

The European importance of Switzerland

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at King's Langley; it included a dog show, boxing displays by Home Guards and N.F.S. teams. According to our contemporary the fête was declared open by Dr. Erich Hubermann from Basle, said to be studying in this country. Our learned compatriot commenced his oration with the remark that being a neutral he could not say *we ought to win the war*, he could say that he knew we would. We admire the good taste of the H.G. and A.T.S. people present in listening to this imposition goodheartedly, but we think our visitor would have brought more honour to himself and our country had he left the war alone.

* * *

A golden wedding in these hazardous times is a noteworthy event and this is what our Birmingham friends, Mr. and Mrs. George Ellison-Burkhardt, of 67 Lady Byron Lane, Knowle (Warwickshire), celebrated on the 21st of this month. Mrs. Ellison has been an occasional contributor to our paper and her charm and personality has just missed in transforming her English husband into an immaculate Balois; if we remember rightly, he speaks our elegant Baslerdütsch with astonishing perfection and conquering fluency. Hearty congratulations!

* * *

We regret to report that our popular friend, Henry Binggely of 167 Clapham Road, S.W.9, has lost his father who died last week at Clarens s/Montreux at the age of 77. Many members of the Colony will remember the old couple who, some ten years ago, stayed with their son and his good lady in London for a few weeks.



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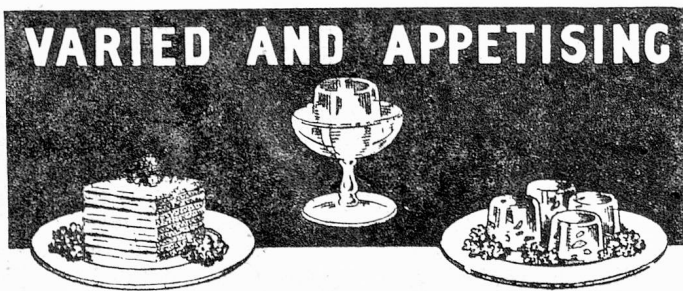
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THE EUROPEAN IMPORTANCE OF SWITZERLAND

Switzerland cannot be described as living in peacetime conditions. She used to be very much a country of foreign connections, of hospitality, of export and import, of intellectual interchange. To-day she is affected economically by the blockade, politically by encirclement by countries of totalitarian or semi-totalitarian régimes and by a voluntary defensive seclusion. Yet in many ways she still is a country of "the small League of Nations" or the "forecast of the Europe of the future," as she has been so often described. In quite a new sense she expresses the thoughts of many countries or peoples whose voices have been silenced; she is the only recognised centre of democracy on the Continent whither all the streams of democratic thought flow and whence, in turn, radiate the messages of hope and confidence to the oppressed. As never before she has become a haven for escaped prisoners and exiles of all races and nations, and enables them to live as full a life as possible under the circumstances. There is a Polish university in which exiles and interned fugitive soldiers are allowed to study. It is hardly necessary to stress the vast amount of work put in by Swiss effort to ameliorate the lot of prisoners on both sides, particularly through the Red Cross.

Switzerland has continued her own stable democratic political life, although the Government have received extraordinary emergency powers. The country lives in a state of permanent mobilisation and keeps a large part of the men under arms—with all the disorganisation it entails in the life of a nation. But it also has advanced in progressive thought despite the emergency. There were general elections last year resulting in a big increase of social democratic votes, and for the first time in Swiss history a socialist entered the Government, which consists of eight members. The Socialists are now the strongest of the political parties. It is characteristic of this unrevolutionary, independent nation that, while around her the governments have swung to the extreme revolutionary right, it moved toward the left.

There have been novelties in social legislation. Old age pensions are being enacted, and plans of social security and full employment are made. The Swiss are very interested in what is done and planned in Britain. The Beveridge plan has been widely discussed; there is probably not a paper in Switzerland which has not published one or several articles on it. It has appeared there in booklet form, and the German translation has run into a second edition. Education is as widely discussed as in this country. Legislation is mostly an affair of the 25 cantons, but the "Archive for Swiss Education" indicates that all the authorities agree to raise the school-leaving age as soon as possible, to reduce the numbers of pupils in the classes, to establish a transition period for young people after they leave school when work should be combined with education. Reforms usually hinge on the financial situation of the different cantons. Zürich town has already decided to raise the school-leaving age to 15, while some of the French-Swiss cantons propose to do so in the near future. In many respects Switzerland faces problems of siege economy common to many European countries. Her economy is uneven; there is over-employment in the metal industry, for example, while the hotel indus-



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try and all the business connected with it tackles the most difficult time they ever had. The question of future full employment, of the avoidance of trade cycles, is being approached.

