

# Switzerland and the Third Reich

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temporary premises and the re-arrangement of terms, it was only possible to hold a reduced number of evening classes.

The preparatory courses for the Cambridge examinations, mostly recruited from day-students, were, as usual, well attended.

With the return to the Society's own premises, which are more centrally situated, it was hoped to resume evening courses on a full scale. The number of classes held last year was 24, with a total attendance of 426 students, as against 31 classes and 575 students respectively in 1972.

A total of 208 candidates sat for the Lower Cambridge examinations, of whom 158, or 76 per cent were successful.

Of 18 students who obtained the coveted Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English, one obtained a first-class pass, a great achievement, considering that less than one-half per cent of all candidates are awarded this distinction.

Mr. S. Baumgartner, Manager of the Swiss Commercial Employment Service in Zurich, visited the College on two occasions during the year, when he gave professional advice to students regarding their future careers.

Those wishing to obtain commercial employment here on completion of their studies were again assisted by the Society. As a result of this service, 17 young compatriots were able to obtain posts with English firms. Many more could have been placed if they had been willing to stay for at least one year, instead of only a few months as some

were prepared to do.

Mr. O. Grob, Hon. Member and former President, was appointed temporary Chairman to elect the members of the Council and the Committees.

A vacancy had been caused by the resignation of Mr. L. A. Simon from the Education Committee, on which he had served for a number of years, due to business and private commitments. Thanks were expressed to him for his services.

The Chairman, Mr. A. Jaccard, agreed to serve for one more year to see the work at Swiss House through to a satisfactory end and the Society safely re-installed there.

He was warmly thanked by Mr. Grob for his untiring efforts during the long period of reconstruction, which had entailed a great deal of time and many worries.

Mr. Jaccard was duly re-elected with sustained acclamation.

The Chairman pro tem also singled out for special mention the Chairman of the Education Committee, Mr. F. O. Hausermann, and the Secretary, Mr. W. Burren, and thanked all the other members of the Council and Committees for their continued support of the Society's aims and aspirations. They were all declared duly re-elected, with the addition of Mr. F. Vaterlaus, replacing Mr. Simon on the Education Committee, and Mrs. A. R. Sharp elected to the General Purposes and House Committee.

The proceedings then terminated.

W.B.

Switzerland's reasserted neutrality was not solely due to German pressure, but also to the radical changes of the European diplomatic scene. But the Reich was the first to profit by the new Swiss stand. Germany knew that she had nothing to fear in the way of economic sanctions from her southern neighbour.

Germany's efforts in pressuring Swiss opinion to its side were dashed at the moment of reckoning, when Colonel Henry Guisan was elected as Switzerland's military leader in preference to some of his pro-German rivals. During that early period, these political efforts took the form of governmental pressure and moral support to various fascist and pro-Nazi groups. The organisations involved in these efforts were the Foreign Organisation of the National Socialist Party, the League for the "Deutschtum" Abroad, and the SS Espionage Services. The work of these organisations remained fairly muted, however, because a more aggressive form of action could have influenced Swiss opinion in the wrong way.

Archives from the first two years of the war show that the Germans seriously doubted the will of the Swiss to defend themselves vigorously and indicate a certain ignorance of the strategy imagined by General Guisan known as the "National Redoubt", the aim of which was precisely to defend the country to the last mountain. Declarations by German generals also prove that Switzerland, like Norway, Holland, Austria, Sweden and other peripheral countries was definitely considered as a future part of the Reich.

This fundamental fact underlies all discussion on whether or not Hitler was actually prepared to invade Switzerland. The fact is that Switzerland was considered by the Reich as a satellite that would be integrated to the new empire at a convenient moment.

The "Bonjour Report" had dwelt at length on the great fright of a possible invasion on the Swiss side. The Swiss authorities were fully aware of the strategical realities prevailing before the invasion of France. Moreover, relations with the Reich had gradually deteriorated with the Germans exerting commercial pressures, obtaining a virtual Press censorship and intensifying their help to Swiss Fascist organisations. After the invasion of France, when the threat of an invasion was put back, the Germans discovered documents in the captured headquarters of the French forces at la Charité-sur-Loire proving that Switzerland, a neutral country, had made military contacts with France on 10th May. This continued to kindle Swiss fears on the likelihood of an invasion and induced General Guisan to ask for several secret meetings with Walter Schellenberg, Head of the SS Espionage, to convince him of Switzerland's determination to fight off any invasion.

Two factors eventually moved the Germans into abandoning their intention of invading Switzerland. The first was,

## Switzerland and the Third Reich

One of the most publicised problems facing students of modern Swiss history is to determine how close Nazi-Germany ever was to invading Switzerland during the early stages of the second world war. This topic is the subject of a recent doctoral thesis by a young historian, Daniel Bourgeois, published under the title *Le Troisième Reich et la Suisse, 1933-1941*.

