

The outlook in Europe

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Objektyp: **Article**

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

Band (Jahr): - **(1947)**

Heft 1078

PDF erstellt am: **28.06.2024**

Persistenter Link: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-694356>

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THE OUTLOOK IN EUROPE.

Lecture by Dr. G. P. Gooch, C.H.

Following the Monthly Meeting of the Swiss Mercantile Society, on Wednesday, October 8th, 1947, the members had the pleasure of listening to a lecture by Dr. G. P. Gooch, the eminent historian. The lecture room was filled to capacity when the Chairman welcomed Dr. Gooch, who, he said, needed no introduction, having lectured at Swiss House for well over 20 years, and before then on occasions had addressed Swiss gatherings at Red Lion Square. Mr. Meier stressed the fact that the members of the S.M.S. had been privileged to hear Dr. Gooch during a period of years and that his fame as an interpreter of current affairs had been steadily growing. Apart from his addresses to us, the Chairman was pleased to state that Dr. Gooch had just returned from a trip to our country, of which he is an ardent admirer.

Dr. Gooch then rose amidst cordial applause and addressed the meeting. The main points of his speech are given below, he said:

"It is a pleasure to see you again and it does not seem a year since I last stood on this platform. During that time, I regret to say, the European outlook has become darker and darker. Why? The answer is that the antagonism between Russia and the United States is fiercer, the gulf is deeper, and the chances of co-operation seem to grow less from day to day. It is a war without fighting, a war of words, a war of diplomacy. It is a war in every sense except that we are not killing one another. It is an alarming outlook. You may ask: Do I think that another war is imminent, am I expecting it in the next few years? No, I am not. Why, then, should I be alarmed, why should anybody be alarmed? One reason is that, although it may be a comfort to think that war is not coming within the next five years, it is not much comfort if we are to have a war in 10 or 15 years. On the economic side, while everybody is thinking and talking about wars, much more in America than here, this nervous tension renders impossible the stabilisation, political and psychological, which Europe urgently needs in order to restore it to the ways of peace.

I begin my survey with Russia and Eastern Europe. What is she aiming at? We all try to answer this question, but it is only guess-work. The Russian mind differs from ours. I often feel it is easier to understand the mind of a Chinaman than the mind of the men who rule mighty Russia from the Kremlin. They are not aiming at war, for we know how utterly unprepared they are for another conflict, above all industrially. Why then are they carrying on a campaign of hatred and denunciation not so much against England, the British Empire, as against the United States? It is a very difficult question. One answer is, from fear. They are terribly afraid of the political, military and economic power of the United States, which, even more than a year ago, is by far the strongest state in the world, stronger than England, France or Germany ever were, far stronger than Russia is to-day. They are afraid that Americans are plotting against the security of the Soviet Republic. A good deal of Russian policy is to be explained by the simple motive of fear of the harm that America can do them. You can see it in their anxiety when America tries to open up traffic on the lower Danube, pours money and military advisers into Greece, helps Turkey,

and takes increasing interest in the oil supplies of the Middle East. They regard America as a formidable rival and a dangerous foe. The men of Moscow tell their people that they are carrying on a defensive diplomatic war out of fear of America, and have to strengthen Russia by extending her sphere of influence over the whole of Eastern Europe, by locking her back door in North Russia, and by scheming to control the Straits.

Fear is one motive, but there are others. Russia, like most Empires, wants to become ever greater. How often in the course of history has a country increased its territory, population, military and economic power, until like the Empire of Alexander, Rome, Charlemagne, Charles V, Napoleon, and Hitler, the whole thing gets so big, like a balloon with too much gas in it, that it explodes. Russia is still in the condition of Empire-building, and it is not for an Englishman to blame other countries for doing what we did for four hundred years.

We, ourselves, have come to the end of Empire-building, and now we are unbuilding. We are getting rid of India, and shall soon be out of Palestine. The larger part of Ireland is completely independent. When I was young, in the days of Joseph Chamberlain, Rhodes, Curzon, Milner, and Kipling, it was the high tide of British Imperialism. That old spirit of boundless confidence, no burden too heavy for us, is dead, killed by two world wars. We are now like a railway porter, taking some of the luggage off our aching shoulders. Russia, on the contrary, is still expanding. See what is going on in Korea as an example. It is not a very big country, but it has a wonderful strategic position. It is a door to Japan and China. When Japan ceased to fight, Korea was divided, the Russians taking the north and the Americans the south. I think the Russians will keep the northern and the Americans the southern zone as a sphere of influence for many years.

