (though not always seen at the surface) across the Continent to the foot of the Black Forest at Basel and provided the building stone for many Cathedrals and Churches. It is used for building the Anglican Cathedral of Liverpool now approaching completion. The Dee is a noble river and flows at Chester through a gap in a red sandstone ridge evidently due to erosion. Just below the Castle a weir has been constructed, damming back the fresh water coming down from the Welsh Mountains and overflowing the weir. Below this obstacle starts the tidal Dee increasing the height of the waterfall at low tide and diminishing the height as the rising tide breasts the weir and sometimes overflows it. Up go the salmon to their spawning grounds amongst the upland streams of the hills if they are not caught before.

Such in outline was the setting of our excursion which was enjoyed by all. The day was fine, the sun doing a full days work and we could even go for a short river trip in a motor boat.

Chester had its anxious nights in the winter and spring of 1940/1 when the air attacks on Liverpool were at their height, but the City is not seriously damaged.

E.M.

OUR NEXT ISSUE.

We hope to go to press again on Friday, 27th July, 1945, and take this opportunity of thanking the following subscribers for their enlarged subscription rates: — E. F. Burger, P. Lambert, V. Kraus, J. Keller, Dr. Arpel, W. W. Landauer, H. Bingguely, Mrs. R. Homberger, J. H. Speich, J. H. Ungricht, A. Perochet, M. Hurlimann, F. Conrad, G. T. Groats, Miss M. Hochstrasser, A. J. Portmann, Mrs. B. Hossack, H. Kirchofer.