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SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

The Society celebrated its 55th anniversary at the Dorchester Hotel, Park Lane, on Saturday, October 9th.

Over 170 members and friends were present at the luncheon which was served in the ball room. It was a truly representative gathering whom the President welcomed after the usual loyal toasts.

He addressed the meeting in the following terms :
" Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Council and the Committee of the S.M.S. I bid you all a hearty welcome to to-day's function.

First of all, I regret the unavoidable absence of the Swiss Minister, who, in a letter to me, has sent the best wishes for the gathering to-day and for the future well-being of the S.M.S. He has delegated M. Girardet to represent him. To you, M. Girardet, I extend a special welcome and congratulate you on behalf of the S.M.S. on your high appointment and we all wish you every success in your most difficult task.

Welcome too to M. Preiswerk, Head of the Special Division. You have shown frequently your interest in the affairs of the S.M.S. and just recently in a very tangible way. Your task is also a difficult one and we wish you every success.

Equal hearty welcome to you, M. de Graffenried, our Commercial Attaché. You have been here a very short time, but the S.M.S. owes you special thanks, seeing that you have agreed to be our " Godfather," and we shall certainly look to you in good times and whenever we are in trouble or need.

To you, Dr. Gooch, I also extend a special welcome. You too are no stranger amongst us and I am glad that we are able to offer you to-day a better venue than the dreary walls of Swiss House — our keenness of hearing you is, however, just the same.

Welcome too to the Heads of the Churches and to the Presidents and representatives of our Swiss Societies with whom we maintain closest friendship and patriotic ties. There are with us to-day :—

Colonel A. Bon — City Swiss Club and Swiss Benevolent Society;

Mr. G. Keller — Nouvelle Société Helvétique and Swiss Press;

Mr. F. G. Sommer — Swiss Choral Society;

Mr. P. E. Dick — Swiss Orchestral Society;

Mr. P. F. Boehringer — London Swiss Philatelic Society;

Mr. C. Berti — Unione Ticinese;

Pasteur Pradervand and Father Lanfranchi representing the Churches.

Lastly welcome to all the members and friends of the S.M.S. who have answered our invitation. The Committee felt that the time was not suitable for the usual peace-time annual banquet and ball, and yet we could not let the 55th anniversary pass without some celebration.

I hope that you all have enjoyed the lunch, but the " dessert," Dr. Gooch's lecture, is to follow and I know is looked forward to by all with great interest.

We greatly miss to-day a delegation from our Headquarters and direct contact with our friends at home; the letters we receive are few and the most news we get is from the " Kaufm. Zentralblatt." I am expressing your sentiments, however, when I say that the London Section is and will always be an active and

true member of the great S.K.V. family. The latest information from Switzerland which will interest you no doubt, and which shows how keen the young people are to perfect their English, is that the fifth English course of four months' duration has just been started at Froburg. Professor Rappard, well known to most of us, gave, in perfect English it is said, a talk on the future prospects of young Swiss going to England and the Colonies after the war.

To-morrow it will be exactly 55 years since the London Section of the S.M.S. was founded and with your permission, Dr. Gooch, I will first and briefly deal with S.M.S. matters.

I can be brief because most of you have a copy of the " Souvenir of the 50th Anniversary Celebrations," so well presented by our Secretary five years ago, and I need therefore only recall some of the outstanding events of the last five years.

The great support the S.M.S. had for its Golden Jubilee both from our friends here and our friends and authorities at home, the hope that appeasement in the political and economic world would succeed in maintaining peace, lead many of us to believe that great times were ahead of us, particularly as regards Swiss House and our Day-School.

Although war clouds arose early in 1939, the attendance at our College and new enrolments were up to average.

When danger became real in early August 1939, on the advice of the Swiss Legation the young lady students were conveyed home, and on the outbreak of war, Swiss House, instead of a College, became a centre of activities for the mobilisation of our soldiers and the repatriation of some of our compatriots.

Most of the teachers left our employ by the end of September, but it was not till the middle of November 1939 that the College closed its doors.