The Russians are not at all satisfied with their relations either with Persia or Turkey. Every year or two they threaten or squeeze Teheran. They have been interested in North Persia for generations because it is the back door of Russia, very close to Baku, the marvellous source of oil on the Caspian, which is as vital as coal to the industries of the Ukraine. I am expecting more trouble between Russia and Persia very soon.

I am more alarmed about Turkey than I ever was about Trieste. Trieste is important as an outpost from the point of view of Moscow, but Constantinople is very close to Russia. I do not wonder that they are dissatisfied with the present status of the Dardanelles. Ever since Catherine the Great brought Russia down to the Black Sea, they have always aimed at the control of Constantinople and the Straits. In 1915, at the crisis of the first World War, England and France agreed by secret treaty that, if we won, Russia should

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be rewarded by receiving Constantinople and control of the Straits. We won, but Russia went out before the end and so the promise did not have to be fulfilled. Naturally the Russian now says, "You were willing to give the old Czardom not merely what we ask to-day, namely a share of control with Turkey, you were willing to give Constantinople itself and entire control of the Straits. You were willing to do infinitely more for the Czardom than for us who are your Allies." She is awaiting her opportunity, and she will raise it when she feels the time has come, perhaps by an ultimatum to Ankara. That is what America is trying to prevent.

There is another country south of Russia — Greece. You have read in this morning's paper the violent attack on the Government of Greece and the friends of Greece, America and ourselves, by the Yugoslav Foreign Minister, because they want Greece to be in the Russian sphere of influence, because he and the Russians feel that as long as Greece is supported by English and American influence, it is an element of danger in case of a military struggle in the Eastern Mediterranean and in the Balkans, and because they feel that American influence in Greece increases the power of Turkey to resist Russian pressure. That is why Russia will never cease to combat British and American policy in Greece. It is from their point of view vital that the whole of Eastern Europe is in the Russian sphere. Finland in the north, Poland and nearly all the Balkan States are already secured. There are only three of her neighbours who are not — Persia, Turkey and Greece, and she will go on trying to get them.

There is growing tension between Russia and the Anglo-American democracies. Everything that comes up in UNO, the admission of new States, or the choice of a Governor for Trieste, or the distribution of Italian Colonies, or the future of Palestine: everything is discussed not on its merits, but from the point of view what part that particular problem plays in the conflict between Moscow and Washington. Someone asked me two years ago what I thought of the prospects of UNO. I replied that if Russia found, or believed herself to find, that it was working against her interests, she would sabotage it and its fate would be the same as of the old League of Nations. This is exactly what she is doing. She has reduced the Security Council, the Executive of UNO to a tragic farce. What has the Security Council achieved so far? Nothing. Has it settled any great issue? No. What is it doing every day? Quarrelling. Is Russia going to remain in UNO, or is she going to walk out? One alternative is as bad as the other. As long as she stays in we can do nothing except quarrel. Would it not then be better if she walks out? It would certainly be better for the harmony of the States who remain and wish it to work. Yet if she walks out, she will not go alone. Her satellites, who all speak the same language and pursue the same policy, would go out automatically. But Finland and Czechoslovakia, who had bought internal independence at the price of complete subservience to Russian guidance in foreign politics, would have to go too. All the world realised the position when England and France issued invitations to Paris to discuss the Marshall offer, and Czechoslovakia accepted. Russia



interposed her veto and she promptly altered the decision. So it would not be UNO any longer, but a group of nations, comprising England and the Dominions, the United States, France, the Scandinavian countries, the South American States and China. Russia would immediately form a rival UNO and we would have two UNO's; but if you have two UNO's you have none. As long as she stays in, she knows she can prevent certain things which she dislikes, and that is a very strong motive for staying.

