

Comment

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had instructed, alongside the tombs of her father and mother.

Chateaubriand's tribute

Many years hence, in 1832, two of her once famed group, Chateaubriand and Mme. Récamier, went down again to Coppet to pay a last tribute to Mme. de Stael's resting-place. Chateaubriand after a time seated himself on a bench, his eyes looking both at the Alps and Lake Geneva. He recalled Lord Byron, Voltaire, Rousseau: "*It was on the threshold of Mme. de Stael's tomb that so many illustrious dead came to mind. They seemed to be seeking their kindred shade in order to soar to heaven with her. If ever I have felt both the vanity and the value of fame and life, it was at the entrance of the silent wood, dark and unknown, where rests the one who had shone so brightly and who had enjoyed so much fame*".

"How sad and long a story is life!" wrote Mme. de Stael to Mme Récamier in 1814. This life that had been so agitated and filled with unrealised hopes, with passion and tears, which had always been dominated by enthusiasm for an ideal and which had always shone with kindness, with generosity—this life, like a sad and long story, was ended! All the charm of the cool evenings behind the doomed Jura mountains whose ember sky drew the silver paths of the moon on the ripple-free lake, all this charm was now lost for ever. To the turmoil, to the fame that had surrounded this stormy life, ringed a hollow silence . . . Alone a bird was singing.

COMMENT

THE OSWALD REPORT

National Service clearly plays a more important role in Swiss life than in Great Britain. This is no wonder. Whereas Her Majesty's Forces have the greatest difficulty in maintaining the level of their effectives at a bare 200,000, every able Swiss youth has to serve his stint in the Army. The Swiss Army can therefore be said to be a part of the nation. By its militia aspect and by its claims on the active life of the average citizen it has become as universally shared as holidays and work.

The Army may not perhaps be separated from the nation in practise, it has however become increasingly divorced in spirit from that part of the nation with which it is most directly concerned: the young. In an age of increased freedom, class equality and permissiveness, the Army's etiquette and code of conduct have remained as fossilised as ever. The constraint of saluting superiors in a marked gesture of outward servility, the prohibition of wearing hair overlapping one's bonnet, the repeated duty of announcing oneself, such were the most blatant anachronisms of the Army's enforced behaviour. Not only did these strictures go against the times, they were useless from the point of view of the army's real purpose, which was to be a combat force.

The commission of officers and

Army instructors presided by Dr. Oswald has proposed to brush all this away. It has just published a report, sanctioned by the Head of the Military Department, which contains the guidelines to a complete revolution in the Army.

The Commission has drawn heavily on the Israeli and Swedish examples. Its central theme is that an Army should exist to fight and train its enrollees for combat. All the mumbo-jumbo which is not directly useful to the creation of good warriors should be done away with. Tradition should be sacrificed to efficiency and relevance. The Oswald Report is not primarily inspired by a dislike of the traditional idiosyncracies of Swiss Army conduct, it only purports to be realistic. A rookie thrown from a discotheque world into four months of basic training is not necessarily able to understand the meaning of insistent drills, maniacal cleanliness and punctilious order, especially if these are applied as punishments. Nothing will ever antagonise the youth of today against the Army with more efficiency.

The Oswald Report means to foster the goodwill of the young by making sensible recommendations. The Army will never produce a good fighting force if it is loathed in its very essence by an important proportion of recruits. The time had therefore come to ingratiate them. Among the new usages which the Report will introduce, the address to superiors will be simplified. The French-speaking recruits will no longer have to say "*à vos ordres*"

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mon capitaine!" but get away with "*compris capitaine!*", which is, of course, less obsequious and more functional. Many more changes are proposed. Recruits should be authorised to discard their uniforms during leave and wear civilian clothes. The distinction in apparel between ordinary soldiers and officers should be toned down. The changing of the guard and other inside usages should be simplified. A further proposal of the Report is to retire Army instructors at 54.

The aim of the drafters has not only been to adapt national service to the times and pave the way for a more functional basic training, it has also aimed at producing more independent men.

Many higher officers have criticised the report. It is easy to appreciate how difficult it must be for a professional or semi-professional officer with a long military experience to adjust to such radical proposals. But the case for a change was overwhelming. There was doubtless a certain beauty in the traditional vertical rapports within the Army. The clockwork of prefect order and discipline and the symbolically charged pantomime of traditional etiquette did not lack in appeal. But the newcomer to the Army ready to appreciate these things are getting rarer these days. A rookie scowls when he has to say "*à vos ordres caporal!*" to a fellow of his own age in a clear and reverential voice. He feels that he could just as well say "*O.K.!*" provided there were a sufficiently rigid disciplinary framework to ensure that the order were actually carried out. No one, not even the obstreperous young of today, are against discipline. But against unnatural rigmarole, yes. The Oswald Report is a milestone in the Army's history because it will allow ordinary boys to behave during their national service pretty well the same way as they do in civilian life. It will certainly help to upgrade the popularity of the Army and its union with the Swiss people.

