

**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:** - (1938)

**Heft:** 863

  

**Artikel:** "The European situation"[to be continued]

**Autor:** Gooch, G.P.

**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-691635>

### **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:** 14.03.2025

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

## LECTURE BY Dr. G. P. GOOCH

ON

## "THE EUROPEAN SITUATION"

WEDNESDAY, MAY 11th at "SWISS HOUSE."

Following the Monthly Meeting of the Society held at Swiss House on Wednesday, May 11th, Dr. G. P. Gooch lectured to a very large audience. Mr. A. Steinmann, President of the Society, who was in the Chair, when introducing the distinguished lecturer, said that he wished to offer a most cordial welcome to Dr. Gooch, who for very many years had lectured to the Society. The Chairman briefly referred to the outstanding achievement of Dr. Gooch on the completion of his monumental work, "The History and Origins of the Great War," which he had written in collaboration with Dr. Temperley at the request of the British Government.

Dr. Gooch then addressed the audience as follows:—My friends, I am very pleased to come to you again and I only wish I were able to have a more cheerful story to tell. The outlook a year ago was not very promising, but it is worse now, to say the least. For many years, in this room and elsewhere, I have been speaking on the overwhelming probabilities and possibilities of peace and war by saying fifty-fifty. The proportion is rather worse to-day, shall we say 55 for war and 45 for peace. I shall not tell you now straight off why the situation has got worse. I shall be content with the expression of opinion which you have just heard. I am going to speak to you for an hour, and after that I shall be ready to answer questions and by then we shall all have had enough of this gloomy matter.

As usual, I shall begin in the East of Europe with Russia. Russia, as we know very well, is a mighty Empire. It has two faces, one which looks towards Japan and the other face which looks towards Central Europe. As regards its eastern face, it is perfectly clear that Japan's attack on China has diminished, for the time being, the probability of a Japanese attack on Russia. Japan is finding China quite enough at one time. Therefore, for the time being, I do not expect a Japanese attack on Russia. The miseries of China in her great and gallant struggle are turning to the advantage of Russia. As for the western face of Russia, how does the situation now compare with a year ago? It is about the same. Relations between Russia and Germany were very bad a year ago and are very putrid now. I am very thankful that these two countries are not neighbours. Poland is between them as a buffer, preventing the Russians from attacking the Germans and *vice versa*. Although the relations of Germany and Russia are just the same as a year ago, to-day the danger of Russia being drawn into a European war is greater. Why? Russia is an ally of Czechoslovakia and has promised to go to the assistance of Czechoslovakia if attacked by Germany, as many people believe and fear she will be attacked. The only other thing since I spoke to you a year ago is that a great deal of blood has been shed in Russia. I do not as a rule speak on these occasions about internal politics. I only do so to-night as we are bound to consider the possible reactions of all these internal troubles on the fighting strength of the Russian army. On that question, has the Russian army been weakened? I cannot give you an authoritative reply. We do not know. We can only go on probabilities. We should all say that an army which has seen its old and trusted leaders shot and punished mostly for unpatriotic conduct must feel troubled in its heart and therefore have less cohesion, less morale, less confidence in its leaders than it had before these terrible events. I cannot tell you what effect, if any, these terrible shootings of Generals and Field Marshals has had or is likely to have on the morale or fighting strength of the Russian army. There is only one test of any army and that is war; and there has been no war for years and years in which the Russian army has been engaged. The last time was in 1920 when they came within sight of the towers of Warsaw in August of that year. I do not know what the actual fighting strength of Russia is, but we do know that it is the biggest in the world. It has about 5,000 first-line air fighters, which is only a very rough estimate. I am going to leave Russia there, with the Japanese ambitions in the Far East, the increase of danger from an alliance of Russia and China; leading to the possibility of a war started by Germany on Russia's ally, Czechoslovakia.

