

The romantic world of Châteaubriand and Mme. Récamier

Autor(en): **Buchler, Geoffrey H.**

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THE ROMANTIC WORLD OF CHATEAUBRIAND AND MME. RECAMIER

BY GEOFFREY H. BUCHLER, PhD

Dr. Buchler is a senior consultant for one of the largest assurance companies in the UK. This represents something of a change of direction for him as his former studies were centered round the 19th century romantic period. In addition to contributing articles to a number of publications he has been a regular albeit infrequent contributor to the Swiss Observer for a number of years. We are greatly indebted to him for this sensitive and meticulously researched article.

WGS



Françoise René, Vicomte de Chateaubriand, 1768-1848, French author and diplomat. Picture by courtesy of Radio Times Hulton Picture Library, London.

Chateaubriand was not only the most celebrated writer of the first half of the nineteenth century; he was also gifted with a political intelligence. Yet while his success as a literary Midas (who borrows from right and left and transforms all he touches into gold) came easily and remained with him all his life, his political career was confined to two years at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The reasons for this are complex, deriving partly from events and partly from his own character. He was a man of complete integrity. Thus, upon hearing of the execution of the Duc d'Enghien in 1804 he at once resigned as Minister to the Valais, to which he had just been appointed and so condemned himself to ten years of political exile. His ambition was enormous, yet he sacrificed it to a cause about which he himself soon lost all illusions. A legitimist by conviction, while at the same time a passionate advocate of constitutional monarchy and freedom of the press, he placed himself in an impossible situation; by his liberalism he incurred the dislike and mistrust of the Kings whose cause he faithfully supported.

As an author, his religious work *Le Génie du Christianisme* is singularly unconvincing, and the only one of his works that is still widely read — his *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe* — was not published in full until after his death. As a husband he was doomed to failure both by temperament and by the choice of an unsuitable wife. As a lover he was enthusiastic and successful but highly inconstant. Only one woman was able to hold a central place in his heart from the moment he came to know her until his death thirty years later, and she was one of the most remarkable women of her time — Madame Récamier.

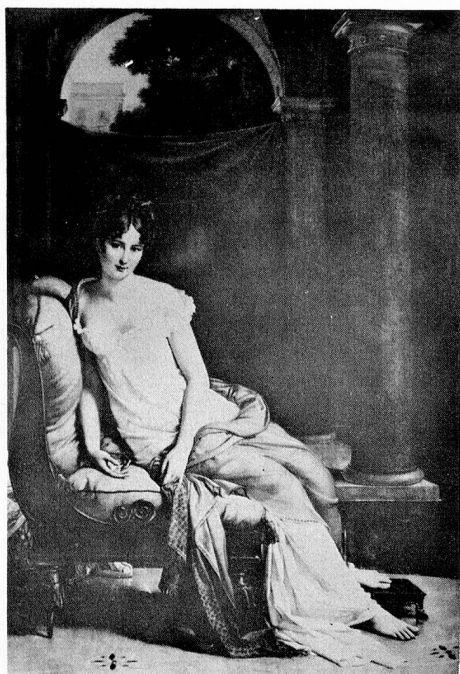
Born at St. Malo on 4th September, 1768, François René Vicomte de Chateaubriand was 22 when he embarked

upon his first adventure. That year, sickened by the excesses he had witnessed in Paris during the early period of the Revolution, he set sail for America to search for the North-West Passage. By January 1791 he was back in France, persuaded of the hopeless nature of his quest. In the meantime he had travelled through the virgin forests of North America, had only just escaped being dragged over the Niagara Falls by his horse and had spent 12 days as the guest of Red Indians. On his departure, he had closely missed being eaten by sharks, and was nearly shipwrecked in a storm. He had certainly not accomplished what he had set out to do, but his exceptional powers of imagination demanded expression. He had determined to become a writer, and he thus brought back with him the framework out of which he was later to mould *Atala*, *René* and *Les Natchez*.

