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Swiss Army to buy 420 German tanks



Bond girls Mary Stavin and Janine Andrews from Britain at the Swiss premiere in Zurich of "Octopussy". With them (right) is this year's Miss Switzerland, 22-year-old Lolita Morena.

THE Swiss army is to buy 420 West German combat tanks – at a cost of Sfr. 4.5 thousand million (about £1.4 thousand million). The Defence Ministry has confirmed that it is the largest armaments order in the military history of this neutral nation.

The deal follows more than two years of intensive field evaluation tests at the Swiss military testing area near Thun, in the Bernese Oberland, of the West German Leopard 2 model and the rival United States M-1 Abrams.

A first series of 210 tanks will be delivered to the Swiss army between 1987 and 1992. The deal is subject to approval by the Swiss Parliament next year, but backing for the procurement programme is considered a virtual certainty. A second series will be due for delivery by the late 1990s.

The West German tank had been heavily favoured to win the multi-million contract. It is equipped with more powerful cannon than the American tank, has a speed of 45 miles (72 km) an hour, and petrol consumption is lower.

The West German tank is made by the Krauss-Maffei concern of Munich, which describes the Leopard as "the result of more than 10 years of systematic development and intensive testing".

Swiss Defence Minister Georges-André Chevallaz said the makers of the American tank – General Dynamics of St. Louis, Missouri – had made a "last-minute offer".

But he said this would have resulted in the Swiss army's modernisation programme being postponed by a further two years.

Another major consideration which helped to sway the Swiss was the Munich manufacturer's agreement that many of the Leopard tanks should be built in Switzerland under licence.

Mr Chevallaz said this had increased the price of the tanks, but would ensure employment over a seven-year period for some 2,000 workers at hundreds of firms throughout Switzerland. The Swiss army currently operates Centurion tanks of British design, and Swiss models produced during the 1970s.

OLDER generation readers will almost certainly remember the song "Lile Marlene", which became a hugely popular hit during the Second World War among soldiers and civilians on both sides.

Hans Leip, German-born writer of the song, has just died in Switzerland. He died at his home in the Thurgau village of Fruthwilen, shortly before his 90th birthday.

The songwriting son of a Hamburg dockworker, Leip penned the lyrics of "Lile Marlene" while on his way to the front during the 1914-18 war. He was stationed in Berlin at the time and, he recalled, had two girl friends – Lile and Marlene.

Lile was the daughter of a Berlin

businessman and Marlene was an army nurse. Standing guard one night underneath a lamp post, the first three verses came to the romance-struck recruit – but he failed to finish the song until 1937.

The song did not catch on immediately. It was not until it was broadcast on German-run propaganda programmes to North Africa that it really took off and was eventually adopted by the British and other allied soldiers themselves. The original version was sung by popular German singer Lali Andersen – but the version which became a wartime standard was recorded by Marlene Dietrich.

Leip wrote several novels, comedies, short stories and poetry, and was also an accomplished artist. But "Lile Marlene" remained his main musical accomplishment. Mr and Mrs Leip settled in Switzerland in 1954 and, a few years ago, he completed his autobiography.

MUSICAL memories of a different kind are being revived here this month by celebrations marking the 100th anniversary of the birth of Ernest Ansermet – Switzerland's most famous orchestral conductor.

Ernest Ansermet was born in Vevey on Lake Geneva on November 11, 1883, the oldest of seven children. His father was a surveyor, his mother a schoolteacher.

He received his first piano lessons from his mother at the age of five, but went on to study

physics and mathematics at Lausanne University and graduated in both subjects. He also taught mathematics at local schools before abandoning his teaching career to take up music and concentrate on conducting.

Ernest Ansermet studied music in Geneva, Paris, Berlin and Munich and also worked as a music critic before taking up his first full-time post – as conductor of the modest Montreux Casino Orchestra.

It was here that he met the visiting Igor Stravinsky, and the two became close friends. Ansermet later achieved international renown for his authoritative interpretations of Stravinsky. And the latter helped Ansermet obtain the post of conductor of Serge Diaghilev's Russian Ballet, with which he made extensive tours of Europe and North and South America.

In 1918, Ansermet founded the *Orchestre de la Suisse Romande* – and remained its director for more than 50 years. He conducted the first performances of works by

many leading contemporary composers, and was invited to conduct throughout the world.

Along with Toscanini, Ansermet helped create the Lucerne International Music Festival. He was made an honorary citizen of Geneva, Vevey and Lausanne and an honorary doctor of the Universities of Neuchâtel and Lausanne.

Ernest Ansermet died on February 2, 1969, in Geneva, at the age of 85.

★ ★ ★

THE British ambassador was there. So were leading Swiss politicians. And dozens of other diplomats and dignitaries.

A United Nations conference in Geneva? A government reception in Berne? No – a champagne party in Zurich for the Swiss premiere of the latest James Bond film, "Octopussy".

The film – last in the series to star Roger Moore – looks like beating the box office records set here by other Bond epics.

Willi Ritschard

AS this issue of the *Swiss Observer* went to press, the sudden death was announced in Berne of Switzerland's Finance Minister, Willi Ritschard.

He collapsed of a heart attack while walking in the mountains near his home in Solothurn on October 16.

Willi Ritschard died only three weeks after his 65th birthday and two weeks after announcing that he would retire at the end of this year.

A Social Democrat, he had been a government minister for 10 years. He entered the cabinet as Minister of Transport and Energy, and in 1978 also served as President of the confederation.

The son of a shoemaker, he rose from a plumber's apprentice to become the nation's most popular politician.

A fuller report will be published in next month's *Swiss Observer*.

SWISS SOCCER

Football League tables up to and including October 7

'A' Division	Pl	W	D	L	Gls	Pts	'B' Division	Pl	W	D	L	Gls	Pts
Sion	10	8	0	2	27	11	Martigny	9	5	2	2	23	12
Grasshoppers Zurich	10	8	0	2	22	10	Biel	9	4	4	1	25	15
St. Gallen	10	6	3	1	20	14	Lugano	9	3	5	1	19	10
Xamax Neuchâtel	10	5	3	2	25	14	Mendrisio	9	3	5	1	17	13
Servette Geneva	10	6	1	3	24	13	Monthey	9	3	5	1	15	12
Wettingen	10	5	1	4	16	16	SC Zug	9	4	3	2	17	15
La Chx-de-Fds	10	3	4	3	26	20	Grenchen	9	3	4	2	15	12
Basle	10	5	0	5	24	23	Fribourg	9	2	5	2	16	16
Zurich	10	4	2	4	20	21	Bulle	9	2	4	3	20	19
Lucerne	10	4	1	5	14	19	Winterthur	9	2	4	3	18	22
Lausanne	10	4	0	6	18	18	Laufen	9	2	4	3	13	19
Aarau	10	3	2	5	15	20	Baden	9	3	2	4	19	26
Young Boys Berne	10	3	1	6	14	23	Chênois	9	2	3	4	9	16
Vevey	10	3	1	6	14	23	Nordstern	9	1	5	3	8	17
Chiasso	10	2	0	8	8	31	Locarno	9	2	2	5	14	21
Bellinzona	10	1	1	8	9	32	Red Star	9	2	1	6	19	22