

Helmer probes 'Private' lives

By ED MEZA

Stina Werenfels' first feature "Going Private" (Nachleben) is the only Swiss pic screening in Panorama, but "Private's" theme of social deterioration is right in keeping with the Berlinale's often bleak examinations of an increasingly dysfunctional world.

"Going Private" is in fact a close look at the desperation of wealthy banking execs and their families trying to keep their lives

from unraveling. It's something the Swiss, whose banks are practically synonymous with the country, obviously know a lot about.

"Many Swiss still have a very idealized view of themselves and of their country," Werenfels said.

"But they don't like to really look in the mirror. In today's society people are forced into being dependent on money and success and that pressures them

to make all kinds of deals that in the end undermine their lives."

Werenfels' Iraqi-born husband and producer Samir said the tale also harks back to themes in turn-of-the-century works by Henrik Ibsen and Anton Chekhov.

Pic is a prime example of projects produced by Zurich-based

Dschoint Ventsch, which Samir runs with partner Werner Schweizer. Company devel-



"Going Private" explores what rich people do when the money dries up.

ops, produces and markets films dealing with cultural, political and social issues.

Since 1994, Dschoint has produced 50 docs and feature films, mostly international co-productions with German, French, Austrian, U.K. and Canadian partners.

Dschoint's recent pics also include Samir's own "Forget Baghdad," a doc about the problems facing communist Jewish Arabs in Israel, and "Snow White," a local hit feature about young romance set against Zurich's drug-infested party scene.