He now found that the suppression of feudal rights had almost entirely deprived him of his patrimony and that his private income had been sequestered by the Government with other Church property. The only hope of financial recovery seemed to lie in marriage to a rich woman. It so happened that a young orphaned girl of 17 called Céleste de Lavigne was then living in St. Malo with her grandfather. Chateaubriand describes her as having been at that time fair-skinned and delicate, slim and very pretty, with lovely naturally curly hair. After a curious courtship, he married her on 19th March, 1792. Céleste soon conceived for him a love and devotion that were to last throughout her life, although they were not reciprocated.

What sort of a person was Céleste de Chateaubriand? Her husband, in a passage in his *Mémoires* written 30 years after their marriage, extolled her keen intelligence and her original and cultured mind and claimed that it was impossible

to deceive her about anything. However, apart from some rather left-handed tributes there are few references to Mme de Chateaubriand in the *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*, and of those only one or two betray how much, during their periods of close proximity, she got on her husband's nerves. He was fundamentally romantic, while she was a realist with a dry sense of humour and a sceptical turn of mind. For a man so concerned with his public and private image it must have been a trial to be married to a woman whom it was impossible to deceive. His rhetorical questions make little attempt to disguise a fact that was already public knowledge, namely, that his passion for women involved him in one liaison after another throughout his married life. Defenceless against his ceaseless infidelity, his wife took refuge in a pretended indifference to what she was powerless to prevent, referring to his mistresses as *les dames de mon mari* or *les Madames*.



Jeanne Françoise Julie Adelaide Récamier, 1777-1849 was, for many years, the love of Chateaubriand's life. She was considered to be one of the most beautiful women in Europe. The picture is by courtesy of Radio Times Hulton Picture Library, London.

In effect, Chateaubriand's marriage started badly. Three and a half months after it had taken place, he left with his brother to join the *armée des émigrés* and it was not until eight years later that he returned to France. By then he had already published his first book, the *Essai sur les révolutions*, and as his name was as yet almost unknown in his own country he sent up a *ballon d'essai* in the form of *Atala*, which he extracted from his *magnum opus* and published in April 1801. It was an immediate success, and as a result *Le Génie du Christianisme* appeared a year later.

Although religious persecution since 1789 had failed to destroy the influence of the Roman Catholic religion upon the French people, that of the *philosophes* was still strong among the intellectuals, and many of them were shocked by this lapse from rationalism – and highly sceptical of its success. "Oh my God! our poor Chateaubriand!" exclaimed Mme de Staël when she read the chapter on virginity; but she had reckoned without the prevailing atmosphere of the time. A swing of the pendulum was bringing about a religious revival in France which Bonaparte hoped to turn to his own use. "The people must have a religion and that religion must be in the hands of the Government", he is alleged to have said. A week before the publication of *Le Génie du Christianisme* he had signed his Concordat with the Pope. Chateaubriand fully realised that his book had, in addition to its intrinsic merit, what he termed *une valeur accidentale*, that of being published at the most propitious moment. Its success was immense.

Chateaubriand's appointment as First Secretary at the French Embassy in Rome in May 1804 lasted but a year before his abrupt resignation from political office. Suffering at times from what was called *le mal du siècle*, Chateaubriand fancied himself in a state of perpetual *ennui*. In fact, his life at that time appears to have been reasonably happy. His mistress of the day, Delphine de Custine, a woman who was apparently as fascinating as she was politically unreliable, held great sway amongst the social elite of Paris. However, Chateaubriand was soon to lead a more conjugal life when he bought a small house in the village of La Vallée aux

Loups, where for the following seven years he and his wife spent a lot of their time. It was also where, in 1811, he began to write his *Mémoires*.

Immediately after Napoleon's defeat in 1814, Chateaubriand was back in Paris campaigning for a representative government. Yet, on the formation of the provisional government he received no post in it, and his eloquent pleas for resistance to the Emperor's return fell on deaf ears. It was with rage and astonishment that he learned of the King's desertion of the capital; there was no alternative but to follow him to Ghent. During the second Restoration he was no more successful: the pamphlet in which he re-stated his political tenets was seized by the royal favourite, Decazes, who was at that time Minister of Police. Chateaubriand's name was struck off the list of Ministers and he lost his ministerial pension. His financial position was, therefore, exceedingly precarious when, in May 1817, he fell in love with Mme. Récamier.

