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# SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY LTD.

The Swiss Mercantile Society held its Monthly Meeting at Swiss House on Wednesday, June 9th. Mr. A. Steinmann, President of the Society, was in the Chair. He introduced to a very large audience Dr. G. P. Gooch, one of the most eminent historians who has written a great number of books and is Joint Editor of the Contemporary Review. The Chairman said that Dr. Gooch was no newcomer to Swiss House having lectured to the Swiss Colony and the S.M.S. since 1919. As an innovation and an experiment a microphone and loudspeakers were installed which proved a great success and ensured good listening for the audience. Dr. Gooch said:

"My friends, I have come with great pleasure to talk to you about the old subject and yet the story that I have to tell you is like the English weather, sometimes the sun is shining brightly but often there is more cloud than sunshine. Those who heard me last year may ask me a question which I will answer at once: 'Is the situation better or is it worse than a year ago?' In some ways it is better and in some things it is worse, decidedly dangerous and to quote a well known phrase of Lord Cecil three years ago, 'The European situation is critical but not desperate.'"

When you are ill and when you have fever you resort to the clinical thermometer to see the temperature. The higher the temperature the more fever you have and for the health of Europe the thermometer is armaments. The bigger the armaments, the greater the rapidity of the armaments race, the more ill Europe is and as long as the armament race is continuing, indeed accelerating its pace, the more dangerous the European situation becomes. Armaments are the revelation, the embodiment of fear and anxiety as well as of ambitions.

During the last few months we have constantly been told of an improvement. Since about the turn of the year there is less alarm now than there was last autumn at the beginning of the Spanish conflict, with a slight temporary "Entspannung." But the temporary improvement is only on the surface. Far more important is the rapidity with which armaments are being piled up, not only by the countries in Europe but also by the two great powers outside Europe, namely America and Japan.

This is not a very cheerful overture to the talk of to-night, but it is not my fault that the situation is not more cheerful. I am beginning with my talk in the East of Europe, working backwards towards the West, remembering all the time that Europe is one indivisible whole the same as M. Litvinov said that the peace of Europe is an indivisible whole and yet Europe is torn by big differences over frontiers and ideologies. It is one in a geographical sense with a thousand ties, political, economical and cultural. I shall deal with the different parts of Europe one by one during my talk but I want you to think of Europe as a single indivisible whole. Let me first say a few words about Russia, remembering all the time that in speaking to-night I have only time to refer to the international relations of these countries and not to their internal régime.

The thing to remember about Russia is that it needs peace, and the Russians know they need it. Yet they are piling up their armaments and their army is by far the biggest in the world, more than twice the size either of the French army or the new German army as it is growing daily before our eyes and getting bigger every day. The Russian army is by far the biggest in the world with one and a-half million soldiers and an air force which is also by far the biggest in the world. In spite of the fact that it is building armaments on a scale never reached before the war, Russia knows that it needs peace and is not going to make war. Do not make the mistake of dividing the countries into "good boys" and "bad boys;" that would be over-simplifying the issue, but divide them into classes who are satisfied with what they have got and those who are not. Russia is absolutely satisfied with her territorial possessions and she is not going to make war, firstly because she does not want anybody else's territory and an equally important reason is the fear that if she is attacked by Japan, Germany would come in on the flank and if attacked by Germany, Japan would come in on the other flank. Russia will not break the peace. She is arming owing to her fear of a combined attack between Germany and Japan since their treaty for suppression of Communism last autumn. How closely these two countries are collaborating we do not know unless and until somebody tells us whether there are any secret, unpublished articles in the treaty published last August to fight and suppress Communism. It is not very difficult now to remember that Russia needs peace, and she works to keep the peace. She is not going to attack anybody as she has what she wants and needs years and years to develop her state in her own way and with her own peculiar method.

