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La Place Je la Concorde Sussie

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black and white photographs add to the richness of the volume. In sum, the parts of *The Continental Army* comprise a first-class reference book no enthusiast of the American Revolution—sailor or not—can do without.

JAMES JOHNSON
Major, US Army

McPhee, John. *La Place de la Concorde Suisse*. New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1984. 150pp. \$12.95

John McPhee, who has written sixteen books before this one and is a staff writer for *The New Yorker*, went to Switzerland to observe Swiss Army training. He was present for a “refresher” course among the high Alps of the Canton de Valais with the Eighth Battalion of the Fifth Regiment of the Tenth Mountain Division. The book’s title is a geographical place name and has no association with the same name in Paris.

The book is written in journalistic style, presumably to “make it more interesting.” It hops around from subject to subject and is interspersed with anecdotes, rather than laying out the subject and dealing with it in what an academic would consider systematic terms. I mention this as preparation for a potential reader of the book rather than as condemnation, although the book is a bit hard to follow so far as solid factual material is concerned. The author is simply not trying to describe the Swiss Army as a briefer would. Instead he paints word pictures of how its members *are*.

There is no information given as to whether the author had previous

experience with things Swiss. If he has not had any, he has done a remarkable job of understanding a great deal about Swiss attitudes, the structure of their society, and the way they prepare for war. I believe he erred on some minor points, like not realizing that some form of military service continues even into old age in Switzerland. But the book is, in general, highly accurate.

As he says, the banker in Zurich is also the colonel of the regiment, and perhaps a member of the Swiss parliament as well. It is a tightly knit society on the elite level, which is the secret of much of Swiss efficiency. McPhee ably brings out Switzerland’s massive and unremitting preparations for war, including the vast underground tunnels, the mined bridges (ready to blow), and the civil defense shelters all over the country. He describes vividly the extremely rapid mobilization techniques by which the Swiss changeover in a few hours from a peacetime to a wartime footing. When I lived in Geneva years ago I saw them mobilize in less than 90 minutes from the initial signal. Each soldier has his rifle, machine gun, or even mortar piece in the hall closet.

Switzerland has not fought a war for a long time—McPhee says nearly five hundred years. This bypasses such incidents as Napoleon passing through Switzerland, and, later, the Russians doing the same thing. But, as McPhee also says, they are and have been ready and willing in modern times to fight any invader who might attack them and they can

make any such attack extremely costly. No one can expect to occupy Switzerland like the Nazis in 1938-39 in Czechoslovakia, or the Soviets in the same country thirty years later. This book explains quite well why not.

FREDERICK H. HARTMANN
Naval War College

Wyden, Peter. *The Passionate War: The Narrative History of the Spanish Civil War*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983. 574pp. \$19.95

Peter Wyden, a former correspondent for *Newsweek* and magazine editor, has written an anecdotal history of the Spanish Civil War. He provides detailed profiles of both Rebel and Republican leaders as well as some of the rank and file. He supplies reams of data on members of the International Brigades, and devotes much space to the careers and activities of reporters who covered the conflict. A reader interested in knowing what Ernest Hemingway, George Orwell or James Lardner among others did during the war will find it all in Wyden's book. Finally, the author makes it very clear just how vicious and brutal the war was and offers vivid descriptions of atrocities committed by both sides.

What is absent from *The Passionate War* is any sustained description or analysis of strategy or tactics. There are no orders of battle or discussions of major battles. The role of naval power is not even mentioned. Furthermore, aside from a few generalizations there is no analysis of the war's role in European diplomacy,

and the author makes no effort to discuss the impact of the conflict on European and American public opinion.

Despite these shortcomings Wyden's book is still interesting and useful. It is well written and gives a good flavor of the times. A reader familiar with the work of Hugh Thomas, Gabriel Jackson and Stanley Payne will find Wyden's book an exciting and useful supplement.

STEVEN T. ROSS
Naval War College

McRae, Ronald. *Mind Wars*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1984. 183pp. \$12.95

This interesting book's subtitle describes its contents, to wit, "the true story of government research into the military potential of psychic weapons." However, for those who know something about military applications of "psi" (extra sensory perceptions, of several kinds) this book may prove something of a disappointment because it does not penetrate the subject. This is surprising in a book introduced by Jack Anderson and written by one of his former "associates."

Ronald McRae describes himself as having served five years in the US Navy, and describes the US Navy as one of two leading US Government sponsors and consumers of psychic warfare research during the heyday of military psi research, i.e., from 1972 through 1982, mostly from 1973 to 1978.

Sifting through this book, readers