

ARMS TRANSFERS, NEUTRALITY AND BRITAIN'S ROLE IN THE COLD WAR

Anglo-Swiss Relations
1945-1958



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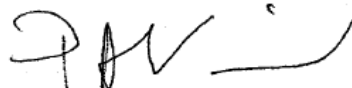
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Photograph on front page:
Swiss DH-100 Vampires Flying, Date Unknown
(Photo Archives, Air Force Center Dübendorf).

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RÉSUMÉ

Fondée sur une recherche multi-archivistique, cette thèse examine les relations anglo-suisse, ainsi que le rôle des transferts d'armes, de la neutralité et de la Grande-Bretagne au début de la Guerre froide. Pour ce faire, les transferts d'armes les plus importants d'un point de vue quantitatif et qualitatif sont analysés en arrière-fond des relations politiques, économiques et militaires de la Grande-Bretagne et de la Suisse. Cette thèse démontre que les relations anglo-suisse durant la Guerre froide, bien que n'étant pas « spéciales », avaient des « traits de *specialness* » ; que les motivations pour les ventes, respectivement les achats d'armes étaient dominées, en Grande-Bretagne, par des considérations économiques et, en Suisse, par des considérations sécuritaires ; que le marché d'armes international a évolué entre 1945 et 1958 d'un *seller's* en un *buyer's* market ; que la Suisse avait, durant cette période, presque continuellement accès au savoir technologique militaire britannique, mais n'a pas vraiment su le mettre à son avantage ; que, pour des raisons politiques, économiques et stratégiques, Londres acceptait la neutralité suisse, dans la mesure où celle-ci n'était pas contraire aux intérêts britanniques ; que la Suisse s'est rendue dépendante des armes britanniques ou de l'OTAN et qu'elle a ainsi enfreint son statut de neutralité et discrédité sa politique de neutralité ; enfin, que l'affaiblissement de la Grande Bretagne ne permettait pas à la Suisse d'utiliser la vente d'armes comme moyen pour influencer sa politique étrangère et de sécurité.

SUMMARY

Based on multi-archival research, this thesis examines Anglo-Swiss relations, as well as the role of arms transfers, neutrality and Great Britain in the early Cold War. The most quantitatively and qualitatively important arms transfers are duly analysed against the background of the political, economic and military relations of Great Britain and Switzerland between 1945 and 1958. By doing so, this thesis demonstrates that Anglo-Swiss relations during the Cold War were not “special”, but had “traits of specialness”. The incentives for arms sales and purchases were driven by economic considerations in Great Britain, while Switzerland was merely attending to core security considerations. Although international arms transfers evolved from a seller's market towards a buyer's boutique from 1945-1958, with concomitant Swiss access to British technological know-how, Berne was unable to fully convert this into a telling strategic advantage. London accepted Swiss neutrality on political, economic and

strategic grounds, provided Berne did not run contrary to British interests. Switzerland became dependent on British or NATO weapons, and although this partially infringed Berne's "neutral status", an economically crippled Britain kept its part of the bargain: arms sales did not directly infringe Swiss foreign and security policies.

MOTS-CLÉS

Histoire internationale, histoire militaire, relations internationales, Guerre froide, transferts d'armes, neutralité, Grande-Bretagne, Royaume-Uni, Suisse, politique étrangère britannique, politique étrangère suisse, politique de sécurité et de défense britannique, politique de sécurité et de défense suisse, transferts de technologies, technologie militaire, industrie de l'armement.

KEYWORDS

International history, military history, international relations, Cold War, arms transfers, neutrality, Great Britain, United Kingdom, Switzerland, British foreign policy, Swiss foreign policy, British security and defence policy, Swiss security and defence policy, technology transfers, military technology, armaments industry.

*To Lisa,
who made this possible through her continuous and loving support*

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	p. 2
1. Anglo-Swiss Relations.....	p. 5
2. Arms and Technology Transfers.....	p. 8
3. Neutrality.....	p. 15
4. Britain's Role.....	p. 27

PART I

MUTUAL ATTRACTION 1945-1949

1. A World in Motion	p. 40
1.1. Switzerland: Suspect but Healthy.....	p. 41
1.2. Great Britain: Overstretched, Bankrupt, but Influential.....	p. 45
2. Anglo-Swiss Relations 1945-1949	p. 50
2.1. Self-Interested British Advocacy for Switzerland.....	p. 50
2.2. Economic Interdependence.....	p. 56
2.3. The Field Marshal in the Alps.....	p. 59
3. Vampires “off the Shelf”	p. 69
3.1. Establishing the Armament Link.....	p. 69
3.2. The Technology Gap.....	p. 73
3.3. Swiss Missions to Britain.....	p. 76
3.4. British Aircraft against Home Production.....	p. 83
3.5. An Unfinished Business?.....	p. 86
3.6. Dénouement.....	p. 89
4. “Homemade” Vampires?	p. 95
4.1. Mutual Interests.....	p. 95
4.2. Independence?.....	p. 98
4.3. Gold and Tourism.....	p. 103
4.4. Supply Priorities and US Intervention.....	p. 107
Intermediate Conclusion I	p. 113

PART II

STORMY HONEYMOON 1949-1953

5. A Divided and Unstable World	p. 120
5.1. Switzerland: The Western Neutral.....	p. 123
5.2. Great Britain: Clinging to Grandeur.....	p. 130
6. Anglo-Swiss Relations 1949-1953	p. 137
6.1. Different Perceptions but Common Interests.....	p. 137
6.2. Continuous Economic Adjustments.....	p. 145
6.3. A Tamed British Lion.....	p. 152
6.4. Swiss Defence Cooperation despite British Criticism.....	p. 158

7. Engines and Venoms.....	p. 173
7.1. Dependence?.....	p. 173
7.2. Towards Self-Reliance.....	p. 180
7.3. Business versus Security.....	p. 190
 8. Centurion I.....	p. 204
8.1. The First British “No”.....	p. 204
8.2. Centurions Made in Switzerland?.....	p. 215
8.3. Project Ross.....	p. 225
8.4. Role Reversal.....	p. 230
 Intermediate Conclusion II.....	p. 241
 PART III	
MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE 1953-1958	
 9. A World in Tension.....	p. 250
9.1. Switzerland: The Recognised Neutral.....	p. 253
9.2. Great Britain: The Fading Power.....	p. 260
 10. Anglo-Swiss Relations 1953-1958.....	p. 268
10.1. Cordial Opportunism.....	p. 268
10.2. Modus Vivendi.....	p. 272
10.3. Silent Security Partnership.....	p. 274
 11. Centurion II.....	p. 287
11.1. Centurion versus Patton.....	p. 287
11.2. The Enemy Within.....	p. 295
11.3. The Rieser Affair.....	p. 302
 12. Hunter.....	p. 311
12.1. Interim Solution.....	p. 311
12.2. Temptations.....	p. 317
12.3. Aircraft Competition.....	p. 327
12.4. Doctrinal Doubts.....	p. 334
 CONCLUSION.....	p. 344
1. Anglo-Swiss Relations.....	p. 344
2. Arms and Technology Transfers.....	p. 346
3. Neutrality.....	p. 349
4. Britain’s Role.....	p. 353
 APPENDICES.....	p. 358
1. Organisational Charts.....	p. 358
2. Exchange Rates.....	p. 360
3. Photographs.....	p. 361
 BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	p. 372

TABLES AND FIGURES

Table 1

Arms Transfers from the UK to Switzerland and European NATO Allies
1950-1958..... p. 3

Table 2

Major Swiss Purchases of British Weapons Systems 1945-1958..... p. 33

Table 3

Value of Swiss Imports and Exports from and to the UK in SFr. 1945-1958..... p. 34

Table 4

Correlates of War Index for the United Kingdom, the United States
and the Soviet Union, 1945-1955..... p. 131

Table 5

Importance of Sweden and Switzerland in UK Arms Supplies from
a Strategic, Economic and Political Perspective..... p. 200

Table 6

Comparative UK Balance of Trade in Manufactures as a Percentage of GDP
1952 / 1956 / 1960..... p. 264

Table 7

Defence Expenditure of Leading European NATO Countries
as Percentage of GNP at Factor Cost..... p. 265

Figure 1

Different Types of Military Technology..... p. 13

Figure 2

Time Spans from Enquiry to Decision for the Individual Weapons System..... p. 35

ABBREVIATIONS

AEN	Archives de l'Etat de Neuchâtel
AfZ	Archiv für Zeitgeschichte, ETH Zurich
AM	Air Ministry
ASIA	Swiss Association of the Aircraft Industry
AVIA	Swiss Society of Air Force Officers
AWP	Arms Working Party
BAOR	British Army of the Rhine
<i>BDFA</i>	<i>British Documents on Foreign Affairs</i>
BJSM	British Joint Services Mission
BoT	Board of Trade
CHUR	Churchill College Archive Centre
CIGS	Chief of the Imperial General Staff
CMAB	Combined Munitions Assignment Board
CoCom	Coordinating Committee for Multilateral Export Control
CoS	Chiefs of Staff
CTP	Commission for Tank Procurement
<i>DBPO</i>	<i>Documents on British Policy Overseas</i>
DMA	Direction of Military Airfields
DMT	Director of Military Training
DOT	Department of Overseas Trade
ECA	Economic Cooperation Administration
ECSC	European Coal and Steel Community
EDC	European Defence Community
EEC	European Economic Community

EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EMIS	Exchange of Military Information Sub-Committee
EPU	European Payments Union
ERD	Economic Relations Department
ERP	European Recovery Program
FDPE	Federal Department of Public Economy
FFA	Flug- und Fahrzeugwerke Altenrhein
FFD	Federal Finance Department
FFI	Federal Finance Inspection
FMA	Federal Military Administration
FMD	Federal Military Department
FO	Foreign Office
FPD	Federal Political Department
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
<i>FRUS</i>	<i>Foreign Relations of the United States</i>
FTA	Free Trade Area
F+W Emmen	Federal Aircraft Factory Emmen
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
IRD	Information Research Department
IWM	Imperial War Museum
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JPS	Joint Planning Staff
JWPS	Joint War Production Staff
KMF	Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement
LHCMA	Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives

MAP	Ministry of Aircraft Production
MDAA	Mutual Defense Assistance Act
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MoS	Ministry of Supply
MTS	Military Technical Service
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDC	National Defence Commission
NSC	National Security Council
OEEC	Organisation for European Economic Co-operation
PRC	People's Republic of China
RAC	Royal Armoured Corps
RAE	Royal Aircraft Establishment
RAF	Royal Air Force
R&D	Research and Development
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander Europe
SAF	Swiss Air Force
SANACC	State-Army-Navy-Air Coordinating Committee
SBAC	Society of British Aircraft Constructors
<i>SDD</i>	<i>Swiss Diplomatic Documents</i>
SEATO	Southeast Asian Treaty Organisation
SFA	Swiss Federal Archives
SFr.	Swiss Francs
SHAPE	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe
<i>SIPRI</i>	<i>Stockholm International Peace Research Institute</i>

Stiftung HAM	Stiftung Historisches Material der Schweizer Armee
SWNCC	State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee
TNA	The National Archives
UN	United Nations
USAAF	United States Army Air Force
USAF	United States Air Force
WO	War Office

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

“Neutrality does not require that for purchases of war material all foreign states or at least the parties of a future conflict have to be equally considered. This liberty could only reach its limits, if through constant purchases of war material from a certain state, Switzerland would become materially dependent on this state and would be unable to maintain essential parts of its armament without its help.”

(Rudolf Bindschedler, Head of the Federal Political Department’s law service, to Max Petitpierre, Swiss Foreign Minister, 05.11.1957)¹

“As I explained to you, an agreement for manufacture under licence leads to quite a lot of direct exports, especially in the early days, e.g. the Swiss will presumably start off by ordering a number of finished aircraft and engines of the types chosen, will later purchase components from the UK for assembly in Switzerland and for a long time will be dependent upon us for accessories, instruments, armament, etc. Moreover, they will probably need considerable assistance from British engineers in getting Production going.”

(E. Haynes, Ministry of Supply, to L. Skevington, Board of Trade, 14.08.1945)²

From 1945 to 1958, Switzerland bought almost all of its heavy armament from the United Kingdom. Every aircraft and every tank was not only bought abroad or produced under licence, but with two minor exceptions, was also of British design. Consequently, “the” permanent neutral state received its heavy military equipment from a single state, which happened to be among “the” leading nations of the Western bloc in the Cold War. How could such an ambiguous situation come about and how far can these arms transfers explain or reflect Anglo-Swiss relations at the time?

Although Rudolf Bindschedler, Head of the Federal Political Department’s³ law service and author of the first quote, considered the neutral state free in its arms purchases, he nonetheless saw the danger of dependency in 1957 and informed Max

¹ Rudolf Bindschedler to Max Petitpierre (Federal Political Department, hereafter FPD), 05.11.1957, Swiss Federal Archives (hereafter SFA), E2001(E), 1972/33, Bd.5.

² E. Haynes (Ministry of Supply, hereafter MoS) to L. Skevington (Board of Trade, hereafter BoT), 14.08.1945, The National Archives (hereafter TNA), AVIA 15/2244.

³ Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Petitpierre, the Swiss Foreign Minister, accordingly. By contrast, on the British side, E. Haynes, a civil servant in the Ministry of Supply (MoS) and author of the second quote, intended immediately after the end of the war to foster exactly such a dependency. The amount of heavy weaponry transferred from the UK to Switzerland during this period, i.e. 176 finished fighter aircraft, 30 finished trainer aircraft, 393 fighter aircraft manufactured under licence, and 210 finished tanks,⁴ is very impressive, especially in relation to Britain's total export of the same weaponry to its European NATO Allies, i.e. 798 finished fighter aircraft, 50 finished trainer aircraft, 1288 fighter aircraft and 76 trainer aircraft manufactured under licence, and 912 finished tanks, (see Table 1).⁵ The question thus arises whether Haynes' statement was not just wishful thinking that eventually became reality, the very same reality of dependency that Bindschedler feared.

