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Swiss praise for Mrs Thatcher

PRIME Minister Margaret Thatcher may not always be too popular in her own country. But many Swiss see her as a "capable and courageous woman", according to one leading newspaper.

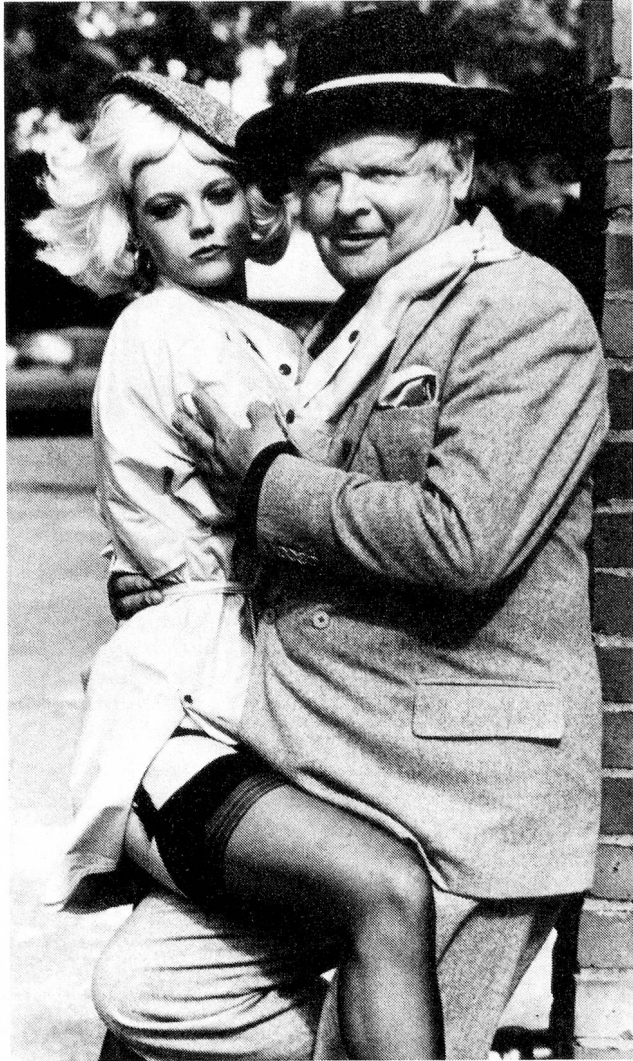
Commenting recently on her first five years in power, the Lausanne-based *Le Matin* wrote:

Margaret Thatcher is a capable woman. What's more, she is courageous. She ordered her fleet to reconquer lost islands, thumbed her nose at the Common Market and sent Colonel Ghaddafi's henchmen back to Libya.

In the Falklands War the British fought for a principle and that is something so rare that it deserves respect. Within the European Community she goes her own way. Mrs Thatcher's view is that Britain should not live beyond its means, and she has no inhibitions about being seen as an insular nationalist as she works to realise that conviction.

Margaret Thatcher knows how to be firm. She did not hesitate to break off diplomatic relations with Libya. And she was right. In London one of Colonel Ghaddafi's elite marksmen shot a policewoman. It was an odious act which violated all international laws.

Curiously, Margaret Thatcher's well-founded acts of authority are sometimes likened to despotism. A recent opinion poll showed that Mrs Thatcher was too authoritarian and too Right-wing. But she is doing good work, according to the majority of her compatriots. And that is a realistic view which is typical of the British. **;**



**Benny Hill...
too saucy for
the Soviets?**

They like Benny Hill, too

LIKE Mrs Thatcher, British comedian Benny Hill also enjoys a big following in Switzerland. Unlike the Iron Lady however, he now seems set to prove his popularity in the Soviet Union as well.

At this year's Golden Rose of Montreux international festival for television light entertainment the Benny Hill Show won for Britain's Independent Television the Funniest Programme special award.

Even Soviet delegates on the international jury were chuckling at cheeky Benny, and they indicated later that the Russians might join the long list of countries buying the show.

But for Communist consumption it will probably be necessary to cut some of the saucier scenes - like the one reproduced here from the prizewinning programme at Montreux.

It was the second successive year that this award went to Thames Television. The BBC, winners of many a Montreux honour in the '60s and '70s, again returned home empty-handed. And the Swiss Television entry attracted few admirers.

The supreme award - the coveted Golden Rose of Montreux plus a Sfr 10,000 cash prize - went to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation for the third time in six years.

The Silver Rose went to Finland and the Bronze Rose to Belgium, which also won the Press Prize.

Forty programmes from almost as many countries competed this year in Montreux, where successful shows not only win prestigious prizes but also become big money-spinners through lucrative resale rights.

...reporting from Berne

THE Swiss have been flocking in their thousands to one of the most unusual exhibitions ever staged in their country – a display of British chamber pots.

The unique collection, which has been touring the country since the beginning of this year, belongs to West German hotelier Werner Zobel. Altogether he possesses 1,300 such specimens from many countries.

Of the 201 which have been on display in Switzerland, almost all come from Britain – “the true home of the chamber pot”, he says. The rest are from Austria, Ireland, Belgium and Germany.

The displayed items alone are valued at some Sfr 100,000 (about £30,000). Mr Zobel acquired most of the exhibits from a British collector two years ago.

Highlights include the specimen, pictured here, made in 1887 to commemorate the golden jubilee of Queen Victoria’s accession to the throne.

Another exhibit marks the coronation in 1911 of King George V and Queen Mary. Each is valued at Sfr 1,500 (£500).

Herr Zobel – clearly a man who believes in getting to the bottom of his hobby – has spent years researching the history of the chamber pot. Some 400 years before Christ, for example, Greek drama told of the Athenian heroine Lysistrata, who ended the Peloponnesian War by persuading all Greek wives to deny their husbands sexual relations while the fighting continued.

She and her followers kept their menfolk at a distance with weapons which included chamber pots – complete with contents.

These pots were very much in fashion in Roman times when the wealthy and well-to-do were accompanied by pot-bearing slaves.

The Orient Express – which carries nostalgia-minded holidaymakers between Zurich and Istanbul – displays a chamber pot made of mahogany. In Istanbul itself is a sultan’s chamber pot made of pure gold.

Most pots were originally made of clay, pewter, porcelain and even silver. Many, says Werner Zobel, were decorated with an erotic design.



THE men of Appenzell Ausserrhoden have again refused their womenfolk the right to vote on local issues. At their annual Landsgemeinde – the open air cantonal parliament – the all male electorate turned down the votes-for-women proposal for the fifth time in 16 years.

In the traditional show of hands some 15,000 men indicated their disapproval of the Socialist Party proposal by a ratio of about two to one.

The Landsgemeinde – a practice of direct democracy still surviving in a few mountain cantons – decides on all major issues concerning the community.

Opponents of the Ausserrhoden initiative claimed that giving local women the right to vote would be too great a break with tradition and would ultimately spell doom for this rural community.

One practical argument advanced by the men is that there would not be enough room for all the voters in the town square if women also took part. And besides, claim many males, the women don’t want the vote anyway.

But the leading local newspaper criticised the decision as anachronistic and a refusal to move with the times.

All Swiss women won the vote at national level in 1971, but the government left the introduction of cantonal female suffrage to local level decisions. Since then all but two of the remaining cantons have introduced full female suffrage.

One of the exceptions is Appenzell Ausserrhoden – and the other is neighbouring Appenzell Innerrhoden, where the votes for women move was last turned down in 1982.



Royal remembrance: An 1887 chamber pot portraying Queen Victoria and valued at £500.