

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: - (1946)
Heft: 1057

Rubrik: Swiss Mercantile Society

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SWISS MERCANTILE SOCIETY.

A large gathering assembled at Swiss House on Wednesday, October 9th, when Dr. G. P. Gooch, C.H., the eminent historian, addressed the meeting. In view of the importance of the lecture, the official business was deferred until the November meeting.

The Chairman, Mr. J. J. Boos, in introducing the lecturer, mentioned that Dr. Gooch had recently been in Switzerland where he was given an enthusiastic welcome.

Dr. Gooch was no stranger at Swiss House, having lectured to Swiss audiences in London for the last three or four decades, first under the auspices of the Swiss Institute and for the last twenty years at the S.M.S.

Whilst the theme of his lecture, "Outlook in Europe," is one on which Dr. Gooch has spoken again and again, the story he has to relate is different every time. Following are extracts from his address:

"When I was a young man in Parliament forty years ago, I remember Lord Balfour saying: 'In Foreign Affairs, no-one can foretell the European weather two years ahead'. To-day, he would probably say two months, as we have never lived in a time when the situation was more fluid. At any moment things might get suddenly worse, or better, but one thing can be said with certainty, the old man of Europe has gone for good. Since the tremendous victory over Germany we are faced with new problems, those of maintaining our existence and our way of life.


As a teacher of history all my life, I have always looked upon politics in terms of their historical background. Broadly speaking, modern history began in the year 1500 with the rise of the great centralised monarchies. Ever since there has been one great preponderant Power in Europe. England has never been a preponderant Power in Europe. In the sixteenth century it was the mighty Spanish Empire with its Austrian branch, which lasted for a century till the French came along. From the time of the great Richelieu down to the Battle of Sedan, roughly for 250 years, France dominated the scene. From then onwards German supremacy made itself felt, beginning with the Prussian victory over Austria in 1866 and consummated in the victory over France in 1870. After a short period of German preponderance, we have to-day arrived at the Russian phase. The day the Russians marched into Berlin in the spring of 1945 was a milestone in modern history. I cannot conceive any possible future in which Russia will not take a leading, if not *the* leading, part in European politics. In the Spanish, French and German phases, England built up the largest Empire the world has ever seen. With the phase of Russian hegemony we shall have to adjust our attitude to this new and extraordinary development.

Until the first World War, there were eight Great Powers in the world, England, France, Germany, Austria, Italy, Russia, and two outside Europe, the U.S.A. and Japan. As a result of the First World War, Austria disappeared, which left seven, and as a result of the second, Japan, Germany and Italy collapsed, which leaves four. I have always been an admirer of France's fine qualities, but we cannot conceal the disagreeable fact that for the time being she has ceased to count as a Great Power; that leaves three, the British Empire, the U.S.A., and Russia.

Does this reduction in numbers simplify matters? On the contrary, we are up against each other more nakedly than ever before and animosities seem to emerge more clearly every day. Since there are only three political units which really count, it makes their relations of supreme importance.

In my surveys of Europe, I have always begun at the other end of the Continent, moving steadily westwards, and to-day I have a new motive for beginning in the East. Russia has never been unimportant in the life of Europe, but she has never been so important as it is to-day. After the first overthrow of Napoleon, the greatest figure in Europe was Tsar Alexander. When the Allies converged on Paris in the spring of 1814, Russia was the country which in general estimation had taken the chief share in overthrowing the French dictator by pushing him back after the invasion of 1812. A year after Waterloo, her influence became much less. But now, I think, it will last a very long time indeed.

What makes a great Power? *Manpower* to start with. Russia has 180 million inhabitants, increasing almost as quickly as the Chinese and the Indians, say about four million a year. There will soon be 200 million and the younger people among this audience will live to see 300 million. Plenty of citizens, plenty of manpower, are needed for a great Power. Next, *Room*, what Hitler called *Lebensraum*, room to expand. Russia has that. *Food*, you want to be able to feed yourselves, and Russia can do it. Almost the only things she has to import are such tropical delights as tea and

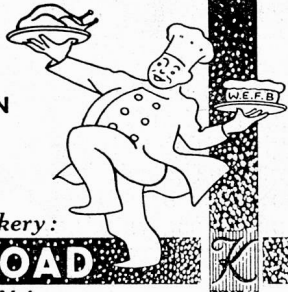


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coffee. In addition to food for the human body, a Great Power wants food for her industry, *Raw Materials*. Russia is as rich in coal, iron and oil as in wheat. She has timber, fisheries, navigable rivers, and since the invention of flying she has been able to develop Siberia. With only a ribbon of a railway from Moscow to the Pacific, everything used to depend on that single line. Now, with the development of air communications, she can push ahead in Siberia, which is full of minerals, food and timber, and there is plenty of room for the growth of population plus the overflow from European Russia. One cannot be but deeply impressed by her tremendous power and unlimited resources. A mighty Empire may rule by such feebly hands that it hardly counts. But Russia is not ruled by feebly hands. Their ideology is not ours, but there is a vigour and drive about the Soviet Government which did not exist under the Tsars.

