

East vs. West no longer the basis of Swiss ministry

By ROLAND HUNTFORD
(C) 1973, The London Observer
BERNE — The Swiss have reorganized their ministry of foreign affairs in a significant way: A division based on East and West in the ideological sense has been replaced by one founded on north and south. All Europe has now been gathered under one head, together with North America.

This means that in Swiss eyes, the principal frontier is not so much one between Communist and non-Communist countries, as between the industrialized and the under-developed worlds.

Since Switzerland is a neutral country in the real sense of the word, this change is of rather more than local interest. It may in all fairness be said that in foreign affairs, the Swiss are innocent of political judgments. Their actions are dispassionate and pragmatic. The reorganization of the ministry they call their Political Department suggests a genuine and profound change in the European climate.

The obvious deduction is that detente between East and West is no longer taken to be simply a form of rhetoric. It contains sufficient reality to affect the conduct of a small country that is compelled to balance among the crosscurrents of the world.

Within the Political Department, therefore, Europe has been reunified. This does not mean that the Swiss, stern Alpine realists, have succumbed overnight to gullibility. But much has changed. The extension of the European Common Market with the entry of Britain, Denmark and Ireland has eroded barriers within Western Europe, while the rapprochement of the United States and the Soviet Union has rusted away the edges of the Iron Curtain.

Consequently, the internal working of the Political Department began to be fraught with complexity. Old divisions of work were hard to sustain. Responsibility was not easy to define. Within Europe, for example, it was difficult to decide whether Finland was the

business of the Eastern or Western divisions. The same was true of the Middle East.

Indeed, from the Swiss point of view, the main commercial and diplomatic problems now lay geographically to the south. As a result, the Political Department's reorganization may be said to have been unavoidable.

What the Department seems to be implying by its change is that the inhabitants of the northern, temperate zone have a certain community of interest as compared with the rest of the world. It is not only the difference between the industrialized countries and the underdeveloped, but between Asia and Europe. Japan, significantly enough, belongs to the division that also deals with the Third World. Historically, there is something to justify this viewpoint.

However, the Swiss are not trying to replace one confrontation with another. The reorganization of the Political Department is simply a recognition of changes taking place in the world.

15 hours apart

China, Soviet agree on direct air travel

By ROBERT G. KAISER
(C) 1973, The Washington Post

Moscow—The Soviet Union and China have agreed to establish regular service between Moscow and Peking by long-range jetliner.

Tass, the Soviet news agency, announced July 16 that the two governments have signed a protocol providing for flights by the airlines of both, which will begin simultaneously at an unstated future date. The Soviets and Chinese will use the Soviet-made Ilyushin-62 jetliner, a four-engine plane similar to the British VC-10.

Diplomatic observers here said the new pact reflected an apparent willingness by both Moscow and Peking to improve state-to-state relations where possible. This does not affect their vituperative ideological dispute. As if to prove that point, Tass carried a harsh attack on Chinese press coverage of the first round of the European Security Conference just minutes before announcing the new air traffic agreement with China.

At present, Chinese planes don't fly out of Asia. Western diplomats expect this situation to change radically in the near future.

Soviet airliners have been flying from Moscow to Peking since the early 1950s, but Chinese planes have only flown as far as Irkutsk, the largest city in Central Siberia. In the past these routes have been serviced by a relatively slow jet-prop plane, the Soviet Ilyushin-18.

Presumably, the Ilyushin-62 will be able to fly non-stop between Moscow and Peking, a trip of more than 3,000 miles. If so it will put Peking within relatively easy reach—perhaps 15 hours' flying time—of Western Europe, a substantial improvement on current schedules.

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