Table 1

<i>Arms Transfers from the UK to Switzerland and European NATO Allies 1950-1958</i>		
Weapons Systems	Switzerland	European NATO Allies
Finished Fighter Aircraft	176	798
Finished Trainer Aircraft	30	50
Licenced Fighter Aircraft	393	1288
Licenced Trainer Aircraft	0	76
Finished Tanks	210	912
Total	766	3960

However, are these numbers to be taken at face-value? The Anglo-Swiss relationship was perhaps more complex and the purchase of a large amount of weaponry did not automatically entail dependency. Even if Great Britain would have wanted to “downgrade” Switzerland to a client state, it would have needed the power to do so. On the other hand, Switzerland would have had to be willing or obliged to be

⁴ “Transfers of major conventional weapons from the UK to Switzerland between 1950 and 1958”, *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Arms Transfers Database (SIPRI Arms Transfers Database hereafter)*, http://armstrade.sipri.org/arms_trade/trade_register.php (accessed 05.09.09); In the above mentioned numbers the 75 finished Vampire aircraft delivered before 1950 are also included.

⁵ “Transfers of major conventional weapons from the UK to the world between 1950 and 1958”, *SIPRI Arms Transfers Database*, http://armstrade.sipri.org/arms_trade/trade_register.php (accessed 23.09.09).

under British tutelage. Were the arms transfers a symptom of Anglo-Swiss relations or were they the cause for the state of their relationship? The crossing of the two countries' incentives for arms transfers with their political, economic and military relations should help unearth hitherto neglected aspects of the real state of Anglo-Swiss relations between 1945 and 1958.

The aircraft and tanks which found their way from the British Isles to the Swiss Alps in the early years of the Cold War also raise more general issues. In what respect do these arms deals illustrate the arms market and British and Swiss defence production in the emerging Cold War, the Korean crisis and the first détente with the Soviet Union? The mechanisms of arms transfers can also be questioned, i.e. whether the selling or buying of modern weaponry was motivated by political, economic or strategic considerations. The transfer of military technology between the two countries is also an issue, especially in the light of the two superpowers' interests, for or against it. The arms market's structures and mechanisms can also be questioned, because it is not evident that there was room for dependency.

The thrust of Bindschedler's analysis in 1957 was then, whether Swiss neutrality could be endangered by the armaments policy Switzerland pursued. The question which immediately comes to one's mind here is if through buying fighter aircraft and tanks from London, Berne acted contrary to the principles of permanent neutrality. The Swiss Cold War lawyer wrote the above statement in the full knowledge that Switzerland had already taken delivery of an enormous quantity of weapons from the UK. Consequently, there is not only the question of whether Switzerland could have betrayed neutrality by becoming dependent on British weaponry, but whether, in buying solely from the Western bloc regardless of its dependency, Switzerland had clearly sided with one party of the conflict. Was Bindschedler trying to justify the apparently one-sided armament policy by stating that "[n]eutrality does not require that for purchases of war material all foreign states or at least the parties of a future conflict have to be equally considered"? This question entails the issue if the neutral state had any other options during the East-West confrontation, and if the policy of neutrality was doomed to fail or survive. Consequently, the arms transfers will be used to study the role and evolution of Swiss neutrality and neutrality in general during the early Cold War.

Meanwhile, did Britain have the power to install a relationship of dependency with Switzerland regarding arms supply, as wished by the MoS' Mr. Haynes? This

also questions the UK's great power role and how it evolved between 1945 and 1958. Were the British losing their empire and trying to find a new role during this period, as later stated by the former American Secretary of State Dean Acheson?⁶ One could interpret the massive supply of weapons to Switzerland as part of a larger strategy, which was supposed to provide Britain with a new role and thus replace the Empire, by creating a power bloc equal to the American and the Soviet ones. Or the reasons that Britain was supplying weapons to Switzerland could have been out of economic necessity. Regarding these questions, the study of arms transfers between Berne and London will thus also be a vehicle to assess Britain's role during the early Cold War.

In short, then, this thesis will use Anglo-Swiss arms sales during the early Cold War to explore four areas of historical debate; Anglo-Swiss relations, arms and technology transfers, neutrality, and Britain's great power role.

1. Anglo-Swiss Relations

Ever since the turn of the eighteenth century, successive British governments had championed Swiss neutrality in order to maintain the European balance of power, and a cultural affinity between the two countries had been forged over a period lasting over 200 years. From a Swiss perspective, the British were the one great power that had repeatedly taken side with Switzerland in its dealings with the other great powers during the nineteenth century. Moreover, economically, the British had not only become important buyers of manufactured Swiss goods, but were also appreciated hotel guests.⁷ Indeed, in addition to their belief in the need of a neutral Switzerland for the balance of power in Europe, the British fell in love with the Swiss Alps and became a driving force in the development of tourism in Switzerland.⁸ The intense contacts through tourism and the mutual strategic interests in neutrality, led to a

⁶ Acheson, Dean, "Our Atlantic Alliance: The Political and Economic Strands", speech delivered at the United States Military Academy, West Point, New York, 5 December, 1962, *Vital Speeches of the Day*, Vol. XXIX, No. 6, p. 163; See also Brinkley, Douglas, "Dean Acheson and the 'Special Relationship': The West Point Speech of December 1962", *Historical Journal*, Vol. 33, No. 3, 1990, pp. 599-608.

⁷ Wylie, Neville, *Britain, Switzerland and the Second World War*, Oxford: OUP, 2003, pp. 20-22, 65-66; For a general account see Wylie, Neville, "Grossbritannien, 3: Vom 19. Jahrhundert bis zum 2. Weltkrieg", in *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz* (hereafter *HLS*), <http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/d/D3356-2-2.php> (accessed 27.10.2008).

⁸ Tissot, Laurent, *Naissance d'une industrie touristique: Les Anglais et la Suisse au XIX^e siècle*, Lausanne: Editions Payot, 2000, *passim*.

cultural affinity, and probably also to an increased understanding of the other's traditions and political system. Thereafter, although the period from 1939 to 1945 subjected the traditionally cordial bilateral relationship to severe strain, at the end of the Second World War, Britain enjoyed enormous prestige in Switzerland, after having defended Swiss neutrality in Washington and Moscow during the war.⁹

According to Mauro Mantovani, it was for this reason and not only for traditional Anglophilia that Switzerland turned after the war to the British in its efforts to enhance its strategic security and that "Another 'Special Relationship'" was established.¹⁰ Mantovani further develops this Anglo-Swiss rapprochement – which was mainly brought about by Field-Marshal Montgomery's meetings with Switzerland's Foreign and Defence Ministers, Max Petitpierre and Karl Kobelt, and Chief of the General Staff, Colonel-Corps Commander Louis de Montmollin – in his book on Swiss security policy during the Cold War.¹¹ Montgomery's interest in Switzerland's defence has also been assessed from a Swiss perspective by Mauro Cerutti,¹² and Stefanie Frey dwells on Anglo-Swiss military contacts in her thesis on *Switzerland's Defence and Security Policy during the Cold War*, without, though drawing clear conclusions as to whether there was a "special relationship" or not.¹³ On a more hypothetical level, Daniele Ganser has identified the British Secret Service as the link between NATO's and Switzerland's stay-behind armies during the Cold War.¹⁴ These works leave several important questions with regard to Anglo-Swiss relations unanswered, as they do not fully take into account how the arms transfers could have affected the two countries' bilateral relations. Did Britain sell modern armament to Switzerland because it wanted to strengthen an important security partner's defences and did the Swiss buy from the British because of their intimate relationship? Perhaps, but on the other hand, it could have been the arms transfers

⁹ Wylie, *Britain, Switzerland...*, *op. cit.*, p.333.

¹⁰ Mantovani, Mauro, "Another "special relationship": The British-Swiss Early Cold War Coordination of Defence, 1947-53", *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Vol.10, No.1, 1999, pp.127-146.

¹¹ Mantovani, Mauro, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik im Kalten Krieg 1947-1963: Zwischen angelsächsischem Containment und Neutralitäts-Doktrin*, Zürich: Orell Füssli, 1999.

¹² Cerutti, Mauro, « La politique de défense de la Suisse pendant les premières années de la guerre froide (1945-1950) : Entre neutralité armée et solidarité avec les Occidentaux », *Itinera*, No.18, 1996, pp.98-129; *Ibid.*, « La Suisse et la sécurité européenne : à propos d'un entretien entre le chef de l'Etat-major général suisse et le Maréchal Montgomery en 1949 », *Relations internationales*, No.86, 1996, pp.213-220.

¹³ Frey, Stefanie, *Switzerland's Defence and Security Policy during the Cold War (1945-1973)*, Lenzburg: Merker im Effingerhof, 2002.

¹⁴ Ganser, Daniele, "The British Secret Service in Neutral Switzerland: An Unfinished Debate on NATO's Cold War Stay-behind Armies", *Intelligence & National Security*, Vol.20, No.4, 2005, pp.553-580.

themselves that caused the Anglo-Swiss defence relationship – if it really existed – and not the other way round.

Was Switzerland in British eyes of sufficient strategic importance to receive priority status in its arms supplies? According to Mantovani, Switzerland was an “estimated” [sic] customer of British weapons for economic reasons on account of the valuable hard currency it brought into the British coffers. This brought the Swiss a valuable fourth place in British arms export priorities, after the British Armed Forces, the Commonwealth, and NATO.¹⁵ Frey reaches a similar conclusion. The only equipment sent to Switzerland was that deemed surplus to Britain’s own requirements.¹⁶ Like Mantovani, Peter Braun identifies economic reasons for British readiness to sell the Swiss modern armament in his study of the Swiss General Staff during the Cold War.¹⁷

If economic reasons could have favoured arms transfers between Britain and Switzerland, what were the two countries’ economic relations? After the war, the economic relations between Great Britain and Switzerland had first to return to normality. It was, however, not only for this reason that the Swiss granted the British a credit worth 260 million Swiss francs (SFr.) in 1946. As Isabelle Paccaud observes, the Swiss authorities also understood the credit as an investment in British support for coming negotiations with the not so benevolent Americans, who wanted to make the Swiss pay for their behaviour during the war.¹⁸ There was, moreover, not only a necessity to buy Britain’s goodwill, but – as claimed by Roland Maurhofer – the British needed currency to buy Swiss products and spend their holidays in Switzerland. The purchase of goods in Britain gave the British the money the Swiss wanted them to spend on their own products or in their hotels.¹⁹ If this thesis is correct, it throws up the intriguing question of whether Berne did buy weapons from London on a massive scale to equilibrate the two countries’ balance of payments and

¹⁵ Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, op. cit., pp.125-129.

¹⁶ Frey, op. cit., p.130.

¹⁷ Braun, Peter, *Von der Reduitstrategie zur Abwehr: Die militärische Landesverteidigung der Schweiz im Kalten Krieg 1945-1966*, Baden: hier+jetzt, 2006, p.256.

¹⁸ Paccaud, Isabelle, « Les relations économiques anglo-suissees au sortir de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale », in Jost, Hans Ulrich ; Leni, Monique ; Leimgruber, Matthieu (eds.), *Relations internationales et affaires étrangères suisses après 1945*, Lausanne : Ed. Antipodes, 2006, pp.33-49.

¹⁹ Maurhofer, Roland, „Schweizerisch-britische Verständigung am Beispiel des Zahlungsabkommens von 1946 und der Gründungsphase der OEEC und EZU 1948-1950“, Hug, Peter; Kloter, Martin (eds.), *Aufstieg und Fall des Bilateralismus. Schweizerische Aussen- und Aussenwirtschaftspolitik 1930-1960: Rahmenbedingungen, Entscheidungsstrukturen, Fallstudien*, Lausanne: Payot; Zürich: Chronos, 1999, pp.452-468.

to advance its own economic interests. Did Britain, for its part, need hard currency to the extent that it was prepared to allow this consideration to shape its foreign arms sales policy?

Meanwhile, one can also question if there was anything special in Anglo-Swiss political relations that could have favoured the arms transfers, or that could have been brought about by the latter. There is no general study that deals with the two countries' diplomatic relations during the East-West conflict, yet, as Maurhofer observes, there was "another special relationship" at work in post-1945 Europe. Britain and Switzerland had common interests with regard to European integration and cooperated, together with some Scandinavian countries, in their effort not to become part of supranational European institutions and, if possible, to prevent their establishment.²⁰ This "common European policy" could have been related to the arms transfers. Although this seems rather improbable at first sight, Anglo-Swiss diplomatic relations will be scrutinised to discover eventual political incentives for the selling or buying of weapons. Evidently, Anglo-Swiss relations changed over time and the causal relationship between the two countries' security, economic or political relations, and the arms transfers were therefore in constant flux.

2. Arms and Technology Transfers

The international arms trade and its industries remain a neglected area of research for military historians.²¹ This is curious, for, as Keith Krause notes, "Arms transfers have been used at least since the Peloponnesian Wars to achieve the political, military and economic goals of states and rulers".²² Or as Andrew J. Pierre claims, "arms sales are foreign policy writ large".²³ Especially in the Cold War, the opposing blocs' contest for clients centred on the use of arms trade as an instrument of foreign policy. According to Edward Laurance, the acquisition of arms from one of the two

²⁰ Maurhofer, Roland, *Die schweizerische Europapolitik vom Marshallplan zur EFTA 1947 bis 1960: Zwischen Kooperation und Integration*, Bern etc.: Haupt, 2001, *passim*.

