

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: - (1942)

Heft: 1004

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: 14.03.2025

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

and Soleure became members of the Swiss Confederation.

For this successful intervention in a crisis Niklaus von Flüe has ever since been venerated as Switzerland's great conciliator. Even to-day the Swiss people cherish the advice he gave the delegates at that time: "Do not seek to enlarge your domain too much. Shun foreign quarrels and be peaceful neighbours. But whosoever wishes to oppress you, may he find you as men. Far be it from you that one of you accept gold for the homeland. Beware of internal strife, for it would lead to your destruction. Love one another, oh Confederates, and may God watch over you kindly as heretofore."

Niklaus von Flüe died on March 21st, 1487. In December, 1934, his last remains were transferred to a new resting place in the beautiful parish church of Sachseln.

In his lifetime Niklaus von Flüe was always ready to assist those in need and many miraculous deeds are credited to his intercession. Instead of being forgotten he is more and more venerated by the Swiss people as a guardian and father of his country. His last resting place at Sachseln is one of the foremost places of pilgrimage in Switzerland. Efforts have in recent years been made that the great Swiss conciliator be canonized and His Holiness Pope Pius XII appears to be most favourably inclined toward this elevation.

**SWISS CLUB DUNFERMLINE.
1st August Celebrations.**

Almost the entire Swiss Colony in Dunfermline was present at the 1st August celebrations again arranged by our club. The evening was spent very appropriate to the occasion. Our president M. F. Gualeni gave a short talk which was followed by three Swiss Films kindly lent us by the London Office of the Swiss Federal Railways. It appeared that all present very greatly enjoyed the films showing pictures of our beautiful country. The rest of the evening passed amidst cheerful talk, games and music. The culinary desires were very well catered for, in the real Swiss way, by our enterprising Social Committee.

SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

After a short recess during the summer months, the Society resumed its activities at Swiss House on Wednesday, September 9th, when the Monthly Meeting was held. Mr. J. J. Boos, President, was in the Chair, and a large number of Members was present.

The Society was very fortunate indeed in being able to open its Autumn/Winter programme with a lecture by Dr. G. P. Gooch, Companion of Honour, the famous lecturer and eminent historian, who addressed the meeting on "World Outlook." The Chairman, introducing the lecturer in suitable terms, said that Dr. Gooch was no stranger to the audience, having lectured to the Society on many previous occasions. He also mentioned that many amongst the audience no doubt vividly recollected some of the events forecast by Dr. Gooch, which had since come to pass. If only some of his warnings had been heeded at the time by the authorities concerned, things might have turned out differently.

Dr. Gooch then addressed the audience. He said:—

"It is always a pleasure for me to speak at Swiss House. I love Switzerland and have known it for well over fifty years. It was the last country in which I spent some time during my travels before the war. I congratulate your country on its neutrality, which has been preserved without any sacrifice of national honour, and hope you will be able to maintain it until the end of this terrible struggle.

I am first of all going to call your attention to three enormously important facts, viz.

1. That Isolationism in America is dead.
2. That the British and Russian peoples have discovered one another.
3. That China has at last taken its well-deserved place not only as a Great Power, but as, in every sense of the term, an equal among the leading Nations.

The second part of my talk will be devoted to the sort of settlement which we may expect, which we should strive to obtain if and when we win the war. There is my lecture in two parts; part one brought about by the three changes mentioned, which are stamped right across the face of the world, not temporary changes, but changes which I hope have come to stay and which will influence the future of the world for the benefit of mankind.

Isolationism, which was very strong both as a tradition and what we may call an ideology ("Weltanschauung"), died on Sunday morning, December 7th, 1941, when the phone bells rang over the whole of the North American Continent with the news of the attack on Pearl Harbour. Most great events happen within a certain period, such as the Reformation, the fall of the Roman Empire, the French Revolution, etc., but world-historic events sometimes happen in a moment. When the first bombs fell on Pearl Harbour a new era of history began. It not only brought America into the war, which was inevitable, but something more important or equally important happened: Isolationism died. Until that moment millions of Americans had said and millions of Americans had believed that they were safe, whatever happened in Europe or Asia. Before the days of submarines and aeroplanes, Americans

