

a special closeness to nature and an incomparable richness of experience. Our strong and highly motivated team in Beijing will ensure that we realize the tremendous potential of this new market.”

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Swiss Presidential Visit to China

From a Sino-Swiss relations perspective, the month of November 2003 saw the Presidential Delegation visit of Swiss President H. E. Pascal Couchepin to China, on the invitation of Chinese President H. E. Hu Jin Tao.

This trip marks the highlight of year 2003 and represents a very important further step towards the continued strengthening and development of the bi-lateral trade and economic relations between Switzerland and China. In the following article SwissCham China looks back to this memorable visit from its own perspective.

Three days in Beijing

The trip started with the arrival of President P. Couchepin in Beijing, on November 20, 2003. At the official dinner banquet hosted by President Hu Jin Tao in the evening, Mr. Christian Guertler, Chairman of the National Board, SwissCham China, had the honour to represent the Chamber.

At the initiative of SwissCham Beijing, a 3-pages Sino-Swiss Friendship Special Supplement was published in China Daily, to celebrate the arrival of President P. Couchepin's visit to China.

This special supplement was very well received and we would like to express our appreciation to the sponsors that made this project possible, listed in alphabetical order: ABB, BREITLING, NESTLE, SR TECHNICS.

Our appreciation also goes to the Swiss Embassy Beijing for its participation in the success of this project. A copy of the article published by SwissCham in that special supplement is provided for your convenience.

The morning of the following day, Friday November 21, began early with a breakfast meeting held at the Diao Yu Tai State Guest Residence. This breakfast session was organized for members of the official delegation and President P. Couchepin to meet and discuss with SwissCham China board members and selected Corporate Representatives Members of SwissCham Beijing their market experiences and key issues faced by the business sector.

This breakfast session served as a preparatory work

group meeting, just prior to the Official Meeting of President P. Couchepin with the Vice-Minister of Commerce, H. E. Mr. Yu Guang Zhou. Representatives of the Chamber joined in a business meeting discussion session with the Vice-Minister of Commerce, H. E. Mr. Yu Guang Zhou. SwissCham China's proposal to further strengthening the cooperation between the Chinese Ministry of Commerce and the Chamber and its regional organizations Beijing and Shanghai was well received. Specially the role of the Chamber as possible facilitator for Swiss investment in China and vice versa was warmly welcomed and commented.

The morning of Friday also saw a formal meeting of President P. Couchepin with the Vice-Minister of Science and Technology, H. E. Mr. Liu Yan Hua.