²¹ Van de Kerkhof, Stefanie, „Rüstungsindustrie und Kriegswirtschaft: Vom Nutzen und Nachteil wirtschaftshistorischer Methoden für die Militärgeschichte“, Kühne, Thomas; Ziemann, Benjamin (eds.), *Was ist Militärgeschichte?*, Paderborn etc.: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2000, p.180.

²² Krause, Keith, *Arms and the State: Patterns of Military Production and Trade*, Cambridge etc.: CUP, 1995, p.1.

²³ Pierre, Andrew J., *The Global Politics of Arms Sales*, Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1982, p.3.

superpowers was widely acknowledged as evidence of a state's allegiance during this conflict. More generally, however, the study of arms trade allows us to better understand "the international system and its effect on the policy choices of its actors".²⁴

In addressing this point, the first issue that needs to be considered is the nature of the "global arms transfer system" at this particular historical juncture. In the immediate post-war period, the industrial infrastructure to support arms production in most of Europe was virtually destroyed. As a consequence of war, several traditional players in the global arms trade – such as Germany, France, Italy and Czechoslovakia – were temporarily absent and Britain stood alone as a European exception. It emerged from the war with its arms industries intact and in the first post-war decade was second only to the US as an arms exporter (the Soviet Union remained generally aloof from the system).²⁵ The small number of suppliers created a seller's market, and only once the other industrial states such as France, Germany and Czechoslovakia recovered from the war, did the number of arms suppliers increase.²⁶ The global arms transfer system of the early Cold War was thus not only dominated by the US and the Soviet Union, as erroneously claimed by Laurance,²⁷ and far less dominated by the US alone, as stated by William Keller.²⁸

The British arms industry emerged from the Second World War not only intact, but also with huge capacities. In the country's attempt to resume its traditional great power role, the ability to produce the entire range of modern weapons systems was critical. In certain fields, such as jet engines, Britain was technologically more advanced than the US. In the early Cold War, Britain delivered significant amounts of weapons to its colonies, to the Commonwealth and to Western European states. In Anthony Sampson's words, "It was a golden age for British arms exports, whether to the developing world or to Europe".²⁹ Meanwhile, the percentage of major weapons production that was exported was relatively high, e.g. 47% of Vampire fighters and 46% of Hunter fighters produced were exported. Moreover, as in the case of these two

²⁴ Laurance, Edward J., *The International Arms Trade*, New York: Lexington Books, 1992, pp.2-3.

²⁵ Krause, *op. cit.*, pp.82-83.

²⁶ Buzan, Barry; Herring, Eric, *The Arms Dynamic in World Politics*, Boulder CO etc.: Lynne Rienner, 1998, p.40.

²⁷ Laurance, *op. cit.*, pp.77-79.

²⁸ Keller, William W., *Arm in Arm: The Political Economy of the Global Arms Trade*, New York: BasicBooks, 1995, p.98.

²⁹ Sampson, Anthony, *The Arms Bazaar, The Companies, The Dealers, The Bribes: from Vickers to Lockheed*, London etc.: Hodder and Stoughton, 1977, p.107.

aircraft models, the weaponry was among the technologically most advanced of its kind. This golden age came to an end in the late 1950s and early 1960s, as British arms exports fell sharply, “both because other suppliers (notably France and the Soviet Union) re-entered the market aggressively and captured traditional British customers, and because British arms were uncompetitive, with aircraft especially proving too expensive for most clients”.³⁰

Switzerland also emerged from the Second World War with its defence production base intact. The country strove as part of its neutrality policy to maintain the maximum level of military self-reliance compatible with its economic base. This, however, did not enable the Swiss to be technologically independent and they continued to import arms.³¹ Yet the decision to rely on imported weapons was not taken lightly. As will become evident in this thesis, the Federal authorities went to great lengths to equip the Swiss Armed Forces autonomously, especially with fighter aircraft, and considered for a long time the purchase of foreign weapons as a necessary, but temporary evil. More specifically, Alexandre Vautravers notes that it was the abandoning of the “national redoubt” strategy – the foreseen withdrawal into the alpine fortress in case of attack – that pushed Switzerland to acquire modern weapons such as tanks and jet aircraft abroad. He sees in these arms purchases the “material dependency” feared by Bindschedler.³² Moreover, he states that because of Switzerland’s isolation, the Swiss authorities launched a programme in 1949 for the development and production of weapons.³³ It is, however, unclear, if he refers to Switzerland’s supposed isolation during or after the war.

While it remains to be seen if Switzerland purchased modern armament because of a change of strategy, what are the incentives for arms transfers? According to Robert Harkavy, what distinguishes the arms market from say, the automobile or other commercial markets, is the pervasive influence of political considerations in driving policy.³⁴ In order to underline this, Krause offers a tripartite division of the motivations driving participants in the arms transfer and production system. The first

³⁰ Krause, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-134; Cornish, Paul, *The Arms Trade and Europe*, London: Royal Institute of International Affairs: Pinter, 1995, pp.7-8.

³¹ Krause, *op. cit.*, p.130; Buzan; Herring, *op. cit.*, p.45; See also Pierre, *op. cit.*, pp.120-122.

³² Vautravers, Alexandre, *L’armement en Suisse depuis 1850 : Carrefour des armées, de la technique et de l’économie*, Thèse, Universités de Genève et Lyon, 2004, pp.253-254.

³³ *Ibid.*, p.262.

³⁴ Harkavy, Robert E., “The Changing International System and the Arms Trade”, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol.535, 1994, p.14.

is the *pursuit of wealth*, by which he suggests that states engage in the arms trade in order to “(1) provide foreign exchange and positively affect the balance of payments; (2) reduce the cost of domestic weapons procurement through economies of scale in production; (3) maintain employment and infrastructure in defence-related industries; (4) recoup research and development expenditures; and to (5) use military production as an engine of growth for economic development. Secondly, because of the *pursuit of victory in war*, arms are exported to (1) guarantee the independence of arms supply to ensure military security; (2) act as a *quid pro quo* for military base/landing rights (or intelligence-gathering facilities); (3) assist friends and allies to maintain an effective (and/or common) defensive posture against external threats; (4) substitute for direct military involvement; (5) provide testing for new weapons systems. Finally, in the *pursuit of power* states trade arms to (1) provide access to and influence over leaders and elites in recipient states in pursuit of foreign policy objectives; (2) symbolise commitment to the recipient’s security or stability against internal or external threats; (3) create or maintain a regional balance of power; (4) create or maintain a regional presence; (5) provide access to scarce, expensive or strategic resources.”³⁵

Quoting a British government White Paper of 1955, Krause states that the UK’s arms sales were primarily governed by political and strategic considerations, i.e. the contribution of arms sales to export earnings could only be taken into account once these were satisfied.³⁶ Others disagree. William Durch comes to exactly the opposite conclusion and suggests that it was mainly for economic reasons that the British sold weapons abroad.³⁷ Consequently, was Britain selling weapons to Switzerland mainly for economic reasons – as stated further above by Swiss historians – or were political and strategic incentives predominant, in accordance with Krause’s general pattern? The answers to these issues will also shed light on Britain’s arms exports more generally.

Meanwhile, on the other hand, what would normally be the incentives of a recipient state to acquire arms? In this regard, Krause identifies three sets of motives driving states to acquire foreign armaments: “*internal* (including securing the regime against internal threats or using military development as a vehicle for social and

³⁵ Krause, *op. cit.*, pp.97-98. See also Buzan; Herring, *op. cit.*, pp.33-35; and Pierre, *op. cit.*, pp.14-27.

³⁶ Krause, *op. cit.*, p.143. Pierre quotes the same White Paper and comes to the same conclusion (Pierre, *op. cit.*, p.101).

³⁷ Durch, William J., *Constructing Regional Security: The Role of Arms Transfers, Arms Control, and Reassurance*, New York etc.: Palgrave, 2000, p.10.

economic modernisation), *regional* (including guaranteeing security, fighting wars and acquiring regional influence or hegemony), and *systemic* (including the pursuit of status, power and prestige)".³⁸ This schema is supported by the research carried out by Buzan and Herring, who suggest that states effectively follow a combination of an "*action-reaction model*" (states strengthen their armaments because of the threats they perceive from other states) and a "*domestic structure model*" (the will to arm is generated by forces within the state).³⁹ These explanations focus mainly on security aspects. Consequently, one misses possible economic advantages, other than technological, the recipient state could gain from buying weapons abroad. For instance, to provide the supplier state with the money necessary to purchase one's own goods, as outlined above.

Nevertheless, technological aspects are not of minor importance. As Martin van Creveld has noted "war [and the hardware to wage it] is completely permeated by technology and governed by it".⁴⁰ Moreover, following on from the Second World War, the Cold War was a period of unprecedented progress in military technology. The fight for national survival forced states during the Second World War to create very large Research & Development (R&D) infrastructures. These remained in place once the war came to an end, and brought about enormous strides in weapons technology, and unprecedented developments in such areas as atomic energy, radar, rocket propulsion, jet propulsion, automation and operations research. The technical developments continued during the Cold War in such fields as nuclear energy, advanced fuel technology, space research, inertial guidance, computers and electronics, aeronautics, radar technology, communications, and optics. This even led to a further growth in R&D and continuous state intervention while the importance of weapons technology was emphasised.⁴¹

As states often prefer producing weapons to acquiring them, the arms transfer system is not only a trade in goods, but also a vehicle for the transmission and

³⁸ Krause, *op. cit.*, p.193.

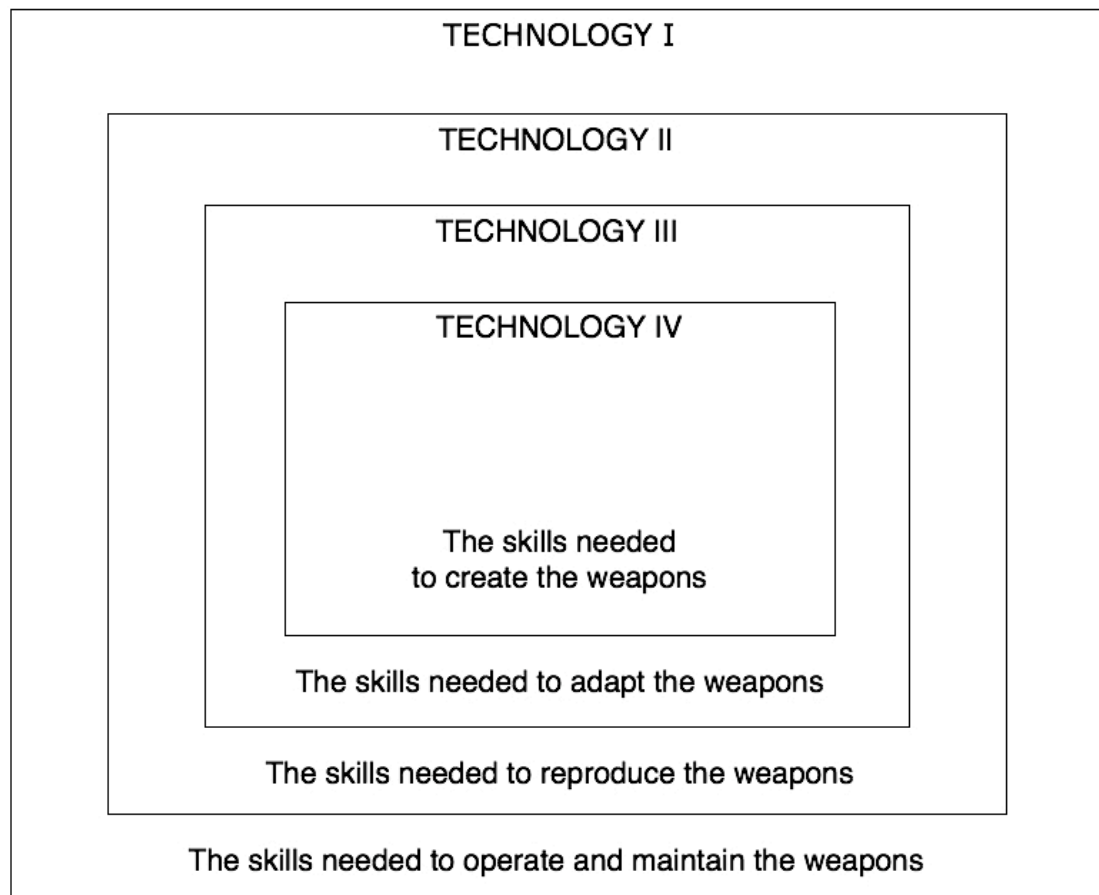
³⁹ Buzan; Herring, *op. cit.*, pp.81-119.

⁴⁰ Creveld, Martin van, *Technology and War: From 2000 B.C. to the Present*, London and New York: Free Press, 1989, p.1.

⁴¹ Bluth, Christoph, "Science and Technology", Dockrill, Saki R.; Hughes, Geraint (eds.), *Palgrave Advances in Cold War History*, Basingstoke etc.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, p.189; Hartcup, Guy, *The Silent Revolution: The Development of Conventional Weapons 1945-85*, London: Brassey's, 1993, *passim*; Hughes, Matthew, "Technology, Science and War", Hughes, Matthew; Philpott, William J. (eds.), *Palgrave Advances in Modern Military History*, Basingstoke etc.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, pp.244-247.

diffusion of military technology. Keith Krause identifies four types of technology by successive levels of complexity (see Figure 1). The first type, technology I, only refers to the skills needed to operate the weapons. For technology II, the scientific and engineering skills are needed to reproduce technology I. While technology III already refers to an autonomous improvement of the imported weapon system, technology IV is the type in which a society is able to produce new forms of technology. Thus, if one applies these technology types to arms transfers, technology I equates to material transfer (the simple diffusion of machines and material), technology II to design transfer (transmission of blueprints, formulas, books, etc.) and technology III to capacity transfer (the transfer of basic scientific knowledge and technical expertise).