The most celebrated beauty of her time, Juliette Récamier was now in her fortieth year. Since the age of 18 she had been accustomed to receive the homage and devotion of many of the most distinguished men of the first half of the nineteenth century. Indeed, during the whole of her long life scarcely anyone, either man or woman, who met her failed to succumb to her extraordinary appeal. A genuinely kind heart and generous nature were coupled with a tact and sympathy that enabled her to turn even the most ardent of admirers into life-long friends. Sainte-Beuve, in his essay on Mme Récamier, described her success as owing to her personal charms: she possessed the beauty, grace and simplicity of a Raphael madonna. Yet beauty and grace were far from being the only qualities that won Juliette Récamier her exceptional renown, and Benjamin Constant probably came nearer to the truth when he wrote of her: *Cette femme me saisit tout à coup et m'inspire un sentiment violent. Le travail, la politique, la littérature, tout est fini. Le règne de Juliette commence.*

Born in Lyons on 3rd December, 1777, the daughter of a solicitor, she married at 15 a rather elderly and well-known banker, Jacques Récamier. M. Récamier was amiable, good-tempered

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and generous, but he was not endowed with any depth of feeling. Indeed, his relationship with his wife was never more than a semi-paternal one. At first she led a somewhat retired existence under the Directory, but she soon began to entertain at Clichy, to attend occasional dinner-parties with her husband in Paris, and to frequent the Opéra, where she had a box. At that time she took singing lessons and played the harp and piano — her excellent memory for music enabling her to continue to play even in her old age when she was almost completely blind.

Her beauty and charm made so great an impression upon all who saw her that she soon became celebrated even among the Parisian populace. Her occasional appearances in public attracted a crowd which, according to Benjamin Constant, only her extreme modesty and tact could keep at a respectable distance.

In 1798, when she was 21, she met Mme de Stäel, who was at that time 32, and they became close friends. Mme de Stäel's letters to her showed how much she admired her: she remained devoted to her all her life. Curiously, Mme de Stäel's son fell in love with Mme Récamier, and so did two of the men with whom she herself was or had been in love — the charming and attractive historian Prosper de Barante and Benjamin Constant. Whatever Mme de Stäel's qualities may have been, a lack of possessiveness towards the men she loved cannot be counted among them. Yet she resigned herself without any apparent bitterness to the spectacle of one after another of her men friends and former admirers falling at the feet of the woman who was known throughout Europe as *la divine Juliette*. It is true that, by the time this fate overcame Benjamin Constant, Mme de Stäel had a new follower, a dashing if inarticulate ex-cavalry officer called Jean Rocca; yet it is clear from her letters that Mme Récamier filled a role in her life which none of her male admirers could replace. Where Benjamin Constant had brought out the worst in Mme de Stäel, Mme Récamier brought out the best in her. With Constant she was tyrannical, jealous, possessive and given to violent scenes; with Juliette Récamier she was warm-hearted, devoted, loyal and generous in her admiration for a woman younger and more beautiful than herself.

During her early years in Paris, Mme Récamier held a brilliant salon in which she entertained many distinguished people, among them Bernadotte, the future King of Sweden; the two cousins Matthieu and Adrien de Montmorency, the former a future Foreign Minister, the latter subsequently to become Ambassador in Madrid, Rome, Vienna and London; Charles James Fox; Lord and Lady Holland, and Talma, the celebrated tragic actor. Even during a visit to England in 1812 she was presented to the Prince Regent and to the exiled duc d'Orléans and widely acclaimed in aristocratic circles.