ALLTRANSPORT & STORAGE LTD.
 Directors: H. DEPREE, M.I.E.R. O. A. DETTWILER (SWISS) H. E. NACHBUR (SWISS)
 Secretary: F. N. RODGERS.
ALLTRANSPORT BUILDING,
 LITTLE TRINITY LANE, LONDON, E.C.4.
 Cables: ALLTRANS LONDON. Telephone: CENTral 6341 (6 lines)
For Overseas and Colonial Shipping
 TRAFFIC TO AND FROM SWITZERLAND
 CARTAGE, PACKING, WAREHOUSING,
 INSURANCES,
 FURNITURE REMOVALS (Local & Foreign)
 Associated firm:
ALLTRANSPORT & STORAGE Co., NEW YORK.
 (Manager: H. E. NACHBUR) 6, State Street.
 Cables: Alltrans New York. Telephone: Bowling Green 9-5651/52.

had every right to say "We are safe, nobody can attack us, we have no difficulty in defending ourselves, we are a great country with a big population and enormous resources." The chief duty of historians is to understand, not to approve or disapprove. But we have a right and a duty to discover why individuals and peoples think and act as they do. It is quite easy to understand why a great majority of Americans until December last were Isolationists. Now try and realise the importance of the change that is taking place. Isolationists are now as anxious to win the war as President Roosevelt, Mr. Cordell Hull, Colonel Knox and Mr. Stimson, and I say once more that it is not a momentary change, generated by Japan's attack, it is a change which has come to stay because what has happened now can happen again. They have learnt that no war can occur in Europe or Asia without affecting their interests, and that although they did not wish to attack anybody, war has been launched on them by three Great Powers simultaneously, by Japan, Germany and Italy.

One cannot exaggerate the importance of the fact that the strongest and richest country in the world, with the greatest potential resources has come right in. Why did we have this new war? There are many reasons, one of them being that after the Americans had helped us to win the last war they went back across the Atlantic, as they had a perfect right to do, and left Europe to stew in its own juice. I do not think they will do that again. They will stay in the game this time and help us to make the settlement. It is no good making a settlement unless you stay and help to carry it out. If I did not think so, I should take a very dark view of the future of Europe. But I am convinced that the United States will make a far greater effort in this war, and there is very little doubt that they will stay in and help us to rebuild the world on a better foundation.

I now come to the second factor, the discovery of each other by the English and Russian peoples. You know what I mean by discovery. Before we discovered each other we knew there was a place called Russia. Many of us had read Tolstoi and Dostoievski, some of us had studied Russian history, and the Russians knew there was a place called England and a British Empire. There have been relations between the two Governments ever since Queen Elizabeth, but the two peoples had never got into real touch with each other. We thought of them as a distant people, speaking a language which few Englishmen could understand, and with Asiatic blood in their veins. We used to quote Napoleon's famous saying: "Grattez le Russe et on trouvera le Tartare" — "Scratch the Russian and you will find the Tartar!" Before the last war we used to look with horror on the corruption, the cruelty and the incompetence of the old Czarist régime. When the Bolsheviks took over, we looked with horror at their cruelty and their mass executions. I am not exaggerating when I say the two peoples had not discovered one another when little more than a year ago Hitler suddenly attacked Russia.

The same evening, Winston Churchill said that England and Russia were now Allies and would fight together till the end. However, you can be military Allies without knowing one another and caring much about each other. We were military allies in the last war, but there were no sentiments of confidence, liking or intimacy. Fighting against a common foe is not