*Figure 1: Different Types of Military Technology*⁴²



The factors determining the step from one technological level to another – such as domestic demand, local investment capital or investment in research and development – are the same in military and civilian production. However, political

⁴² Krause, *op. cit.*, p.19.

will is necessary for successful diffusion on a military level, mainly because of the nature of the military market. The shift to technology II requires significant capital and labour resources, while the transfer of technology I needs little or no local capital and labour expertise. In conjunction with these domestic factors, the arms transfer system can contribute strongly to the choice between material and design transfer. If there is a technological gap and the producing state is willing to export his products for profits, the receiving state is more likely – because of the lower cost – to choose material transfer. But if the arms transfer system becomes controlled, and the state possessing the technology is unlikely to export the weapons, the recipient state may be willing to go for design transfer, despite the heavy investments needed.⁴³

The interest of this research lies thus not only in explaining Britain's incentives to sell modern weapons to Switzerland, and the Swiss' motives for buying them, but also in the correlating technology that was transferred from one country to the other. It remains to be seen if the Swiss were only able to acquire the technology through the purchase of weapons, or if they were able to receive and use the know-how to produce the weapons themselves. This in turn was also dependent on the UK's willingness to sell licences and on Switzerland's industrial base. If there was such a technology transfer through licensing production arrangements, did this enable Switzerland to advance along the path from dependency to independence?

These questions are important, because the Cold War seriously reduced the free flow of technology, especially between the two blocs. The obstacles were not, however, even, nor were they in place from the start of our period. In the late 1940s, monitoring of East-West trade and military technology transfers was not yet firmly established. Moreover, the challenge of the post-war years was to control the traffic not just in weapons but also in related technology.⁴⁴ The economic containment of the Soviet Union and its satellites came about rather slowly as a reaction to the Cold War. Although the Americans tried hard to implement an embargo on East-West trade from the end of 1947, the British and the other allied European powers were reluctant to cooperate with the US fully and curtail or suspend their trade with the Soviet Union. The Coordinating Committee (CoCom) of the Consultative Group to oversee day-to-

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp.18-28.

⁴⁴ Cornish, *op. cit.*, p.27.

day operations was only established in January 1950.⁴⁵ It was by setting up CoCom that the free flow of technology was seriously reduced.⁴⁶

According to Jeffrey Engel, after the war, the British were “[...] not concerned who the buyer [of their jet engines] is”.⁴⁷ He states that even after the establishment of CoCom, the allure of lucrative arms contracts encouraged London to adopt a more flexible approach to the transfer of weapons technology than the Americans. In time, the divergence of opinion on arms sales created significant strains in the “special relationship”.⁴⁸ This had obvious implications for Britain’s approach to the sale of weaponry to the Swiss, because it questions if in this setting Switzerland remained independent or was, through its relationship with Britain, part of one bloc and its interior technology transfers. The impact of CoCom on neutral Switzerland’s ability to secure technology from the UK and eventual US interventions in these transfers will also have to be assessed.

3. Neutrality

The third area addressed in the thesis is the issue of neutrality. Political scientists identify two “ideal” types of neutrality: occasional and permanent neutrality. The occasional neutral state declares neutrality in a particular conflict and only for the duration of that war. A permanent neutral nation, by contrast, commits itself to remain neutral in all future wars. This type of neutrality implies that a state will never start a war and never enter one unless it is attacked. Neutrality has mainly been codified in a body of rights and duties in the Hague Conventions of 1907. The Fifth Convention states that the territory of neutral powers is inviolable; a neutral power must not allow a belligerent to violate its territory; a neutral state is not called upon to prevent the export of weapons and other means for war to one of the belligerents and, if it does

⁴⁵ Jackson, Ian, *The Economic Cold War: America, Britain and East-West Trade, 1948-1963*, Basingstoke etc.: Palgrave, 2001, p.18; Cain, Frank, *Economic Statecraft during the Cold War, European Responses to the US Trade Embargo*, London: Routledge, 2007, pp.18-25.

⁴⁶ Laurance, *op. cit.*, pp.93-94.

⁴⁷ Engel, Jeffrey A., “We are not concerned who the buyer is”: Engine Sales and Anglo-American Security at the Dawn of the Jet Age”, *History and Technology*, Vol.17, 2000, pp.43-67.

⁴⁸ Engel, Jeffrey A., *Cold War at 30,000 Feet: The Anglo-American Fight for Aviation Supremacy*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2007, *passim*.

choose to restrict arms exports, every measure of restriction or prohibition must be impartially applied to both belligerents.⁴⁹

While neutrality has a legal dimension, it also has a political one which has no foundation in law. According to the historian of US neutrality, Jürg Martin Gabriel, “neutral politics [...] comprise all measures intended to strengthen and protect the law of neutrality”. Whereas for an occasional neutral this implies acting in a way that prevents it from being drawn into a particular ongoing conflict, for a permanent neutral power, the implications are broader. It should do nothing to undermine the practicability or the credibility of its neutrality in a future war. Therefore, a permanent neutral should not enter into peacetime alliances.⁵⁰ In practice, this is difficult to achieve. Since the peacetime duties and rights of permanently neutral states have not been formally codified into international law, they remain a matter of debate. Consequently, if rather contrary to what one might expect, the institution of permanent neutrality is not as clear as that of occasional neutrality.⁵¹ Nevertheless, the concepts of credibility and respectability are important, especially if a country’s neutrality is not considered an end in itself, but rather a means to achieving a given end. Switzerland’s neutrality, for instance, is instrumental, and had over time a range of functions: national cohesion, independence, free trade, balancing, good offices etc.⁵²

Even though the Swiss Confederation declared itself neutral in the seventeenth century, its permanent neutrality was first internationally recognised as a result of the Congress of Vienna in 1815. As mentioned above, neutrality was codified in the Hague Convention of 1907. Although the conduct of the First World War was felt by contemporaries as a “crisis to neutrality”, and pre-war assumptions about the strength, viability and attractiveness of neutrality were shattered,⁵³ the Treaty of Versailles again recognised Swiss neutrality under international law. This was confirmed by the Council of the League of Nations in 1920, which accepted the concept of “differential

⁴⁹ “Laws of War: Rights and Duties of Neutral Powers and Persons in Case of War on Land (Hague V); October 18, 1907”, *The Avalon Project, Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy, Yale Law School*, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hague05.asp (accessed 23.09.09).

⁵⁰ Gabriel, Jürg Martin, *The American Conception of Neutrality After 1941*, Basingstoke etc.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002, p.12.

⁵¹ Hakovirta, Harto, *East-West Conflict and European Neutrality*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988, p.10.

⁵² Riklin, Alois, „Die Neutralität der Schweiz“, in Riklin, Alois; Haug, Hans; Probst, Raymond (eds.), *Neues Handbuch der schweizerischen Aussenpolitik*, Bern etc.: Haupt, 1992, p.199.

⁵³ Oeter, Stefan, *Neutralität und Waffenhandel*, Berlin etc.: Springer, 1992, pp.48-50. See Ørvik, Nils, *The Decline of Neutrality: With Special Reference to the United States and the Northern Neutrals*, Frank Cass: London, 1971, *passim*.

neutrality” to Switzerland to enable it to join the League. “Differential neutrality” freed Switzerland from participating in military sanctions, but did not release it from its obligations, as a member of the League, to contribute to economic sanctions. This episode did, however, not last for long and after the outbreak of the Second Italo-Abyssinian War (1935) the Swiss returned to integral neutrality. This was sanctioned by the League Council in May 1938.⁵⁴ Switzerland, a small state with some criteria of a medium power – not only of a political, but also of an economic and military nature – succeeded in navigating its way through the Second World War as an independent, neutral state, shunning the refuge of military alliance or tutelage.⁵⁵

This achievement was not mainly a reflection of Switzerland’s military preparedness, but rather the important concessions made to Nazi Germany, voluntarily and involuntarily. Among other things, the Swiss National Bank had agreed to purchase stolen gold in exchange for Swiss francs, many of the country’s companies had one-sidedly supported Germany’s war effort, and Berne had regularly complied with the Third Reich’s anti-Semitic policy.⁵⁶ As a result, Switzerland was considered by the Allies to be a war-profiteer, who had not contributed to the defeat of Nazi Germany and its fascist allies, and had, through its collaboration with the Third Reich, even helped to delay its demise.⁵⁷ The Swiss situation after the Second World War resembled to some extent the Netherlands’ after the First World War. Like Berne, The Hague had had to compromise its neutrality during the conflict and to make concessions in line with the belligerents’ – mostly Germany’s – demands. Whereas this had discredited the policy of neutrality, it had also prevented the country from being drawn directly into the conflict or being overrun. Despite the post-conflict disrepute of neutrality, the Dutch decided to uphold the policy of neutrality, which

⁵⁴ Riklin, *op. cit.*, pp.192-193; *Ibid.*, „Neutralität“, in *HLS*, <http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/d/D16572.php> (accessed 27.10.2008).

⁵⁵ Fleury, Antoine, « La Suisse : petite ou moyenne puissance ? », in Allain, Jean-Claude (ed.), *La Moyenne puissance au XXe siècle*, Fondation pour les études de Défense nationale, Institut d’histoire des conflits contemporains, Paris : FEDN-IHCC, 1988, *passim*; *Ibid.*, « Les petits Etats dans la politique européenne aux XIX^e et XX^e siècles », in Dumoulin, Michel ; Duchene, Geneviève (eds.), *Les petits Etats et la construction européenne*, Actes de la VII^e Chaire Glaverbel d’études européennes 2001-2002, Berne etc. : Peter Lang, 2002, p.43; Halliday, Fred, *European Neutralism and Cold War Politics: A Harder Look*, Sheffield: University of Sheffield, 1990, p.6.

⁵⁶ Unabhängige Expertenkommission Schweiz – Zweiter Weltkrieg, *Die Schweiz, der Nationalsozialismus und der Zweite Weltkrieg: Schlussbericht*. Zürich: Pendo, 2002, *passim*.

⁵⁷ Linke, Manfred, *Schweizerische Aussenpolitik der Nachkriegszeit*, Zürich and Chur: Rüegger, 1995, pp.11-16.

they only abandoned after having been occupied during the next world war.⁵⁸ In contrast to the Dutch after the First World War, however, after the Second World War the Swiss were not only confronted with significantly more outspoken hostility of the victorious powers, but also a post-war system which seemed to drastically limit the space for neutrality.⁵⁹

With the division of Europe and the communisation of Eastern Europe, the international system was different from the European order of the nineteenth century. Moreover, Soviet Communism radically contested the traditional European order. Nevertheless, in 1945, the victorious powers defined – through a set of agreements – the political and legal bases of a European order. Although this order failed, some of the agreements' elements remained during the Cold War and both blocs continued to invoke Potsdam at certain moments.⁶⁰ In addition, the victorious powers had agreed that the backbone of this new international order should be the United Nations (UN) and its related institutions.⁶¹

The UN Charter limits the freedoms that existed in the League of Nations' Covenant. The member states are supposed to assist the organisation in any action it takes under the Charter, and because of the possibility of centralised decisions for unified action, it becomes virtually impossible to stay aloof, i.e. neutral. Moreover, neutrality can gain no legal recognition under the UN Charter. Consequently, it comes to no surprise, that the neutrals were not invited to the UN Conference in San Francisco in 1945. The argument ran that neutrality was not a policy of peace, but of war. The neutrals clearly felt that they were being punished for their failure to join in the Allied "crusade" to rid the world of fascism. The Soviets were more hostile to neutrality than the Americans, and the French tried to give their hostility the most clear-cut expression by proposing anti-neutral amendments to the UN Charter.

⁵⁸ Abbenhuis, Maartje M., *The Art of Staying Neutral: The Netherlands in the First World War, 1914-1918*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006, *passim*; Mallinson, William, *From Neutrality to Commitment: Dutch Foreign Policy, NATO and European Integration*, London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010, *passim*.

⁵⁹ On neutrality and its "survival" after the Second World War see Neff, Stephen C., *The Rights and Duties of Neutrals: A General History*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000, pp.191-217.

⁶⁰ Soutou, Georges-Henri, «Y a-t-il eu un ordre européen de Potsdam au Traité 2+4 (1945-1990)?», in Soutou, Georges-Henri; Béranger, Jean (eds.), *L'ordre européen du XVI^e au XX^e siècle*, Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1998, p.151-160.

⁶¹ Krieger, Wolfgang, "The International System", in Dockrill, Saki R.; Hughes, Geraint (eds.), *Palgrave Advances in Cold War History*, Basingstoke etc.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006, pp.28-29.

Nevertheless, at Potsdam, the “Big Three” paved the way for the admission of neutral countries and Britain appeared to be the driving force in this process.⁶²

With the emergence of the Cold War, however, the policy of neutrality was reassessed by both blocs.⁶³ The founding of NATO meant that the UN system with the idea of security by universal power was not working and had been replaced by the idea of security through blocs of power. In this setting, the US came to accept Swiss and, more grudgingly, Swedish neutrality. They preferred strong to weak neutrals and considered Swiss neutrality an asset for strategic reasons. Switzerland, with its mountainous terrain and rather well-equipped armed forces, was considered to be a realistic obstacle to the Red Army’s advance into Western Europe. Nonetheless, whereas the Americans could accept a neutral’s will to stay clear of peacetime alliances, when it came to economic matters, they showed less understanding and expected – and ultimately tried to force – the neutrals to “participate” in the CoCom sanctions regime.⁶⁴

On the Soviet side, the significant change of its position to neutrality came about in 1955, in response to German rearmament and was designed to play upon the American Joint Chiefs of Staff’s (JCS) anxiety that a neutral Austria would together with Switzerland form a wedge in the centre of NATO. This was similar to the spectre of a neutral Germany earlier in the decade. The Moscow memorandum leading up to the signing of the Austrian State Treaty was the first Soviet document, to implicitly recognise and confirm Swiss neutrality and the policy of neutrality itself.⁶⁵ Harold Macmillan, British Foreign Secretary at the time, considered it “comical” that the Russians elevated “neutrality on the Swiss model into a political principle”, because

⁶² Gabriel, *The American Conception...*, *op. cit.*, pp.66-78; On Neutrality and the UN Charter see also Oeter, *op. cit.*, pp.69-86.