During the years 1805-6 M. Récamier over-reached himself in his

banking operations, and being unable to obtain a loan from the Bank of France — "I am not Mme Récamier's lover", said Napoleon coldly when the request was put to him — he went bankrupt. He sold his house in the rue du Mont Blanc; his wife sold her silver and jewellery, and they moved into a furnished apartment. M. Récamier's ruin, however, did not entail social disgrace: on the contrary, his wife's friends and acquaintances flocked to her house to show their solidarity for her in her misfortune. Her husband's bankruptcy was closely followed by another blow — the death of her mother, which occurred the next year. Her health was affected by this double misfortune, and, in the hope of restoring it, she decided to join Mme de Stäel at Coppet. She went there in July 1807 and remained until mid-November. Among the guests was Prince Augustus of Prussia, a nephew of Frederick the Great. It came as no surprise to learn that before long he had fallen in love with Mme Récamier. On this occasion the unexpected happened: for the first time in her life she, too, fell in love. However, the prospect of leaving her husband, and eventually her own country, filled her with dismay, and she shrank from the scandal that would result from an annulment of her marriage. She withdrew from an engagement into which she regretted ever having entered. Nevertheless, the Prince seems to have been the only man besides Chateaubriand who ever stirred in her the feelings that she often aroused in others; for Mme Récamier was quite an incorrigible flirt. Her marriage provided none of the emotional fulfilment for which her warm nature craved and, although her love for her adopted niece was clearly a source of much comfort to her, she had no children of her own.

In 1811 Mme de Stäel, in exile at Coppet, suffered from an intellectual isolation that amounted almost to a living death. Moreover, she feared that if her friends should attempt to visit her there they would suffer a similar fate: her fear was justified. To side with Mme de Stäel was, in Napoleon's eyes, to side with the enemy. Mme Récamier was perfectly aware of the danger, but she chose to ignore it. Their mutual friend Matthieu de Montmorency had recently been forbidden to live within a hundred miles of Paris, for daring to join Mme de Stäel in Switzerland; and an attempt that Mme Récamier made to visit Coppet in August incurred the same penalty. After a short stay in Lyons she travelled through Italy and spent some time with the King and Queen of Naples, Joachim and Caroline Murat, returning to Paris only after Napoleon's banishment to Elba.

Anxiety

Murat was anxious that a convincing defence of his right to the throne of Naples should be put before the Allied powers at the Congress of Vienna.

Mme Récamier advised him to commission Benjamin Constant to draw up a memorandum on the King's behalf, and undertook to enlist his services for this purpose. In effect, she had known Constant for a long time and had passed many months in his company at Coppet during the period of his liaison with Mme de Stäel, and of his secret marriage to Charlotte von Hardenberg. He had now reappeared in Paris without either of them, allowing Mme Récamier to focus upon him her powers of persuasion. She was only too successful: Constant conceived a sudden and desperate passion for her which her indifference and his wounded vanity fanned to ever great intensity. It was probably under the influence of his new infatuation that he published on 20th March, 1815, an article in the *Journal de Paris* depicting the dangers inherent in the return of the Emperor, following it up on the 19th with a violent attack upon Napoleon in the *Journal des Débats*. On the 20th the Emperor took up residence in the Tuileries, and within three weeks he had sent for Benjamin Constant, appointed him Councillor of State, and charged him to draw up an "Additional Act of the Imperial Constitution". This *volte-face* on Constant's part was not so surprising as it was sudden. He had already switched his allegiance from Bernadotte, whom he had considered a likely candidate for the French throne, to the Bourbons, who had retrieved it, and his outburst against Napoleon derived rather from a desire to impress Mme Récamier. Fortunately for him, the instability of his nature matched the brilliance of his intellect. His passion was violent but it could not take deep root, and after a turbulent 14 months it finally withered away.

Duke's penchant

Meanwhile, M. Récamier had restored his financial position to its former prosperous state and his wife resumed her entertaining. Among the guests she received were Metternich, Bernadotte, the painter David, Delacroix and Canova. The Duke of Wellington had a *penchant* for her, and among the foreign princes who braved Napoleon's displeasure to call upon her were the Prince of Bavaria (later Ludwig I), and the Prince of Württemberg. Thus Mme Récamier's salon, unconnected as it was either with the Emperor's Court or with that of the Bourbons, had become a focal point for statesmen, writers and artists of many European countries and of varied political persuasions. To Chateaubriand it presented an ideal environment in which to develop his ideas by discussion with some of the most brilliant intellects of his time, and there, also, he could observe the effect of his new works upon a discerning audience. The occasion of Chateaubriand's reading from *Le Dernier des Abencérages*, in 1814, was not the first time he had met Mme Récamier. When he had first done so, in 1801, he

was as yet comparatively unknown — *Atala* was published in April of that year — and he lacked self-confidence. Spell-bound by the presence of the celebrated beauty and wretchedly conscious of the gulf between them, he remained tongue-tied, wishing desperately that she were less beautiful or he more famous. They were not to meet again for 13 years, and 16 were to elapse before their lives became inextricably linked together.

