

Schwarzenbach, Annemarie

(1908-1942)



Part of an important industrial Swiss family, Annemarie Schwarzenbach began writing early in life, initially writing fiction, in order to focus on her travels and their coverage for newspapers and books. Starting in 1929, she wrote regularly for several Swiss newspapers, particularly the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* and the *National-Zeitung*. After her doctorate in medieval history and writing some novellas and novels, she began her life as a traveller and a travel journalist throughout the Middle East, with particular focus on Persia. She published a travel journal about her first trip (*Winter im Vorderasien*, 1934, *Winter in Asia Minor*). She also travelled through several European countries, covering in her reports moments of the rise of National-Socialists, and also moments of repulsion towards this new political reality. In the USA, she wrote reports that were very politically and socially engaged. Annemarie Schwarzenbach was also an important journalistic photographer. Due to issues with drugs and complicated homosexual relationships, she was expelled from the country, returning by ship to Europe, in February 1941, through Lisbon. There, she met the Swiss ambassador Henri Martin, with whom she had already become acquainted in Ankara, and who urged her to write texts about Portugal and Lisbon's importance to Switzerland in a warring Europe, especially regarding activities connected to the Lisbon port and the International Red Cross. After a short time in Switzerland, she was forced to leave the country due to family issues and sailed from Lisbon to Africa (more exactly to Congo). She wanted to work for the Free French Radio there, like her friend Erika Mann did in London for British authorities. However, she was suspected of

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being a spy, and was denied a position. She spent some time in the Congo hinterland, before reboarding in Luanda, on March 14th, 1942, the ship *Quanza*, headed to Lisbon, where she remained for some weeks, continuing her writing about Portugal in both informative texts and personal accounts of her Lisbon and the outskirts through which she passed through, while many exiles awaited a place on a ship or in the few airplanes headed to the USA.

Annemarie Schwarzenbach published over twenty articles about Portugal during the two periods she was in the country. These articles are not overtly critical of the regime of the time, but reflect the attitude of many Europeans who saw Portugal as the only way out of a burning Europe. For Annemarie Schwarzenbach, Portugal was, at the time, the only symbol of the “old” Europe, with which she had so many cultural bonds. This did not mean she wasn’t sympathetic to the poverty she saw on the city’s sidewalks and outskirts. She had plans to settle in Lisbon as a correspondent for some Swiss newspapers, intending to also cover Spain and Morocco, since she was married to a French diplomat, then consul to Tétouan. However, on September 7th, 1942, she suffered a cycling accident near her house in Sils-Maria, and passed away months later.

Travels

Portugal, USA, the Middle-East, Persia, Switzerland, Congo.

Quotations

Out of all the cities I know, none has been so welcoming as Lisbon, the first time I was here. The capital of a small country, doubtlessly charming, but evidently half-forgotten by history, was so outside of our usual routes that I had never bothered to visit it for its own attractions [...] How happy I felt walking, for the first time, its narrow, steep alleys, stopping before a fountain, making out familiar faces in a café on a noisy, bustling square, buying a Swiss

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newspaper from a frizzy-haired youth, already late in the night, and, the next morning, sighting, from the window of a palace built on tropical exuberance, on emerald green and the first flowers of the year, the glistening surface of the port, full of ships, pennants, and chimneys!

“Rückkehr nach Lissabon”, National-Zeitung, 4.6.1941, translated from: “Regresso à Europa”, trans. Maria Antónia Amarante, in *Annemarie Schwarzenbach em Portugal (1941, 1942)*, Cadernos do Cieg nº 11, Cieg/Minerva, Coimbra, pp. 58 and 59.

Returning to Europe is a sentimental experience, whose intensity, with its a painful joy, I once again felt when, a few days ago, I docked at Lisbon, aboard the Quanza, a Portuguese steamship that does trips to Africa. I’ve not wanted for opportunities to familiarise myself with this feeling, seeing that, since the beginning of the war, I have returned to Europe twice: the first time, coming from India and the second, a year ago, from America, at a time when ships headed to Europe were practically empty, but, on the other hand, those setting off from Lisbon towards the two Americas were crowded with refugees and emigrants from all the nations, races and classes who turned their backs on a threatened, broken-down Europe, searching for peace, safety and prosperity in the distant new continents of the west. [...] Immediately after my arrival in Lisbon, I took a suburban train to Estoril and, an hour later, setting off from the golf course, I trod the pine woods, the tops of windswept hills, the reddish fields and the wet, fragrant meadows. I could have asked myself if I was in a Swedish archipelago, in the Balearic thickets, on the beaches of southern France, on the neighbouring moors adjacent to the North Sea. What surrounded me was the light air, the harsh wind, the soft colours, the sweet proximity and the nostalgic, blue vastness of those days that foretold the European spring.