In June 1940, new life came to Swiss House. On the suggestion of the Swiss Minister and with the help of generous donors here and our authorities at home, a relief centre was formed, which came very handy when the convoy of would-be home-goers was put off and Swiss House had to house so many stranded Swiss.

The home that should have given shelter to refugees, alas, received nearly a direct hit itself on the night of September 16th, 1940, the 30 occupants almost miraculously escaping harm. Later raids added to the damage and had it not been for the ever vigilant caretaker, Bossert, Swiss House might to-day be but a burnt out shell.

Since March 1942, under a short new agreement, we have been holding No. 35 only. The most essential repair work was completed a few months ago; there is sufficient accommodation for all our activities and those of our affiliated societies and the rooms and offices are ready to start, if perhaps on a small scale, our Day College, once peace reigns again.

But whilst our College is at present *non est*, the activities of the Section have, I am glad to say, increased. Our membership has been maintained, in fact even slightly increased, and we have to-day 24 Honorary Members, 60 Contributing Members and Firms, and 248 Active Members (12 Ladies and 236 Gentlemen). In a small way we have thus helped our Mother Society in Switzerland to reach the fine total of 50,000 members, which figure includes the Junior members.

We have in the past years had excellent meetings with our diplomatic representatives. In May 1940 we

welcomed our new Minister and M. Preiswerk and showed them in words and pictures our activities. M. de Graffenried early this year made his *début* in the Swiss Colony in the circle of the S.M.S. We have always been able to count on the co-operation of our Legation and shall need to do so perhaps even more in the future.

We have had excellent lectures by eminent people, such as Dr. Gooch, Major Cripps, Mr. Gottfried Keller and others. We have also had film shows and social gatherings, thus maintaining interest and friendship amongst our members.

Discussions amongst our members on topical subjects have recently been started; "Target for World Trade," "Beveridge Plan," etc., have been discussed and other subjects, such as "The Keynes Plan," are already earmarked for the near future.

The S.M.S. has taken a leading part in the organisation and in the support of the many Swiss functions held in the Colony in the past years and thus done its share in fostering a patriotic spirit amongst its members.

We, of course, like all the other Swiss Societies, miss the arrival of young blood, even if we have an excellent young circle as table No. 1 shows, but it is gratifying to see how almost all of our veteran members maintain their support. We have to-day with us Mr. E. Gattiker, who has been a member since 1895; Mr. G. E. De Brunner, Hon. Trustee and Past President, who has been a member since 1897 and given of his best to the S.M.S. during long years; Mr. Louis Chapuis, member since 1898; we have further with us several other past presidents, namely Mr. P. F. Boehringer, who was President in 1901; Mr. H. Ungricht, who presided over the Society in 1910; Mr. A. Stauffer, who was President just 25 years ago. Unfortunately Mr. A. C. Stahelin, who has perhaps put in more of his time for the S.M.S. than anyone else and who richly deserved the great honour bestowed on him by the Zentralverein in making him the only Honorary Member of a section abroad, is prevented from being with us this afternoon. Amongst those present is Mr. A. Steinmann, who guided the S.M.S. during five long years.

I must not forget Mr. J. J. Pfaendler, who has been connected with the Employment Department for just on 35 years and who for many years was the S.M.S. impersonated.

We have also with us many members of Council and Committees past and present, who for years have given of their best in the interest of the S.M.S.. Time does not permit to name them all.

Let me also mention Mr. J. J. Schneider and Mr. W. Burren, who still give a good part of their time to the work and in the interest of their former employer.

To all of you, members and friends of the S.M.S., many thanks for your loyal and continued support.

This year has seen the 25th anniversary of feminine emancipation in the S.M.S. We have had lady members for over 20 years, but few have ventured out into Committees. We have, however, two exceptions whom I would specially mention, namely firstly:

Mrs. Lunghi-Rezzonico, who for many years acted as Godmother to our young Swiss girls. To-day she occupies a place of honour because she celebrates her Golden Wedding day.

