THE COLLECTIONS AT THE CHATEAU DE VALENCAY

By: Ernest J. Fischer

A tour of the Chateaux of the Loire Valley is usually high on the list of "must" sights for any visitor to France. These stately and well-kept complexes offer unusual perspectives on life from Medieval times to the present; most are still inhabited. Lately several of the chateaux began to offer expositions aimed at increasing tourist attention and thereby revenues. Among these expositions are vintage autos, tropical fish, copies of all the crowns of Europe, and other exotic items.

Regretably, none of the displays have yet featured decorations. Recently while accompanying a group of persons interested in the life and works of Talleyrand, my wife and I found ourselves headed for the Chateau of Valencay. This Chateau had passed through the hands of several families before becoming the Talleyrand family property but thereafter remained in the family's keeping until the direct line became extinct in the 1920s. A private family now controls the estate and has opened it to the public. Besides having the joy of visiting the Chateau, rumor had it we would view a traveling exhibition of old cars as a special fillip to the tropical birds and fish permanently on display for the edification and enjoyment of the visitor.

Talleyrand, probably one of the most adept students (including Henry the K) of Machiavelli who ever existed, was known for his ability to change his political inclination slightly faster than that of France from 1777 until his death in 1837. I was aware that he held many high honors; he was an intimate of Napoleon as well as Louis XVIII. He held the Collar of the Legion of Honor as well as that of the St. Louis! Knowing that his family held some of his decorations (including the Collar of the Legion of Honor) I was pleasantly surprised to find the bulk of them displayed in a well designed case in a former stable area.

These decorations include early examples of the Imperial Russian Order of St. Andrew (star and badge), Alexander Nevesky (star and badge), and a St. George Cross. Grand Cross sets of the Red Eagle and Black Eagle of Prussia of the post-Napoleonic period compliment a St. Hubert Order Grand Cross set awarded to Talleyrand. An Elephant Order sash and star, a first type Redeemer Grand Cross set, a Charles III Collar and Grand Cross set, and a Sun and Lion Grand Cross set surround his Holy Spirit Collar. Also displayed are several Medjidjie Order badges, a St. Stephan Grand Cross set and a Golden Eagle Grand Cross set.

Certainly this museum's major drawing point is the opportunity it presents to become aware of Talleyrand's life style. For the collector, the decoration display makes the trip worthwhile itself. One may sample the wines produced on the Chateau and even purchase a case or two if desired (the white is especially good! It's akin to a dry Sauvignon.) The pleasant country-side and unhurried people contribute to a feeling of well-being...oh yes, there are always the tropical fish!

RUMOR has it that a major medals manufacturing firm is re-striking the U.S. WWI Victory Medal. The same has been done with the WWII WAC Medal. Is the American market going the same way as the Third Reich market?
DER STAHLHELM

I.
The full name was: "Der Stahlhelm" Bund der Frontsoldaten or "The Steel Helmet" League of Front Soldiers. Originally, membership was limited to W.W.I. veterans who had served in the trenches.

2. The other badges were for sports achievement and high leaders of the organization. The latter was really a distinction of rank rather than achievement.
Stahlhelm sources claimed that, in 1930, nine thousand members (with two thousand vehicles) had been enlisted in Munich; by 1931, thirty-one thousand members and three thousand vehicles had been organized in Breslau. These are sample figures. In addition, eight motorboat Staffeln and a flying corp had been formed. Many of the sporting and training activities of these units were coordinated with those of the German civil clubs N.D.A., V.G.D.K., and N.D.L.V. A large badge (70 x 55 mm) was established for the motoring organization. It was a silvered metal wreath of oakleaves surmounted by a Prussian crown. A helmet with the letters "R. K. St." was in the center, over a spoked wheel. Between the spokes was translucent blue enamel. This "special badge" is mentioned in a history of Stahlhelm insignia and uniforms that was published in 1932. The article does not give details about award criteria, however, and other Stahlhelm documents examined do not mention this item. Because Stahlhelm awards were of very limited issue and because the R.K.St. existed for less than seven years, it is unlikely that this badge was distributed in great numbers.


FLEECE OF GOLD - FEET OF CLAY

BY: HOYTE C. EVANS

The Order of the Golden Fleece is one of the most knightly and ancient Orders, having been instituted in 1429. It was common to the princes of the House of Austria, and came to Spain in 1504 with the accession of Philip to the throne of Castile. It was worn for high ceremony, very aristocratic, reserved for crowned heads, heads of foreign states, and Spaniards of noble birth.

But there is some history touching this noble device which is not generally discussed as it involved an ignoble use.

As background, let it be known that Ferninand VII, restored by the victories of Wellington, announced his daughter to be his heir. His brother, Carlos V, resented the action and became the Pretender to the Throne. Upon his death, another Pretender arose, also using the name of Don Carlos. In 1860, this Pretender unsuccessfully attempted revolution, was captured, and renounced his claim.

A third Pretender arose, brother of the second, and again used the name of Don Carlos. His fortunes appeared favorable when the Republicans offered him the Throne in hopes of a constitutional form of government. Don Carlos refused unless he could rule as absolute monarch, and the Republicans became his bitter enemies. Insurrections kept parts of Spain in turmoil as late as 1876, and Don Carlos was forced to retire to Paris where he tried to live in luxury.

As head of the House of Bourbon, he also was the legitimate representative of the House of Stuart. Barring the English Act of Settlement, he would have been King of Great Britain and Ireland.

Alas, Don Carlos found that luxury did not come cheaply. Amid domestic troubles, he would sell his war horse, fling the money on a table before his wife, and tell her to buy bread. As always, his friends would repurchase the animal for him.