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SWITZERLAND TO-DAY.

By Arnold Lunn.

(This article is reprinted with due acknowledgment from the "Catholic Times," August 31st, 1945.)

On May 14th, 1940, while the Germans were thundering through the ill-fated gap at Sedan, I said goodbye to the Alps from the Terrace at Berne, and as the rose of sunset withered on the crest of the Jungfrau I wondered whether the Swastika would be flying from the Bundeshaus, if and when I returned. On July 9th of this year I returned to the Terrace. The Alps had been veiled in mist as the train swung round the curves above Neuchâtel and I was unprepared for the revelation which awaited me. The mists lifted as I reached the Terrace. There they stood, Wetterhorn, Eiger, Monch and Jungfrau. Our Lady's Peak, faint and spectral in the twilight haze, undiminished and immutable, uninfected by the filth and cruelty and oppression which has so long poisoned the plains of Europe, and still bearing witness in their unshrinking splendour to the timeless beauty which does not pass away.

The Switzerland to which I returned is not, of course, the Switzerland which I left in 1939, but though the material framework of life, food, clothing, etc., has been affected in Switzerland as elsewhere, the spiritual foundations are uneroded. Whereas the French are canvassing the possibility of civil war and dictatorship, Switzerland remains the most stable democracy in Europe, and this because—to quote Eugene Eagger—"of all the European democracies it remains the most faithful to the Christian origin of our civilisation. It is the most advanced of the European nations because it is the most conservative." Swiss democracy is stable because it is based on the distribution of property and of power. The balance between the country and the town has not been overthrown in favour of the town, the first phase on the road to serfdom, and the universal tendency stubbornly resisted by cantonal pride. Of all countries in Europe Switzerland provides the least fruitful soil for "swindle democracy."

In 1940 when France felt the German pressure became difficult to resist, and there were some who urged that if France, which was linked by alliance to England, had surrendered, Switzerland, a neutral, could hardly be blamed if they did not resist a German invasion, but though the world believed German victory to be inevitable, the Swiss none the less resolved to save their honour and to withdraw into the inner Alpine fortress, where the quixotic struggle could at least be prolonged for a year. Courage has never paid a higher

dividend. Because the Swiss made it clear to the Germans that they would not only fight, if invaded, but also blow up the Simplon and Gotthard tunnels, so valuable for the transport of coal to Italy, they were never invaded.

The Swiss are experts at the advertisement of their mountains and their lakes, but make no attempt to advertise their charity. They would disdain to do so. They not only know but generously recognise that but for our continued resistance in 1940 the few European countries which have remained neutral would to-day be enslaved by the Nazis. And consequently they regard the millions which they have spent on the relief of war victims as their particular contribution to the liberation of Europe. Their record, in this respect, is unrivalled among neutrals. To cite one instance alone, more than 80,000 French children were entertained in Switzerland by means of private collections among the Swiss of all classes. "Pas d'argent. Pas de Suisses" was the old sneer. "Pas de Suisses. Pas d'argent" is nearer the mark.

From the Russian Government Switzerland has received neither money nor thanks in return for the hospitality extended to thousands of Russian refugees who escaped from Germany into Switzerland. On the contrary the Russian Press never ceases to attack Switzerland in general and the Swiss treatment of the Russian interned in particular. I recently accompanied a Swiss friend of mine who was visiting one of these camps. The victims of "Swiss fascism" were living in a comfortable little hotel. The Swiss couple who were running it were obviously beloved by the Ukrainian girls in their charge. They were hailed as "Papaschen" and "Mamaschen" by smiling young women. It was reassuring to learn from "Papaschen" that the attempts to eradicate religion had completely failed so far as these children of Ukrainian peasants are concerned. "They are very well brought up," said "Papaschen," "and are very religious. They all want to go to church." I talked to some of the girls, for they had been long enough in Germany to master German. They had been deported at the age of 16 and had heard nothing for three years of their parents. If their parents were still alive they wanted to return. If not, they would prefer to stay in Switzerland. They were astonished that I had travelled from England *alone*. The Russians are so impregnated with the totalitarian collective spirit that they cannot understand an Englishman being *allowed* to wander about uncontrolled and *alone*.