This division between a Russian and an Anglo-American bloc gets deeper from day to day. And now we have the rehabilitation of the Comintern, the new international organisation of Communist parties with its headquarters at Belgrade, a city which is ideologically and politically as much part of Russia as if it were within her frontiers. Russia and America are fighting with the gloves off. Each is trying to harm the other as much as it can. I know no means of improving the situation, so deep is the suspicion on both sides, so fierce the hostility, so open the conflict of interests and ambitions in the Far East, the Middle East, the Mediterranean, Central Europe, and in the three countries I have mentioned, Persia, Asia Minor and Greece. I am very sorry to speak so pessimistically, but I am certainly not speaking more pessimistically than most highly placed American soldiers and statesmen.

A distinguished Turkish statesman, who has been here recently, expressed the opinion that Russia desired neither war nor peace. She did not desire war, because she would not be ready for it industrially for many years. But equally, in his opinion, she does not desire peace, by which he meant the stabilisation of Europe. She believes that stabilisation would lead to a general improvement in the life and circumstances of the average man in every country of Europe, and that, if things get better with the masses, the chances of Communist influence would diminish, whereas if they get worse, its chances would increase.

Why does Russia say no to almost everything? Why does she say no to the Marshall offer? Why does she not help us to make the Austrian treaty? Why will she not come half way to meet us in the German settlement? One answer is that she thinks time is on her side. She is slowly but surely recovering from the ravages of war, whereas in her opinion the economic situation of America now at its height, is certain to get worse. Better it cannot become, because America is fully employed, production is greater than ever. Moscow believes that America is moving rapidly and inevitably towards a huge economic crash, perhaps as terrible as the great blizzard of 1929, which was by far the worst tornado through which American life has ever passed in time of peace. Therefore, she asks what is the good of trying to settle things now, when "We shall have better cards to play next year, and still better the year after. We shall be in a stronger position to bargain about Austria, Germany, Japan and the Dardanelles, when our economic fortunes are going up and America's are going down."

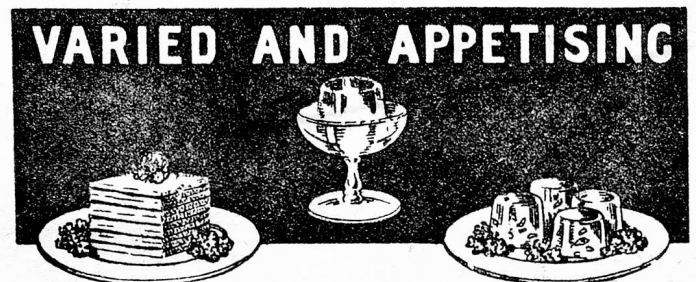
I was interested to read the full report of the interview between Stalin and Stassen, an acknowledged candidate for the Presidency next year. Stalin made it clear that a huge economic disaster is expected to come along in America, and most of the 10 or 12 men who rule Russia, of whom Stalin and Molotov are only

the two best known, doubtless agree with him. She is playing for time. I shall be surprised if Molotov does not play for time when he comes here in November for the next meeting of the four Foreign Ministers, as he did in spring for six weeks in Moscow, when Mr. Bevin came back with empty hands. When he went he said: "I expect at any rate we shall make a treaty with Austria. I do not expect to make a treaty with Germany." The treaty with Austria was discussed but we were no nearer agreement at the end than at the beginning.

Now I must say a word about Germany. According to the Potsdam Agreement there should be an economic and administrative unification of the four zones, Russian, British, American and French, each possessing authority in its own zone but working towards economic co-operation. That has not happened and is unlikely to happen. The only step has been the union of the British and the American zones. When that was made we and America said we should be very glad if our other two partners would come in. Russia will not come in and France so far has also refused. So there is no sign of economic unification.

And what about political administrative unification? It is farther off than ever. Russia has Communised the whole of her zone, which comes up to the Elbe, and a good half of Germany is now for all practical purposes part of Russia and likely to remain so.

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peace treaties and ratified them with five of our late enemies, Finland, Italy, Roumania, Bulgaria and Hungary, and in each case troops are to be withdrawn in three months. One of the reasons why I do not expect an agreed treaty with Germany is that I do not believe that Russia intends to withdraw her troops. And as long as they keep their troops there, we and the Americans will keep ours there too. The Germany that we knew, the strongest military power on earth, has ceased to exist. There is no Germany to-day. There is no capital, no government, no army. There are two Germanies, the Russian and the non-Russian, and neither is or is likely to become self-governing, for no country can be self-governing which is dominated by foreign troops.