In the spiritual and intellectual field Switzerland to-day plays a leading rôle in Europe. Karl Barth has deeply influenced all Protestant thought. His *Dogmatic* erected a new theoretical basis for the Protestant churches, while his *Letter to the French Protestants* has become an inspiration to spiritual resistance in France. The Confessional Church in Germany would be unthinkable without him. Emil Brunner, the other leading Swiss churchman and Rector of the University of Zurich, has perhaps his greatest importance in his theory of the Christian State. When, under the advent of totalitarianism, the Church in Europe so often retired from the field of public life into voluntary isolation, it was Brunner who stressed the necessity of permeating the State and society with Christian principles.

In the field of music some Swiss composers are outstanding. Honegger and Schoek, for example, can be found in concert programmes all over Europe. In the same way, the Swiss theatre has become a focus for drama in Europe. The *Schauspielhaus*, in Zurich, is famous for its enterprise, its experiments, its fearless expression of free thought, despite all attempts at intimidation from outside. Little Switzerland, too, is the only country on the Continent where free art exhibitions can be held, where there are no banned artists or

pictures, where no "pass of a chamber of culture" is required. In the same way, all types of film are exhibited freely, and despite the difficulties of transport more British, American and Russian films than German are shown. *In which we Serve* and *Mrs. Minniver* had record runs, and there is no doubt which side the Swiss prefer. But Switzerland, too, has started its own film industry. The wireless is of European importance and often, in the regions round Switzerland, the only source of objective news for the owners of small receiving sets. There have been prosecutions in Germany for listening to the Swiss wireless throughout these years, and only recently several people have been sentenced to heavy terms of imprisonment. The Swiss have a long-established and cherished tradition of unbiased representation of facts and views, and people in Europe like to turn to the Swiss wireless to receive a true picture of the situation. The radio stations and the press required the greatest courage and determination from the Swiss, especially in 1940 and 1941, but they kept the flame burning. This was done for their own sake, but doubtless also in the realisation of their responsibility towards the peoples of Europe. For "the other Germany" Switzerland is the only natural market with a background of the German language. Thus the poet Hermann Hesse has now been accepted by the Swiss as their own. The Philosopher Eberhard Grisebach teaches and publishes at Zürich, and in the field of political science and economics Wilhelm Roepke has become an authority at Geneva.

In Switzerland, as in England, many people plan for the future. In their tradition of humanitarian work they desire to help in European reconstruction, as they are now caring for prisoners, exiles and children from occupied countries, sending food to Greece, etc. The boarding schools have decided to prepare for a great influx of foreigners who might wish to come to Switzerland to "regain their strength." More important still are the preparations of Swiss Universities and leading experts for participation in a renewed European academic life. There is no doubt that many of these men and women will follow the call if Universities destroyed by Nazism should require their assistance in rebuilding learning and science. There are already remarkable new enterprises in this field, such as the Institute for International Relations at Zürich, the International Student Congress, and the academic journals such as the *Hochschulzeitschrift* and *Suisse Contemporaine*, which deliberately pursue an international course. Typical of the active spirit at the Universities have been the demonstrations and messages of the teachers and students of Zürich, Basel and Berne to the Norwegian students after the mass arrests at Oslo at the end of last year. It was then that Professor Emil Brunner declared: "All universities of Europe and the world are one spiritual unity, one unity of faith, truth, telling of truth. Whatever happens to one university, happens to all."

Journals like the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* and *Neue Schweizer Rundschau* provide articles on the great questions of democracy in the future world, such as: Is there a middle way between planned economy and economic individualism? or: What forces can counter-balance the power of the State? or: The moral crisis underlying the political crisis in the world; or: What place should be given to vocational training and the humanities in education? Besides this general analy-

sis of our time there are definite proposals dealing with various urgent problems of reconstruction. Many hold that the greatest danger of our civilisation arises if society becomes an inert mass (*Vermassung*) instead of an integrated community. Decentralisation seems more hopeful to-day than in the "good old peace times," when all attempts to get townspeople "back to the land" had an artificial flavour. For to-day industries in Europe are already largely decentralised. This process should be kept up and strengthened. It would diminish the great crowding of population, and would enable the workers to live near their places of work and thus increase their time of leisure. Everyone could ultimately have a garden and enjoy an open-air life; and smaller communities would integrate their members who would have a personal interest in the running of affairs, no longer too vast to control.