On behalf of all, I offer her and her family God's blessings and all best wishes. May I now read out a

Sonnet which has been affectionately dedicated to Mr. and Mrs. Lunghi by Gallus (Mr. W. Deutsch, who incidentally, celebrated yesterday his 30th wedding anniversary):—

These golden hours of a golden day
Are the Almighty's bounteous gift to you;
He blessed your home and hearth these long years
through...

You shared life's joys and sorrows on the way.

Your love has blossomed like a tree in May,
On which new love and new affections grew;
Your children and your children's children, too,
Owe you a debt they never can repay.

And, in the background stand a host of friends,
Devoted by the lead you always gave,
Proud of the high example you have set
On what true happiness in life depends.

Let our pray'r, by which we humbly crave,
Be that, for long, you may be spared us yet!

Further, we have Mrs. G. Jenne, who stepped into the breach when Mrs. Lunghi resigned. Mrs. Jenne too celebrates, it is her birthday, which I am not allowed to say. To you, Mrs. Jenne, many, many happy returns.

What of the future?

Plans are being prepared here and at home to bring new life into our colonies abroad when this terrible war is over. There is, as you are aware, a Council for the Study of Swiss Problems in being, which is giving all matters urgent consideration and we must all hope that their labours, with the goodwill of the Authorities here and the help of our Government at home, will bring the desired results.

The S.M.S. will do what it can, but, Ladies and Gentlemen, until and when better times arrive, I look to you, the members and friends of the S.M.S., to give us the necessary support. Let us keep the ship that sailed for 55 years afloat and steady now and when peace reigns again.

May I in concluding ask you to drink with me to the 55th anniversary and further well-being of the S.M.S., coupling it with the name of Mr. De Brunner, our Trustee and Veteran, who will say a few words in reply."

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Rev. A. LANFRANCHI,
16, Abingdon Road, W.8.

Prolonged acclamation followed the President's address, and Mr. G. E. De Brunner then rose to respond on behalf of the Veteran Members.

He congratulated the President and the Society on the splendid success of the gathering and in a witty after-dinner speech recalled some of the earlier history of the S.M.S. He related how the Society had been nurtured from a sapling into a sturdy tree, which had weathered many a storm. He further chronicled some of the outstanding events and achievements of the Society, with which he has been so actively connected for the best part of its existence.

In conclusion, Mr. De Brunner exhorted all present to give the Society their continued active support for its future welfare and prosperity.

Mr. De Brunner's words were cordially cheered and the Chairman then called on Dr. G. P. Gooch, Companion of Honour, the eminent historian, who addressed the meeting on

WORLD OUTLOOK.

Mr. Boos expressed the Society's gratitude to Dr. Gooch for having once again consented to lecture to the Society. He said that the lecturer was no stranger to the members, having addressed them on many previous occasions.

In his opening remarks Dr. Gooch paid tribute to our country, recalling that some twenty years ago, Lord Bryce, the great historian, in his famous volumes on "Modern Democracy" ranked Switzerland first in his review of the leading democracies of the world. What was true then was true now. He believed that our little country, great in quality if not in size, had come nearest to the solution of the main problem of government, — the art of different nationalities, speaking different languages, all living happily and harmoniously together, all equally loyal to their common fatherland. Switzerland had been spared the horrors of war, but that did not mean that she had not acute anxieties. Owing to her neutral position she had been able to carry out those admirable activities which meant so much to all belligerents. In the sphere of human service Switzerland had never failed.

Dr. Gooch then went on: "I wish to speak to you to-day on a subject which concerns us all, whether belligerent or neutral, the coming settlement. I speak entirely for myself, and what I say does not commit the Swiss Mercantile Society. I am going to tell you frankly what I think is likely to happen when the war has been won by the Allies, as we in England confidently expect it will be. We shall then be faced with the difficult and responsible task of drawing the new frontiers of the world, attempting to bind up the wounds of war and to create a better world. I look forward to it with natural apprehension but also with some confidence. When we had a similar opportunity 25 years ago we made some terrible mistakes, I hope and believe that we shall avoid them, at least the worst of them, when a second chance presents itself of re-

drawing the frontiers and rearranging the relations of the different States of Europe."