⁶³ On the American and Russian positions to neutrality during the Cold War see Gabriel, *The American Conception...*, *op. cit.*, *passim*; Hanhimäki, Jussi M., “The First Line of Defence or a Springboard for Disintegration? European Neutrals in American Foreign and Security Policy, 1945-61”, *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol.7, No.2, 1996, pp.378-403; Allison, Roy, *The Soviet Union and the Strategy of Non-Alignment in the Third World*, Cambridge: CUP, 1988, pp.7-17; Hanhimäki, Jussi M., *Scandinavia and the United States: An Insecure Friendship*, New York: Twayne, 1997, *passim*; Hanhimäki, Jussi M., *Containing Coexistence: America, Russia, and the “Finnish Solution”*, Kent OH: Kent State University Press, 1997, *passim*; Fuhrer, Hans-Rudolf; Wild, Matthias, *Alle roten Pfeile kamen aus Osten – zu Recht? Das Bild und die Bedrohung der Schweiz im Licht östlicher Archive*, Baden: hier + jetzt, 2010, *passim*.

⁶⁴ Gabriel, *The American Conception...*, *op. cit.*, pp.90-122.

⁶⁵ Cronin, Audrey K., *Great Power Politics and the Struggle over Austria, 1945-1955*, Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 1986, pp.151-153.

before they had denounced neutrality as a “proof of ‘pro-fascist cowardice and an avenue of profiteering’”.⁶⁶

What was the British attitude towards neutrality during the Cold War? Did they continue to champion neutrality as they had done during the nineteenth century? Although there is no consensus among historians as to the British “approach” to neutrality during the early Cold War, according to Wolfram Kaiser, European neutrality, especially that of Sweden and Switzerland, was much criticised in Britain after the war. These two countries were perceived as war profiteers. Later, successive British Governments developed a pragmatic approach towards the European neutrals, in order to advance their own policy with regard to European integration.⁶⁷ Patrick Salmon shares these views: Britain, he claims, tended to deprecate neutrality on practical and moral grounds not only during the world wars, but also during the Cold War.⁶⁸

Yet one can question whether Britain’s view of neutrality was ideologically or morally motivated, for it traditionally approached neutrality from a utilitarian perspective. Historically, especially during the 19th century, London had largely respected the neutrals, because it was in its own strategic interest. But on contingent issues, and particularly during the First World War, it had no qualms to infringe on the rights of neutrals while ostentatiously claiming to respect them. Whereas Britain had entered the war under the pretext to protect the neutral rights of Belgium, it did not hesitate restricting Dutch shipping. Nevertheless, overall it preferred the Netherlands to be neutral rather than occupied by Germany. This not only provided strategic advantages, but also allowed Britain to use the country as an intelligence platform and as a springboard for Belgians to join the Allied armies.⁶⁹ Swiss neutrality could be similarly useful. During the Second World War, Switzerland served as a base to gather intelligence, and intervened on behalf of British Prisoners of

⁶⁶ Macmillan, Harold, *Tides of Fortune: 1945-1955*, London etc.: Macmillan, 1969, p.596.

⁶⁷ Kaiser, Wolfram, „Neutral, nicht neutral, auch egal: Grossbritannien, die Neutralen und die europäische Integration 1945-1972“, Gehler, Michael; Steininger, Rolf (eds.), *Die Neutralen und die europäische Integration 1945-1995*, Wien etc.: Böhlau, 2000, pp.45, 53; *Ibid.*, *Using Europe, Abusing the Europeans: Britain and European Integration, 1945-63*, Basingstoke etc.: Macmillan, 1996, *passim*.

⁶⁸ Salmon, Patrick, “British Attitudes towards Neutrality in the Twentieth Century”, in Commission d’histoire des relations internationales (ed.), *La neutralité dans l’histoire*, Helsinki: Finnish Historical Society, 1993, p.117. On Britain’s approach towards neutrality during the Cold War see also Aunesluoma, Juhana, *Britain, Sweden and the Cold War, 1945-54: Understanding Neutrality*, Basingstoke etc.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.

⁶⁹ Abbenhuis, *op. cit.*, pp.33-35.

War.⁷⁰ Thus, it could be argued that during the Cold War, Whitehall continued to approach Swiss neutrality from a predominantly pragmatic and utilitarian perspective.

More specifically, Kaiser's and Salmon's negative appraisals do not sit comfortably with all the evidence. If Britain's esteem for neutrality was so low, how could it be that the British delegation to the Pentagon Negotiations in March 1948 leading up to the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty defended Swiss neutrality so strongly?⁷¹ This British "hostility" to neutrality seems to contradict Mantovani's thesis of a "special relationship" in security matters, except the British wanted to establish such a relationship to estrange Switzerland from its traditional neutrality, and the supply of armament was a useful tool in such an undertaking. Therefore, did London use the access to its military technology to wean Berne from its neutrality?

Meanwhile, what Swiss neutrality did Britain appreciate or deprecate between 1945 and 1958? In the first half of the 1950s a general consensus had emerged on how the Swiss authorities saw their policy of neutrality. Bindschedler clearly expressed this vision in his "The Concept of Neutrality" – which was never officially, but tacitly and effectively endorsed by the Federal Government – first in 1951 and then in 1954, in which he set out some general principles, which he felt should guide state practice with regard to neutrality. Switzerland, as a permanent neutral has – contrary to occasional neutrals – duties during peacetime: not to start war, to defend neutrality and independence, and to avoid any behaviour that could drag it into hostilities. Regarding the third duty, Switzerland is not allowed to conclude alliances that may oblige it to wage war. In respect to international conferences and organisations, while the country shall not participate in political organisations, it may collaborate in economic, cultural or technical organisations. For its military neutrality, the neutral state ought not enter into any military agreements with other states. Finally, the neutral is not allowed to enter a customs or economic union with other states, as it reduces its political independence.⁷² This definition clearly took shape during the

⁷⁰ Wylie, *Britain, Switzerland...*, op. cit., p.321; Wylie, Neville, *Barbed Wire Diplomacy: Britain, Germany, and the Politics of Prisoners of War 1939-1945*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

⁷¹ Wiebes, Cees; Zeeman, Bert, "The Pentagon Negotiations March 1948: The Launching of the North Atlantic Treaty", *International Affairs*, Vol.59, No.3, 1983, pp.359-361.

⁷² Der Begriff der Neutralität, Rudolf Bindschedler, 26.11.1954, Schindler, Dietrich (ed.), *Dokumente zur schweizerischen Neutralität seit 1945: Berichte und Stellungnahmen der schweizerischen Bundesbehörden zu Fragen der schweizerischen Neutralität 1945-1983*, Bern etc.: Haupt, 1984, pp.15-19; Der Begriff der Neutralität, Rudolf Bindschedler, 05.04.1951, dodis.ch/9565, *Swiss Diplomatic Documents* (hereafter SDD), <http://www.dodis.bar.admin.ch/dodis/dodis>.

years preceding it in response to the challenges posed by the post-war international system.

After the Second World War, the Swiss leadership was aware that the US and the USSR not only held a negative opinion of neutrality, but also of neutral Switzerland. On the contrary, the Swiss people (at least a large majority) and their leaders had an almost thaumaturgic representation of neutrality, to which they attributed the protection of Swiss independence during the war. As a result, the political leadership not only decided to maintain Swiss neutrality, but as in Sweden,⁷³ fashioned this policy as a monument of national identity. This went so far, that the Federal Government even tried to prevent historical research, which would question the neutrality record during the previous war.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, the new anti-neutral international environment pushed the Swiss authorities to add new dimensions to traditional neutrality. The maxims of “solidarity” and “universality” formed together with neutrality a triptych. Both were supposed to improve the standing of neutral Switzerland, the first by helping the countries devastated by the war, the second through the recognition of all states, regardless of their political regime.⁷⁵

The maxim of “solidarity” was especially important to compensate for Switzerland’s decision to not follow the other wartime neutrals into joining the UN, a decision it took in view of the fact that the UN was unable to accept the “differential” form of neutrality acknowledged by the League. With the emergence of the East-West conflict, solidarity was used to legitimise Switzerland’s participation in the Marshall Plan and its entry into the Organisation for European Economic Co-operation (OECE). This was also justified by the “artificial” distinction between organisations of a “military-political” and a “technical-economic” character, as stated in Bindschedler’s definition above.⁷⁶ At the same time, however, with the appearance of the Cold War, the Swiss fell back on what they considered to be traditional neutrality. But what form did this supposedly traditional neutrality take? According to Antoine

⁷³ Malmberg, Mikael af, *Neutrality and State-Building in Sweden*, Basingstoke etc.: Macmillan, 2001, p.164.

⁷⁴ Zala, Sacha, “Governmental Malaise with History: From the White Paper to the Bonjour Report”, in Kreis, Georg (ed.), *Switzerland and the Second World War*, London: F. Cass, 2000, pp.312-332.

⁷⁵ Fleury, Antoine, «De la neutralité «fictive» à la politique de neutralité comme atout dans la conduite de la politique étrangère», *Politorbis*, No.44, 1/2008, pp.5-7.

⁷⁶ Trachsler, Daniel, *Neutral zwischen Ost und West? Infragestellung und Konsolidierung der schweizerischen Neutralitätspolitik durch den Beginn des Kalten Krieges, 1947-1952*, Zürich: ETH Zürich, 2002, pp.49-56.

Fleury, the “universal” dimension was reduced, because Switzerland belonged to the Western world on political, moral and, especially, economic levels.⁷⁷

The Swiss were predominantly anticommunist. Even though in 1947 the domestic Communist Party (*Partei der Arbeit*) received a 5.1 percent share of the vote, in 1951, this share was almost halved to 2.7 percent. The party remained marginalised with between 2 and 3 percent for the rest of the Cold War.⁷⁸ Moreover, the communists were also rejected by the social-democrats, who had enjoyed a seat on the Federal Council since late 1943 as part of the ruling system. Although the Swiss considered themselves a “special case” (*Sonderfall*), they defined themselves as part of the Western world, and integrated themselves into the Western economic system.⁷⁹ It thus seems that neutrality was neither a condition to maintain domestic peace, nor a tool to achieve a consensus between left and right – as was the case in Sweden.⁸⁰ The Swiss people and their leaders attributed to neutrality the function of maintaining their independence, and one might ask if Bindschedler’s definition of neutrality was only a never achieved idealised type of this status and policy, which was incompatible with the international system and the close relationship with Britain.

The largely ideological East-West conflict seems to have had a paradoxical impact on neutrality. On the one hand, it took away some pressure from the neutrals because the two blocs could accept a neutral country to remain outside if it would not act contrary to their interest.⁸¹ On the other hand, the pressure on neutrals could be very strong, as was the case with CoCom. According to Gabriel, Switzerland was unable to uphold its neutrality, because of the Cold War’s bipolar system. “When the system polarises”, he notes, “and most nations join alliances or, conversely, when the system becomes solidarious [*sic*] and most nations join arrangements of collective security – [...] it becomes extremely difficult to keep apart and aloof”.⁸²

According to Harto Hakovirta, Switzerland and most other European neutrals sided at least economically and ideologically with the West, and all of them were

⁷⁷ Fleury, «De la neutralité «fictive»... », *op. cit.*, p.7.

⁷⁸ Studer, Brigitte, „Partei der Arbeit“, in *Historisches Lexikon der Schweiz*, <http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/d/D17401.php> (accessed 16.03.2011).

⁷⁹ Tanner, Jakob, “Switzerland and the Cold War: A Neutral Country between the ‘American Way of Life’ and ‘Geistige Landesverteidigung’”, in Charnley, John; Pender, Malcolm (eds.), *Switzerland and War: Occasional Papers in Swiss Studies*, Bern: Peter Lang, 1999, pp.113-128; Imhof, Kurt, „Die Schweiz im Kalten Krieg oder der ‚Sonderfall‘ im Westblock“, *Itinera*, No.18, 1996, pp.179-186.

⁸⁰ Malmberg, *op. cit.*, p.166.

⁸¹ Hakovirta, *op. cit.*, p.39.

⁸² Gabriel, Jürg Martin, *Swiss Neutrality 1945-1990: Success or Failure?*, St. Gallen: Hochschule St. Gallen, 1992, pp.12-16, 9.

dependent on arms imports. The only country, however, to strike a balance between East and West was Finland, which bought combat aircraft from the USSR, Britain and Sweden.⁸³ Yet, Finland was a different type of neutral to Switzerland. It was only during the 1950s that Finland began to present itself as a neutral to the world, and only then that the superpowers began to consider it as such. Moreover, the Finns were linked to the Soviet Union through the treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance of 1948. The Finnish Government could thus only promote its neutrality policy once Moscow intended to use the concept of neutrality to advance its strategic aims in Western Europe.⁸⁴ Although Finno-Soviet relations were not, therefore, as smooth as many scholars have assumed,⁸⁵ Finland was building its neutrality – as a necessity – on good relations with the Soviet Union.⁸⁶ Consequently, it is understandable that Helsinki's arms imports practice stands out among the neutrals during the Cold War, and does not lend itself to comparison to that of Switzerland.

