

Kuwait and Switzerland:

Some aspects of the relations between the two countries.

The first official diplomatic and consular relations between the two countries go back to February 1966, when Sheikh Naser M.A. Al-Sabah -who had been the Kuwaiti Ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva since December 1965- was also appointed as Consul General of Kuwait for Switzerland. And last summer, the Kuwaiti Mission to the U.N. in Geneva inaugurated its impressive headquarters, located in the vicinity of the United Nations.

Switzerland, for its part, named in 1967 a Consul (Honorary) to Kuwait in the person of Morad Youssef Behbehani, a wellknown and distinguished Kuwaiti merchant. And in 1975, the Swiss Embassy was opened in Kuwait, headed then by Chargé d'affaires Otto Gritti, while the Swiss Ambassador to Jordan remained accredited to Kuwait also.

But thanks to enterprising Kuwaiti and Swiss businessmen, trade relations were established long before the opening of the respective diplomatic missions. In recent years, the volume of these exchanges have risen considerably, as the figures* below will show:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Swiss exports to Kuwait</u>	<u>Swiss imports from Kuwait</u>
1980	128.3 mio Sw.Frs.	44.6 mio Sw.Frs.
1981	200.8 mio Sw.Frs.	2.7 mio Sw.Frs.
1982	255.7 mio Sw.Frs.	6.3 mio Sw.Frs.

* Source: Swiss Customs' Statistics

The trade balance is indeed very much in favor of Switzerland. With its population of 1 1/2 million, Kuwait must certainly be among the best customers of Switzerland, when it comes to the count per capita (approximately Sw.Frs. 200.- per year per inhabitant).

Switzerland's main exports to Kuwait include watches, jewelry, machinery, electrical installations and precision instruments, textiles, chemicals, pharmaceutical products, etc. Kuwait's exports to Switzerland now consist mainly of precious stones and jewelry items shipped there for refining.

In comparison to 1982 the trade figures pertaining to Swiss exports to Kuwait are expected to show in 1983 a decline of approximately 25 %, following the recent financial events in Kuwait.

In addition to the above statistics, one should not forget the considerable contribution of Kuwaiti residents to the Swiss tourist trade. For the Kuwaitis are indeed attracted to the Swiss scenery in general and to the Lake of Geneva Region in particular. Last year the Swiss Embassy in Kuwait issued more than twelve thousands visas to Kuwaiti tourists and businessmen. This figure is likely to be surpassed in 1983.

Direct connections by air are offered four times a week in each direction by Kuwait Airways and Swissair. The Swissair line to Kuwait was inaugurated in 1976.

Financial transactions between Kuwaiti and Swiss banks and financial investment companies have also become more important in recent years.

Swiss companies, in cooperation with their local sponsor, have participated and are still participating in important projects in Kuwait like electric power stations, roads, high-rise buildings by slip-form system, construction of flour mills and of a synthetic resin plant, installation of sophisticated elevators and of textile machinery, engineering supervision of a new telecommunications tower project, planning and supervision of the Shuaiba seawater pump stations, etc.

Numerous other companies of Switzerland are represented in Kuwait by a general agent and importer. This is especially true of the watch sector.

The Swiss presence in Kuwait is also very strong in the hotel/restaurant field, especially at the managerial level. The Mövenpick Swiss Restaurant in Kuwait, which opened in 1981, met with instant success.

The Swiss community in Kuwait is 120 - 140 persons strong. Swiss businessmen meet usually once a month for lunch, a reunion often enhanced by an address given by a distinguished visitor from Switzerland.

In the field of cultural relations, one of the most successful international events of this kind was the presentation at Kuwait University in November 1981 of an exhibition pertaining to the work of Peter Rindisbacher, a young Swiss painter of the North American Indians in the 1820's, an event organized by the Kuwait National Council of Culture, Arts and Letters, in collaboration with the Embassy of Switzerland.

Quite a number of Kuwaiti students are presently enrolled at Swiss universities, colleges or trade (hotel) schools.

Exchanges of books and other documentation have been conducted for some time between Kuwaiti and Swiss universities. A distinguished Swiss author, A.-L. Chappuis, was invited to give a lecture at the University of Kuwait.

Also in the field of sports, the relations between the two countries have been quite active in the last two years: two Swiss soccer teams played in Kuwait against the National Team and Swiss athletes and tennismen also participated -with success- in international competitions here.

Kuwait, October 24, 1983

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"Kuwait and Switzerland: Some aspects of the relations between the two countries"

Dans le cadre d'une requête émanant de la chambre de Commerce Arabo-Suisse de Genève, pour inclusion dans un futur numéro spécial de son magazine sur la présence suisse dans les pays arabes, j'ai été récemment prié par l'Ambassade de Suisse à Amman de rédiger et lui faire tenir un exposé sur ce thème, limité à mon pays de résidence.

Je vous remets en annexe un exemplaire de ce texte, susceptible de compléter utilement votre documentation sur les échanges entre les deux pays.

Le Chargé d'affaires de Suisse a.i.

(Bovay)

1 exposé

(avec annexe)

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|---|--|
| - DAE, Information et presse | - DAE, Div. Pol. II |
| - DAE, Section des affaires cult. et de l'UNESCO | - DAE, Service économique et financier |
| - DAE, Secrétariat de la Comm. de coordination pour la présence de la Suisse à l'étranger | - <u>DAE, Secrétariat général, division du personnel</u> |
| | - OSEC, Lausanne |
| | - Société Suisse des Constructeurs de Machines, Zurich |