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# The Swiss Observer

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war had been "won in Switzerland", the espionage hub of the two camps. The book related Captain Masson's secret dealings with the Nazi espionage chief Walter Schellenberg and received considerable publicity at the time.

The interviews between General Guisan and Schellenberg are also depicted in the *Bonjour Report*. It enlivens the reading but does not really reveal an important event. The details of what was said between the two men were not reported but it appears that Schellenberg had come all the way from Berlin only to hear from Guisan himself that Switzerland was not going to compromise on her territorial integrity under any circumstances. Actually, Schellenberg never mentioned this meeting in his "Memoirs". The question of territorial integrity came up again toward the end of the war, as the Allies were driving the Germans away from Italy and France. More men were mobilised to guard the borders and negotiations took place between Guisan and General De Lattre to make sure that the war and its sequel would not overflow into Switzerland.

The *Bonjour Report* is not only a remarkably readable account of vital historical events, it is also a rich portrait gallery of the greatest interest to all contemporaries of Switzerland's war-time leaders. But one must have sufficiently long holidays . . .

(PMB)

## LE "REDUIT NATIONAL"

Georges Piroué, a Swiss author established in Paris, has written a book on war time Switzerland of a rather different vein than the *Bonjour Report*. His book is called "*Le Reduit National*". It is the story of a company confined to an upper valley of the Alps with the mission of guarding a railway bridge. The war is raging abroad, but for this isolated company, stiff with

boredom and lewd dreams, it is a far and distant echo with which they are remotely concerned. The long trains of sealed wagons, packed with their mysterious loads, climb up the mountain in endless files and disappear in the tunnel on their way to Italy. The bored sentinels watch them pass and patrol absently on the bridge. They enliven their beat by staring down the valley with their field glasses, hoping to catch signs of life and movement in the villages below. They see the artillery men of the regiment haul their vast twenty-pounders in the field, pull off their covers, swivel their lethargic machinery and wait the whole day in lazy alertness for an enemy that would not come, and return to their barracks. But the company finds a way of transfiguring the hours of the long evenings. There is the *Magi*, who hypnotises people while the company sit on their haunches and watch intently, listening bemused to the hypnotic divagations of their comrades. But life wears on until one day, the company's disciplinarian Sergeant Klug goes mad and is shot down accidentally. Another rookie comes home to the barracks dead drunk and swearing, forces himself into a game of Jass and drags off to sleep never to wake up again.

The book is quite short, almost a short story, but this gives it formal beauty and consistency. It is written in a limpid and evocative style, which makes George Piroué a worthy disciple of Proust.

(PMB)

# COMMENT

## THE "ROMANDS" AND THE FRENCH

The French-speaking Swiss and the French share common ancestors. They both spring from the Burgunders, the Celts, the Gauls and have both been shaped by the same civilising influence of Rome. History has endowed both nations with the same language and both people can pride themselves of one trait commonly shared: they are Latins.

But further than that they differ in almost every aspect. The relations between the French and the French-speaking Swiss have always been tinged with a touch of mutual irony. The French traditionally tease the Swiss for their historically subservient and inglorious role of vergers and mercenaries. For reasons which escape the understanding, the French, a strongly bourgeois people, consider the Swiss as small-minded and middle-class shopkeepers. A new word has become increasingly in use in their spoken language. It is "*s'ensuisser*" and is supposed to have the same meaning as "*s'embourgeoiser*" with, however, a

marked contemptuous connotation. I do not think that the *Académie Française* has passed this expression for regular and acceptable usage. Let us hope that it will never do so—this might create a diplomatic incident. But the fact that this deprecatory idiom has gained ground shows what the image the Swiss have in the minds of the French. The French are also known to be amused by the singing accent and the colourful expressions of the Swiss vernacular. And, lastly, they consider their small neighbours as mental oxes with slothy reactions. This, of course, is injurious to Genevese or Valais Swiss, whose sharp sense of repartie and witticism should not be confused with the same of less Latin Swiss. The French tend to put under one Swiss label and one national characteristic people as different as the Appenzeller, the Graubündener and the Genevese.

The French-speaking Swiss naturally react against their powerful neighbours for their untrue vision of the Swiss character. The French, they say, speak before they have any ideas to express. The essential is to speak. They have love of fine words and dainty vocabulary which *Romands*, who ponder more before they say something, consider as blue stocking perversion. "We have ideas which reach our speech with difficulty", wrote a Swiss journalist. "The essential thing is our conscience. The French have fugitive opinions. We search for unalterable convictions. At the limit, this yields our sparkless honesty and the superficial elegance of the French".

