

"The European situation" [to be continued]

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LECTURE BY Dr. G. P. GOOCH

ON

"THE EUROPEAN SITUATION"

WEDNESDAY, MAY 11th at "SWISS HOUSE."

(Continuation).

Now to a great event in Central Europe. Since I was here a year ago there has been the disappearance of Austria, a very great event. There may be some events which happen to-day that may be undone to-morrow or a little later. Changes do occur. Many changes occurred in Europe as a result of the World War. Many more changes will and would occur if there is another world war. But even the youngest of you in this room will ever see Austria anything else except what she is to-day, a part of the German Reich.

The seizure, the rape of Austria, whatever you may think of its morality, is a great historical event; firstly negatively in so far as it registers the disappearance of an independent state and positively it registers an enormous increase of strength to the German state, an increase of six and a half million in population, an increase in the size of the German army, an increase in the economic resources of Germany. Austria is not a rich country. There are too many mountains and too little fertile plains, but at the same time it is not altogether without resources. In particular there is a certain iron mountain to which there is no parallel except one in the north of Sweden. Austria is rich in forest and wood, but not rich in agriculture and not rich in food. I have not the time nor is it necessary to re-tell at any length the story of the decline and fall of Austria. Let me say a few words about it. Before the War Austria-Hungary was a great power and had been so for 400 years. As regards territory it was the biggest power in Europe after Russia. As regards population Russia was first, Germany second and Austria with 54 million third. At the end of the War nothing was left but a little over 6 million people with a huge capital. Vienna, with about 2 million people, was the right size for the great Austro-Hungarian Empire, but much too big for the Austrian state. Although the League of Nations came to her aid in 1922 and encouraged the raising of loans for the salvation of her economic life, and although during the following ten years an economic revival took place, many people inside and outside said Austria is not viable, it is kept alive as an invalid is kept alive, by drugs and injections in form of loans; and with all her unemployed she cannot live and that in the long run she will have to go in with Germany. How often have we heard that all these years. Another view was held by men like Dollfuss and Schuschnigg who said Austria is viable. She can live if not throttled by tariff walls all the way round, if left alone, if no more conspiracies occur like the Putsch in 1934, when Dollfuss was foully and brutally murdered. The situation seemed more hopeful last year when Germany and Austria made the famous treaty by which Hitler consented to the Viennese Government declaring the Austrian Nazi party illegal and Schuschnigg in return for that great concession, or what looked a great concession, declared that he considered Austria as a German state. It looked like a great triumph for Austria. The reason for it was that in order to create the Rome-Berlin axis Austria should no longer be an apple of discord as she had been for years and years between Berlin and Rome. It should so to speak be neutralised as a bridge between Berlin and Rome rather than an obstacle between them, the famous Austro-German pact. Now it has gone and as usually happens not only in quarrels between individuals but also in quarrels between countries, each says it is the fault of the other. Hitler says Schuschnigg broke his word and Schuschnigg says Hitler broke his word. Behind the scenes the Austrian Nazis were all the time working. Hitler then sent an invitation, or rather a command, to Schuschnigg to visit him at Berchtesgaden. They talked for nine hours. We know what happened. It was not at all a free talk. The stronger said to the weaker, "We must change our relations. I am not going to have the Nazis ill-treated and ignored as you are doing. I insist on your taking into the Cabinet Seyss-Inquart, the young Austrian lawyer who is a Nazi, as Minister of Interior and to have control of the Police." It was the shock of his life to Schuschnigg. He could not say "No" and Seyss-Inquart entered the Cabinet with Hitler behind him with all the strength of Germany's arms and air force, just waiting to be called in if necessary. There were now two possibilities for Schuschnigg, one to accept a "fait accompli" and go on as Chancellor and nominal head of the

Austrian State and Government, but only as a shadow taking his orders from Berlin and watching the Nazis in Austria taking control of the whole situation and waiting until the time should come when he should be brushed aside. Another possibility was that he should rebel against the Nazi yoke which had been imposed upon his shoulders and was weighing him down. He appealed or proposed to appeal to the people whether they were for him and an independent Austria. In his speech at Innsbruck in March he declared that on the following Sunday he would consult the people in a plebiscite. Indeed it was expressly authorised in the Austrian constitution which Dollfuss and Schuschnigg had themselves drawn up after very unwisely having suppressed the old democratic Austrian constitution which involved free elections, free Press and free Parliament. There was nothing whatever to complain of the idea of having a plebiscite but he made a gigantic, a tragic and a fatal tactical error in rushing it, in proclaiming an election when there was no register of voters in the country where there had not been elections for years and where in the meantime young people had grown up for whom there were no voting papers. Schuschnigg was a high minded man, but he made some terrible mistakes and his last mistake has cost him not only his own position but also his country. Hitler seizing the opportunity and acting with lightning rapidity, that which makes him so terrifying. Like lightning from a blue sky, a "Blitz vom heitern Himmel," he seized the opportunity to intervene. Scores of thousands of his army and hundreds of aeroplanes came across the frontier, and big guns rolled through the streets. Several of you have seen and talked to friends of yours who were present when it happened. I personally have many friends in Vienna. Several of them, I need hardly say, are Jews, who as in Germany were being imprisoned or pushed out of the country. Several of those poor creatures have come over here as they can no longer earn a living in their own country. They were able to tell dramatic accounts of the immense display of armed force which accompanied the seizure of Austria, so immense that it proved beyond doubt that the invasion was not impromptu, not a sudden decision but that it was a sudden execution of a very old and carefully prepared plan down to the last button. And then they had the plebiscite which just because it practically represented unanimity on paper was in itself a great lie. How many Nazis there were in Austria before the invasion I do not know because it was part of the system of Schuschnigg, part of the system of Dollfuss which I do not approve and greatly condemn, part of their system not to consult their people. We do not know how many Nazis there were. What is your estimate? Austrian people and English people, officially and unofficially, estimated their number between 30-40%. I never met anybody who suggested that they had a majority, for the Socialists were supreme in Vienna and the Clerical Party of Dollfuss and Schuschnigg were very strong in the country and villages. At any rate, if you have something like 99% of voters voting for a "fait accompli" you know perfectly well that a very large proportion voted as a result of fear and nothing else.