"I shall start in the east because it is in Eastern and Central Europe that most of the problems will have to be solved and the greatest difficulties are to be found. Territorial changes in the west will be extremely few, whereas in East and Central Europe they will probably be numerous." Beginning with Russia, Dr. Gooch said that whereas after the last war she was conspicuous of her absence, this time, owing to her sufferings and her marvellous achievements, she would play a deciding part in all territorial arrangements of Eastern Europe. What was she likely to do with her tremendous power at the moment of victory? In Finland she would probably return to the frontier as it existed when the Finnish-Russian war came to an end in the spring of 1940, which, she felt, was necessary for her strategic safety. But he thought there would be a change in another aspect of Finnish-Russian relations in view of Finland's decision to join Germany in her attack on Russia in 1941. Russia would insist on two things, firstly a close supervision of Finland's armaments, secondly the installation and maintenance at Helsinki of a government which was not likely to become hostile to the Soviet Union.

As regards Poland, Russia would not be content to return to the frontier as it existed at the beginning of the war. She had always felt that since the Treaty of Riga after the Polish-Russian conflict of 1920, and indeed since the Treaty of Versailles, the eastern frontier of Poland had extended too far into the heart of Russia. When the Poles and the Russians signed their treaty two years ago, which gave great pleasure in England, no reference was made to the future demarcation of the frontier. That was not because Poland did not ask for the recognition of her frontiers of 1939. She did, but her request was refused. Three members of the Sikorski Cabinet resigned on the ground that Russia declined to promise the return of the territory she occupied in 1939. Dr. Gooch said he could fully understand the bitterness among his Polish friends in contemplating the loss of a substantial slice of their eastern territory, perhaps including Vilna in the north, the old capital of Lithuania and birth-place of Marshal Pilsudski, and Lemberg in the South. But the change will not be merely territorial. As in the case of Finland, it will doubtless extend to the field of politics. Whatever Government is installed in Warsaw will have to be such as is not likely to become hostile to the Soviet Union.

The lecturer then referred to the three little Baltic States; Estonia, with its capital at Reval, Latvia, with its capital at Riga, and Lithuania with its capital at Kovno. They were part of Russia before the first world war and were rearranged by her shortly before the second. They would remain parts of Russia, who feels that those States, occupying an extremely important strategic position in the Baltic and the Gulf of Finland, cannot be safely left outside her frontiers.

There was one more country which was a neighbour of Russia, namely Roumania. Everyone knew what was going to happen there. Russia would once again take Bessarabia, that little province at the north west corner of the Black Sea between the Pruth and the Dniester. Bessarabia was in Eastern Europe what Alsace-Lorraine had long been in Western Europe, the prize of victory, passing backwards and forwards half a dozen times as the fortunes of war ebbed and flowed

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Turkey, although a very important neighbour of Russia, would not come into the picture unless she came into the war.

Passing to the Balkan States, which had played an important part in this great struggle and might be called upon to play a still more important one, he believed that territorial changes would be small. He had already mentioned the inevitable loss of Bessarabia to Russia. The fate of Transylvania now divided between Roumania and Hungary, was uncertain, for both claimed the whole province. Bulgaria would also be on the losing side, but he did not think she would have to sacrifice any territory. That did not mean that he approved of her action in aiding Germany in her attack on Greece, and she would have to provide such compensation as she could. Yugoslavia possessed all she wanted in 1939 and would recover her old frontiers; he would be surprised if she asked for more. Little Albania, which was attacked by Italy on Good Friday, 1939, would also be content with her old territory.