This was in May 1817. Mme de Staël who had returned to Coppet from France had invited some friends to dinner, but at the last moment illness prevented her from being present herself. Chateaubriand and Mme Récamier were among the guests and they sat next to each other at table. They were both silent during most of the meal, but finally Mme Récamier expressed her concern about their hostess's health. Chateaubriand raised his eyes to hers, and his fate was sealed. Their infatuation was instantaneous and mutual. "It would be impossible for anyone to have had their head turned more completely than mine was by M. de Chateaubriand", Mme Récamier told a friend many years later. She fell into a state of nervous distraction and was constantly in tears. Soon, completely to succumb to her emotion, the result of her committal was a love that was to last on both sides for 30 years.

Second failure

In the summer of 1819, M. Récamier, busy again with financial affairs, failed in business for the second time: Mme Récamier losing 100,000 francs of her own money as a result. This time M. Récamier's ruin came at an opportune moment for her; obliged to move out of their house she decided to move by herself (with her niece) into an apartment of a teaching convent, l'Abbaye-aux-Bois. No sooner had she moved than a stream of friends and acquaintances began to visit her. Younger men and women of talent, among them Alexis de Tocqueville and Prosper Mérimée began to join her circle. People of all ranks of society sought her

protection, for, as Sainte-Beuve wrote, "to be protected by Mme Récamier was for 30 years the most infallible of recommendations". Yet it was not from ambition or a love of intrigue that Mme Récamier used the considerable influence she possessed: she did so simply out of goodness of heart and a wish to help other people, just as her influence derived from no actual political power but from the desire of others to please her. Of all the visitors to the Abbaye-aux-Bois, none was more assiduous than Chateaubriand. Every morning he wrote her a note and every afternoon at three o'clock he called on her with such unfailing punctuality that he claimed the inhabitants of the neighbourhood regulated their clocks by his visits.

At last, in 1820, Chateaubriand's political star began to rise. Until then his ambition in this sphere had been constantly blighted, and he harboured a justifiable feeling of bitterness towards the Bourbons for their disloyalty to him. A change was on its way, though. For in February 1820 the assassination of the King's legitimate heir, the duc de Berry, brought about the fall of his favourite, Decazes, and the inclusion of the ultra-royalist opposition in the Government became inevitable. Although Chateaubriand, as leader of the ultras in the *Chambre des Pairs*, played an important part in the formation of the new ministry, the King's aversion to him prevented his being called to office. He was therefore — since he could not altogether be overlooked — appointed Ambassador to Berlin, a post he naturally accepted without enthusiasm. Thus he set off for Germany on 1st January, 1821.

London

However, by December another change of government put the Ministry of Foreign Affairs into the hands of Matthieu de Montmorency. The following April Chateaubriand was posted as Ambassador to London, where he lived with a pomp that contrasted gloriously with his former poverty as an exile in England. On his return, as one of the delegates to the Congress of Verona, he

found himself in a position to achieve his greatest ambition. The resignation of Matthieu de Montmorency from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had left a vacancy which was offered to him. He at first affected an extreme reluctance to accept it, which deceived no one but caused him to suffer some moments of anxiety lest the King should call his bluff. Fortunately for him this did not happen.

Once in the Ministry, he immediately put into effect a plan he had been nursing for some time: to restore the Bourbon King to the throne of Spain by the intervention of French troops. The campaign was short and immediately successful. The triumph went completely to his head. His visits to the Abbaye-aux-Bois became shorter and less frequent, and he fell violently in love with a woman of 27, Mme de Castellane. Not wishing to remain in Paris in such circumstances, Mme Récamier left for Italy. There she renewed her friendship with Hortense, the former Queen of Holland, and with Caroline Murat, as well as with Canova, who did a bust of her.