What use will she make of this power? Towards what end is she turning her thoughts? There are two interpretations of her policy. The first is that which she gives herself. After the terrible experience of the invasion, when the Germans came within 20 miles of

Moscow, when they surrounded Leningrad, and when people dropped dead in the streets in thousands, when they reached the Volga at Stalingrad, after that, say the Russians, you cannot be surprised that we think of our security. Ever since Hitler attacked Russia in June 1941, 'The Soviet News' has been published in London and has been sent to me every day, doubtless as Editor of the 'Contemporary Review'. It is very interesting because there you can get the Russian impressions, not British impressions, the reproduction of leading articles in 'Pravda' and 'Izvestia', reproductions of wireless talks, full texts of all important declarations of Stalin, Molotov and Vishinsky. The Russian case is: 'We are thinking of our security, and you ought not to be surprised at that after that terrible struggle, in which the losses of life in Russia was greater than that of all the other belligerents together'. Since the end of the war she has sought her security in trustworthy neighbours, if possible friendly neighbours, all the way round her frontiers. She wants to be sure that she does not have hostile Governments on her doorsteps.

In Finland, free elections have been allowed, and

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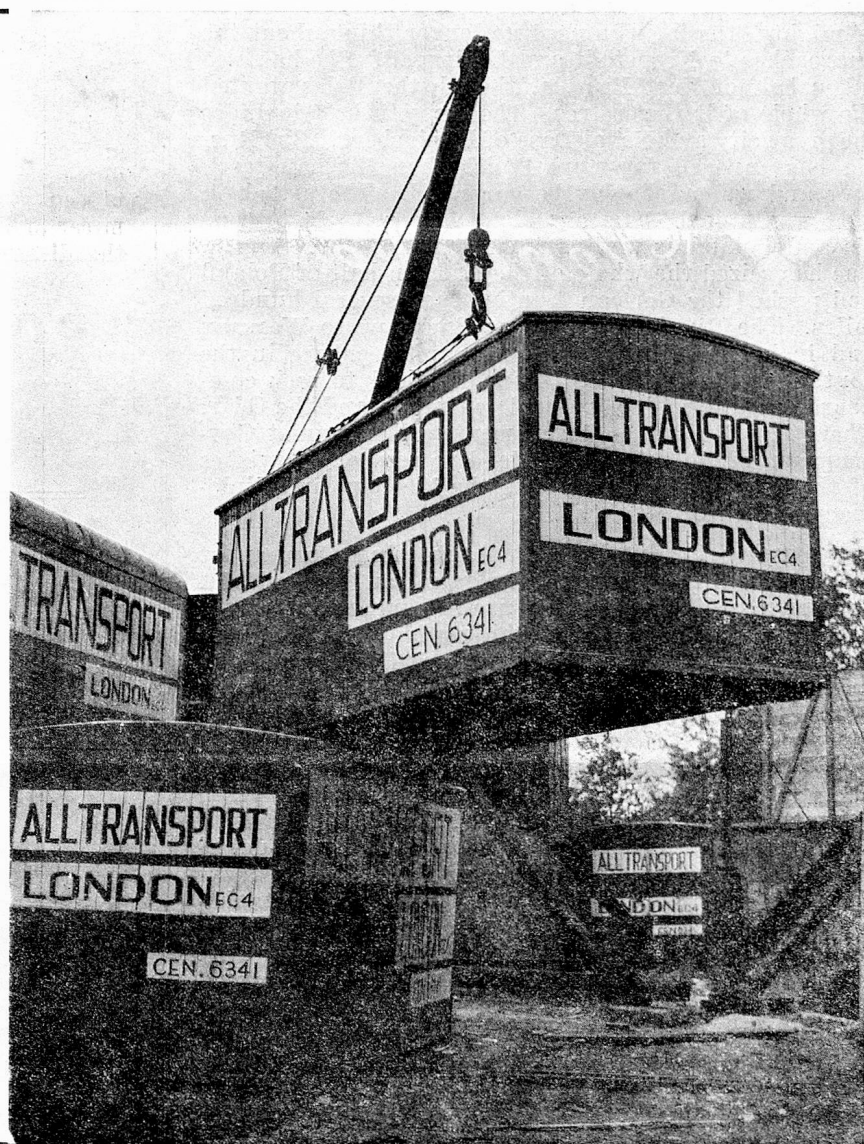
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although they do not have a Communist Government, the old anti-Russian clique has gone. Moscow is quite at ease about its Finnish neighbours. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, which were never independent before the First World War and enjoyed 20 years of very precarious independence, have returned into the bosom of mighty Russia, who need no longer think about the approaches to Kronstadt and Leningrad. She has also taken half of East Prussia, though the Poles wanted the whole of it themselves. The Russian half includes the great city and Naval Base of Königsberg. But Russia has annexed far more Polish than German territory and we can hardly be surprised. The attack in 1941 was launched from various places in East Prussia and Poland as well as from Slovakia in the South. She has seized the whole of the Eastern half of Poland and pushed the German frontier back several hundred miles. The Russian line comes almost up to Warsaw, and includes Vilna in the north and Lemberg in the south. In consequence, Poland has had to seek compensation by pushing forward to Stettin and the Oder. There is a Russophil Government, a Communist Government, which does not pretend to respect the wishes of the people, since it follows the ideology and diplomacy of Moscow.