enough to bring peoples together and to lay the foundations of an emotional rapprochement. What has actually brought us together is the magnificent fight which the Russians have made and are making. Men and women who can make such a magnificent fight must be a great people. We have discovered the Russian people as being full of vigour full of vitality, with a passionate love of their country and a determination not to be slaves of a foreign Power. This is an enormous emotional change with far-reaching military and political consequences. And we have not only discovered them, but they have also discovered us. They have not only sent their statesmen over, like Molotoff, but their Trade Unionists have also been here and have seen what we are doing. We have an English paper published in Russian in Moscow, and the Russians have a daily paper here, "The Soviet News." Nations never love each other, but they can be interested in each other and admire each other's strong points. The political systems of our two countries are very different. Ours is based on the sharing of responsibility by every adult man and woman in the country, whereas Russia is governed by a Dictator. But there are similarities between the two peoples as well as differences, such as patriotism and a love of national independence for which we are both ready to fight and to die. I am not a prophet and do not know how long this new feeling will last, how strong it will be when the war is over. I hope it will be strong and lasting and feel sure that at any rate a good deal of it will remain. We shall not think of Russia any longer as a far off, alien, incomprehensible Power, but rather as a colleague and comrade, and I hope she will think of us in the same way. If that happens, a new force has entered into the life of Europe, Anglo-Russian comradeship, Anglo-Russian co-operation.

I now come to my third point, namely the discovery of China, America discovered China before England, using the word discovered in the sense in which I have defined it already, i.e. a combination of interest and sympathy. After the first war between the Japanese and Russia in 1904-5, Japan was very popular here. We were glad when she beat Russia and we thought of her not only as a great fighter, but as a great people who had full claim to equality. The emergence of Japan as a Great Power has been one of the most important events in the life of the world in the last half century. Of China we used to think as a great country with a great past, but quite incapable of playing its part on the broad stage of world affairs. Japan could do it and China could not. We knew of the Manchu rulers of Peking and all the corruptions of their rule. People felt that China was rather "a geographical expression," to use the famous phrase of Metternich which he applied to Italy before its unification. We knew a little about the Chinese people and admired some of their ways, but to be quite frank, we did not care very much about them and were not very interested in them. Some of our missionaries and some of our traders were, because they knew better. Owing to two things our whole attitude to China is different now. Firstly, the magnificent efforts made by her since the last war, under such great leaders as Dr. Sun Yat Sen and General Chiang Kai-shek, to pull the country together and make it a nation-state. It always had been a state, but not a nation-state, a state which is also a nation and feels the spiritual

unity of a nation, based partly on past experience, partly on common material interests, partly on the subtle emotional reality which we call atmosphere. You Swiss have performed the admirable feat of making a nation out of very diverse elements, racial, linguistic and religious, a great and magnificent feat.

It was not until a few years ago that China began to modernise, without however losing her soul. It is no use going out of your course and making changes if in the process of doing so you lose your soul. China is now a combination of what we call modern civilisation with its own fine traditions inherited from the past. Let us never forget, China is the oldest continuous civilisation in the world. Our civilisation only began with the coming of the Anglo-Saxons. Most of you some years ago must have seen the Chinese Exhibition at the Royal Academy. Surely you must have felt this is one of the great races in the world, with its wonderful sculpture, its fine pottery and painting, all so marvellous, so old. I remember seeing a splendid bronze of 1700 B.C., a great deal more than a thousand years older than the Parthenon at Athens. We knew all that, yet it had not brought the Chinese and English peoples closer together. But all that has changed now. They, like ourselves, are fighting as they say, and as we say, for the best interests not only of our own countries but of civilisation. The Chinese are not only fighting for the same ideals, but with a magnificent spirit, and an Englishman loves a brave fighter in what he regards as a good cause. But there is not only new contact between England and China, but also between the Indians and the Chinese. The Nationalists in India are as anxious to help China as we are, and therefore I regard the mutual discovery of the British Empire and China as being one of the outstanding results of the war so far and one of the best.

I now come to the second part of my lecture. If we do not win the war, we shall obviously be unable to decide on the New Order in Europe. If the war ends in a draw, a compromise, again we shall not be able to do what we want. So for the sake of argument I am going to assume that the Allies will win. That is my hope and my expectation, that we shall once more have the opportunity which we had in 1919 of laying down the lines of settlement with our defeated foes. Now of those three foes, — Germany, Italy and Japan, — Germany as we know very well is the strongest, the nearest and most formidable, Japan the second most formidable and the furthest away, whereas Italy is the least formidable of the three. As regards Japan, I suppose the U.S. will claim, and rightly claim, the chief share in deciding the settlement in the Far Eastern and Pacific Zones. We shall have a good deal to say, and when I say we I mean the British Empire, including India, Burma and Australia, but it will be mainly an American task. So I shall not speak about it this afternoon. The settlement with Italy will, in my opinion, be mainly a task for England. Russia is not very interested politically or otherwise in European or African Italy. America is not very interested in Italy, so the task of dealing with Italy and the Italian Empire is mainly for ourselves. The best solution for tropical colonies in Africa will be a system of international control, an international administration. There are three obvious ways of dealing with Italy's African colonies, all of which are tropical, viz. (1) To keep them after driving the Italians out; (2) To hand them, or some of them, back;