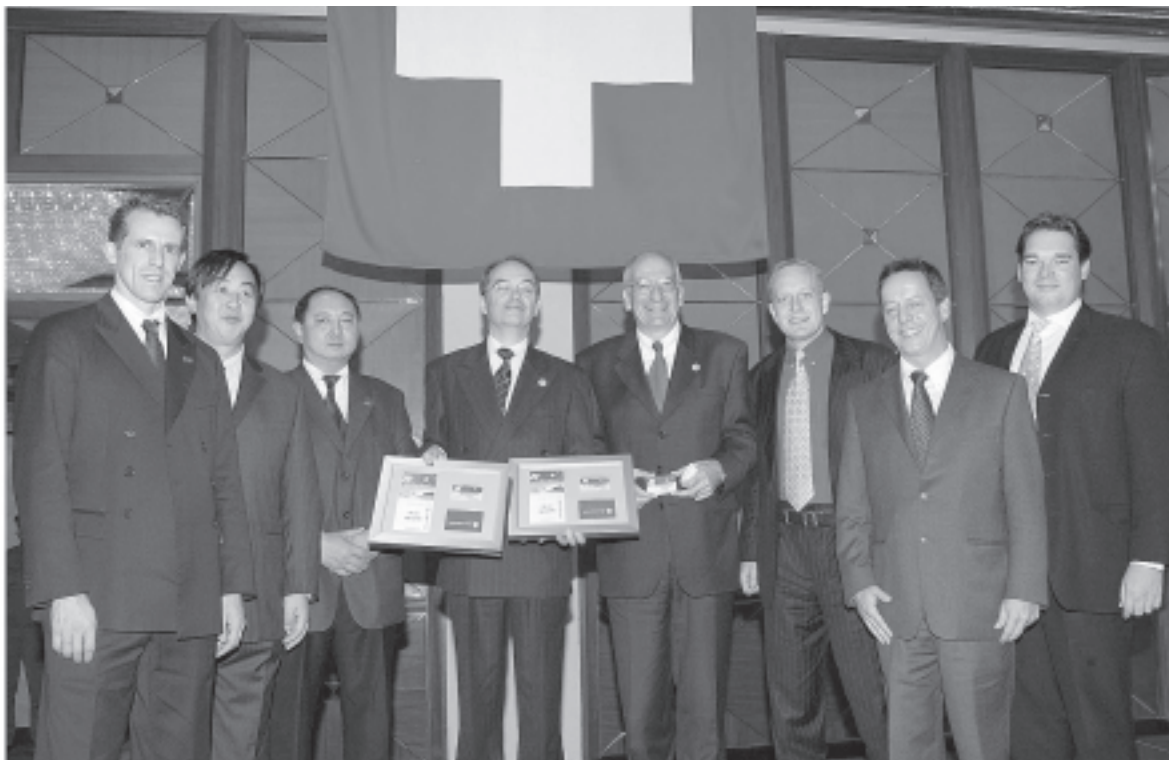
At lunch, a reception for the Swiss community was held in the Kerry Centre Hotel. At that occasion, SwissCham Beijing took the opportunity to present to both President P. Couchepin and to Swiss Ambassador to China Dr. Dominique Dreyer a memorable marker of this important trip: the Chamber's Executive Frame and V.I.P. Membership Card. SwissCham Beijing unveiled its innovative Membership Card with integrated Smartcard, on that day, in public, for the first time. SwissCham China is the first foreign Chamber of Commerce in China to have introduced a membership card with SmartCard functionality.

In the afternoon another important meeting with Chinese Premier H. E. Mr. Wen Jia Bao ended the two-day Beijing part of important meetings and discussions with key Chinese Officials. The day ended by a performance of the Mummenschanz group held at the Tian Qiao theater.

The delegation left Beijing on the morning of Saturday for Lanzhou and Dunhuang on a sightseeing visit that also offered an impression of rural China. The President reached Shanghai on Sunday, November 23, evening.

Shanghai Highlights

Early in the morning President Couchepin honoured the



Swiss Presidential Visit to China – November 20 to 25, 2003

The Board of SwissCham Beijing presenting the Chamber's Executive Frame and V.I.P. Membership Card souvenirs to H.E. P. Couchepin President of the Swiss Confederation and to Dr. D. Dreyer Ambassador of Switzerland to China.

From Left to right:

Fabian Furrer, SwissCham Executive Director; Zhang Hu, Vice President; Johnson Li Director; H.E. Ambassador Dominique Dreyer; H.E. President Pascal Couchepin; Cyrill Eltschinger, President; Alexandre Sudan, Treasurer; Guillaume Boudin, Director.

work of the Swiss Center Shanghai (SCS) and in the presence of many Chinese and Swiss dignitaries officially opened the new premises of SCS in Xinzhuang Industry Park. The ceremony was followed by a SwissCham Shanghai event attended by the Presidential delegation, presenting 3 cases of successful entry of SMEs in China, illustrating the concept of the SCS offers and the practical support it affords Swiss companies.

The President went on with a visit of Firmenich's newly opened facility, minutes away from the SCS, and drove to the Urban Planning Exhibition, a permanent display of Shanghai, past present and future, illustrating the key economic importance of this Chinese city-province of close to 20 Mio. inhabitants.

The Mayor of Shanghai then received the Presidential delegation and treated it to a banquet. Both discussion and lunch were attended by the undersigned representatives of SwissCham China.