A mixed commission, with Russian representatives, is on its way to Switzerland. The Russians began by making it clear that they would issue instructions for the transport of the Russian interned, but

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the Swiss, with their characteristic dignity, reminded them that the Swiss had no intention of surrendering their sovereign rights, and took orders from nobody in Switzerland.

What is the object of the continued Russian attack on Switzerland as pro-Fascist? The *National Zeitung*, of Basle, recently published an interesting article in which they summarised the following characteristics of a Fascist state: the single-party system, the suppression of all opposition and criticism of the Government, the complete control of the press and radio, the existence of a secret police and the subordination of the judiciary to the executive. The article concluded by inviting the Russians to decide for themselves which of these characteristics of a Fascist state were to be found in (a) Russia, or (b) Switzerland.

This central core of Europe, this democratic state with its high standard of living, lies across the Russian lines of communication to the West, and is therefore a constant source of irritation to all Fascists, red, brown or black. Switzerland has the distinction of having provoked the bitter hatred of both Hitler and Stalin.

British prestige stands high to-day. In 1939 the Swiss were horrified by the fact that the Opposition voted against conscription and many Swiss believed that we were doomed. The fact that we did not surrender in 1940 made a profound impression. Mr. Churchill's prestige is immense. So is Field-Marshal Montgomery's. The Swiss were enchanted by the contrast between the victorious "Monty" in a sweater and flannel bags and the defeated Rommel in full regimentals and orders. That kind of contrast delights the Swiss.

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CITY SWISS CLUB. Monthly Meeting.

The Monthly Meeting of the City Swiss Club took place on Tuesday, October 2nd at Brown's Hotel, and was preceded by the customary dinner. Eighty-five members were present.

Mr. A. Bon, who was in the Chair, informed the members that the committee had decided to devote this meeting to the administrative business of the Club and invited them to bring forward suggestions or proposals with regard to the future of the Club.

Mr. Renou voiced his opinion that the younger members of the Swiss Colony in London should be given a chance to take an active part in the Club, and invited the committee to study this question; various members took part in the ensuing discussion, and the committee promised to encourage the younger generation. Unfortunately the former are rather limited in numbers owing to the conditions which restricted immigration during the last six years of the war.

A lengthy discussion then followed concerning the finding of new premises for the City Swiss Club, and making use of the Funds which had been earmarked for these purposes. The committee was invited to make proposals at a later date, in connection with this matter.

It was also decided that, should conditions allow it, Ladies should be invited to some of the lectures held at the Monthly Meetings of the Club.

Mr. Ch. Chapuis, a former President of the City Swiss Club, drew the attention of the members to the fact, that the "Swiss Observer," the official organ of the Swiss Colony in Great Britain, is shortly celebrating the 25th anniversary of its existence. He paid a warm tribute to Mr. P. F. Boehringer, the founder and publisher of the paper, as well as to its former editors, Dr. Latt, Dr. Lang, Dr. Egli and Mr. Stauffer and other collaborators, expressing the wish that this deserving venture should receive the whole-hearted support of the Colony. Mr. Chapuis mentioned that Mr. Stauffer, editor of the paper from 1929 - 1939, and a member of the committee of the City Swiss Club for the last twelve years, will shortly take up his duties with the paper again. Mr. O. Boehringer, on behalf of his father who was unable to attend the meeting, thanked Mr. Chapuis for his complimentary remarks, and the members for their kind approval of what was said.

Five new members were admitted, no resignation came to hand.

The President informed the meeting that Sir Arthur Morgan, Kt. will address the Club, on Monday, November 5th at the Dorchester Hotel, on "The British Empire and European Economic Federation," and that Mr. Geoffrey Crowther, Editor of the "Economist" has promised to be present.

Close of the Meeting 9.15 p.m.

OUR NEXT ISSUE.

We hope to go to press again on November 30th, 1945, and take this opportunity of thanking the following Subscribers for their enlarged subscription:—

G. Hediger Max Schaerer, Miss Kerr-Weddell, H. Gattiker, R. Dupraz, Swiss Office for Development of Trade, Mrs. B. Sandmeyer, E. Spleiss, Nouvelle Société Helvétique.