An urgent need in Europe will be housing, the more urgent the longer the war lasts. The small, semi-rural communities will be best equipped to cope with the problem, adopting new methods of building such as pre-fabrication. Through evacuation people will have become used to living away from the large towns, especially if the nations will also decentralise their institutions of culture; arrange for theatre tours like Ensa, touring exhibitions, cinemas in their community centres, etc. One planner thinks of small towns of 10,000 inhabitants who should live on an area of not less than a square mile. The semi-rural character of such towns would also ease the situation in the case of unemployment which the Swiss hardly hope to abolish altogether. The political thought behind these schemes, however, is probably the motive of it all—education for democracy by experiencing it and living it. Local government is to be the vehicle. Here the feeling for political realities can be formed. Such a settlement, run on self-governing lines, will help more towards democracy in Europe than sermons about it. If in this way there would be about 10,000 practical centres for Re-education for Democracy, there need be no Theoretical Re-education."

As the Swiss are keen to interpret continental thought to the Anglo-Saxon world, so they are eager to interpret Anglo-Saxon thought and literature to Europe. Ever since the fall of France, when the material encirclement and isolation started, the Swiss have tried to break through it spiritually. In the sphere of books they digressed from their "strict neutrality" and gave prominence to English thought. Many best sellers have been welcomed in Switzerland. Writers like Norah Lofts, Richard Llewellyn, Louis Bromfield, Pearl Buck, Cronin, Sinclair Lewis, Upton Sinclair, Eric Knight, have their regular, steady and, for Swiss conditions, big public in German translations. As transport conditions are slow and uncertain, it is common for the Swiss publishers not to stress too much the novelty of a book, but to advertise several of the author's works at the same time, because they can count on people being interested in all of them. Not only are there many translations, but there have sprung into existence firms publishing books in the English language. This is the more surprising since the personal contacts giving occasion and vitality to the learning and use of a foreign language are largely lacking owing to war conditions. These English editions are the Clipper books, Ljus English Library, Phoenix books and Zephyr books. They are suited to

every purse, the first series comprising more expensive books of 11 francs, while the three others also publish at four, four-and-a-half, and five francs. These series are also used in Swiss schools, since the Tauchnitz edition was banned by the Nazis. The English series contain, among others, Priestley's *Black-out in Gretley* and *The English Spirit*; Cronin's *The Keys of the Kingdom*, Llewellyn's *How Green was my Valley* and his later book *None But the Lonely Heart*. Dorothy Sayers and Agatha Christie represent the detective story. Among the older novels we find *Wuthering Heights* and *Pride and Prejudice*. Richard Hillary's *The Last Enemy* made a deep impression, and Somerset Maugham's *An Hour Before Dawn* was warmly received. It is not novels and *belles-lettres* alone that the Swiss are interested in; they want to keep abreast of happenings and thought among the United Nations. They published a translation of the speeches and writings of Winston Churchill and a biography of him by Lewis Broad. Oprecht's Europa publishing House at Zürich produced the American diplomatic records, 1931-41, edited by the State Department, as well as Allan Nevins' *History of the U.S.A.* The Steinberg publishing firm brought out the Diary of Ambassador Davies. Professor E. H. Carr's *Conditions of Peace* had three editions in the first few months. Characteristically, the Swiss added the word "lasting" to peace in the German title of the work. Ernest Barker also is widely read in Switzerland. Michael Robert's *Recovery of the West* was welcomed as an answer to Spengler's *Decline of the West*.

"The Swiss publications to-day are so enterprising," declares the *Basler Nachrichten*, "that considerations of the limit of our home market are hardly taken into account. Even the greatest optimist among our publishers will not believe that our small country could consume this colossal output. It looks as though our stores are to be filled for future export. They seem to be thinking of the empty shelves of the book shops in the neighbouring countries, and reckon with the time when mankind, relieved from the daily menace, will pounce on books."

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