

**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:** - (1939)  
**Heft:** 910  
  
**Artikel:** Switzerland in the European crisis  
**Autor:** [s.n.]  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-691319>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. 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. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **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. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **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. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 17.02.2026

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

## SWITZERLAND IN THE EUROPEAN CRISIS.

The disappearance, or to give it the proper name, the rape of Czecho-Slovakia has deeply stirred our people at home.

Although genuine sympathy was felt for a young nation, which was overrun by a mighty neighbour, — in spite of the previous assurances given, — public opinion felt that Czecho-Slovakia ought to have resisted invasion in the hour when its very existence was at stake. —

There is not the remotest doubt in my mind, that Switzerland will fight, whenever and by whomever her liberty, integrity and independence is challenged.

Switzerland does not own her independence to any green table conference, but to many hard fought battles. Our ancestors have at no time refused to fight when their liberties and their rights were threatened or violated.

And as it was centuries ago, so it will be to-day, our present generation will fight when attacked. We are a peace loving nation, but the arms with which we so ardently practice throughout the year will not be laid down in the case of a threat or an invasion. We shall use these arms in order to defend ourselves, without asking from which side the attack is coming, or who will be the aggressor.

We have not only to defend the independence of our beautiful country, but also the liberties and the rights of our population, ideals which are well worth fighting for and even dying for.

The Swiss have been for centuries the first soldiers in Europe, they have shown their worth on all the battle fields of this continent. As in the past so also to-day they would fight an aggressor to the last. A nation, which lays down its arms without a fight, when her independence is at stake, will find no friends.

Wrecked cities and devastated villages can be rebuilt, but not lost liberties nor a lost fatherland. History has proved over and over again, that a nation, which has not the courage to sacrifice the life of its citizens for its most sacred inheritance, and lays down its arms in a panicky despair, will cease to exist for ever. Our own history has taught us this. True enough the old Confederation in its internal strife and disagreements broke down over 100 years ago. But in the battles of Neuenegg, at Grauholz, Schindellegi, Rothenturm and in Nidwalden our national honour was saved and restored. Through the blood which has been shed on these battlefields, through defeat and through its sufferings our country has awakened to a new national life, and has become a united and strong state.

We Swiss not only *will* but *can* defend our country; in spite of our smallness we are strong if we take advantage of our natural fortifications, and if we know how to put at the disposal of our defence the great spiritual, financial and economic forces. We have every reason to have confidence in our military preparedness. Even admitted that we are in the middle of rearmament, Switzerland can to-day not be simply overrun even by a strongly superior aggressor. It should not be forgotten, that owing to the grouping of belligerent nations in a possible war, an aggressor can only use one part of his forces against us, whilst its main forces will be massed on other fronts. —

Much is still to be done, but this is also the case with our neighbours. News regarding stupendous forces by certain nations must be treated with suspicion, they are mostly propagated in order to frighten other countries.

With confidence in our own strength, we can look calmly into the future, recent precautions and measures have proved, that our military authorities are well awake.

The development of the international situation, however, makes it imperative, that we use all our energy in order to hasten and to strengthen the defence of our country. Weaknesses in several branches of our defence should be remedied with greater speed. The erection of new frontier fortifications, the building of Alpine roads and improvements in railway communications can brook no delay.

Special attention must be paid to our Air Defence and to the building of aeroplanes, these are the weakest points in our military organisations.

Great efforts are made at present in Switzerland to overcome these deficiencies, and I have no doubt, that, if time will be our ally, we shall become masters of the situation.

Whatever fate has in store for our own country, and we may pray in all earnestness that the horror of war will not be inflicted on it, nor on any other nation, this one thing is certain, that Switzerland will fight to the bitter end, with courage and determination to defend, and hold

# ★ SWISS NATIONAL EXHIBITION

## ZURICH

MAY 6—

OCT. 29, 1939

ASK FOR THE ILLUSTRATED

SWISS NATIONAL EXHIBITION FOLDER

INFORMATION from the Swiss Railways & State Travel Bureau,  
11-B Regent Street, London, S.W.1. 'Phone: WHitehall 9851.

what our forefathers have left to us in sacred trust; let there be no doubt about this, and when the time should come, may God grant us strength to fight the biggest and sturdiest battle in the history of our beloved land.

ST.

## DR. A. LATT IN LONDON.

Visits of prominent people from our home country are of a rare occurrence, and it is to be regretted, that the importance of such visits to the various Swiss Colonies abroad, has not yet been realised at home.

Whilst some of our sister colonies are frequently visited, either by the head of their respective countries or by important politicians, industrialists, professors, etc., we, once in a blue moon, have one of our "big noises" pay us a flying visit, and they seem to be in such a hurry to return "back home," that often the Colony has no opportunity to get in touch with them.

Numerous attempts have been made especially by the City Swiss Club, to induce members, either of the Federal or Cantonal governments, to pay us an occasional visit, in order to give us first hand information about the happenings and doings at home, but, — alas — all in vain.