Dismissed

In June 1824 Chateaubriand was summarily dismissed from the Foreign Ministry. His fall was due neither to any failure in the pursuit of France's foreign policy, nor to any lack of political intelligence or gift of oratory, for he excelled most of his contemporaries in both. His arrogance, vanity and egoism were his undoing. He was unable and unwilling to conceal the fact that he despised most of his political rivals, and he felt for them a personal animosity which they fully reciprocated. Neither the death of Louis XVIII, and the succession of Charles X in 1824, nor the fall of Villèle's government in 1828 restored his political fortune.

At the end of May 1825 Mme Récamier returned to Paris from her self-imposed exile in Italy. As soon as he learned of her arrival Chateaubriand hastened to the Abbaye-aux-Bois. Chastened if embittered by his sudden fall from power, he now recognised which of his personal attachments meant most to him; and Juliette Récamier had gained



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in understanding what she had lost in illusions. She now moved into a larger apartment on the first floor of the Abbaye-aux-Bois and began again to entertain widely. Chateaubriand presided over the salon like the god of the hearth, and readings of his works were the order of the day. His effective political career was now over: he returned to diplomacy, and was appointed Ambassador to Italy. Engulfed in a mortal *ennui* he wrote by every courier to Mme Récamier. Formerly she had languished in Italy while he was soaring on the wings of triumph in Paris. Now, happy in the certainty of his love, she lived peacefully in France surrounded by devoted friends and admirers. It was with immense relief that he returned to France at the end of May 1829, and she received him with joy. From now on until his death in 1848 he was seldom separated from her for long. She enveloped him with her care and solicitude, and her salon was once again devoted to France's most illustrious writer.

As the result of an accident in the summer of 1846 his condition deteriorated greatly, and from then on he was unable to walk. After his wife's death Chateaubriand begged Mme Récamier to marry him, but she refused, pointing out that such a step was quite unnecessary at their age, and that nothing could increase their complete devotion to each other. In her dying years, Mme Récamier continued to devote herself with all her remaining strength to Chateaubriand, whose only solace now lay in her company. He died on 4th July, 1848. She lived on, a ghost among ghosts, for almost a year until on 11th May, 1849, she too passed away.

As for Chateaubriand, the aesthetic brilliance of his life, which has lived on till this very moment, is obvious and undeniable. Not surprisingly his is the name that comes readily to mind whilst Mme Récamier's is lost, as it were, in fuliginous obscurity. For this reason, and for this reason alone, every reflection, every facet of his life is grist for the mill of the critic.

Each element, staggering in its grandeur, or infinitely small in its detail, brings us closer to a truer appreciation of the master he really was.

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BELLINZONA. — Strascico elettorale. — Secondo i vigenti regolamenti elettorali federali per il Cantone Ticino si è dovuto procedere ad una votazione di ballottaggio per scegliere i due deputati fra i tre candidati al Consiglio degli Stati che alla votazione dello scorso ottobre erano usciti in capo alla lista, ossia *Masoni* (liberale) *Stefani* (pop. dem.) e *Poma* (socialista). Il ballottaggio effettuato il 9 novembre ha dato il seguente risultato: Masoni 30,044 voti, Stefani 28,726, Poma 16,315. Resta quindi eliminato l'esponente socialista.

FAIDO. — Nuovo capogruppo liberale. — Il consigliere nazionale ticinese, Luigi Generali, è stato nominato venerdì, 21 novembre, presidente del Gruppo radicale-democratico delle Camere federali. Generali succede in questa carica al sangallese Paul Buerger, consigliere agli stati. In un comunicato, la frazione radicale annuncia che s'adopererà con gli altri partiti rappresentati in Governo a favorire la messa a punto d'un programma di lavoro per la nuova legislatura. Stima per altro che la composizione politica del Consiglio federale non dovrebbe essere modificato.