Now for Poland. As I came along to-night, I read in the evening paper, and I do not always take my history and politics from newspapers (laughter), but it is very likely true what I read only two minutes ago, namely, that Poland has informed Russia very plainly and very clearly that she will not allow the Russian troops to cross Polish terri-

tory if they want to go in support of Czechoslovakia, that she would not allow Russian aeroplanes to fly over Polish territory. That does not mean that Poland is an ally of Germany, because she is not. You know how many allies Poland has, two. One is France, everybody knows that; the other is Rumania. The alliance between France and Poland is an alliance of mutual military support. The alliance of Poland and Rumania is not a fighting alliance, but one of neutrality. The object of the Polish-Rumanian alliance is to interpose a great block of neutral territory between Russia on the right and Germany on the left. It is not a secret object of that alliance to prevent Germany from attacking Russia or *vice-versa*, through Poland or through Rumania. Now that is very important, because if she attacks Czechoslovakia, which we do not know, and Russia tries to go to the aid of her ally, she will have to go through one or both of the two countries, Poland and Rumania. If they both say, "No, we are neutral in this fight, we are not on anybody's side," Russia would then have to choose between telling Czechoslovakia that because of the attitude of Poland and Rumania she could not send any help, or "It is my right and duty to go to their help and I am going to march through Poland and Rumania, and if either of these countries tries to prevent the advance of our troops it is war with Poland and Rumania as well." The way in which the problem of Czechoslovakia is going to be solved is foremost in my mind, in everybody's mind all over Europe, for it involves the whole of Europe. I shall presently point out the way in which it involves France. Beginning our journey in the East of Europe, the question whether Hitler attacks Czechoslovakia mightily concerns: 1. Russia; 2. Poland; 3. Rumania.

I want to say one thing about Poland which I could not say in this room before, regarding the old quarrel between Poland and Lithuania. It dates from 1920 when a Polish general, acting nominally on his own initiative, but really, as was afterwards announced, on the orders of Marshal Pilsudski, marched into Vilna, the capital of the little Lithuanian state. He took it for Poland, and it has remained Polish ever since. Poland was then a state of thirty million inhabitants and it has now thirty-four million inhabitants. Lithuania was then, and is now, a small country with two million inhabitants. Lithuania was much too small to fight and so if you cannot fight, the Lithuanians said to themselves, the best is to sulk. They could not fight, so they said, "We will not recognise the seizure, the rape of our old capital, Vilna. It is our capital to-day and we shall not recognise the theft." And so they sulked. A train could run to the frontier, but not across. Poland had no diplomatic representative in Kovno. Lithuania had no diplomatic representative in Warsaw. It was a complete break between the two countries. Many attempts were made to re-open the frontier. An attempt was made ten years ago at Geneva. After waiting eighteen years, Poland quite recently took action again and said this has lasted long enough and if the Lithuanians will not willingly renew relations with us and open the frontier, trade with us and exchange diplomatic representatives, we will force them to do so. They did, and issued an ultimatum and once again, like in 1920, there was no resistance. The ultimatum was accepted on the spot, the frontier opened, and diplomatic representatives were again in Warsaw and Kovno. The working people could again cross the frontier on terms of mutual recognition. I do not suggest that the Lithuanians are pleased with what has happened, but being the weaker country they yielded to force, and had to yield to threats of force. The novelty to-night, therefore, is that since I was here last a year ago, the conflict has been brought to an end bloodlessly, by means of a Polish ultimatum.

Now for the Balkans. Rumania, you know very well, had a very troubled and eventful year. Last autumn, the political crisis began with the General Election through one or two of the leading parties, two to be quite correct, one, the most important of all, the Agrarians, the other the Iron Guard, the Fascist party. They refused and refuse still to have anything to do with King Carol, to take an interest in the Government, as long as the King's favourite, Madame Lupescu, retains her present position. If you eliminate two of the largest parties, it is very difficult to get a really representative Government and after the General Election King Carol who more and more can say, "L'état c'est moi" surprised us all by making Prime Minister Goga, the leader of one of the smallest parties with about 40 followers out of 400, known