I now come to Poland. Does Poland belong to the satisfied powers? She has all the territory she wants. There may be one or two Poles here or there who might wish a little territory overseas, but there are not very many of them. Poland, broadly speaking, therefore is well satisfied with her territory, with her share of the world, as Russia is. She is not going to make war. She wants peace, needs peace and knows that she needs it. The whole policy is to prevent an outbreak of war into which she might be drawn. She pursues a policy whereby she tries to be on as good terms as she can with Russia and Germany. She does not love either of them very much. Being staunch Catholics, the Poles do not love Russian Bolshevism or German Nazism. The Polish statesmen are determined to keep peace and utterly determined not to attack anybody, therefore wants nobody's possessions and belongs to the satisfied class. I do not for a moment expect Poland or Russia to press the button for war, to throw a lighted match into the barrels of gunpowder. Therefore do not expect trouble to begin in North Eastern Europe.

I now come to deal with the Balkans or South Eastern Europe. The Balkans, where the World War arose, are at the present moment the most stabilised and pacific part of Europe. The outlook has improved since last year. After the war they were divided into these two classes, those who were satisfied and those who were not. The country which was not satisfied was Bulgaria. They were not satisfied and looked with longing eyes to Macedonia. They went into the World War and ever since looked across the frontier with longing eyes and frowning with anger. But their armaments are limited, their finances in confusion and during the last two or three years the Bulgarians have come to the conclusion that it is no use carrying on the feud. Serbia and Yugoslavia would not give up Macedonia. The process of the *détente*, the "Entspannung" and reconciliation was beginning. It took place before the murder of King Alexander at Marseilles. It was the last he did when he went to Sofia to bury the hatchet with King Boris. Through the *détente* between those two countries they have got nearer to one another. In January this year Yugoslavia and Bulgaria made a little treaty of friendship and peace, and a new friendship gradually grows up between Sofia and Belgrade. No mention of Macedonia was made in the Treaty. A willingness on both sides displayed a silent confession that Bulgaria is aiming no longer at the reconquest of Macedonia which is not mentioned in this treaty of peace and non-aggression. The surrender of that claim has made the treaty possible. It ended the quarrel and the face of Balkan politics at last begins to smile. There is no love between these different countries. You will observe a *détente* and no *entente*. Possibly later on if I speak here next year or the year after there may be the beginning of an *entente*. I think the fact that they have gone so far in the stage of the *détente* which has taken place makes us all very glad about it. If I had more time I should like to tell you of two things which happened in the Balkans, the domestic character in relation to foreign politics, the increase of the Iron Guard in Rumania which Fascistic, anti-Semitic and came into power last August, with a Fascist Dictator and all that goes with it, namely the tearing up the constitution, muzzling the Press, opening letters, listening to telephone conversations, filling prisons with critics. I have not time to talk about the internal affairs of these countries but do keep in mind the interest of the growth of pro-German Fascist influences in Greece where they are now in control and in Rumania where some people think they may come into control before very long. There is an interest attaching to the growth of these Fascist pro-German influences and movements which we shall do well to keep in mind.

I have said something on the whole encouraging. I now come to the most disturbed part, namely the centre. When you get to the centre of Europe, I am thinking above all of Germany, Czechoslovakia and Austria, you cannot any longer isolate it from the rest of Europe. When you get to the centre of Europe, just because it is the centre, you have also to think of West, East and South, namely Italy, in bold lines the new political alignments of great powers. I want to remind you that the situation in 1937 is extraordinarily similar to the situation in 1914, which was not the case a year or two ago. One thing leads to another and the Abyssinian war carried with it inevitably the breaking up of the Stresa front, the Anglo-French-Italian diplomatic partnership which had really controlled the larger part of Europe ever since the War. When Mussolini determined to seize Abyssinia as he did determine in 1933 he also determined to smash the Stresa Front, to alienate England and to cool down the relations with France. When Italy went out of the Anglo-French consortium she was for the time alone. The five great powers of Europe are France, Germany, Italy and Russia. When Italy were with Eng-