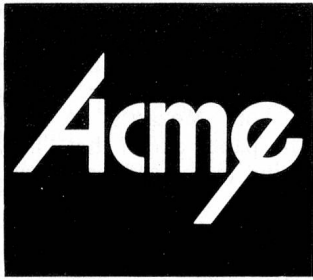
This book studies an aspect of the war which has not been dealt with to the same extent by Professor Edgar Bonjour in his monumental work "The History of Swiss Neutrality". It was, moreover, not based on the same material. Bourgeois had to rely on German Archives because Swiss war-time Archives are not yet open to the public. They were made available to Professor Bonjour only because his report had been officially commissioned.

Using Nazi Archives presented great difficulties of interpretation owing to the mixture of wild dream, cynicism and blunt realism shared by the Nazi officials

who drafted the documents. Other difficulties are inherent to the political organisation of war-time Germany, which consisted in several, and often antagonistic, administrations. The fact that many archives relevant to the period under study had been destroyed didn't make the task any easier.

Bourgeois distinguishes the pre-war period (1933-1939) and first war years, in particular the critical period between the springs of 1940 and 1941.

During the pre-war period, which saw the new dictatorship in Germany develop its imperialist programme, Hitler strived to detach Switzerland from the Europe inherited from the Treaty of Versailles. He tried to induce the Swiss to be more understanding towards the new German State. Bourgeois recognizes that he was largely successful. At the outbreak of war, Switzerland was free from previous collective security agreements and returned to a position of integral neutrality. The author stresses that



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naturally, that the strategic situation had changed completely with all of France. The second, and equally determinant reason, according to Bourgeois, was that the balance between firmness and conciliation with the Reich exercised by Swiss leaders convinced the Germans of Switzerland's attachment to her professed principles. As the war dragged on, the Germans came to realise that realism and moderation were the best tactics. They appreciated that an invasion would put an end to the qualitative — if not quantitative — contribution of the Swiss arms industry to the German war effort.

In conclusion, this new book on an historical problem of national importance confirms that the Germans were seriously

talking of invading Switzerland in the early years of the war. This intention was supported both by the ideologists of the Reich who were talking of another *Anschluss*, and the military, who were concerned with occupying France. Bourgeois quotes Hitler as saying that the Swiss would serve as the "inn-keepers" of the Reich. That this plan was never carried out is due to a changed strategic situation, and to the fact that Switzerland was eventually placed in Germany's good books. But Bourgeois seems to disprove the officially-encouraged view that the Germans were actually put off a confrontation with the Swiss because of the military preparedness of the latter since he tells us of the Germans' misconceptions on the matter.

citizen in 1954, and has lived in Zurich since 1964. He is a leading teacher of composition and students come to him from all over the world. Among them were Rolf Liebermann, Erik Bergmann and Usco Merilainen. As for Lütschg, the *Times* said that his style was "sweet-toned, refined, integrating well with the orchestra's" after a recent performance of Mozart's A major concerto. The paper added that "he was most interesting in the cadenzas, not for exhibitionism but for the musicality he revealed there".

The same concert at the Queen Elizabeth Hall will also include the *Divertimento K 138* by Mozart, the *Mother Goose Suite* by Ravel, and Schubert's *Unfinished Symphony*. Tickets obtainable at the Royal Festival Hall (01-928 3191) and usual agents.

P.M.B.

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aid. The talk will be illustrated by a film.

The lecture will take place at 7 p.m. at the Swiss Embassy, 16-18 Montagu Place, W.1. All Swiss and their friends will be welcome.

### AN IMPORTANT CONCERT

Among the concerts listed in the above events, the Cultural Attaché at the Swiss Embassy has asked me to draw attention on the concert to be given on 21st June at the Queen Elizabeth Hall. The soloist will be the Russian-born Swiss violinist *Andrej Lütschg* who has been

director of a master class at the Zurich Academy of Music since 1964. He will perform the Violin Concerto by the Swiss composer *Vladimir Vogel*. The latter is one of Switzerland's leading composers. His musical and teaching activities have had a considerable influence on the continuation of the twelve-tone technique in the work of the younger generation of Swiss composers.

Born in 1896 the son of a German father and Russian mother, he studied with Busoni in Berlin and later came into contact with Schoenberg and the twelve-tone system which is integrated in his own work from 1937 onwards. He settled in Ticino in 1933, became a Swiss

### SWISS GIFT TO THE BRITISH MUSEUM

The Department of Prints and drawings has recently received from the British Museum Society the very generous gift of a copy of the Latin edition of a Life of St. Beatus, Apostle of Switzerland, *Almi Confessoris et Anachorete Beati Vita*, printed in Basle by Adam Petri in 1511. The chief interest of this small book is that it is illustrated by Urs Graf (c. 1485-1527) with a series of woodcuts with scenes from the life of the Saint.

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