LUGANO. — Calo del reddito nazionale. — Secondo anticipazioni rilasciate dal prof. Kneschaurek, delegato governativo per problemi congiunturali, quest'anno il reddito nazionale lordo calerà dal 4 al 5% rispetto all'anno scorso, con una diminuzione netta di circa 6 miliardi di franchi. Kneschaurek ritiene che l'attività edilizia denuncerà una diminuzione complessiva del volume del 30% e l'industria un calo di produzione del 15-20%. Il delegato governativo, nel quadro d'una conferenza tenuta a Zurigo, ha lanciato un'appello a datori di lavoro e a salariati esortandoli ad affrontare come una sfida la situazione attuale e, superato lo choc, ad agire concordi con quella fede che, come si sa, "sposta le montagne". Non dobbiamo attenderci dall'esterno, nemmeno dallo Stato, la soluzione dei problemi attuali. Occorre affrontare la situazione con rinnovato spirito d'iniziativa pronti singolarmente ad accettare anche sacrifici. Kneschaurek ha fatto notare che l'attuale situazione è dovuta alla recessione che ha colpito tutti i paesi industrializzati e la maggior parte di quelli in fase di sviluppo non produttori di petrolio. Soltanto nei paesi dell'OCSE lo smercio di prodotti industriali è calato da 400 a 500 miliardi di franchi. Il volume del commercio mondiale è sceso del 9-10%. Sulla Svizzera hanno influito soprattutto 2 fattori negativi: l'alto corso del franco, che rischia di salire ancora, e il mancato aumento annuo della popolazione di circa

100,000 anime. Proprio pel calo dell'aumento della popolazione si assiste oggi ad una ridimensione dell'economia interna.

PIOTTA. — Ponte eliminato. — Mercoledì, 19 novembre s'è provveduto alla demolizione del ponte Sort, in cemento precompresso, sito a nord dell'abitato di Piotta. Il ponte era stato costruito 22 anni fa secondo una tecnica che allora era considerata d'avanguardia. Il manufatto, lungo una quarantina di metri, fino a pochi mesi fa era parte integrante della strada cantonale. In quel punto s'è successivamente provveduto a costruire una deviazione per consentire la demolizione del manufatto, che lascia il posto al tracciato della futura autostrada. La demolizione del manufatto rivestiva particolare interesse tecnico in quanto che era la prima volta in Svizzera che si provvedeva allo smantellamento d'un ponte in cemento precompresso. Il ponte è stato demolito con l'impiego di pani d'esplosivo sistemati al centro e alle 2 estremità. Provocata l'accensione, il manufatto è crollato di schianto, spaccato in 2 tronconi.

ROBASACCO. — Niente piazza di tiro. — L'Alpe di Caneggio non verrà venduto alla Confederazione. L'assemblea patriziale di Robasacco nel corso d'una riunione straordinaria tenutasi domenica, 16 novembre, ha infatti respinto l'offerta del DMF interessato all'acquisto dell'alpe per creare una zona di tiro. La decisione è stata presa all'unanimità dei presenti ch'erano ben 75 tra cui il deputato al Gran Consiglio, Claudio Lafranchi. L'alpe di Caneggio che si trova sotto il Camoghè ha un'area di circa 2 milioni di m.q. Comproprietari sono il Patriziato di Robasacco e quello di Medeglia. Quest'ultimo già s'era espresso negativamente sull'offerta della Confederazione che intendeva rilevare l'area pagando 40 cent. il m.q. L'opposizione del Patriziato di Robasacco, come del resto quella del Patriziato di Medeglia, non è dovuta a ragioni di carattere finanziario ma alla consapevolezza che la regione va salvaguardata pel suo ricco patrimonio boschivo e anche per le sue numerose e preziose sorgenti d'acqua.

BELLINZONA. — Il testone numismatico. — Un collezionista ticinese ad una recente asta a Zurigo ha acquistato una moneta di ½ testone coniata dalla Zecca di Bellinzona dopo il 1503. Si tratta d'esemplare in ottimo stato di conservazione. Sul davanti porta lo scudo sormontato dall'aquila bicipite e coronato ai fianchi da 2 bische. Sul rovescio è effigiato il San Martinus Episcopus, il santo protettore di Svitto, che siede in