land and France, Germany and Russia were keeping aloof. Italy could not make friends with Russia owing to her different ideology. Germany and Italy wanted to dominate Austria for a little time. When the Abyssinian campaign was prepared the logic of the situation drove Germany and Italy together. They reached their hands out which are clasped more tightly every day. Some people believe, we do not know, that there is already some written arrangement of a military character. Germany and Italy are standing together, co-operating in Spain and elsewhere, helping one another all they can, commercially, diplomatically and, who knows what the future may have in store, perhaps in the military field. The important change for the life on Central Europe is enormous. Italy has gone right out of the Anglo-French partnership, and now the Berlin-Rome axis! When you have got as far as that you are practically back in 1914, — England, France and Russia in military alliance. So they are to-day. England was not the ally of France in law and in treaty, but in actual practice we were working together, we were allies in everything but name, and so we are to-day; the Triple Entente, England very friendly with France and France allied with Russia. England is not tied to Russia but is connected to Russia by the fact that we are closely allied to France, the East to West line — England, France, Russia as in 1914, and Germany, Austria, Italy in 1914 were in triple alliance. How does the North to South line compare with 1914? It resembles it very closely with one or two important differences. In 1914 Austria-Hungary was a great Empire, the biggest country in Europe after Russia in territory. Germany and Austria, a formidable political and military block with the Triple Alliance, which meant Germany and Austria, and Italy only nominally a partner in that alliance, pledged by her signature. Everybody knew that her heart was elsewhere, in London, Paris and St. Petersburg. In 1914 the Central European block was Germany and the Austrian Empire. Now Austria has gone to pieces. From that point of view Germany is weaker in her Austrian ally in as far as she is an ally. In 1914 Italy was not in the campaign in anything but name. The question you can answer as well as I, has Germany lost more by the dissolution of Austria-Hungary than she has gained by her friendship with Italy? The answer can only come, if it ever comes, in a world war. What are the loss and gain of Berlin? Austria-Hungary was not as strong as it looked. There were millions of Slavs who had no heart in it. It is a very equal question, shall we say fifty-fifty. If Germany has lost by the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire it has also gained by the fact that Italy is not only in name, but in reality in her camp. Mussolini speaks with truth of the Berlin-Rome axis. Little Austria up to the Austria-Germanic political declaration last July kept Berlin and Rome apart and does so no longer because Hitler, in order to obtain the friendship and diplomatic support of Mussolini has for the time being abandoned his campaign for the Nazification, for the establishment of a Nazi government in Vienna. He has made the sacrifice in order to obtain the friendship of Italy which is a great power. This has created a new political map. Until a year or two ago Europe was run and ruled by England, France and Italy. Russia did not come into the game. Germany did not come into the game either because it was too weak. That Europe is absolutely gone. Five great powers are now equally important from the point of view of shaping the destinies of our Continent. The coming back into the game of Germany and Russia has changed Europe. Russia came back because she thought Germany and Japan might attack her, hence her military alliances with France and Czechoslovakia. Her return strengthened the Anglo-French group. Against that must be set the return of Germany into the game which diminishes the power of the Anglo-French group. Italy, who had for three years been absolutely alone, is no longer alone. A triple entente, a triple alliance, England-France-Russia, Germany and Italy, Austria and Hungary with them forming part of the Rome-Berlin axis, tied closely to Italy by the Rome Protocols.

Where do these two lines meet and cut? Czechoslovakia is a little island. Not only a little island of democracy but a little island in this great Rome-Berlin stream, a very uncomfortable position in the centre of Europe, a geographical centre of storm here and now. Until three years ago I used to say that the most dangerous part of Europe is the Polish Corridor at the mouth of the Vistula and now since Hitler and Pilsudski signed the famous 10 years' pact of peace and non-aggression, that moment the electric current was turned off and peace has reigned as between Germany and Poland as regards the Corridor and reigns to-day. This pressure of danger increased in the South of Germany, Hitler sacrificed for ten years any ambition he may have had in the East in order to free his aims for any ambitions he has on the southern frontier, namely Czechoslovakia and Austria. The danger switches over from the Corridor to,