Passing to the Near East, we find Communist Governments in Roumania, Bulgaria, and Yugoslavia. In Hungary the Communists are in a minority, but the majority parties can do nothing which the Russians dislike. Many people think that the Hungarian Government will soon shift to the Left, though Moscow is not alarmed about what poor, weak, devastated Hungary may do. Eastern Austria is in Russian hands, and there are more Russian troops there than those of the other three Powers together. Czechoslovakia is a Slav land, with a Communist Prime Minister in a Coalition Government. Internally there is self-determination, but the discussions in Paris during those weary months showed that in external affairs Czechoslovakia is definitely a member of the Russian team and never voted against the wishes of its mighty ally. And Russia wants something else — Trieste, suggesting that she is championing the legitimate cause of Yugoslavia. If Trieste becomes a Yugoslav possession, it will become a Russian outpost, and everybody knows it. For the first time in history, Russia, under the flag of her Yugoslav satellite, would then be on the Adriatic.

I have not covered the whole field of Russia's neighbours, for there are two countries which are not governed by Russophiles, Greece and Turkey. At the U.N.O. discussions in London and in America, and in the long Paris negotiations, Greece kept coming up again and again. Greece is not Russophil, neither the people nor the Government. The Greek Communists are in a minority and so the Russians are not happy about Greece. The reason for the unceasing friction is the fact that we have our troops there and that they long for us to withdraw, in order to instal in Athens, probably through a *Putsch*, a Russophil Government, wholly or mainly Communist. We cannot keep our troops in Greece for ever. The King has gone back, sitting on British bayonets, as the Russians say, and what will happen to the King when the British troops leave? What Greece needs for generations is internal and external tranquility, but nobody believes she will get it.

This brings me to Turkey. Trieste has never seriously alarmed me, but I am, however, frightened about the Straits. I have often said in public addresses 'If Russia wins, she will make trouble about the Straits'. Yet I do not blame her for it, and it is nothing new. When Catherine the Great extended Russian rule down to the Black Sea, when the great port of Odessa came into existence and the Black Sea became a Russian lake, all Russian eyes were turned on Constantinople, the holy city from which they drew their culture, as we in the early ages drew it largely from Rome. Russia has one very strong card which she will play in connection with the Straits. In the First World War, we and France promised her (by secret treaty in the

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spring of 1915) that if we all won she should have not only the Straits but Constantinople itself. The Russians have not forgotten that. What they will say is: 'You gave to the old Tsardom far more than we are asking now. We do not demand Constantinople and sole control of the Straits, but merely joint control of the Straits with Turkey.' Naturally they feel very bitterly about the Anglo-American resistance to their sharing control.

Ought we to take up this negative attitude? We must remember that we are an ally of Turkey — an alliance of mutual assistance against attack. Although she did not come into the war, it was with our consent that she stayed out, for she was militarily unfit for the terrible stress and strain. The Russians sharing control of the Straits with Turkey sounds all right on paper. There can be sharing of power between equals, but the proposed partnership between mighty Russia and little Turkey with her limited armaments and resources, is not a partnership of equals. Yet Russia has a very strong claim to partial control of the Straits, and we can well understand that she longs to get to the Mediterranean as she has not a single coaling station where she can put in for supplies and repairs. She surprised us all a year ago by asking for the administration of Cyrenaica, and Molotov even said she would be glad to have Eritrea. After all, South Russia is much nearer to the Mediterranean than is England. To sum up, Russia's claim to security has been largely met by her actions in regard to her neighbours, but she will not feel entirely happy until Greece and Turkey are definitely within her sphere of influence. And finally there is Persia. It is not merely the oil wells

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she is interested in; Persia is also her back door. She has long wished to get to the Persian Gulf, and she is definitely determined that at any rate she will dominate North Persia, which is so close to her great oil wells on the Caspian.