I have said something of the end of Austria as a great state, great for four hundred years and a little state for twenty years after the War. It has now gone and is part of Germany. I said something about the increase of the population of the great Reich, the increase of its fighting power, the material increase of its iron and timber resources, of its territory. You know what the map of Austria is. You know it is a small country on the map. You know it occupies a very important place in the heart of Europe. You know that the absorption of Austria into the German Reich means that Germany is the neighbour of Italy for the first time. And it was very interesting that at the same time as tens of thousands of German troops came with lightning speed over the frontier and occupied Linz and Vienna, the German soldiers went down as fast as they could right down to the Italian frontier and exchanged friendly words with the Italians. In my belief there were two reasons why Hitler sent such an enormous force into Austria. Firstly to render impossible all opposition in Austria but also as a warning to Mussolini not to interfere. At first we thought that Hitler's

seizure of Austria was such an enormous undertaking that he must have told his friend Mussolini about it to ward him off because to have the mighty Germany as a neighbour on the Brenner must have been what every Italian dreaded. Then we discovered that we were wrong. Mussolini had not been consulted. You might have thought that Hitler made some kind of promise that if he were to march into Austria without Mussolini giving the Austrians any protection he would help Mussolini in Spain or in Africa. Nothing of the sort. Mussolini was as surprised as you and I. I know that from the declarations of the two defenders of Austria, Hitler's famous and emotional telegram "Ich werde Ihnen dieses nie vergessen"; secondly Hitler's long explanatory letter why he did it which letter was sent after he did it and not before; and thirdly Mussolini's speech. In 1934, at the time of the Dollfuss murder Mussolini hurried his troops as well as his aeroplanes to the frontier. He would have marched right up to Vienna if the Nazi Putsch had not been promptly suppressed. "I will stand by Austria to the end," he declared and the Rome Protocols were pretty near a political alliance as well as a commercial agreement with Austria and Hungary. But on the occasion of the rape of Austria last March when the German troops were coming up in strength to absorb Austria, there was silence. Not for four days did Mussolini open his mouth, but then said, "What you cannot prevent and what you cannot undo you had better accept with good grace, 'faire bonne mine à mauvais jeu.'" Mussolini was not pleased with the rape of Austria and nobody will hasten to suggest that he was and although he has given Hitler hospitality, the Rome-Berlin axis is not inwardly so strong. A healthy alliance between nations is an alliance between equals, but if you find one of the partners infinitely stronger, then there is little satisfaction for the weaker party. The rape of Austria brought this home in a flash to Mussolini, that Hitler was not only a friend and ally but also his master, just like someone having strong arms around him and the embrace a little too hard, a little too tight. If you want the main reason for the Anglo-French negotiations it was that Mussolini felt Hitler's arms a little too much, for Germany was not only nearly twice the size of Italy but also infinitely stronger in a military sense. And so Mussolini, who is a great realist, felt that it would perhaps be just as well to try and make friends again with England and France. There is nothing more interesting than the study of foreign diplomacy, to watch affairs in which one event leads to another, the consequences as well as the reactions.

(To be continued).

SWISS REPRESENTATION AT LONDON

MUSIC FESTIVAL.

Sophie and Colette Wyss.

At the most important London musical event for years, the International Festival for Contemporary Music, which takes place on June 17th-24th, Switzerland is singularly well represented. It is only befitting that the honour and high task of such representation should have been bestowed on our Sophie Wyss together with her sister Colette Wyss, who is coming over from Switzerland for that great occasion. Madame Colette is one of the most eminent operatic and lieder-singers in our own country with a dramatic soprano voice of rare beauty. She has once before been heard at a London concert some two years ago when she was warmly applauded and received very flattering critiques. On this occasion she will sing an unusually difficult cantata by Krenek, a modern Austrian composer on June 20th at the B.B.C. Concert Hall.

Madame Sophie Wyss, who has risen to the very top rank of concert-singers in England during the last ten years and who has done so much for spreading the reputation of Swiss composers in this country — single-handed and with scarcely any moral support from her compatriots — is once again devoting her art to a young Swiss composer, Burkhard, who is looked upon in Continental musical circles as one of the most talented and promising personalities among modern composers. Madame Wyss is taking the soprano-part in Burkhard's oratorio "Das Gesicht Jesajas," which was hailed at a recent Musical Festival in Zürich as a most moving master-piece. Its London performance on this occasion will probably provide the culminating point in the distinguished programme of the Festival, which has been organised under the patronage of the "Daily Telegraph and Morning Post" and the International Society for Contemporary Music. The Swiss concert which also includes an Orchestral Piece by Jean Binet, will take place on the 24th at the Queen's Hall, with the assistance of the B.B.C. Orchestra. Seats from 2s. upwards. Madame Sophie Wyss will also take part in the concert of the 17th at the Queen's Hall (the first in the Festival), when she