Although Swedish, contrary to Swiss neutrality, was never enshrined in international law,⁸⁷ in the early Cold War, Sweden was nevertheless a *de facto* permanent neutral country, and its status came the closest to that of Switzerland. Contrary to Finland, both Sweden and Switzerland were ideologically and economically part of the West; in Jussi Hanhimäki's words, both were "western neutrals", because they were "Western in their trade orientation, [...] secretly contributed to and participated in economic warfare, and each could be seen as a military extension of NATO".⁸⁸ After the Second World War, Stockholm clung – like Berne – to neutrality, and while the international reputation of this policy was at an all-time low, there was no substantial domestic pressure to move away from

⁸³ Hakovirta, *op. cit.*, p.47-48.

⁸⁴ For Finland's neutrality during the Cold War see Häikiö, Martti, "Finland's Neutrality 1944-1994", in Gehler, Michael; Steininger, Rolf (eds.), *Die Neutralen und die europäische Integration 1945-1995*, Wien etc.: Böhlau, 2000, pp.199-217; and for Finland during the Cold War more generally see Majander, Mikko, "Post-Cold War Historiography in Finland", in Olesen, Thorsten B. (ed.), *The Cold War – and the Nordic Countries: Historiography at a Crossroads*, Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2004, pp.43-82; Ruddy, Michael T. (ed.), *Charting an Independent Course: Finland's Place in the Cold War and in U.S. Foreign Policy*, Claremont CA: Regina Books, 1998.

⁸⁵ Rentola, Kimmo, "From Half-Adversary to Half-Ally: Finland in Soviet Policy, 1953-1958", *Cold War History*, Vol.1, No.1, 2000, pp.75-102.

⁸⁶ Hanhimäki, *Containing Coexistence...*, *op. cit.*, pp.105, 110.

⁸⁷ Schaub, Adrian R., *Neutralität und kollektive Sicherheit: Gegenüberstellung zweier unvereinbarer Verhaltenskonzepte in bewaffneten Konflikten und These zu einem zeit- und völkerrechtsgemässen modus vivendi*, Basel and Frankfurt a.M.: Helbing & Lichtenhahn, 1995, pp.36-38.

⁸⁸ Hanhimäki, "The First Line of Defence...", *op. cit.*, pp.388-389; Hanhimäki, *Containing Coexistence...*, *op. cit.*, p.110.

neutrality.⁸⁹ Moreover, again like Switzerland, Sweden had also survived the vicissitudes of the Second World War unscathed, and emerged from the conflict with a large and intact military apparatus, a comparatively healthy economy, and a large industrial capacity.⁹⁰ In light of these important similarities, it can be questioned whether Switzerland's arms imports experience was similar to Sweden's. The Swedish case also lends itself to comparison, for there is sufficient literature available, since scholarly research on Stockholm's "western-oriented" foreign and neutrality policies during the Cold War began rather early –⁹¹ at least in comparison to Switzerland –⁹² and was encouraged further by the 1994 government-sponsored report on neutrality.⁹³

Sweden's domestic arms production was not sufficient to strengthen its defences in line with its declared policy of "armed neutrality". Therefore, as Paul Cole has argued, it was a "fundamental objective" of Stockholm's post-war diplomacy to gain access to US and other western war materiel. In this undertaking, Sweden accepted American trade and security prerogatives, and as a result, by the early 1950s, it received US military equipment on a regular basis.⁹⁴ However, during the early Cold War, Sweden's main weapons supplier was not the US, but Britain.⁹⁵ In the late 1940s, while Whitehall was willing to deliver aircraft, Washington excluded Stockholm from its plan for European rearmament, so as to wean it from neutrality and forestall the creation of a Scandinavian Defense Union.⁹⁶

It was during this period, that the Swedish Foreign Minister, Östen Undén, had very briefly flirted with the idea of telling the Americans that Sweden would look to

⁸⁹ Hanhimäki, *Scandinavia and the United States...*, *op. cit.*, p.9.

⁹⁰ Silva, Charles, *Keep Them Strong, Keep Them Friendly: Swedish-American Relations and the Pax Americana, 1948-1952*, Doctoral Dissertation, University of Stockholm, 1999, p.1.

⁹¹ Lundestad, Geir, *America, Scandinavia and the Cold War, 1945-1949*, Oslo etc.: Universitetsforlaget, 1980. For a historiographical account of Sweden during the Cold War see Bjerfeld, Ulf; Ekengren, Ann-Marie, "Cold War Historiography in Sweden", in Olesen, *op. cit.*, pp.143-175.

⁹² For a historiographical account of Switzerland during the Cold War see Wenger, Andreas; Nuenlist, Christian, "A 'special case' between independence and interdependence: Cold War studies and Cold War politics in post-Cold War Switzerland", *Cold War History*, Vol.8, No.2, 2008, pp.213-240.

⁹³ Neutrality Policy Commission, *Had There Been a War... Preparations for the Reception of Military Assistance 1949-1969*, Stockholm: Fritzes, 1994.

⁹⁴ Cole, Paul Marion, *Neutralité du jour: The Conduct of Swedish Security Policy since 1945*, PhD Thesis, The Johns Hopkins University, 1990, pp.338-367.

⁹⁵ See Aunesluoma, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

⁹⁶ Karlsson, Birgit, "Neutrality and Economy: The Redefining of Swedish Neutrality, 1946-52", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol.32, No.1, 1995, pp.41-42; Nilsson, Mikael, *Tools of Hegemony: Military Technology and Swedish-American Security Relations, 1945-1962*, Stockholm: Santérus Academic Press, 2007, pp.116-173.

the East for its armament if Washington continued to refuse to deliver modern weapons to a neutral. Yet, this idea was not followed up, and according to Mikael Nilsson, by the early 1950s Sweden had given its consent to American hegemony so as to gain access to advanced arms technology.⁹⁷ But the adaptation was not only one-sided, for the US had also changed its position and begun to view a strong and western-oriented neutral Sweden as being in its own interest. Therefore, in early 1952, NSC-121 ruled that Sweden should be given access to reimbursable military aid.⁹⁸ Dedicated to the strengthening of Swedish defences, the Eisenhower Administration maintained this policy.⁹⁹ In the early Cold War, Sweden thus became fully integrated into the Western arms transfer system. Although unwilling to admit it, Stockholm was aware of the political implications of its one-sided arms purchases. However, as Nilsson argues, there seemed to have been “an assumption that Soviet technology would surely compromise Swedish neutrality in American eyes, and perhaps in the view of the Swedish public as well”.¹⁰⁰

With the Swedish experience in mind, one may ask whether the Swiss also gave their allegiance to the West through or for their arms purchases? Did Berne ever consider the possibility of buying weapons on the eastern side of the Iron Curtain, or did it fear that to do so would compromise its standing in London and Washington? Finally, and most importantly, did Switzerland knowingly manoeuvre itself into a relationship of dependency with Britain, or the West more generally, and did this undermine its neutrality? The investigation with regard to neutrality has two dimensions: while Sweden “only” risked acting in contravention of its neutrality policy, Switzerland – as a *de jure* permanent neutral – also ran the risk of violating international law.

If we accept Bindschedler’s view at the beginning of this introduction, then a permanent neutral could indeed infringe upon its neutrality status through such a dependency, because it has the duty to practice a foreign and security policy during peacetime, which does not jeopardise the practicability of neutrality in wartime. His successor, Dietrich Schindler, reiterated this position on permanent neutrality in

⁹⁷ Nilsson, *Tools of Hegemony...*, *op. cit.*, pp.145, 379-80.

⁹⁸ Silva, *op. cit.*, pp.330-332.

⁹⁹ Moores, Simon, “‘Neutral on our Side’: US Policy towards Sweden during the Eisenhower Administration”, *Cold War History*, Vol.2, No.3, pp.29-62.

¹⁰⁰ Nilsson, *Tools of Hegemony...*, *op. cit.*, p.407.

1980,¹⁰¹ and the Federal Council also worked within Bindschedler's broader views on neutrality across the board. Yet, one can argue that contrary to a political or military alliance, the dependency on weapons supplies would not necessarily compromise neutrality, as long as the weapons remain under the sole control of the neutral, and were not linked to specific security arrangements with one of the two blocs. Meanwhile, without necessarily violating international law, one-sided arms purchases could also – if one accepts also Hakovirta's interpretation – undermine a state's neutrality policy by discrediting it. According to this political scientist, "the main criteria for evaluating the success of peacetime neutral diplomacy" are "credibility and respectability", of which the most important monitors are the major conflicting powers.¹⁰² Thus, if Switzerland was dependent on Western weapons, one can argue that this discredited Switzerland's neutrality in Washington's, London's or Moscow's eyes. Also this interpretation can be questioned, for one could argue that weapons are goods, which can be traded for economic reasons like other industrial products.

This thesis will question whether Switzerland broke international law and discredited its neutrality policy through arms purchases from Britain, and eventually other Western states. I will address whether the Swiss betrayed their neutrality while trying to adapt to the post-war international system, and whether genuine neutrality itself was sustainable during the early Cold War.

4. Britain's Role

In his 1962 West Point speech, Dean Acheson, after having observed that "Great Britain has lost an empire and has not yet found a role", stated that the British "attempt to play a separate role – that is, a role apart from Europe, a role based on a "special relationship" with the United States, a role based on being the head of a "commonwealth" [...] – this role is about played out".¹⁰³ Was the former American Secretary of State right that Britain had tried to play a separate role apart from Europe and that in this attempt it had failed?

¹⁰¹ Here I am referring to what has been called *Vorwirkungen der Neutralität im Frieden* by Swiss specialists on the law of neutrality. See Schindler, Dietrich, „Die Lehre von den Vorwirkungen der Neutralität“, in Diez, Emanuel; Monnier, Jean et al. (eds.), *Festschrift für Rudolf Bindschedler: Zum 65. Geburtstag am 8. Juli 1980*, Bern: Stämpfli, 1980, pp.563-582.

¹⁰² Hakovirta, *op. cit.*, pp.26-27.

¹⁰³ Acheson, *op. cit.*, pp.163-164.

In October 1948, in the shadow of the Berlin Blockade, Winston Churchill outlined in a speech at a Conservative Party conference Britain's position in three interlocking circles: "The first circle for us is naturally the British Commonwealth and Empire, with all that that comprises. Then there is also the English-speaking world, in which we, Canada, and the other British Dominions and the United States play so important a part. And finally there is United Europe. [...] Now if you think of the three inter-linked circles you will see that we are the only country which has a great part in every one of them".¹⁰⁴ According to Churchill, it was the position in the three circles that was key to Great Britain remaining a great power. Although in 1948 Churchill was "only" Leader of the British Conservative Party in opposition, in the early 1950s he was in power again and the foreign policymakers preceding and succeeding him – such as Ernest Bevin and Anthony Eden – based Britain's great power role on these three circles.¹⁰⁵ However, in the post-war international system, the importance accorded to each of the circles and British power varied.

Martin Wight preferred a definition of great powers that stems from the Paris Conference in 1919 and that sees "great powers [as] powers with general interests, i.e. whose interests are as wide as the states-system itself, which [...] means world-wide".¹⁰⁶ In accordance with this definition, Great Britain was still a great power in 1945. The British were among the three peace-makers at Potsdam, still possessed world wide interests, military bases and substantial military forces. Victory had restored national self-confidence and gave Britain a new moral authority in a liberated but devastated Europe. After the war, the British economy was by far the strongest in Europe.¹⁰⁷ Moreover, Britain was the "proud possessor of a great Empire and Commonwealth which had held together through the vicissitudes of war" and was the centre of the world sterling trade area.¹⁰⁸ It was the only surviving world power other than the US and was the only European country able of single-handed self defence

¹⁰⁴ Churchill, Winston S., "Conservative Mass Meeting. A Speech at Llandudno, 9 October 1948", in *Ibid.*, *Europe Unite: Speeches 1947 and 1948*, London etc.: Cassell, 1950, p.417.

¹⁰⁵ Deighton, Anne, "Britain and the Three Interlocking Circles", Varsori, Antonio (ed.), *Europe 1945-1990s: The End of an Era?*, Basingstoke etc.: Macmillan, 1994, p.156.

¹⁰⁶ Wight, Martin, *Power Politics*, London and New York: Leicester University Press and Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1995, p.50.

¹⁰⁷ Adamthwaite, Anthony, "Britain and the World, 1945-1949: the View from the Foreign Office", Becker, Josef; Knipping, Franz (eds.), *Power in Europe? Great Britain, France, Italy and Germany in a Post-War World, 1945-1950*, Berlin etc.: de Gruyter, 1986, p.20; Steiner, Zara, "The Fall of Great Britain: Peace, Stability, and Legitimacy", in Lundestad, Geir (ed.), *The Fall of Great Powers: Peace, Stability and Legitimacy*, Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1994, p.71.

¹⁰⁸ Sanders, David, *Losing an Empire, Finding a Role: British Foreign Policy since 1945*, Basingstoke etc.: Macmillan, 1990, p.51; Deighton, *op. cit.*, p.157.

against hypothetical aggression.¹⁰⁹ To use Zara Steiner's words, "even after 1945, while not a superpower, Britain remained a power of the first rank, one of the "big three" or at least the "big two and a half".¹¹⁰

Meanwhile, British power was strongly diminished by the Second World War. As a direct result of the war effort itself, Britain was in dire financial position. Moreover, Britain's grip on the Empire had weakened and the geo-strategic landscape in Europe had been totally transformed with the emergence of a strong USSR and the arrival of the US.¹¹¹ Indeed, the war and the post-war years saw a sharp decline in British power relative to that of the US and the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, in the immediate post-war years, the UK was able to retain the status of a full member of the "Big Three" and was thus "a titular equal of the future superpowers". The formalities of conferences and meetings partially veiled real decline.¹¹² The new Prime Minister, Clement Attlee, and his Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, both had a deep detestation of communism and were aware of the importance of Britain's international position through their years of service in the wartime coalition.¹¹³

In a speech on foreign affairs to the House of Commons in October 1946, Bevin spoke for many of his colleagues when he defended Britain's right to its Empire by arguing "that our contribution to these two world wars, the price we have paid in blood and money, our moral claim as well as the sacrifices which we have already given, do not call for a justification of our existence every five minutes". He then went on by defending an independent policy for Britain by saying that "[o]ur role is not to be an intermediary at all. We have our own contribution to make to world peace, and they have theirs".¹¹⁴

In the aftermath of the war, Cabinet members and the Foreign Office (FO) shared the general agreement that Britain was a great power with an unchallengeable role as a member of the "Big Three". They were patriotic and had the firm assurance that Britain should maintain its pre-eminent world position. Also public opinion

¹⁰⁹ Parker, R.A.C., "British Perceptions of Power. Europe between the Superpowers", Becker, Josef; Knipping, Franz (eds.), *Power in Europe? Great Britain, France, Italy and Germany in a Postwar World, 1945-1950*, Berlin etc.: de Gruyter, 1986, pp.448-449.