I have explained Russia's case as she presents it, but there is another explanation besides the craving for security. Is all this talk about security a pretext? Many British and American observers will answer yes. Moscow, they say, is merely continuing the expansionism and aggression which begins with Ivan the Terrible in the 16th century. It is by no means only or chiefly a satisfaction of legitimate demands for national security, they add, but a revival and continuation of the old Tsarist policy of practically unlimited expansion. These are the two rival interpretations and before leaving the subject I will give you mine. Russian policy, I believe, is dictated neither entirely by security nor entirely by expansionist traditions, but is a mixture of both. In what proportion those two elements are represented I make no estimate, for I know too little of the inner workings of the Moscow mind. The policy is not made by the Russian people, but by a small inner ring of whom Stalin, Molotov, and the victorious generals are the chiefs.

And now what of Germany? There is no Germany to-day, for the first time since the creation of the Hohenzollern Empire by Bismarck. There is a Russian Germany and a non-Russian Germany — for all practical purposes two separate countries, with little prospect of political, economic or cultural unification. The Russians are taking as much food and as much machinery out of the country as they can, which is not surprising in view of the terrible devastation of the western half of their country. They are also using German labour in the factories, as well as able German brains, chemists and inventors, to prepare for war if it ever comes along. If we have had so much trouble over the peace treaties with Italy, Finland, Hungary, Bulgaria and Roumania we must be prepared for still more troublesome discussions about Germany and Austria. Some surprise and alarm has been caused by the intense opposition of Russia to the discussion of Austria, small and defenceless though she is. No problem is or can be discussed on its merits, for the Big Three are always manoeuvring for position.

What is there to resist the westward sweep of Russian influence and Russian ideology? I answer, England, France and the United States. The two greatest

political results of the Second World War are the domination of the larger part of Central Europe by Russia, and the end of isolationism in the United States. Owing to the submarine, the aeroplane, and the rocket, the Atlantic has almost ceased to exist. The American realises that he is not a very long way from Europe, as he used to be, and that he needs the British Empire just as much as we need him. The death of isolationism has been proclaimed over and over again by Byrnes and Truman. America has come into Europe, not as in 1917, but has come to stay. An offensive Anglo-American partnership would be madness, but a defensive partnership, strong enough to prevent Russia attempting to push further west is already in being. Bismarck used to say: 'We do not want Russia in Central Europe, and the only way to keep her out is to push her towards the East. If ever there is an explosion, let it take place in the East. Do not get in her way in the Balkans or Turkey, otherwise you will have to fight in Europe.' That was Bismarck's policy. Can we adopt it by not getting in her way? I doubt whether in the long run the British Empire will be able or willing to keep her grasp off the Straits. That grave problem is looming up and I do not envy the British statesmen who will have to deal with it.

What ought we to do in these difficult times? Firstly, the British Empire must do all it can to make a success of U.N.O., marred though the Charter is by that terrible clause allowing a veto by a single member on all effective action. We have to work it because the Charter was the best we were able to get. We could not have a new League without Russia, and she was only willing to come in on those terms.

Secondly, we must maintain, and if possible increase, our intimate and trustful relationship with our cousins beyond the Atlantic, the Mighty American State, not the biggest but the strongest and richest community in the world. She has suffered no losses in her great industrial apparatus; not a factory in America was destroyed by bombs in the air or shots from the sea.

Thirdly, we must help to put France on her legs again, give her all the material and moral help we can, not only for her sake but for the preservation of our way of life and of the civilisation which the Americans carried across the Atlantic and still preserve.

Fourthly, we must strive to keep in with Russia, to be patient with her, to realise how the different outlook arises from her utterly different background, differences of geography, language, culture, her nearness to Asia, the admixture of Tartar blood, the complete absence of political education. While we are practising the difficult art of parliamentary government, theirs is a system of autocracy, sometimes efficient, sometimes inefficient. Mr. Wallace has advised his country's spokesmen not to stand out for every single point. If you read the Russian official declarations, you realise that they feel we are always opposing them. They forget that they are always criticising us much more sharply. Happily, Mr. Bevin shares Lord Grey's conviction that the greatest quality of a Foreign Secretary is patience."

Dr. Gooch was given tremendous applause at the conclusion of his address. He answered a number of questions put to him, and finally Mr. Joss, former President of the Swiss Institute, proposed a hearty vote of thanks, ably seconded by Mr. Deutsch, and very warmly supported by all present.

W.B.

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