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SWISS EVENTS

FEDERAL

A MILESTONE IN RELATIONS BETWEEN SWITZERLAND AND CHINA

A major milestone in the relations between Switzerland and the People's Republic of China was laid on 7th August when Mr. Pierre Graber, Head of the Political Department, opened an important exhibition of Swiss industrial products that was to attract thousands of Chinese in Peking for two weeks.

Mr. Graber's journey was in itself an inaugural event. During his visit in China, the Head of Swiss diplomacy had talks with his Chinese counterpart, Mr. Chi Peng Fei. He also did a little sight-seeing, visiting the Great Wall of China and other historical sites, and laid the foundation stone of the future Swiss Embassy in Peking. However, relations between the two countries have been maintained at ambassadorial level for a very long time. Switzerland was in fact, in

1950, one of the very first western countries to recognise the new Communist regime in China.

Mr. Graber was accompanied by an important delegation. In the party was the President of the Office of Trade Promotion (OSEC), Mr. Gerard Bauer, who had talks with the Chinese minister of foreign trade on developing exchanges between the two countries. Although Switzerland is still only in twentieth position among China's trading partners, business between the two countries has made spectacular progress over the past two or three years. Exports rose from 74 million francs in 1972 to 132 million in 1973 while imports rose from 75.3 to 90.4 million francs. China's market of 700 million people offers vast potentialities to Swiss exporters. The Chinese need machines for their development, optical instruments, watches and a host of technological products. To tap this vast market, over 800 Swiss businessmen were in Peking during the exhibition which occupied an area of 12,000 square metres housing the goods of some 150 exhibitors and worth over 40 million francs.

As a result of this official visit and exhibition, the second of its kind after a Swiss watch exhibition staged in Peking in 1968, Mr. Chi Peng Fei will be making an official visit to Switzerland, and China will be guest of honour at next year's *Comptoir* in Lausanne.

These events were also the signal for the opening of a air route with China by Swissair.

MODERN LIFE

THE GROWING ATTRACTION OF LOTTERIES

Every Swiss spent an average of 40 francs 85 cents in lottery tickets or stakes in the Swiss football pools last year. The income of the country's 643 lottery and pools organisations amounted to about 263 million francs, an increase of 40 million over the previous year. The growing attraction of jackpot wins is paralleled by the mushrooming of lotteries. Cantonal authorisations were delivered for 47 new organisations of that nature in 1973.

Lotteries for lucrative gains have been banned since 1923, so that all these organisations have to be charitable institutions. They in fact represent the major source of charitable income in the country. By far the most important of them is the *Sport Toto*, the Basle-based football pools organisations, whose turnover amounted to 192.4 million francs, or nearly 80 per cent of the total. The profits of these organisations are completely devoted to charity. This has encouraged dozens of charities to sell their own lottery tickets, particularly in the French-speaking cantons. Thus Vaud has 253 registered lotteries, Berne 188, Tessin 70, Geneva 35 and Neuchatel 21 as against Basle with 10. The highest win offered by Vaud's innumerable lotteries amounts to 50,000 francs, by courtesy of

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Aside from national pools and lotteries, the Swiss are increasingly attracted by similar possibilities abroad particularly in sports. This trend is linked with the importance of foreign television broadcasts, mainly French and German, and results in an estimated outlay of 50 million francs a year.

Killed while picking an edelweiss

The Edelweiss, the Alp's most famous flower, recently confirmed its reputation of also being a most dangerous flower to pick.

A young man from Mur, in Canton Vaud, Francois Cornuz, 17, slipped to his death down a 70 ft. ravine while attempting to pick some of these most elusive flowers.

A SHORTAGE OF EMMENTAL BUT A GLUT OF GRUYERE

The Swiss are suffering from a shortage of Emmental cheese because of heavy demand abroad. Cheese co-operatives say that their stocks are depleted because of the exceptionally high purchases of some Common Market countries, Italy foremost among them. It is getting increasingly hard to buy Emmental in Switzerland and housewives are compelled to buy second rate products. While Emmental is in short supply, Gruyere producers are suffering from a glut which is overloading their cellars. The figures speak for themselves. Of a production of 50,000 tons of Emmental, 30,000 are normally exported every year. This year 32,000 tons of Emmental have already been sold abroad. Switzerland's Gruyere production amounted to 17,000 tons last year, while exports reached only 201 tons (!) The reason for this is that Emmental is traditionally in greater demand abroad, and that it can be preserved longer.

