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SWISS EVENTS

SWISS LEADERS' TRIPS ABROAD

ARMY EXERCISE SHOCKS MP

A Socialist National Councillor from Zürich, Mr. Walter Renschler, has taken exception to the theme of recent Army manoeuvres carried out by the 11th Mechanized Division which consisted of facing a situation where Switzerland was under the threat of extreme-left groups.

He tabled a written question to the Federal Council to ask whether such exercises were meant to describe the real political and military situation. In its reply, the Government insisted that the themes chosen for exercises by the General Staff did not reflect a real situation.

The situations in which these exercises were set were always "supposed" and had a basically didactic purpose. But the Government pointed out that it was necessary to retain certain political premises in order to give meaning to military exercises. The Federal Council stressed that no distortion of what the Swiss Left stood for was intended by the 11th Division's manoeuvres.

Consulate occupied

The Iranian Consulate in Geneva was occupied by students and an Iranian diplomat was asked to leave because he had indulged in what were described as unacceptable intelligence activities. Iran had protested and the work of the newly formed trade commission between the two countries was suspended. Good relations with Iran are important in view of her growing market for Swiss industrial products.

GUNTER SACHS BECOMES SWISS CITIZEN

International playboy and millionaire Gunter Sachs, associated with various film stars including Brigitte Bardot, has been accepted as a citizen of the Grisons and, consequently, as a Swiss citizen. The West German industrialist, who is 44, was a resident of Valbella (GR). By 179 to none, the Great Council of the Canton accepted his naturalisation, and those of his Swedish wife Inger Marianne, 33, his son Gunnar Zourab, 5 and his brother Ernst Wilhelm, 47, who is also an industrialist. Gunter Sachs is now a citizen of the Commune of Surcuolm.

Until recently, there was a kind of tradition which forbade members of the Federal Council from indulging in too many official visits abroad.

Of late, federal councillors seem to have increased their personal contacts with foreign governments and one not infrequently reads comments in the Press criticizing these visits abroad. At the end of the year, Mr. Pierre Graber, Head of the Political Department, and Mr. Ernst Brugger, Head of the Department of Economy, were both abroad at the same time, the former in Greece and the latter in Egypt and Jordan.

On his return to Berne, Mr. Graber declared himself to be very satisfied with his talks in Athens. These were said to have touched on bilateral trade and on political cooperation. Mr. Graber told Greek leaders that Switzerland which, like Greece is associated to the European Economic Community, would do everything possible to support Greece's application for full membership. The two

countries also reviewed the situation resulting from the European Security Conference held in Helsinki in the Summer of 1975 and found a large measure of agreement.

Mr. Brugger opened an exhibition of Swiss technological products in Cairo, the first exhibition of its kind to be staged by Switzerland in the Middle East. Over 60,000 people visited the exhibition and orders of some 100 million francs were secured. Mr. Brugger also visited Jordan which he described as a clean and well organised country. "Opportunities for economic cooperation between Switzerland and Jordan are quite promising, particularly in the tourist field," he said.

Finally, Mr. Albert Weitnauer, former ambassador in London and Secretary-General of the Political Department, made a trip to Iran to improve relations strained last summer by allegations that the Iranian secret police, Sawacs, were operating from Geneva against Iranian nationals in Switzerland.

A BASLE DAILY TAKEN OVER BY A STRONGER COMPETITOR

The *Basler Nachrichten*, one of the most important Swiss quality dailies, will disappear on 31st January, having been taken over by the *National Zeitung*, the other and more widely circulated Basle newspaper (see Gottfried Keller's Letter from Switzerland).

The fate of the *Basler Nachrichten* has created a great deal of emotion among other papers in Switzerland, who see this as a sign of the disappearance of quality papers under the pressure of commercialism. The *Basler Nachrichten* had tried very hard to refurbish its image. During the past five years, it had considerably increased its content and modernised its appearance.

Banks and chemical firms from Basle had agreed to bail the paper out over a five-year plan initiated in 1971. But despite the valiant efforts of the Liberal editorial staff under the leadership of Mr. Oskar Reck, the paper was still losing money and, according to informed sources, suffered losses of about 2 million francs last year. The banks that had supported the paper therefore decided to pull out. There was no other avenue left open but to merge with the *National Zeitung*.

The take-over will mean the loss of about a hundred jobs. The *Basler Nachrichten* staff was stunned by the news and by the fact that it had never been consulted. A meeting of journalists and workers rejected the early retirement and social plan proposed under the terms of the takeover.

SWISSAIR IMPROVES IN-FLIGHT SERVICE

Endeavouring to make constant improvements in its in-flight service, Swissair has introduced a number of innovations:

On all flights to and from the Middle East first class passengers now enjoy the popular off-the-trolley meal service, while on some flights to the Far East and South America meals are specially prepared to individual wishes on an electric grill.

In first class in Europe, hot dishes have replaced cold meals on some flights and a wide selection of Swiss cheeses is available for dessert. The lunch box provided in economy class on very short flights in Europe has been fitted with a transparent cover for improved presentation and now contains a lighter and wider variety of snacks including salads.

Also, on a trial basis a greater range of non-alcoholic beverages is served on these flights.

ATTRACTIVE LOG BOOKS

All first and economy class passengers travelling on Swissair long haul routes now receive on board the new 128-page booklet "Memories of a Swissair flight".

The booklet, which replaces the economy class flight kit distributed hitherto, contains information on Swissair's fleet, network, in-flight facilities and customer services, route maps, price list of articles for sale on board and general reading matter.