¹¹⁰ Steiner, *op. cit.*, p.47.

¹¹¹ Sanders, *op. cit.*, pp.38-39.

¹¹² Parker, *op. cit.*, p.448.

¹¹³ Reynolds, David, *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century*, London: Longman, 1991, p.156.

¹¹⁴ Bevin, Ernest, "Speech by Rt. Hon. E. Bevin on Foreign Affairs in the House of Commons, 22nd October, 1946", Attlee, Clement; Bevin, Ernest, *Britain's Foreign Policy*, London: Labour Party, 1946, pp.2, 24.

endorsed this view. They favoured a strong foreign policy and thought that Britain should play an assertive leadership role in the post-war world.¹¹⁵ It was also believed that the UK ought to be equal to the US and, especially, that they needed Britain.¹¹⁶ British policymakers were convinced that enfeeblement was temporary, not permanent, and thought that full recovery as a great power was a realistic goal. This was to be achieved by encouraging cooperation between the “Big Three”, and by British leadership of the Dominions, France and smaller West European powers.¹¹⁷

The implementation of the above-mentioned strategy proved, however, to be rather difficult. While the assessments of the Soviet Union were growing increasingly grim, links were also weakening with one of the three circles in 1945-6.¹¹⁸ Immediately after the war the relationship with the US became uneasy. The Americans abruptly ended Lend Lease in August 1945, accorded Britain only hesitatingly a loan, and ended the wartime cooperation on atomic weapons in 1946. All of this nurtured British fears of an American reversion to isolationism. Nevertheless, from 1946 on, the UK and the US cooperated to counter Soviet expansionism in Iran, Greece, Turkey etc., followed by the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and finally NATO.¹¹⁹ Although it has been argued that Britain “dragged” the US into the Cold War because it was not strong enough itself to counter communism in Europe, the Americans finally decided themselves to contain the Soviets.¹²⁰ The British commitment to the US was also illustrated by a massive rearmament programme at the time of the Korean War. Nevertheless, during the 1950s, the relationship was strained and Washington increasingly saw London as its junior partner.

Meanwhile, the dimension of Britain’s power and interests in its “cherished” Imperial/Commonwealth circle was declining. There was a trend away from loyalty to the metropolitan centre and towards political independence. From a military perspective it was clear by 1950 that the Empire’s security could not be guaranteed by Britain alone and “British policy-makers had to enlist American aid”. Economically,

¹¹⁵ Blackwell, Michael, *Clinging to Grandeur: British Attitudes and Foreign Policy in the Aftermath of the Second World War*, Westport CT etc.: Greenwood, 1993, pp.25-27, 84, 68.

¹¹⁶ Parker, *op. cit.*, pp.448-449.

¹¹⁷ Adamthwaite, *op. cit.*, pp.20, 13.

¹¹⁸ Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled...*, *op. cit.*, p.158.

¹¹⁹ Dockrill, Saki, *Britain’s Retreat from Suez: The Choice between Europe and the World?*, Basingstoke etc.: Macmillan, 2002, pp.11-12.

¹²⁰ Reynolds, David, “Great Britain”, in Reynolds, David (ed.), *The Origins of the Cold War in Europe, International Perspectives*, New Haven etc.: Yale University Press, 1994, *passim*.

the Commonwealth countries were looking increasingly for dollar assistance.¹²¹ But *Britain's Retreat from Suez*, i.e. from the Empire towards Europe, only started with the Suez crisis and Defence Minister Duncan Sandys' White Paper, which began to reorientate British defence policy between 1956 and 1958.¹²²

On the other hand, the "unloved" European circle was gaining in importance. Immediately after the war, while the Americans seemed to withdraw into isolation, the Labour Government was interested in building links with continental Western Europe in this period. While the Dunkirk Treaty in 1947 was a serious diplomatic effort in Anglo-French politics, Bevin's "Western Union" concept, which intended a third world force led by Britain and France, and embracing their colonial dependencies, seemed to be a stillborn idea. With the need to contain the USSR in cooperation with the US, by the summer of 1948 the vision started to evaporate and by mid-1950, Bevin was committed to Atlanticism. In the 1950s, although the UK remained committed to the defence of Europe as part of NATO, France seized the initiative and leadership on the continent with American benevolence. Convinced of the importance of the other two circles, the British approach to Europe was one of benign association.¹²³

In regard to the British design to maintain or regain a leadership role as a first class great power in relation to the "three circles", one might ask if its supplying of arms to Switzerland was – despite Swiss neutrality – part of this vision to create a third world force, lead Western Europe, and strengthen its defences; if the supply position of Britain to Switzerland changed over time with the conversion to Atlanticism; and if the American and the Empire circles had a direct influence on the arms transfers between the two countries.

Through the lenses of Anglo-Swiss relations, arms and technology transfers, neutrality and Britain's role, this thesis innovates historiographically on at least five levels: it is the first work to focus extensively on Anglo-Swiss political, economic and military relations during the early Cold War; then, it uses arms transfers to unearth hitherto unknown aspects and the inner-mechanisms of the relationship between

¹²¹ Deighton, *op. cit.*, pp.161, 158-159.

¹²² Dockrill, *Britain's Retreat ...*, *op. cit.*, pp.22-26.

¹²³ Deighton, *op. cit.*, pp.162-165; Young, John W., *Britain and the World in the Twentieth Century*, London: Arnold, 1997, p.148.

Britain and Switzerland. Thirdly, by analysing the incentives for Berne's weapons purchases and London's weapons sales, it sheds new light on the arms transfer system of the early Cold War and allows for the discovery of relatively unknown motives of its participants. It also examines how Switzerland integrated itself into the Western arms transfer system through Britain and closed the door to Soviet weapons. By doing so, it not only questions Berne's dependency on weapons from abroad with regard to neutrality law and policy, but also offers an important insight into the sustainability of neutrality during the Cold War; fifthly and finally, the thesis questions Britain's role during this period from a western neutral and small power perspective other than Sweden, and analyses the British arms exports policy with a genuinely historical methodology in the attempt to evacuate false assumptions.

In line with these new historiographical approaches, this thesis mainly demonstrates – among other things – that Anglo-Swiss relations during the early Cold War were not “special”, but had “traits of specialness”: while Switzerland bought weaponry predominantly in quest for its security, Britain's arms sales were mostly financially motivated; incentives for arms transfers could simultaneously be more multifaceted, and political scientists have so far ignored that there could also be economic benefits for the recipient state; the arms transfers involved important, yet limited technology transfers; Switzerland undermined its neutrality status and discredited its neutrality policy by solely relying on western weapons supplies; and Britain was too weak to even think of employing arms sales to influence Swiss foreign and defence policy.

In order to reach these conclusions, the issues discussed in the introduction will be analysed and answered through a variety of arms transfer case studies that took place between 1945 and 1958 against the background of Anglo-Swiss political, economic and military relations. The case studies are made up by the Vampire, Venom and Hunter aircraft, the Centurion tanks, and the Sapphire jet engines. These arms transfers build the backbone of this study, for they were quantitatively and qualitatively the most significant weapons systems which were sold from Britain to Switzerland. On the one hand, as table 2 illustrates, there were 725 aircraft and tanks which were transferred. This number is not only impressive *per se*, but the arms deals also involved large sums of money, which could have a significant impact on the bilateral economic relations. Swiss arms purchases of British designed weapons systems had a value between SFr.64.45 and SFr.312.7 million. Such sums clearly

affected the Anglo-Swiss trade balance and, indirectly, the balance of payments. This must hold especially true if one considers that the annual average of Swiss imports from the UK was worth SFr.324.78 million, and the annual average of British imports from Switzerland valued SFr.215.25 million (see Table 3). Admittedly, these sums could not be sufficient to stabilise Britain's overall financial situation. Yet they could be symptomatic for London's attempts to use arms exports more generally to refill the Treasury's coffers. Moreover, in contrast to most currencies at the time, the Swiss franc was one of the few remaining and sought after hard currencies in the world.

Table 2

<i>Major Swiss Purchases of British Weapons Systems</i> <i>1945-1958</i> ¹²⁴			
Weapon Systems	Year of Decision	Number	Value in SFr.
Vampire I	1947	75	64,450,000
Vampire II	1949	100	108,000,000
Venom I	1951	150	175,000,000
Venom II	1954	100	115,000,000
Centurion I	1955	100	171,200,000
Centurion II	1957	100	104,470,000
Hunter	1958	100	312,700,000

¹²⁴ Bundesbeschluss über die Beschaffung von Flugzeugen für die Armee, 23.09.1947, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18962, Bd.1; Bundesbeschluss über die Beschaffung von Flugzeugen, 24.03.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18963, Bd.1; Bundesbeschluss über die Beschaffung von Kampfflugzeugen, 12.04.1951, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1856, Bd.7; Bundesbeschluss betreffend Vermehrung der Panzerabwehrwaffen und Beschaffung von Panzern sowie über die Mehrkosten des Rüstungsprogramms, 25.03.1955, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1863, Bd.87; Bundesbeschluss betreffend ein Sofortprogramm zur Beschaffung von Kriegsmaterial, 21.12.1956, *Bundesblatt*, Bd.2, Ht.52, 28.12.1956, pp.1026-1027; Bundesbeschluss über den Ersatz von Kampfflugzeugen, 11.06.1954, SFA, E5560(C), 1975/46, Bd.272; Bundesbeschluss über die Beschaffung von Kampfflugzeugen, 29.01.1958, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/101, Bd.117.

Table 3

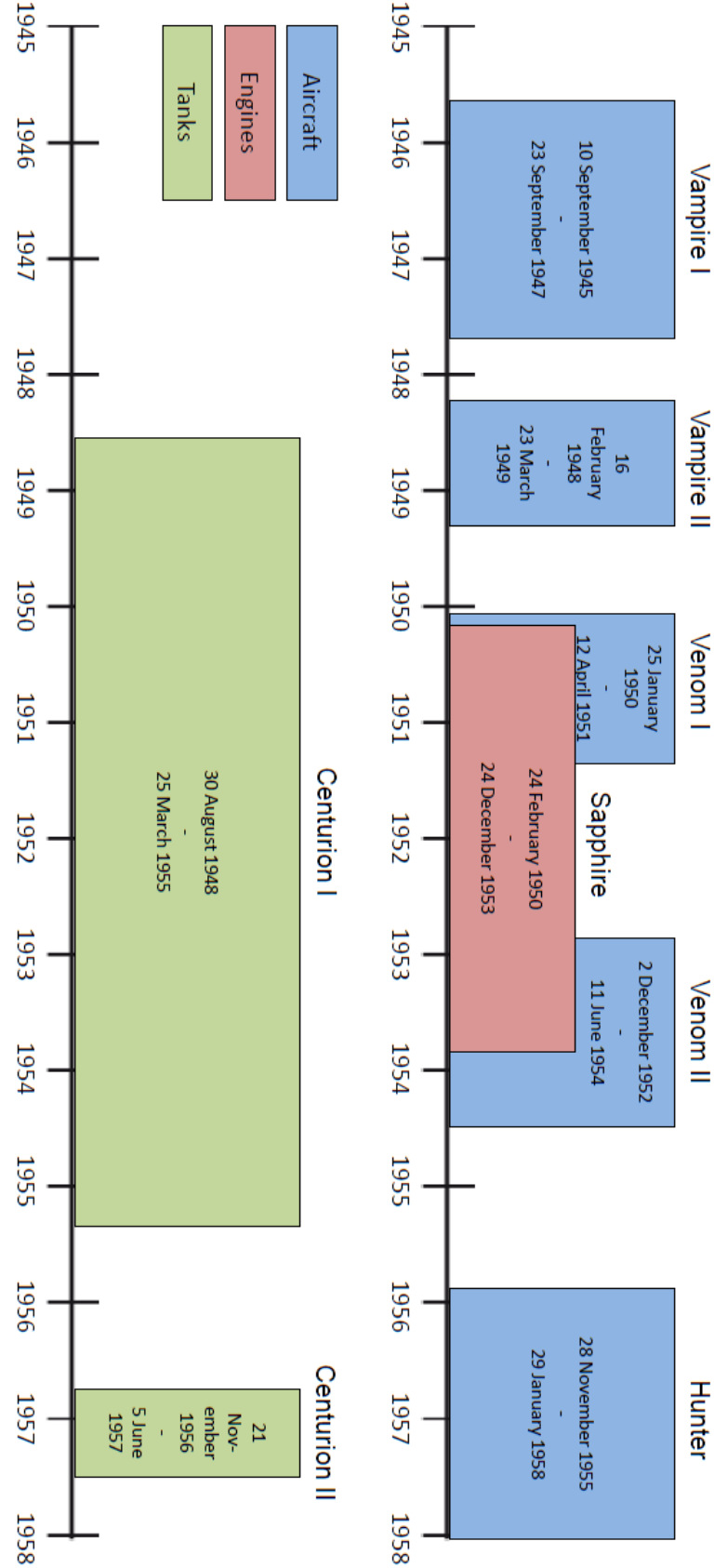
<i>Value of Swiss Imports and Exports from and to the UK in SFr.</i>		
<i>1945-1958¹²⁵</i>		
Year	Imports	Exports
1945	21,500,000	31,700,000
1946	196,500,000	58,100,000
1947	322,700,000	117,000,000
1948	355,700,000	139,900,000
1949	276,200,000	158,400,000
1950	369,800,000	137,400,000
1951	398,700,000	228,700,000
1952	336,400,000	233,300,000
1953	341,000,000	245,600,000
1954	316,700,000	266,600,000
1955	334,800,000	302,800,000
1956	412,700,000	335,700,000
1957	450,300,000	375,400,000
1958	413,900,000	382,900,000
Annual Average	324,778,571	215,250,000

On the other hand, these were all weapons systems that the Swiss were at the time unable to produce themselves and involved – especially in the case of jet aircraft – significant and internationally desired military technology. Therefore, although the Sapphire engines are not listed here due to their limited quantity, they nevertheless form an integral part of this thesis. During the early 1950s, they were the most advanced jet engines in the world, and the question whether Britain ought to export them – not only to neutral, but also to allied countries – caused tensions between London and Washington.¹²⁶ Consequently, their transfer from Britain to Switzerland could be an important vector for assessing the state of the two countries' relations.