THE MATTERHORN GETS A CLEAN UP

An important operation to clear the Matterhorn of the litter left by generations of Alpinists and install new toilets at the Solvay Hut, near the summit, was carried out early in August by teams of the "Internationaler Umweltschutz Korps". The "Clean Matterhorn" operation was financed in part by the Korps, and also by the Zermatt Tourist Office. Some 50 people took part and worked for two days. New fixed ropes were laid on the rock face, and a new panoramic layout was also installed on the Gornergrat.

As for the new toilets of the Solvay Hut, they were brought up by an Air Zermatt helicopter. They were manufactured under an American patent and are designed to eliminate waste completely by a special combustion process. They are believed to be the only installations of their kind in the Alps. Their introduction at the Solvay Hut, which was built in 1911 by a Belgian

financier of that name, came as the result of numerous criticisms in the Press about the odorous emanation of the Hut's outdated toilets, which were deprived of any waste disposal device. The Solvay Hut will also be equipped with new and ultra-modern radio equipment for use by the Swiss air rescue service.

SPORTS

REGAZZONI LEADS WORLD DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

Clay Regazzoni, from the Tessin, took the lead in the World Championship when he won the European Grand Prix on the Nurburgring at the beginning of the month. The Ferrari driver, who has made remarkable progress this season, finished ahead of the South African ace Jody Schekter, who had trailed him and attacked repeatedly during the race, and the Argentinian Carlos Reutemann. His Ferrari team mate, the Austrian Nikki Lauda, who had been the favourite for the race, was forced to abandon following a slight collision with Schekter's Tyrrell Ford which sent him hurtling against the rails. The Brasilian Emerson Fittipaldi, last year's champion, was out of the race early on following a puncture and a broken engine. At present, Regazzoni leads the championship with 44 points, followed by Schekter, 41 and Fittipaldi, 37. It was Regazzoni's second Grand Prix victory. Regazzoni won again at the Austrian Grand Prix three weeks later and confirmed his lead by 5 points.

SWISS ABROAD

THE STATUE OF WILLIAM TELL DISAPPEARS

A statue of William Tell and his son was stolen in Tell City, a town in Indiana (USA) founded by pioneers from Canton Vaud in 1798. The large bronze statue had just been completed by the American sculptor Donald Eagle and was due to be erected in the city's central square. It had been left overnight inside a lorry while its creator spent the night in a nearby motel. When he returned to his lorry to bring his work to its final destination, the man with the crossbow and his son had gone. This event, reported by Associated Press, happened just before 1st August and probably spoilt the National Day celebration of the Swiss community of the town, which is very near to George Washington's birthplace.

Tell City was founded by Jean-Jacques Dufour, an emigrant from Vaud, who introduced grapevine in the area. The town was initially called Helvetia but renamed Tell City in 1857, presumably for linguistic reasons. Its founder died in 1827 but the generations of Swiss who settled in the area introduced not only wine but a variety of fruit trees which represent a major source of wealth for this agricultural region.

ANGLO-SWISS

Anglo-Swiss Protocol signed at the Embassy

A supplementary protocol amending the 1954 Anglo-Swiss Convention for the avoidance of double taxation with respect to taxes on income was signed at the Swiss Embassy on Friday, 2nd August by our Ambassador Dr. Albert Weitnauer, on behalf of the Confederation, and by Mr. Roy Hattersley, Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, on behalf of the United Kingdom. This supplementary protocol was additional to the one, signed in London on 14th June, which modified the original convention. It is subject to ratification. The Swiss Government will shortly be publishing a message to the Federal Assembly setting out details and asking for parliamentary approval.