In the afternoon, the joint Boards of SwissCham Shanghai and Beijing had a closed door meeting with the President and part of his delegation. The legal and operational structure of SwissCham China, the main activities of its regional organizations Beijing and Shanghai were presented and two main topics were discussed: China's implementation of WTO agreements and the cooperation of the Chamber with Swiss institutions such as

Seco, Osec and the Diplomatic Representations. The exchange was open, frank and practically oriented. Results are summarized below.

The President went on with the public grand opening of "Work in Progress" an exhibition promoting Swiss architecture in China, organized by the Consulate General of Switzerland in Shanghai and accompanied by the distribution of 70'000 pamphlets over China.

The delegation finished its China visit with an evening cruise on the Huangpu river, offering the striking views of 19th century Shanghai, the Pearl of the Orient, on one side and the City of the 3rd Millennium ready to emulate New York, on the other.

Summary

President P. Couchepin's visit overall, has been a very successful trip. The long-awaited for Approved Destination Status (ADS) was awarded to Switzerland, which is a critical step towards developing a growing tourism-base from Chinese travellers to Switzerland. Other areas of cooperation between our two countries were discussed, which are expected to see the unfolding of various projects and initiatives in the future.

SwissCham China provided a "Welcome Package" to

every participant of the official delegation and representatives of the Media, which provided information about the activities of SwissCham China. V.I.P. Membership Cards were also issued to all delegation members in an effort to raise awareness on the efforts led by the Chamber in China and in Switzerland.

To mark the start of a more engaged cooperation, SwissCham China proposed two initiatives to the Swiss delegation, one to work closely with Seco to monitor China's implementation of her WTO's commitment, the other, to study in details trends of the Chinese development, experiences made by Swiss companies already active in China and the practical needs of Swiss firms to start a China business.

This latter proposal, in the form of a SME-survey in Switzerland and Swiss enterprises in China, would allow the Chamber and other public and private institutions to support the entry of SMEs in an environment that is renown to be difficult, yet more and more promising.

More Aspects on the Presidential Trip

Besides obtaining the Approved Destination Status (ADS), which constitutes assuredly the most tangible result of the Presidential visit, and the aspects raised in the articles hitherto, several other points deserve a mention:

- Friday 21st November, Mr Pascal COUCHEPIN had talks with Mr LIU Yanhua, Vice Minister of Science



President Couchepin at a peasant's house of Tudun (Province of Gansu).

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and Technology, at the end of which Swiss Ambassador Dominique DREYER and the Vice Minister signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This agreement aims to bring about a reinforcement in the collaboration between the two parties in about ten pre-selected fields, which could lead in the near future to the creation of cooperation platforms, joint laboratories, even a Swiss house for science and education in the PRC. Further to the delegation's visit in June 2002, known as the "Swiss Innovation Week", this will be an interesting realization of bilateral exchange on the subject.

- The question of intellectual property was raised not only with the Prime Minister WEN Jiabao but also with the Vice Minister of Commerce YU Guangzhou. Taking up a suggestion made by Novartis, Switzerland proposed to receive Chinese specialists in order to promote training and encourage an exchange of views. Geneva, headquarters of the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) would seem to be the ideal place to hold such meetings. The Chinese in charge have reacted favourably, adding that this suggestion will be put forward to the authorities concerned.
- Regarding the China Compulsory Certification (CCC), the parties were in agreement for the need to come to a mutual recognition of certificates in such a way as to avoid any difficulties for Swiss and Chinese companies.
- The visit of the Swiss Study Centre – perhaps a little too rapid to be able to assess all the significance – opened in 1988 within Beijing Foreign Studies University, was an opportunity to see how much work has



President Couchepin visiting the Swiss Study Center at Beijing Foreign Studies University.

been accomplished with encouraging professors and students. President COUCHEPIN promised that a computer would be given to the centre in the near future. Moreover, the question could be raised as how to give more support and more prominence to this center. Should it be placed higher on the list of projects aiming to promote Swiss presence in China?