The visit of Dr. Latt, President of the "Auslandschweizer Kommission" has been therefore greatly appreciated, he is, of course, an old and faithful friend of the Colony, and the many services he had rendered and is still rendering to the N.S.H. and our country during his *sejour* in London, some 22 years ago, have not been forgotten.

A reception and little dinner Party was held at the Hotel Foyer Suisse, which was attended by over fifty members of the Colony and personal friends of Dr. Latt.

This party was followed by a lecture given at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. (small Hall) and was attended by about 150 of our countrymen. Monsieur C. R. Paravicini, the Swiss Minister, was in the Chair, Messieurs Girardet and de Rham, of the Swiss Legation, were present and a large number of well-known personalities in the Colony attended, amongst them Messrs. Walser, Wuthrich, Gattiker, L. Chapuis, Sommer, Pfander, Sigerist, Deutsch, Bessire, Beyli, Prader, Beckmann, Joss, Boos, Zimmermann, Gambazzi, etc., etc.

The Swiss Press attended in *corpore*, viz.: Dr. Kessler (Neue Zürcher Zeitung); Dr. Egli, (Bund); M. G. Keller (Basler Nachrichten and Schweiz. Depesch Agentur); Mlle. Du Bois (La Suisse); and M. Stauffer (Swiss Observer).

M. A. F. Suter, President of the Nouvelle Société Helvétique (London Group) on behalf of the Society paid a cordial welcome to Dr. Latt, Monsieur Paravicini, later on associated himself with the tribute paid to the lecturer.

We hope to be able to publish the excellent lecture, entitled "Switzerland and the present European Crisis" in a subsequent issue of this paper, for the benefit of those who were unable to be present.

The N.S.H. is to be thanked for having given the Colony an opportunity to hear Dr. Latt, whom we wish to congratulate on having given us a most competent *compte-rendue* about a subject which is very much in everybody's mind just now.

The lecture was followed by a very interesting general discussion.

## THE VISIT OF DR. A. LATT TO LIVERPOOL.

True to his time table Dr. Latt reached Liverpool on the 18th instant and arrived early enough for us to show him some of the sights of Liverpool, such as the noble Anglican Cathedral,

which is likely to be the outstanding architectural achievement of our time.

As the day was fine, we also made a crossing of the Mersey a sight familiar to him from former visits 22 years ago, but an experience to be repeated, for its never failing interest. He saw the funnels of the new Mauretania in the dock at Birkenhead belching out smoke a sure sign that she will shortly be ready for her trials.

The Swiss Club had arranged a modest dinner at Reece's Bank Café in the evening and there he met some old friends and many new ones to whom he gave an address dealing especially with the implications of Swiss Neutrality and providing us all with the possibility of meeting criticism of the type of "he who is not for us is against us" so apt to be the prevailing mood in times of stress. We all feel grateful to him for the trouble he has taken to visit us.

Amongst the 37 people present were a number of our girls who delighted us when they sang Swiss songs in their vigorous fresh voices.

Mr. and Mrs. Davidson were there but Mrs. Macquarie was absent owing to an unfortunate accident which kept her in bed. — But she was determined to be Dr. Latt's hostess and so he saw her later in her home. Indeed it would have been disappointing if Dr. Latt had not seen both our ladies who look after the girls in such an admirable way.

I think Dr. Latt can have no doubt of the pleasure his visit has been to us.

E.M.

## THE MEANING OF DEMOCRACY.

REGINALD LENNARD,

Fellow of Wadham College, Oxford.

(The Hibbert Journal.)

The dictators of Germany and Italy, in expressing their scorn of Democracy, commonly speak of the "Democracies of the West." And in considering the meaning of Democracy we may take as a starting-point those words of Lincoln which have long been employed as a brief description of it among the English-speaking peoples. Democracy, we say, is "Government of the People, by the People, for the People." An old phrase, battered by careless use; but there is more in it than appears at first sight. *Es ist eine alte Geschichte, doch bleibt sie immer neu.* And the first thought which the old phrase suggests, when we turn to it in the present discontents, is the significance of its emphasis upon the "People." In the ideal of Democracy those subject to the law of a State are a People — one People — and they must be treated as such. Slavery is incompatible with Democracy; and the principles of Democracy are violated if the State treats as aliens or outcasts any class of persons from whom it exacts obedience. Against the principles of the totalitarian states and their persecution of Jews and Communists and Christians, Democracy sets a spirit of toleration. Government by the People means that the will of the majority must prevail; but it means also that that will should be conditioned by fellow-feeling for all minorities, by recognition of the fact that they too are a part of the People, by the "political sense" which refrains from outraging them or destroying their will to remain loyal fellow-citizens of the majority. Not all who profess and call themselves democrats appreciate all that this implies. For it implies that all class-war is undemocratic, whether the class assailed is large or small, and whether its members be Jews or Gentiles, rich or poor. And it implies not only that all minorities should be treated as part of the People, but also that it is their duty to behave as such, and not cling to privileges which mark them off from their fellows, nor let clanishness grow stronger than good citizenship. If class-war is a contradiction of Democracy, it is none the less true that Democracy is favourable to the social progress which leads towards a classless society.