REASONS TO KENT-BROWN BOVERI DEAL

We reported in our last issue on the deal whereby the Swiss electrical engineering giant, *Brown Boveri* would take a controlling stake of part of *George Kent*, a British instruments maker. Under the projected deal, Kent would be separated in two groups. One, producing process control equipment complementary to *Brown Boveri*'s range of products, will be called *Brown Boveri Kent* and be 52 per cent controlled by the Swiss firm in exchange for a cash injection of £6.1 million. The other activities of *George Kent*, in which *Brown Boveri* is not interested, will be grouped under a new concern called *Scientific and Medical Instruments* and entirely owned by Kent shareholders. The major shareholders since 1968, when the defunct Industrial Reorganisation Corporation (IRC) intervened to prevent the Rank Organisation from taking over the ailing instruments firm in a bid to save this branch of British industry, are the Government (25 per cent) and Rank (18 per cent). As a result, Mr. Anthony Wedgwood Benn, Secretary of State for Industry, will have the casting vote enabling him to allow, or prevent the deal from going through. Mr. Benn's well-known aversion for "multinationals" — and *Brown Boveri*, with sales of one billion pounds and 100,000 employees is a fine example — Kent directors were concerned that the Government should prevent a very sensible deal from being implemented.

The *Financial Times* explained why the two partners were interested in a "marriage". Kent, which reported a net loss of £575,000 for the year to 30th March, 1974, on sales of about £37 million, were faced with increasing competition in its main field of activity, industrial control equipment, from such American leaders in the field as Honeywell and Foxboro. In the power station field, moreover, Kent was often at a disadvantage against large electrical

groups such as Siemens or GEC which also built the control equipment necessary to the operation of the heavy electrical gear which they already supplied. An alliance with a large group was thus necessary and Brown Boveri was a logical candidate since it had no significant process control capability of its own, but a strong marketing set-up throughout the world which would help to boost Kent's turnover.

Conversely, Kent appeared an almost perfect match to Brown Boveri as the Baden-based multi-national had long felt itself at a disadvantage alongside its great German competitors, AEG and Siemens, in that it had no major automation and instrumentation interests to complement its basic business, the sale of rotating electrical machines to electricity utilities, paper and steel mills and other industrial processes.

To build up its own operation would have taken too long, and it would have run into a severe personnel shortage in both Germany and Switzerland. So, in the words of Mr. Erwin Bielinski, BBC's planning chief: "With Kent's know-how, the combination is an excellent match" and the deal would raise Brown Boveri's instrument interests virtually on a par with those of Siemens and AEG. Brown Boveri plans, in addition to the £6.1 million cash injection, to modernise Kent's British plants with investments of £3 million over the next five years.

The deal was to be put to the vote of George Kent shareholders on 30th August. Because of Mr. Benn's casting

vote, there were fears that the transaction would be delayed. There were several reasons — most of them of a non-business nature — why the Department of Trade and Industry, which now holds the Government share in George Kent, should hesitate. Firstly, the present situation indicates that the only partial takeover ever attempted by the IRC during its existence was a part failure. The Corporation had stepped in the market to save a medium-size firm in a key-sector of industry from the grips of a giant, the Rank Organisation.

But, left on its own, George Kent has shown very mediocre results. Its profits have been meagre and turned into losses during the past year. It is also heavily in debt and had to pay £1.7 million in interest charges in its last financial year. It therefore needs to co-operate with a larger organisation which has offered shareholders a very good deal. They would receive one new share in Brown Boveri Kent worth 33p, and another share in Scientific and Medical Instruments (which won't immediately be listed on the Stock Exchange) worth 24p for every share already held. This makes 57p compared with the current price of 26p.

The great obstacle lies in the Labour administration's unwillingness to recognise that the 1968 deal was a mistake, and especially, Mr. Benn's very dogmatic views on the ownership of industry. He may indeed well prefer to commit £6.1 million of tax payers' money, with the perspective of

continuing low business and a "salvage" nationalisation, rather than allow a willing and powerful group to chip in, with very serious chances of turning George Kent into a prosperous and efficient business, for the sole purpose of giving vent to his phobia against multi-nationals, particularly if they are foreign-based.