Prague. Those two lines from East to West and North to South cross there. If war comes within the next year or two it will be fought out over the isolated position of Czechoslovakia which has six hundred miles of common frontier with Germany, far too long, far too expensive and far too hilly and mountainous to fortify. I know that frontier. It runs along the crest of Saxon mountains. You have often to ask on which side of the frontier am I. You cannot fortify that frontier, the enormous German-Bohemian frontier. In the north of Czechoslovakia live 3,500,000 Germans. 2,500,000 at the last election voted for *Henlein*?, for the German minority in the Prague Government last February. The Prague Government with a Czechoslovakian majority made certain concessions which should have been made long before. How crazy it was not to give in to them before *Henlein* (*Hähnlein*) emerged and won two thirds of the German vote! How crazy it was not to satisfy the two and a half million who had lost faith in the Czechoslovak Majority Government, before *Hähnlein*? had to look to Berlin as their salvation, before they had begun, as their critics say, to take money from Germany for their propaganda. A great opportunity was lost when a large part, more than half, was allowed to get more and more discontented, not so much for political reasons as for a fair share of governmental assistance for the terrible economic suffering from unemployment, which, as we all know, tormented Europe and particularly Central Europe, ever since the American blizzard burst upon us in 1930. Well now there is Prague. Keep your eyes on Prague. When last I spoke I said keep your eyes on Danzig. Now I say keep your eyes on Prague, at the hub of the London-Paris-Moscow axis and the Berlin-Rome axis.

(To be continued).

#### A STROLL THROUGH THREE CANTONS.

(Continued).

Below the Croix de Cœur the path winds down through the delicate green of larch forests, flecked with white and mauve hepaticas, and fragrant with wintergreen. Down, down you plunge, slaking your thirst with heady yellow wine at La Tschuma, until you cross a bridge and climb up to the curious little village of Iséables. There is no accommodation of any sort here for the traveller, so you can only linger in the narrow street which leads so unexpectedly under the church, wondering how the huddled chalets manage to stand on each others' shoulders on the perpendicular side of the mountain.

A mule-track cut in the rock round the Bec de Nendaz, 3,000 feet above the Rhône, takes you to Haute Nendaz, one of the most primitive of Valaisan villages. It is as well to sleep here, for the tiny hotel is clean and comfortable. The postal car goes down to Sion, and the train will take you to Ardon, and then your feet lead you into totally new country, changing in character every mile, from the burning vineyards above Ardon until you penetrate deep into the unutterably wild Val de Triquent.

You will need a stout heart and comfortable boots as you skirt round the foot of the soaring Haut de Cry. For the narrow path grows narrower as it leads up into the gorge. Sometimes it sideslips a little towards the milky waters of the Lizerne churning over the boulders below; sometimes it disappears altogether, and a hair-raising corner is simply spanned by a few planks.

A full rucksack is a necessity, for there is no inn in all the length of the valley, hardly a habitation, only sighing pines, and rocks — more rocks than you have ever seen, too many to be true, lying about everywhere, all shapes and all sizes. The path threads its way between them until you emerge at last on to the amphitheatre of Derborence, frowned upon by the great massif of the Diablerets, with the Zanfleuron Glacier hanging like lace round the battlements of St. Martin's Tower. For grandeur and desolation, Derborence is hard to beat.

Two hundred years ago, Derborence was a fertile pasture, dotted with chalets and musical with cow-bells. In June of 1749 the demons of Les Diablerets fought a pitched battle on the heights, so runs the legend, one faction struggling to push the mountain over on the Valais side, the other fighting to topple it on to Berne. After terrible detonations and convulsions, millions of tons of rock split off the cliffs of the Diablerets, and crashed on to the pasture, burying chalets, cowmen and cattle in a gigantic cemetery. The Lizerne was dammed by great blocks of stone, and a deep blue lake now fills the lower pasture. There is a tiny inn on the edge of the lake, kept by a very old lady and her daughter. They will invite you to sit with them round the kitchen fire, and will tell you eerie tales of the old days when the devils played battledore and shuttlecock with the mountains, until you are thankful to burrow into a snug nest in the hayloft, and pull the blankets up about your ears.