“Liebe zu Europa”, Thurgauer Zeitung, 6.6.1942, translated from: “Amor à Europa”, trans. Maria Antónia Amarante, in *Annemarie Schwarzenbach em Portugal (1941, 1942)*, Cadernos do Cieg nº 11, Cieg/Minerva, Coimbra, pp. 76, 78 and 79.

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- «Passagiere nach Lissabon», *Die Weltwoche* (7.3.1941) [Passengers to Lisbon]
- «Das Rote Kreuz in Lissabon», *Neue Zurcher Zeitung* (18.3.1941) [The Red Cross in Lisbon]
- «Lissabon – neues Leben in einer alten Stadt»*, *National-Zeitung* (19.3.1941) [Lisbon – a new life in an old city]
- «Heimfahrt aus Amerika», *Luzerner Tagblatt* (22.3.1941) [Return from America]
- «Die Versorgung der Schweiz uber Portugal»*, *Neue Zurcher Zeitung* (23.3.1941) [Switzerland’s supply via Portugal]
- «Die “Schweizer Flotte” im Hafen von Lissabon», *Schweizer Illustrierte* (26.3.1941) [The “Swiss Fleet” at Lisbon port]
- «Offener Himmel uber Lissabon...»*, *Thurgauer Zeitung* (10.4.1941) [Open sky over Lisbon ...]
- «Das Rote Kreuz in Lissabon», *Neue Zurcher Zeitung* (27.4.1941) [The Red Cross in Lisbon]
- «Die Weihe der Schiffe»*, *Die Weltwoche* (16.5.1941) [The blessing of the boats]
- «Ruckkehr nach Lissabon»*, *National-Zeitung* (4.6.1941) [Return to Lisbon]
- «Eine Atempause in Estoril»*, *Die Weltwoche* (6.6.1941) [A breathing pause in

Estoril]

- «Zwischen den Kontinenten»*, *Die Weltwoche* (11.7.1941) [Between the continents]
- «Funchal», *National-Zeitung* (10.9.1941)
- «Äquator», *Die Weltwoche* (19.9.1941) [Equator]
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- «Wiedersehen mit Portugal»*, *Die Weltwoche* (15.5.1942) [Portugal revisited]
- «Internationales Rotes Kreuz. Die Aufgaben in Lissabon»*, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (24.5.1942) [International Red Cross. The tasks in Lisbon]
- «Ein Schiff aus Afrika», *National-Zeitung* (26.5.1942) [A boat from Africa]
- «Spaziergang in Portugal»*, *National-Zeitung* (1.6.1942) [Stroll in Portugal]
- «Liebe zu Europa»*, *Thurgauer Zeitung* (6.6.1942) [Love for Europe]
- «Diplomatenaustausch in Lissabon»*, *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* (18.6.1942) [Diplomat exchange in Lisbon]
- «Der Transport zwischen Lissabon und der Schweiz»*, *Thurgauer Zeitung* (30.6.1942) [Transport between Lisbon and Switzerland]
- «Sonniges, herbes Portugal»*, *Thurgauer Zeitung* (11.7.1942) [Sunny, harsh Portugal]
- «Nationale Jugend in Portugal», *Schweizer Illustrierte Zeitung* (12.7.1942) [National Youth in Portugal]
- «Kleine Weltreise unter der Flagge Portugals. San Thomé und Madeira, zwei Portugiesische Atlantik-Inseln»*, *Luzerner Tagblatt* (8.8.1942) [Small trip around the world under the Portuguese pavilion]
- «Die Jugend Portugals», *Die Tat* (14.8.1942) [Portugal's Youth]
- «Zwischen Afrika und Europa», *Die Tat* (12.2.1943) [Between Africa and Europe]

Other manuscript articles at the Swiss Literary Archive

- «Junge Portugiesische Malerei» (30.4.1941) [Young Portuguese painting]
- «Nach der Ausstellung Edmond Bille in Portugal» (? .5.1941) [After Edmond Bille's

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- exhibition in Portugal]
- «San Thomé, die Insel am Äquator» (31.5.1941) [São Tomé, the Island on the Equator]
 - «Das Beispiel der weiblichen Jugend in Portugal» (4.1942) [The exemple of female youth in Portugal]
 - «Junge Portugiesinnen in Uniform» (12.5.1942) [Young Portuguese women in uniform]
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Gonçalo Vilas-Boas