- Going to Gansu was far from a mere tourist trip. Leaving the axe Beijing-Shanghai, was an opportunity to become aware of the realities of a western province, by visiting for instance the different types of peasant homes and the clay greenhouses, as well as meeting the Dunhuang authorities and the Governor of the province, Mr LU Hao, to whom President COUCHEPIN reiterated his support after the earthquakes which hit Gansu last October. In the domain of senior management training the Swiss delegation was

able to see the concrete developments of a programme supported by our country (China Training Centre for Senior Personnel Management Officials or CTC-SPMO) and visit this training centre in Lanzhou.

In a preliminary statement regarding the trip, Ambassador Dominique DREYER recalled that the aims of the visit were to develop bilateral relations, to reinforce the image of Switzerland in China, to meet the new Chinese leaders and, last but not least to stress the importance of Sino-Swiss relations to the Swiss people. In spite of the limits and frustrations that any delegation of this type could bring to light, there is no doubt whatsoever that the delegation fulfilled its goals, paving the way further in our relations with the People's Republic of China.

Gérald Bérout
Secretary, Geneva Chapter Executive Board

President Couchepin Opens Swiss Center Shanghai

Facilitating China Access, the Center Offers SMEs a Global Advantage

Four years after supporting the project launch, Swiss President Pascal Couchepin opened the Swiss Center Shanghai in the Shanghai Xinzhuang Industry Park (SHXIP) on November 24th 2003 during his official visit to China.

“China is developing into a formidable competitor” acknowledged the President. He then went on to mention “to face the competition, SMEs will find a well-prepared ground. They will be able to start production after a relatively short time and in conditions of relatively low risk. This is, in my view, essential for an SME, as they very often do not dispose of the necessary personnel or finances to start China operations successfully. (...) I am convinced the SCS offers Swiss companies an ideal “launch-



*Swiss President Pascal Couchepin (right side) is officially opening the Swiss Center Shanghai.
(Pictures: Florian Lüthi)*

ing pad" for China and will bring a key contribution to the support of SMEs in China."

Nicolas Musy, Managing Director of the Center, presented the achievements of the SCS with more than 40 SMEs (small and medium sized enterprises) served since January 2001, including Jura (producer of coffee machines), Migros (the biggest Swiss retailer), Komax (listed Co. for cable handling machinery).

The Center caters to SMEs, interested in tapping opportunities raised by the emergence of China and its transformation into the main production hub for the World.

SMEs have the opportunity to purchase components at excellent quality/price ratio; supply Chinese producers with equipment and supply the Chinese growing middle class with high-class consumer goods.

The Swiss Center Shanghai (SCS) is a platform for Swiss SMEs interested to set-up their business in China. After offering services from 2001 and instant downtown office space from 2002, the Center is completing its concept and offers instant start-up workshop space for SMEs. Additional instant desk space is also available.

Three years ago, the day of the 50th anniversary of establishment of Sino-Swiss diplomatic relations, Swiss President, Mr. Adolf Ogi presented the Swiss Center Shanghai with its corner stone. In the meantime the groundbreaking project developed well: more than 40 companies received very appreciated support from the

SCS and its network of professional experts.

In this time and with the SCS involvement, Xinzhuang Industry Park welcomed 10 more Swiss enterprises making the industry park selected by the Swiss Center the biggest cluster of Swiss companies in China.

The SCS and its network of professionals is providing SMEs with the resources they lack to successfully enter the China market, be it for sourcing, production or distribution.

The SCS offers not only China management expertise, business and cultural know-how, but also financial support, valuable local government relations and adequate instant space.

By integrating and pooling the services, best conditions are earned for the SCS members and clients.

On September 15th 2003 in Quebec, the SCS got the award of best international project of the first World Chambers Competition 2003 (see Bulletin issue 3, 2003). It is now fully ready to fulfill its mission: provide the Swiss SMEs with a strategic advantage and develop Sino-Swiss economic relations.

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