In regard to Greece an important change would be made, but not on the mainland. The Dodecanese, that little group of islands at the south west corner of Asia Minor of which Rhodes was the chief, belonged to Turkey until the Tripoli war of 1911-1912, and were then taken by Italy, who had kept them ever since. What was the population? Neither Turkish nor Italian, but almost entirely Greek. The Greeks wanted those islands, and so far as he knew the inhabitants wished them to be part of Greece, which he thought they would be when the war was won. One more change of the Greek frontier was possible but not probable. There was an old controversy between the Albanians and the Greeks as to who ought to have the frontier districts in the South of Albania, where the population was mixed. His own feeling was that when Greece obtained the Dodecanese she should not press her claims against the very small territory of the Albanian State.

Dr. Gooch then returned to Poland, approaching it from the other side. Assuming that she would lose a considerable slice of her eastern frontier to Russia, there was a probability, many people would say a certainty, that she would obtain substantial territorial and economic compensation in East Prussia. Poland was determined that after her terrible sufferings it should come under her control. Hegel defined tragedy as the conflict, not between right and wrong, but between right and right. The Germans were right in saying that East Prussia was one of the most German parts of the Reich, German in blood, language, tradition and feeling. Everybody knew what the result of a plebiscite would be. The case of the Poles was strategic, not ethnic. They rightly argued that they had an impossible task with 1,200 miles of Polish-German frontier to defend, one third of which was that of East Prussia. How could they guard such a long frontier against an enemy so much stronger and better armed? Since they could not avoid a Polish-German frontier on the west, there seemed all the more reason to shorten it on the north. When the Allies achieved complete victory, Poland would assert and almost certainly obtain her claim to annex the whole of East Prussia and Danzig. Russia was likely to approve for two reasons. She would feel that it would make it easier for Poland to surrender a strip of her eastern territory, and that it would be desirable to push the

German-Russian frontier back. Such a drastic amputation would naturally be fiercely resented in Germany and could only be maintained by Poland with Russian help.

As regards Czechoslovakia, she would, of course, regain her pre-Munich frontiers. Unfortunately there is a territory which looked very small on the map but which meant a good deal both to Poles and Czechs, and kept those two Slav countries from being real friends and partners in the years between the two world wars. The little territory of Teschen, on the eastern side of Bohemia, contained valuable coal mines. After the last war it was a very difficult problem to decide who was to have it. The population was mixed and it was quite impossible to reconcile the Polish and Czech statistics. So the peace-makers at Paris cut the district in two, which did not satisfy either side. When Hitler fell on the Czechs, Poland seized the opportunity of seizing the Czech part of the Teschen district, which naturally left a bitter memory in the minds of the Czechs. The best way of getting round the difficulty would be for the two countries to strive for a political and economic agreement. They had made some progress already, but the important problem of the Teschen area was still unsolved.

Dr. Gooch then passed to a problem in which English people took a great interest, namely Austria. They were not especially in love with the old Hapsburg Empire, but the little Republic was very popular in England for its culture and music, mountains and winter sports. When Hitler seized Austria in the spring of 1938 there was indignation and deep sympathy. What was Austria going to do after the war? The best course would be if she could express her desires in a plebiscite under international auspices, not directly after the war stopped, but when the Austrians could look round and ascertain above all the nature of the new Germany. On paper there was a choice of possibilities; Austria could once again become an independent Republic of six to seven millions; she could be a partner in a Danubian Union reconstituting the core of the old Hapsburg Austria, namely Austria, Czechoslovakia and Hungary. From an economic point of view there was much to be said for such a Federal State on the middle Danube, with a great financial and administrative capital at Vienna as each partner possessed what the others lacked. A third possibility was that the Austrians might express a wish, as they did after the last war, for partnership unity in a reformed, democratised, federalised German Reich. Some people went so far as to suggest the union of Austria and Bavaria in a new State, but that was most improbable.

(To be continued.)

* * *

Members are reminded that the next Monthly Meeting will be held at Swiss House on Saturday, November 13th, and will be followed by a discussion on the "Keynes' Plan."

W.B.

EDITOR'S NOTE.

Owing to the absence through illness of Mr. P. F. Boehringer, this issue of the Swiss Observer has been edited by the staff.