(PMB)

SWISS NEWS

PRESIDENT FOR 1971

The Federal Assembly has elected Mr. Rudolf Gnägi, Head of the Military Department, as President of the Swiss Confederation for 1971. Mr. Gnägi became a member of the Federal Council in succession to Dr. F. T. Wahlen. He entered the State Council of Berne in 1952 and was elected to the National Council in 1953 as a representative of the Agrarian Party. He headed the Department of Transport and Communications until July 1968. He is the 20th Bernese president of the Confederation.

The Vice-President for the year will be Mr. Nelio Celio, Head of the Financial Department. He entered the Federal Council in December 1966 and

was for a time the Head of the Military Department. Mr. Gnägi is 53, and Mr. Celio 56.

(ATS)

THE CASE OF THE BULGARIAN FAMILIES

Three Bulgarian families obtained a tourist visa from the Swiss General Consulate in Turkey. It was made plain to them that there were no possibilities for any foreign tourist of finding work in Switzerland. A few weeks after their entry into Switzerland, these Bulgarians found themselves stranded without a rappen in Geneva. They filed an application for asylum which was refused by the immigration laws. These only grant asylum to refugees who have not previously obtained political asylum elsewhere. The Bulgarians were not in that category, because they had previously obtained asylum from Turkey. They found moral and practical support with the Protestant Social Centre in Geneva, which asked Maître Payot, consultant lawyer of the League for Human Rights, to look after their case. Maître Payot sent a letter to the Department of Justice after the latter had decided to return the refugees to Turkey. This letter, although not in the form of a regular appeal, was interpreted as a request for a re-investigation of the case. Maître Payot decided at the eleventh hour to make a formal appeal against the extradition of the Bulgarians. They will be allowed to remain in Switzerland until a decision on their case is taken.

THE KIDNAPPING OF AMBASSADOR GIOVANNI BUCHER

The British public were more concerned about the power shortages than about the fate of the Swiss ambassador in Rio on December 7th, and this is probably why it has been practically impossible to read about this affair in the British Press.

Mr. Giovanni Bucher, a sportive and courteous bachelor, was making his way towards the Swiss Embassy in Rio early on Monday morning, 7th December, when his limousine was suddenly hemmed in between two small cars. The kidnappers sprang out, armed with pistols, and ordered Mr. Bucher's chauffeur to lie down on the pavement. The ambassador's bodyguard attempted to resist but was immediately shot down. He died later in hospital.

The Brazilian police reacted quickly. It deployed 30,000 men in the Rio area and concentrated its search in the residential areas around Barra de Tujica, a luxury seaside resort situated in an exotic setting north of Rio. There they found one of the cars of the kidnappers. They located the kidnappers' hideout but could not take the risk of investigating it immediately, as this would certainly have cost the life of the Swiss Ambassador. The kidnappers thus had time to break away into the neighbouring jungle.

When this account was written, four days before Christmas, nothing was known of the exact whereabouts of Ambassador Bucher. The Brazilian authorities had received a second message written by him personally on December 17th. The letter was addressed to Mr. Max Feller, the Swiss diplomat who had been dispatched to Rio to replace Mr. Bucher. (In passing, Mr. Max Feller is known to many Swiss in London, as his career brought him to London a few years ago. He has recently been appointed to the new post of Ambassador to Luxembourg). This letter indicated that Mr. Bucher was alive and well, although beginning to feel the strain of his detention. He reiterated the kidnappers' conditions: They were ready to release their captive on the condition that a formal guarantee were given by the Brazilian government that 70 political prisoners would be freed. They also demanded official declarations from the Chilean and Algerian embassies in Brazil that these respective countries were ready to grant political asylum to the 70 prisoners. The kidnappers were ready to give the list of prisoners once these guarantees were given.

This affair is one more episode of the urban guerrilla now being waged against the Brazilian regime. The kidnappers revealed their affiliation in the tracts they left behind them on the scene of the kidnap. They belonged to the same commando group as Joaquim Ferreira Camara, revolutionary leader who was killed two months beforehand on his arrest. It is believed that the raid was organised by Carlos Lamarca, one of the last remaining major leaders of the urban guerrilla. This kidnap was the fourth in a series involving the U.S. ambassador, the Japanese Consul in Sao Paulo and the German Ambassador. All three had been returned alive in exchange for the liberation of political prisoners. The German Ambassador had been exchanged for 40 prisoners who were expatriated to Algeria.

Why choose the Swiss Ambassador? Mr. Apollonio de Carvalho, one of the Brazilian exiles who had been ejected from Switzerland for having made political statements in Geneva last November, revealed that the kidnap had been planned long in advance. There was therefore no direct link between this unfortunate Swiss incident and the choice of a Swiss ambassador. Mr. de Carvalho had been invited with a colleague by the International Commission of Jurists and the League for Human Rights in Geneva to testify on the regime of terror in Brazil. He had said in what he claimed to have been a private conversation that the hijacking of airliners was to be condoned in circumstances of last resort. A Genevese reporter had turned this into a public statement and the Federal Council, still sensitised by the Jordanian affair, had ordered their extradition. The reason advanced by Mr. de Carvalho for the choice of a Swiss ambassador was