The French-speaking Swiss may readily concede that the French have more taste and a more developed sense of etiquette. But the same journalist commented: "In France, there are no truths, there are fashions. The opposite would apply with us, our truths belong to our communes, our families". The Swiss may envy the gaiety of the French, their exciting and brilliant style of life. They are perhaps aware of pondering over life too much, of perhaps making it too plain. But their strongest criticism is aimed at the French tendency to place their culture above that of other countries and their own. The French have Paris, a prestigious capital that drains the intellectual and artistic sap of the nation. The Genevese have Geneva, the Lausanne have Lausanne and each are proud of their local cultural achievements which do not attempt to vie with those of an overriding capital.

Many French-Swiss intellectuals are concerned by the French cultural invasion. The Swiss, after all, prefer to watch the French TV channel and listen to "Europe No. 1". Pop music and fashion came from beyond the Jura and most of the new literature for sale in a Geneva bookshop are French editions. But this is the natural fate of a small country living in the cultural orbit of powerful neighbours. The in-



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fluence of Germany is just as strong in Zurich or Basle.

The French and the French-Swiss then share a common ancestry, a common Latinity, the same language and little more. But even the French language differs on either side of the border. The written style of a Swiss newspaper can be easily distinguished from the prose of a Paris daily. The same obtains for German-Swiss dailies, whose German have a flavour absent from "Die Welt" and the home-style of "Der Spiegel". The accents of Geneva, Vaud, the Jura, the Valais and Fribourg are all profoundly different, and the French, who tend to make fun of the Swiss accent should rather admire the diversity in the vernacular of such a small territory and perhaps realise that the blather of the Marseilles bistrot-keeper sounds phonetically uglier than the worse twang of a wine-grower from Vaud!

The German-Swiss have a language of their own and this helps to confirm their identity with respect to Germany. The French-Swiss use the language of their great neighbour but this has not prevented them from retaining a staunch cultural identity of their own. This shows that language is not the strongest bond, and that a particular differing political heritage has as much influence in shaping the minds of people with an intellectual life stemming from the same root.

(PMB)

## SWISS NEWS

### TO PROTECT WHAT IS "MADE IN SWITZERLAND"

The Federal Council has recently published its proposals for a watchmaking law which would complete the 26th September, 1890 law on the protection of watch makes. Also included are proposals for a ten year decree on the quality control of watches. Both the law and decree would take effect after 1971 and will be specifically designed to protect the name and the reputation of Swiss watches.

The new law will define what can be designated as a "Swiss Watch". Following the recommendations of the Watchmaking Federation, a watch will be legally "Swiss" when its movement will have been assembled, set in motion and checked in Switzerland and when 50 per cent of the value of its components will be of Swiss origin. A Swiss watch will moreover have to be tested in Switzerland according to official standards. The decree will lay down that only those watches of a certain minimum quality shall be marked as "Swiss". This measure will ensure that the quality reputation of the Swiss

watch will not be compromised by the cheaper products coming from the Swiss watch industry. Buyers all over the world associate "quality" with "Swiss", especially in the field of watches. Describing a bad watch as "Swiss" would therefore be a misrepresentation which could be harmful to a vital export industry exporting 97 per cent of its output.

When the Federal Council debated eight years ago on the present legal status of the watchmaking industry, it decided to abandon the traditional interventionist policy which had been introduced to protect the industry in the crisis years of the 1920's and 1930's. The new proposals will represent a complete break from 40 years of interventionistic policy.

(ATS)

### LAUSANNE WELCOMES BACK HER GI'S

Six months after the end of the war, the Swiss National Tourist Office and the American General Staff made arrangements for American servicemen who had fought on the German and Italian fronts to have a rest and relaxation trip to Switzerland. 25,000 of them visited Lausanne in 1945 alone and this mass visit was to boost local tourism from its war-time lethargy.

The New York and San Francisco offices of the SNTTO have decided to mark the 25th anniversary of this event by inviting some of these uniformed post-war guests to make a pilgrimage to Lausanne. Two of them were traced back. A Mr. Steve Marcinek and a Mr. Jesse Ellsworth will thus be received in grand style with their families by the Association for Lausanne's Touristic Interests and be guided round the Canton of Vaud.

(ATS)

### AN EXPULSION THREAT UPHELD BY THE FEDERAL COURT

An Italian doctor resident in Switzerland and married to a Swiss woman was formally warned of expulsion at the end of the Globus battle in which he had taken part. His appeal to the executive council of the town of Zurich to have this warning lifted was rejected. He pursued his case before the country's highest instance, the Federal Court of Lausanne, where the judges upheld the former decisions.

The man had not been actually sentenced to expulsion and was therefore not appealing against any direct expulsion order. His claim was that the Zurich police had not had the right of letting the menace of deportation hang over him. The Federal judges took due regard of his personal background and his Communist environment from an early age, but decided that he had shown an unwillingness to submit to the rules of his host country and that, as such, the written threat of expulsion provided in the aliens' legislation was justified.