(3) To have a system of international administration in which Italy, like other European Powers, will have a share of control. You know that is the tendency of thought about tropical possessions, which has been moving away from the idea of full national sovereignty — this country or that having a lot of colonial territory and others like Germany none. We must cultivate the idea of partnership in control and administration, looking forward all the time to the education of the native, to his growth in political and intellectual stature, to learning to rule himself, not by having power thrust into his hands before he is ready for it, but little by little, as has been going on for some time in some of the more advanced African colonies.

Now I come to Germany. In my opinion there will be and there should be no peace with the Nazi leaders, and this is the universal opinion of my country, the British Empire, the U.S.A. and Russia. We shall have to deal with new people in Berlin, just as we did last time when the Kaiser and all his old advisers disappeared and we had to deal with the Weimar statesmen, many of whom were men of high capacity and good character, though they failed because the task which confronted them was too difficult. The first question will be that of preventing, or curing, or helping to cure starvation. The most urgent problem will be that of providing as far as we can work and bread, not only for reasons of humanity, but also for reasons of political common sense. Napoleon used to say "There is only one thing I am afraid of and that is a hungry Paris." — The worst possible foundation for a new Europe would be a hungry, unemployed country in the heart of Europe. The treaty of Versailles had many failings, and perhaps the greatest was the extraordinary blindness to the importance of economic reconstruction. It devoted much time and trouble to territories and reparations, but there is little in the Treaty, which makes a substantial volume of over 400 Articles, about the economic viability of Europe. I hope we shall do better this time, everybody needs work and bread. If we do not, there will be more trouble. Men desperate with hunger and idleness would form the raw material of which the agitator gets hold, and we should prepare the way for a new Hitler, a new Nazi revolution with another name. In the Atlantic Charter great stress is laid on making life possible and tolerable for everybody, including our enemies. Directly war is over, a wise generosity in the economic field is part of the message of the Atlantic Charter, and I hope that it will be one of the leading principles in the settlement.

There is another article in the Atlantic Charter which I hope will be carried out, the complete disarmament and industrial demilitarisation of Germany, pending the creation of a new system of collective security for Europe as a whole, which will take a long time. Collective security will not be created merely by keeping some of our troops in the Rhineland or some Russian troops in Eastern Germany. I do not call that security, but merely military occupation. By collective security I mean what we tried to do in the League of Nations. The reason why it failed was because the countries did not play up when the aggressors began to aggress. In the field of disarmament the settlement must be drastic — wise generosity in the economic field to be matched with wise severity in military disarmament and industrial demilitarisation.

There are various plans for dealing with Krupp's firm at Essen and the great war industries in the Ruhr. You will never get lasting and effective disarmament unless you deal in some effective way with the war factories which have made this terrible military machine, for modern war is becoming increasingly mechanised.

With regard to the frontiers, my feeling is that, Bismarck's work, his creation of Germany as a political unity, should remain intact. That is broadly speaking the desire of most Germans. Any plan of the victors of breaking up Germany into various States will not last. They will come together again. There are all sorts of projects. One is to make the Rhineland an independent state. Another, by a well-known refugee writer, is to cut off the South and West from the North, the object being "Exit Prussia," — to diminish the power and the dangerous possibilities which we all recognise in Prussia. One of the greatest difficulties would be that Prussia is two-thirds of Germany in population and territory and a great deal more in punch. They are much tougher than the Southerners and you would never have peace in Europe unless Prussia remains part of Germany. I think the best way of dealing with what is admittedly a great danger, another recovery of military strength by the hard-working, energetic and disciplined German people, is along the lines I have indicated, viz. by complete military disarmament combined with economic viability.