only for his fanatical hate of the Jews, and in 7 weeks Goga had made such a mess of things that even the King, who had called him to power, turned against him. The industrial and financial life of Rumania slowed down to such an extent that it was something like a paralysis. That does not suggest that the whole of industry is in the hands of the Jews, but it did show that the coming to power of this fanatic was an experiment which could not last. Then Goga died suddenly and you now have a sort of coalition, a National Government from which the peasant party stands aside and from which the Iron Guard are also excluded, not merely for the reason I gave you before. The party has now been dissolved and its leader Codreanu has been arrested and is under trial for high treason. I had to mention those facts, although I have not time to say anything very much about the internal affairs in this case. In Rumania, the internal affairs may be very closely related to its foreign policy. The general idea is that as a result of these changes Rumania has come more into the German orbit and has rather moved away from the French and the Geneva orbit, and Rumania was never very friendly to Bolshevistic Russia and is now less so than ever. You must say without exaggeration that French influence in Rumania has diminished and German influence has increased. As regards Greece, General Metaxas is still in harness. Some people will tell you that he has done a number of good things; some will say he rules like a tyrant. We all know that there is no liberty in a country which is full of spies, where letters are opened, telephone calls listened into, where the prisons are full of political prisoners. From my point of view, as an old-fashioned English Constitutionalist, I have a horror of military dictatorships and look at the present position of Greece with great apprehension. I do not like the system and am going to renew my prophecy that the rule of General Metaxas will not be very long lived. I shall not be very surprised if there will be another ruler of Greece in five years' time. What one General can do, another can do, and one General after another comes into power, one pushing out the other.

The history of Bulgaria is one of quiet and internal peace. King Boris is a good, wise, and unselfish man. He felt about a month ago that the time had come for him to consult the Bulgarian people what Government they would like after an unparliamentary Government for four years. Although Bulgaria has not returned her own parliamentary Government, she is finding her way back to a responsible government after she has emerged from a four years' period of quasi autocratic rule.

In Jugoslavia it has been quieter and in Albania an event of personal rather than political significance has taken place in the marriage of King Zog to the Countess Apponyi, one of the great historic families of Hungary.

So much for the Balkans. Apart from the grave trouble in Rumania, as regards external reactions, there is nothing in particular to say.

I am now going to leave the Balkan Peninsula as a whole, by saying that German influence is increasing, German commercial intercourse is growing, and you know as well as I the very close connection between commerce and politics. They are very close indeed. The rapid, dramatic ascent of new Germany in power and in prestige has begun to produce, and is producing day by day, a change, a subtle change, in the Balkans. Germany can count on more in South-Eastern Europe than a year ago. I do not suggest alliances, but her increase in trade and her increase in political prestige and in consequence her political influence in Rumania, Greece and Jugoslavia is beyond all doubt. I have now dealt with Russia, Poland and the Balkans.

(To be continued.)

## EIN SCHWEIZER ALS AMERIKANISCHER GENERAL.

Kürzlich wurde auf dem Arlington National Friedhof mit allen militärischen Ehren ein alter General begraben, dessen Wiege in der Schweiz gestanden hatte. Brigadier-General Léon A. Matile, geboren am 28. September 1844 in Neuenburg, als Sohn des bekannten Wissenschaftlers, Prof. Georges August Matile, war einer der ältesten pensionierten Offiziere der amerikanischen Armee. Er hatte sich als Soldat einen grossen Namen gemacht, und noch kurz vor seinem Tode war er der Ehrengast auf dem Jahresbankett der "Military Order of the Carabao," dem ausgeschiedenen Offiziere der amerikanischen Armee angehören, die während des spanisch-amerikanischen Krieges und des darauffolgenden Aufstandes auf den Philippinen kämpften.

Das "Army and Navy Journal," ein einflussreiches Organ der Armee und der Flotte, widmete dem in der Schweiz geborenen General ausserordentlich lobende Worte. Das Blatt schreibt: "Léon A. Matile, der als Jüngling mit seinem Vater nach Amerika kam, trat im Alter von 19 Jahren als gemeiner Soldat in die Armee der Union ein. Er kämpfte im Bürgerkrieg und wurde in einem Gefecht bei Atlanta verwundet. Das war am 7. August 1864. Nach dem Ende