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Only some "Baslerbeppis" could come up with this joke of calling their pet piglets Porgy and Bess. Instead of a pet dog or cat, the family Gelzer keep two "Göttinger" (miniature) pigs in their plush St Albans apartment in Basle.

Porgy and Bess have lived with the family Gelzer for the past two years. They are fully house trained and are absolutely clean, belying the notion that pigs are dirty by nature.

A former children's room was transformed into a "pigsty" with plenty of straw, old towels and bits of cardboard which the piglets use to make up their "beds". A swing door allows Porgy and Bess direct access to an enclosed garden where, in the farthest corner, they have set up their own "toilet". Contrary to popular belief, if pigs are given the chance and plenty of room, they will make a strict distinction between living quarters and latrines...

Neighbours apparently have so far had no complaints about Porgy and Bess. The only time the piglets become a nuisance is in the morning when they are hungry and squealing for their meal. For this reason, they receive their breakfast first before the rest of the family.

On most weekends, the Gelzer family travels to their holiday home in the Black Forest over in Germany. It took over six months to obtain the necessary papers to allow them to cross the border with Porgy and Bess who love the forest where they can roam. Pigs need a lot of room to move around and they are very active animals all day long.

Undoubtedly, on their daily stroll through the streets of Basle, Porgy and Bess always attract a lot of attention. Policemen stop the traffic to let them cross the streets, passers-by stare in disbelief, tourists catch them on cameras and dogs cannot make head or tail out of them...

Since the Gelzers adopted Porgy and Bess, the members of the family have almost become vegetarians. They very seldom eat meat now and certainly no more pork at all. They themselves are amazed how much the presence of two piglets has changed their lives.

A leisurely stroll through the streets of Basle to the astonishment of many passers-by and motorists.



PROMISE OF PLEASURE

At the Swiss Travel Mart in Basel, the Swiss National Tourist Office unveiled its new logo and a new slogan - "Holidays at long last. Switzerland is yours". Purpose of the floral logo is to "symbolise the Swiss promise of warmth, well-being, enjoyment, sensuality, pleasure, desire and prestige.

(Note from the Editor: we did not realise that so much power could be packed into a single Edelweiss).



ON THE OCEAN WAVE

The Swiss Navy is not a contradiction in terms.

For anyone not connected with shipping, it is hard to comprehend land-locked Switzerland as anything remotely resembling a maritime nation. Though its merchant-shipping fleet may come only 68th in world ratings, it is the biggest of any totally inland country.

Born out of the necessity for security at the outbreak of the Second World War, a fleet of 15 merchantmen was assembled in 1939 under a rush deal with Greek shipowners. The primary objective was to secure supply lines for the strategic commodities necessary for survival. To avoid any possible wartime hazards, strict control over cargoes was exercised by the Federal Government to ensure the neutrality of the vessels. But when Greece entered the war, these measures were frustrated with ships being attacked in the Mediterranean. As a result, a number of

Swiss companies at the time bought a number of vessels and registered them in Panama.

This in turn was frustrated also by the war clouds looming over the USA and with it, Panama. So in April 1941, the Swiss Government moved rapidly to create the necessary legal framework to enable its ships to fly the country's neutral flag and be registered in Basle. Lying on the Rhine, the city has access to the North Sea by river barges and special sea-going vessels. Though this does not, of course, apply to large ocean-going ships, international maritime law recognises Basle as a port for the purposes of registration.

Since those early days, the size of the fleet has fluctuated, rising to a peak of 36 vessels in 1952. Since 1985 however, it has dwindled from 34 to today's figure of only 18 ships with a gross capacity of approximately 300,000 tonnes, or 520,000 deadweight tonnes.