It is not a complete solution, but we must leave a large German State intact. Here again I rest on the Atlantic Charter, the second Article of which says in the clearest terms that territorial changes should only be made in accordance with the wishes of the people concerned. The Prime Minister's signature is at the bottom of this document and it is generally approved by this country. Are we going to carry it out? If we are — and I hope we shall never make public promises unless we intend to carry them out — then changes in the German frontiers will have to be reconcilable with the wishes of the people concerned. It is a tremendous promise. Think for instance of Alsace-Lorraine, which is very interesting to you Swiss for it is at your doorstep. What is to happen there? According to the Atlantic Charter they can settle their own fate, which the Germans did not allow them to do after 1870 nor the French after 1918.

A much more difficult question is the Polish frontier. Poland was the victim of an unprovoked attack on September 1st, 1939. It was conquered and is being treated with the most terrible cruelty. When the war is over and Hitlerite Germany defeated, the Poles will have a great deal to say about the new frontier. My idea of the settlement of Europe is, broadly-speaking, that the Americans will leave it mainly to us and Russia, that we shall leave Eastern Europe to Russia, and Russia will leave Western Europe mainly to us. There are, of course, other countries to be considered as well as England and Russia. Free France will have to be consulted about Alsace-Lorraine and will no doubt claim its return. Poland and Czechoslovakia will have a great deal to say about the German frontiers. Czechoslovakia is very much concerned in the German-Polish frontier, as she has entered into a treaty of partnership with Poland. The most difficult territorial problem in all Europe will be the Polish-German frontier. Poland will, of course, demand and

obtain the restoration of all she possessed between the two wars, but she will not be content with that and I think she will get more.

She wants above all East Prussia. This is the most difficult of all territorial problems in the coming settlement, just because both sides have a very strong argument. The Germans say with truth that East Prussia is German, the home of the Junkers, with Memel, Königsberg and all the other Teutonic towns with their historic memories. The Atlantic Charter leaves no doubt about its fate, for if changes are only to take place according to the wishes of the people concerned, the inhabitants of East Prussia will say "We want to remain part of Germany." Yet the Poles have an argument just as strong as the ethnic argument in German eyes. They say with truth that events in September 1939 proved to them and to all the world that the pre-war Polish-German frontier is too long to be successfully defended. Poland's frontier is 1,200 miles long and it is worse even than it sounds, because there is no natural frontier. It is not merely the length of a frontier that counts, but its character. The Pyrenees and the Alps are marvellous frontiers to defend, but there is no natural frontier between Poland and Germany. East Prussia is only about 70 miles from Warsaw, and it is a frontier of some 400 miles. The Poles, remembering on that terrible September day when the Germans poured in from the North, from the West and the South, say that it must not happen again. To bar the approaches from East Prussia, that is the determination of the Poles in England and elsewhere. Their decision is for purely military reasons, not for reasons of prestige. Their determination is just as strong as that of the Germans in East Prussia and in the rest of the Reich to keep in German hands this essentially and indeed passionately German population. There will be great difficulties there. My own feeling is that if we win a 100% victory, as we did before, East Prussia will become Polish, and so will Danzig, and quite likely the German part of the Province of Posen and the German part of Upper Silesia. In that case the inhabitants should be given a chance to opt and a year will be given them during which to make up their minds, as happened in Alsace-Lorraine in 1871 and in Transylvania after the last war.

In conclusion, Dr. Gooch briefly summarised the chief points arising from his lecture. He also answered some interesting questions from among the audience.

Mr. W. Meier, Vice-President of the Society, then moved a cordial vote of thanks to the lecturer, in which he was supported with hearty and prolonged applause from a most appreciative audience.

Members are reminded that the next Meeting will take place on Saturday, October 10th, at Swiss House, when Major the Hon. H. L. Cripps, eminent ship-owner, industrialist and social reformer will give a lecture on "*The New World Order*," dealing chiefly with international trading, export, etc. W.B.

Drink delicious "Ovaltine"
at every meal - for Health!