The most interesting of the surrounding peaks are inaccessible from Derborence, so if you want to climb you must push on over the Pas de Cheville into the canton of Vaud, as far as Anzeindaz, and engage a guide. Several very pleasant days can be spent at Anzeindaz, scrambling over the Diablerets (when the devils are in a quiet mood!), the Roc d'Enfer, and the Oldenhorn.

When you have exhausted the possibilities of this lovely district, the way into the canton of Berne lies over the Zanfleuron Glacier on to the Sanetsch Pass. Zanfleuron is patois for Flowery Field, and, as soon as the snow ends, the curious volcanic rock, which seems to have been poured down the slope, is studded with countless violas and brilliant with crimson house-leek.

The Sanetsch is the Pass which links Valais, with Berne, and you must follow its lonely windings for four hours, until you zigzag down at last to the hearty welcome of Gsteig.

Here everything is utterly different, smug almost, in contrast to the lovely desolation you have come through. The famous Bernese chalets are decked out in all their summer finery of geraniums, and the fountain in the village square wears a hat of Reckitt's blue lobelias. A broad highroad leads to Gstaad and civilisation, and the Spitzhorn suns his huge shoulders behind you.

After Gsteig, cross the beautiful verdant Krinnen Pass to Lauenen. Do not stop here too long, fascinating as this little doll's house village is. For you must sleep the night at the Gelenhütte, if you want the Wildhorn to shine as yet another jewel in your climber's crown. It is a four and a half hours' walk past the Lauenen Lake, and the 'ladders' are uncomfortable after nightfall. Your guide, and the cow-bells, will wake you at three o'clock in the morning, and three hours afterwards, the worst of the glacier work over, you will be sunning yourself on that wonderful Col du Brotz, with its great rocky window giving on to the giants of Valais. Two hours up a snow slope brings you to the summit.

You are on the last lap now, after a night spent at the Wildhorn Hütte, dropping down from your eagle's eyrie to the lovely Iffigenthal, with its romantic lake. You can take the Iffigenhorn in your stride, and sleep at Iffigen. There are many walks from here, to Zufuchthütte, the Mittaghorn, Rothorn, and the five lovely lakes of the Rawil Pass.

If your holiday is over now, you can sleep at Siebenbrunnen, near Lenk and the Montreux-Oberland-Bernois Railway, but if you still have time to spare, the Wildstrubel will surely tempt you with its hanging glaciers, or the Fluhseeli, which mirrors the Laufboden Horn in its ice-cold depths.

Jocelyn Saunders Davies.

(In "The Lady.")

#### MISCELLANEOUS ADVERTISEMENTS

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#### FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

April 22nd — June 20th — The Swiss Exhibition — at Union House, Lower Regent Street, S.W.1. Open 10.30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday to Friday inclusive. Saturday 10.30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Admission free.

June — Nouvelle Société Helvétique — No Meeting.

July 19th-31st — Haslemere Festival — under the direction of Arnold Dolmetsch, at the Haslemere Hall — Haslemere (Surrey.)

Wednesday, August 4th, at 7.30 p.m. — Société de Secours Mutuels — Monthly Meeting, at 74, Charlotte Street, W.1.

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#### SCHWEIZERKIRCHE

(Deutschsprachige Gemeinde).

St. Anne's Church, 9, Gresham Street, E.C.2.

(near General Post Office.)

Sonntag, den 20. Juni 1937.

11 Uhr morgens, Gottesdienst und Sonntagsschule.

7 Uhr abends, Gottesdienst.

Anfragen wegen Religions-bezw. Confirmandenstunden und Amtshandlungen sind erbeten an den Pfarrer der Gemeinde: C. Th. Hahn, 43, Priory Road, Bedford Park, W.4 (Telephone: Chiswick 4156). Sprechstunden: Dienstag 12-2 Uhr in der Kirche.