Should this line be adopted, a storm can be predicted in the City. But it is possible that Britain will have a new Government by the time the present administration makes up its mind on the George Kent Brown Boveri deal.

Cyprus and the Cantonal system

Depending on how the situation in Cyprus develops, the island state will probably be the second country in the world with Cantons! This particular political entity has been put forward by the Turks as the basis of a lasting solution to the political and human problems of Cyprus. The Turkish foreign minister Turan Gunes came to the second phase of the peace talks in Geneva on Friday, 9th August with the firm intention of seeing this solution implemented. His determination was such that, refusing to allow any period of reflexion to his hesitating Greek partners, he broke off the Geneva talks abruptly at 2.30 a.m. on the following Wednesday. Minutes later jets were bombing Nicosia and Turkish armour was set in motion to slice off the northern third of the island.

The Turks have called for a number

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of Turkish Cantons which would be semi-autonomous states brought together with the Greek section of the island into a federation. At first sight, it really seems that a Swiss federal solution is being proposed. The Shorter Oxford Dictionary clearly indicates that the word "Canton" in its political sense refers to the "sovereign states of the Swiss Confederation", or the subdivision of a French "arrondissement". But the latter meaning can obviously not be the one given in the Turkish proposals.

The Confederation of Swiss Cantons has proved an exemplary political formula in one historic case. It remains to be seen whether such a formula could work in Cyprus. The fact that it would be imposed by brute force doesn't augur too well for its success.

threw his father's car into a ditch, fortunately with no harm to himself. After this adventure, its hero is unlikely to take the wheel of his father's car for a long time.

SWISS RHINE COMPANIES IN PERIL

Swiss shipping companies operating on the Rhine are in dire difficulty and have called for urgent support to the Confederation. Without official aid, they claim that they will not be in business for long. The most important of these companies running some 30 ships, the Swiss Rhine Navigation Company, made a 1.4 million franc loss last year while its traffic remained quite good. There are various reasons for the decline of Rhine navigation. There are too many ships in operation for the available traffic, and the German companies enjoy special facilities from the State denied to their Swiss competitors. The railways which are public, and hence risk-free organisations, also offer stiff competition to fluvial navigation. The Swiss companies say that business could pay only if a ton of freight between Rotterdam and Basle were charged 36 francs. Competition has forced these rates down to 12 francs and these companies have no choice but to accept them. As a result, the number of Swiss-owned ships has fallen by three-quarters to about seventy during the past few years and traffic handled by Basle has never regained its record volume (9.3 million tons) of the early sixties.

Young prisoner killed in an escape

A teenager convicted for theft was shot dead by two policemen after escaping from Bochuz, French-speaking Switzerland's main borstal institution. This tragic outcome produced a wave of criticism in the press because the police are not supposed to use their weapons in tracking down escaped prisoners unless it is in self defence, or when the fugitive is known to be dangerous.

The young man, Patrick M. (the name was not published in full according to Swiss police practice) had escaped from Bochuz in a prison van after hiding in the prison garage. Some miles away, Patrick abandons the van and steals a car. Two policemen on car patrol, who happened to be passing by, recognise him and race after him. Patrick jumps from his car and runs in Sermuz forest, to the north-west of Yverdon. The two policemen continue the chase but Patrick gets hold of a scooter and manages to escape out of sight. Meanwhile, two policemen on ordinary duty, who had noticed a police car following a runaway "motorist" and had decided to join the chase, meet with the other two on the outskirts of the forest. They hold a brief conference and it is decided that the two newcomers, who had previously been informed of the escape, should remain on the spot while the other two call for reinforcement and dogs. They set up a road block on a country road. It is late at night, several hours after the escape. There is a clear sky and a shining moon.

Miscellaneous

An unusual escapade

A ten-year-old child accomplished an unusual feat: taking the wheel of his father's car, he managed to get it started and drove it unimpeded for over ten miles. He climbed up the twisting road from Bex to Gryon (Vaud) and continued up a narrow valley nearly up Sollalex, a well-known hamlet to hikers in the area. This escapade ended shortly before Sollalex as the child missed a bend and

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