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A Briefing on the 1988 General Defense Exercise

In November 1988 more than 10,000 civilian and military personnel participated in the one week's General Defense Exercise 1988. Except the Federal Council—represented during the exercise by seven other qualified gentlemen nominated by the "real" Federal Council—the genuine holders of a function had to stand a hard but well planned and informative test for the fulfillment of their mandates.

chm. General defense exercises on federal level, recently always coupled with operational (military) exercises, of late are part of a strategic training programme decided on by the Federal Council in April 1988. Fundamental knowledge imparted to those personalities participating in the decisive process in extraordinary situations (i.e. all strategic cases except the normal case of "relative peace"), and all what they work out within the scope of their departments and federal agencies, or within the army's headquarters, is put to the test in a general defense exercise. In particular the cooperation between the leading federal organs and the cantons and the individual spheres of general defense (especially the armed forces) is investigated. However, the '88 exercise's objective was more extensive: Whilst in earlier exercises first of all optimum cooperation between the Federal Council (who assumes in all strategic situations the leadership of the state) and all subordinated agencies was at stake, this time especially the behavior in various cases of threat was paid attention to. Consequently the scenario, covering three phases of the exercise, not only contained warlike events befalling the participants, but also "civilian" emergencies similar to Chernobyl in the USSR or Schweizerhalle in Switzerland. According to Division-General G. Däniker, Chief of Staff of Operational Training and Chief of Staff of the General Defense Exercise, General Defense is defined as "Extensive crisis management on the basis of our Federal Constitution and our state policy objectives".

The General Defence Exercise 88 was directed by: Div. Gen. Gustav Däniker, Cantonal Councillor Eduard Belser, Corpscommander Rolf Binder. (Keystone)

Corpscommander R. Binder, Chief of Army Training and military leader of the general defense exercise, refers to the so-called "management games", for many years well proved in trade and industry management training. Decisive for the quality of such schooling are a careful preparation (of the game), the content of reality and an ingenious and efficient composition of the represented scenarios. According to Binder, the Swiss militia system permits to exhaust an élite potential, rendering the '88 general defense exercise a training project of—even seen internationally—unique dimension.

Imposing List of Participants

The number of more than 10,000 participants (ladies and gentlemen) gives an idea of the immense size of the exercise which took place in November 1988. The list of names documents that



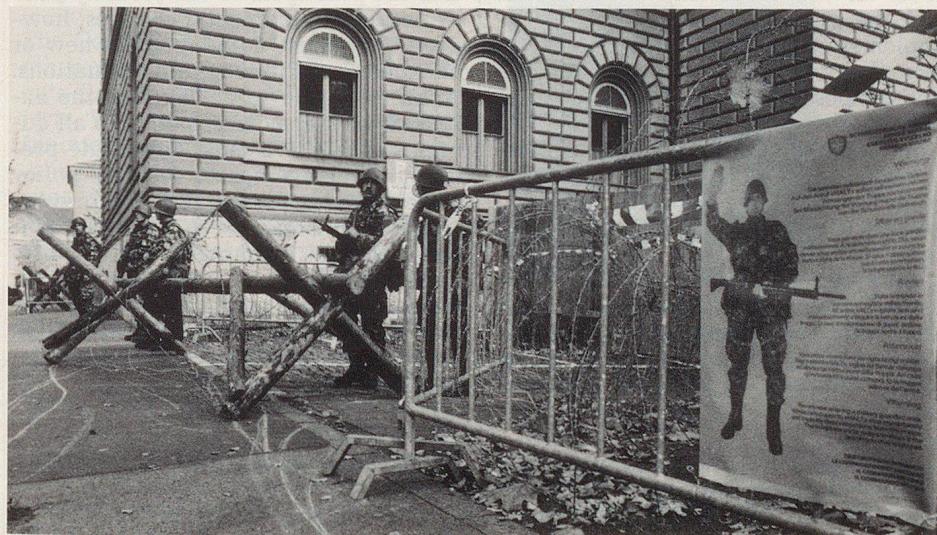
The former Hotel Bernerhof too, shows unusual measures of protection. (Roulier)





Even elderly people are not bothered by rather unusual aspects.

(Roulier)



During the '88 General Defense Exercise, barbed wire and barricades furnish evidence of exceptional activities in the city of Berne.

(Roulier)

really "high carat" participants guaranteed a representative and realistic exercise:

– The direction of the exercise occupied 630 persons and 300 members of civilian (all 26 cantons) and military (all army units) marking staffs.

Three groups of experts composed of 50 personalities coming from politics, business and industry and science, and representatives of the population followed up the work of the people carrying out the exercise. The experts had to judge and evaluate the expediency of decisions and dispositions made. During the whole week they were at the disposal of the participants as "private" contact and information agencies. Their observations were continuously evaluated and finally compiled in a final report for the attention of the Federal Council. Without stating names, one may say that in these groups of experts more or less all per-

sonalities of important rank or name were present:

- The Federal Council during the exercise was represented by seven parliamentarians (also ladies).
- Civilian offices and agencies on federal level had to be present with their original staffs.
- Army headquarters had to be slightly altered since the Chief of Staff in charge, Corpscommander E. Luthy, had to fill the post of Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces (not filled in peacetime).
- From the Cantons parts of the cantonal leading staffs of all cantons –inclusive of the total general defense organization of the canton of Geneva—took part in the exercise.

More than 7,000 soldiers acted as infrastructural troops for the services of communication, operational and office work, supply, transportation, anti-aircraft and guard duties.

Post-Evaluation—Consequences

Detail evaluation of the '88 General Exercise is at present in full swing. The task consists of gaining positive and negative findings from the test, of concluding and taking decisions accordingly and then to submit improvements for the future. At least the great expenditure caused by such a giant exercise should also be worth-while.