I have known Germany since Bismarck's days. I have seen her at the height of her power, a terror to her neighbours. I do not expect to live long enough to see an independent Germany once more, even with reduced territory in the east and in the west. You know the old saying, *ce n'est que le provisoire qui dure*. I cannot see any possibility of reconciliation between the Russian and the Anglo-Saxon bloc. I am not one of those who believe in the possibility or probability of a revolution in Russia which would lead to the overthrow of the Bolshevik régime and its replacement by a Government which would be willing to work with the Anglo-American world within the orbit of UNO.

Now what about France? Before the first World War there were six Great Powers in Europe, England, France, Germany, Austria, Italy and Russia. England is still a Great Power, but she is not so strong as she used to be. Germany has ceased to exist. Austria disappeared for ever in 1918 when the Hapsburg Empire was broken up. Italy was always at the bottom of the list. She no longer counts, for she is desperately struggling to keep alive. And France, look what France was under Richelieu, Louis XIV, Napoleon, Poincaré. Think what she is now. Is she a Great Power in the real meaning of the word? No. She is not a little Power, but she is not a Great Power like the United States is, the British Empire and Russia. Before 1914 there were six Great Powers in Europe, now there are only two, Russia and England with the British Empire at her back. I am not going to say that France will not recover part of her influence; but with her stationary population of 40 millions she is unlikely ever to play again the dominating part in the life of Europe which she did for 300 years.

I will end up with my own country. Mr. Bevin often says: "if we could get more coal out of the ground my task would be easier, the prestige of my country would stand higher. We should be taken more seriously both by our comrades and our rivals in UNO and elsewhere." The economic crisis is hitting us very hard internationally. The Russians seem to consider that we hardly count any more and can be described as a satellite of the United States, politically and financially. Without the devoted loyalty, affection and generosity of our Dominions, we should count even less. We of the old country cannot be thankful enough that the partners in our free Commonwealth want to be with us for better or worse, in peace as in war. It is a great moral support as well as a great political and military aid. Even then, just think of our manpower as compared with Russia and the United States. The white population of the British Commonwealth is now

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70 millions. Russia will very soon be 200 million, and the United States has about 130 million white men. Manpower is not everything, but it is immensely important. I know that China has far more manpower than anybody else, but she does not possess the industrialisation and the up-to-date knowledge which are necessary to make full use of her abundant population. But when you think of the rapid growth of the Russians, 4 millions a year, and compare it with our static population, the balance is moving against us. We are now about one third of Russia and half that of the United States. So I repeat, though still a Great Power, we are not so great as when I was young, in the later days of Queen Victoria and the opening years of the present century.

What have we to do in this country? First to struggle through the economic and financial crisis. What else? Co-operate with the United States as closely as possible. Give all moral and material support we can to France, who is in a far more difficult position than we are. Having helped to create UNO, give it all the backing we can. Try to develop our wonderful overseas Empire, aiding not only our white Dominions but also our Dependencies, helping to develop their resources, as we are now at last doing in a very large way. Work closely with the States of Northern Europe who share our way of life. All those things we are doing, and I feel sure, will continue to do. Our foreign policy really makes itself, for all those maxims are obvious common sense. I did not add — try to co-operate with Russia. I did not say it because we have been trying to do so and have failed. We shall go on trying, but without expecting success.

If I come again next year, we shall know how far my forecast of darkening skies is correct. If it is wrong, I shall be delighted and so will you, so will the world, because this Russo-American antagonism is a *cauchemar*, a nightmare which weighs upon Europe and the world, paralyses business, upsets finance, prevents the bounty of old mother earth being lavished upon hundreds of millions of human beings who want nothing more than to live in peace and happiness."

Dr. Gooch was given a hearty ovation at the conclusion of his address. He answered a number of questions put to him by the audience, who had followed his survey with rapt attention and thus came to a close a most interesting and instructive evening. We hope to have the pleasure of hearing Dr. Gooch again next year.

WB.