¹²⁵ Eidgenössisches Statistisches Amt (ed.), *Statistisches Jahrbuch der Schweiz*, 67. Jahrgang, Basel: Verlag Birkhäuser, 1959, pp.190, 206.

¹²⁶ Engel, *Cold War at 30,000 Feet...*, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

Figure 2: Time Spans from Enquiry to Decision for the Individual Weapon Systems



All these arms transfers took place during the early Cold War. As figure 2 illustrates, between 1945 and 1958, there was never a year when Britain and Switzerland did not work towards or conclude an arms deal. It was thus, as mentioned earlier in the introduction, during this period that Britain became Switzerland's main supplier in modern armament. Yet there are other and equally important reasons to favour the 1945-1958 time-frame, even though the "making of the European settlement", which led to a more "stable" international system is generally considered to have lasted until 1963.¹²⁷ First, it allows us to analyse the arms transfers in three different international settings. The first is the period when the Cold War emerged and the anarchical international system transformed into a more bipolar one of East-West confrontation between 1945 and 1949. During this period the fronts were not clear-cut and different outcomes were still possible. The second period is one of high international tension with clearly identifiable blocs opposing each other even indirectly in a "hot" war, lasting from the founding of NATO in 1949, to the end of the Korean War, 1953. Finally, the third period is one that includes the so-called "first détente"¹²⁸ starting in 1953 and a crescendo of international tensions leading up to the Berlin crisis of 1958. These three periods form the basis of the thesis' division into three parts. Then, after the Suez-failure, Britain not only definitively fell into second-rank great power status, but also re-oriented its defence and armament policies after the Sandys Defence White Paper of 1957. Finally, 1958 was the year when the Swiss abandoned the development of their own jet aircraft and foreign types were no longer considered interim solutions.

The description and analysis of the various arms transfer case studies during three different periods within the 1945-1958 time-frame is mostly based on multi-archival research – a *sine qua non* for a balanced view in international history. With a primary focus on Anglo-Swiss relations, the main research has been carried out in the National Archives of the United Kingdom and the Swiss Federal Archives. Nevertheless, I have also visited the National Archives and Record Administration to get the view from the United States, the leading power of the western world, of which both Britain and Switzerland were a part. The documents found in these archives are of various types, and were produced by different ministries, services, officials,

¹²⁷ Trachtenberg, Marc, *A Constructed Peace. The Making of the European Settlement 1945-1963*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999, pp.vii, 4.

¹²⁸ Soutou, Georges-Henri, *La guerre de cinquante ans: le conflit Est-Ouest 1943-1990*, Paris : Fayard, 2001, p.265.

officers and politicians. They include diplomatic correspondence, intra-governmental correspondence, reports, minutes etc. The authors of these documents range from low-ranking civil and military servants to Prime Ministers, Federal Councillors, Ministers, Generals and Field-Marschals.

This already vast array of documents has been complemented by private papers, as well as document and photo collections from a multitude of regional, specialised, museum and university archives: the Archives de l'Etat de Neuchâtel, the Archiv für Zeitgeschichte at ETH Zurich, the Air Force Center Dübendorf, the Stiftung Historisches Material der Schweizer Armee, the Churchill College Archive Centre at the University of Cambridge, the Imperial War Museum London, the Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives at King's College London and the Archives and Rare Books Collection at the British Library of Political and Economic Science. In addition to photos and rare books, these archives contained the private correspondence of people such as Winston Churchill, Field-Marshal Bernard Montgomery, Sir Basil Liddell-Hart and Corps Commander Louis de Montmollin.

This multi-archival research has brought to daylight – as already highlighted above – numerous but different documents. Their different typology and authorship allowed for reconstructing and analysing the arms transfers within Anglo-Swiss relations from a multinational and multi-level perspective. The thesis thus encompasses not only the views and decision-making processes in one country or at the higher levels, but follows the events through all strata of the British and Swiss and, to a lesser extent, American government. Moreover, thanks to cross-checking of the many documents it was possible to assess the veracity of individual accounts and to view the events from different angles. Admittedly, additional research in French and, especially, Russian archives would have rounded off this research. Yet it was possible to answer the research questions without this additional effort, which would probably have significantly delayed the completion of this thesis. Furthermore, the apparently difficult access to the sensitive archives of the former Soviet Union would have formed another obstacle.

These primary sources were – mostly for the contextual part – complemented by published document collections, official publications, memoirs, databases, secondary literature, newspapers and encyclopaedias. Whereas the general literature on the early Cold War, as well as on Britain and Switzerland during this period is relatively substantial, the view from Moscow remains insufficient. Nevertheless,

despite this shortcoming, I have been able in this thesis to assess Anglo-Swiss relations, as well as the role of arms transfers, neutrality and Britain during the early Cold War in three parts: first, from 1945 to 1949, when Britain and Switzerland were “mutually attracted” by common interests; then, from 1949 to 1953, as during their “honeymoon” they had to go through the “storm” of the Korean War; and finally, from 1953 to 1958, when their relationship turned into a pragmatic “marriage of convenience”.

PART I
MUTUAL ATTRACTION
1945-1949

PART I

MUTUAL ATTRACTION 1945-1949

1. A World in Motion

The Second World War had turned large parts of Europe and Asia into wastelands; hunger reigned and transportation facilities were wrecked. Meanwhile, the Americans emerged from the conflict richer and stronger than ever before, but they were nevertheless suspicious of the Soviet Union,¹²⁹ which in turn was an “exhausted giant”. Nonetheless, the Soviet leader, Joseph Stalin, was determined to exert a firm grip on Eastern Europe, which he regarded as a potential security buffer against the West.¹³⁰ With the end of the war approaching in Europe, it was over the fate of Eastern Europe – especially Poland – that the Soviet Union and the Western powers started to quarrel. Although this created tensions, it was the dispute over Iran and Turkey, which played a “key role in triggering the conflict”. Once it became apparent in 1946 that the Soviets wanted to extend their power not only in Eastern Europe, the United States began to shift policy and became less accommodating with the Soviet Union.¹³¹

During the war, the American President, Franklin D. Roosevelt, had worked towards harmonious Soviet-US relations. But at the end of his life, he was worried about Soviet intentions. While his successor, Harry S. Truman, first had an ambivalent approach to the Russians, he soon favoured to follow the strategy of containment,¹³² which George Kennan outlined for the first time in his famous “long telegram” on 22 February 1946. In accordance with this strategy, on 12 March 1947, Truman pledged military and economic assistance to Greece and Turkey. This was followed by the so-called Marshall Plan, announced in June 1947, which committed the US to the reconstruction of Europe.¹³³

Stalin saw these Western initiatives as a part of a larger design to undermine the spheres of influence he thought they had agreed upon at Yalta and Potsdam.

¹²⁹ Leffler, Melvyn P., *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992, pp.1-3.

¹³⁰ Zubok, Vladislav M., *A Failed Empire: The Soviet Union in the Cold War from Stalin to Gorbachev*, Chapel Hill N.C.: UNC Press, 2009, pp.1, 21.

¹³¹ Trachtenberg, *op. cit.*, pp.4, 35-36.

¹³² Leffler, *A Preponderance...*, *op. cit.*, pp.25-26.

¹³³ Gaddis, John L., *The Cold War: A New History*, New York: The Penguin Press, 2005, pp.29-31.

Although he pretended to follow the rules of great power diplomacy, he tested their limits. This brought him some important territorial and political gains, but at the same time exhausted American goodwill.¹³⁴ Once the US had taken the initiative – the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, followed by the rebuilding of Western Germany – out of fear that the Kremlin might capitalise on the “anarchy of the international system”, Stalin reacted strongly. He pressured his allies to rebuff American overtures, tightened his grip on Eastern Europe, limited the access to Berlin, and supported the communist seizure of power in Czechoslovakia in February 1948.¹³⁵

Even though war was not imminent, the Western European powers lacked conventional forces to prevent them from being overrun in the event of war, and the “only protection” was the American nuclear monopoly. Consequently, Western Europe was in need of security. Yet, the key to this problem was an American military commitment. With Britain and France weakened, only the US had the necessary strength to contain the Soviet Union. In the aim to “entangle” the Americans, on 17 March 1948, Britain and France (after their signing of the Dunkirk Treaty in 1947) signed together with the Benelux countries the Brussels Treaty. The US Government had insisted that before it would reinforce its role in European security affairs, the Europeans had first to organise themselves. Finally, the North Atlantic Treaty, which was to be the basis of the Western security system for the Cold War and beyond, was signed in April 1949.¹³⁶

1.1. Switzerland: Suspect but Healthy

How and under what circumstances did Switzerland adapt to this “world in motion”? Once the Allies had taken the advantage in the Second World War, the Swiss – although they were relieved from the encirclement by the Axis Powers – became again the target of political and economic pressure. At the end of the war, Switzerland was considered by the Allies to be a “war profiteer”, which had not contributed to the liberation of Europe. Its neutrality was seen as selfish and opportunistic.¹³⁷ The Swiss,

¹³⁴ Zubok, *A Failed Empire...*, *op. cit.*, pp.31, 43.

¹³⁵ Leffler, Melvyn P., *For the Soul of Mankind: The United States, the Soviet Union and the Cold War*, New York: Hill and Wang, 2007, pp.65-66.

¹³⁶ Trachtenberg, *op. cit.*, pp.66, 85-86.

¹³⁷ *Supra*, Intro., ch.3.

on the contrary, saw their policy of neutrality confirmed, because it was to this policy that they attributed their unscathed survival of the war. Consequently, neutrality was hardly questioned on a domestic level.¹³⁸ Meanwhile, the two superpowers which had emerged from the conflict, the US and the Soviet Union, were hostile to neutrality. Their critique of neutrality was not only directed against Switzerland. Also Sweden, the traditional Scandinavian neutral, was in the “line of fire”. But like the Swiss, the Swedes believed in the beneficial effects of neutrality and stuck to this policy.¹³⁹

The newly elected Head of the Federal Political Department, Max Petitpierre, intended in 1945 to continue the policy of neutrality, but to participate nevertheless with special status in the UN. In 1946, however, the Swiss abandoned the idea of joining the UN, because it appeared that the organisation’s main members would respond unfavourably to an officially recognised special status for Switzerland. Consequently, while the other neutrals – Sweden, Portugal and Ireland – applied to the UN, the Swiss preferred to remain outside. In the aim to compensate for Switzerland staying outside of the UN, Petitpierre developed the complementary maxims of “solidarity” and “universality”, and later that of “availability”. The first encompassed humanitarian aid, the participation in the “technical” international organisations and the strengthening of Geneva as a place for international cooperation, the second was the recognition of all states, no matter their regime or political complexion and, finally, the third maxim underlined Switzerland’s “availability” for mediation in international affairs.¹⁴⁰

Another great challenge immediately after the war was the re-establishment of diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, a task in which the former Swiss Foreign Minister, Marcel Pilet-Golaz, had failed and had been humiliated. A controversy over the conditions of Soviet POWs in Switzerland and their repatriation gave Petitpierre the opportunity to start secret negotiations without losing face. These talks, which lasted from January to March 1946, led to the re-establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries on 18 March 1946. This cleared a major obstacle, as

¹³⁸ Spillmann, Kurt R.; et. al., *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik seit 1945: Zwischen Autonomie und Kooperation*, Zurich: NZZ, 2001, p.34.

¹³⁹ Hanhimäki, *Scandinavia and the United States...*, op. cit., p.9. On Sweden, Switzerland and their cooperation during the Cold War see Flury-Dasen, Eric, „Die Schweiz und Schweden vor den Herausforderungen des Kalten Krieges 1945-1970: Neutralitätspolitik, militärische Kooperation, Osthandel und Korea-Mission“, *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte*, Vol.54, Nr.2, 2004, pp.123-145.

¹⁴⁰ Möckli, Daniel, *Neutralität, Solidarität, Sonderfall: Die Konzeptionierung der schweizerischen Aussenpolitik der Nachkriegszeit, 1943-1947*, Zürich: CSS ETH, 2000, pp.79, 186-189, 205-206.

Switzerland now had diplomatic relations with all the major players in world politics, and it underlined its maxim of universality.¹⁴¹ Meanwhile, although Berne had diplomatic relations with Washington, they were far from cordial.

As the Swiss came out of the Second World War with an intact, modern and well functioning economy, they wished to re-enter the world market. This required, however, the benevolence of the US.¹⁴² The so-called Currie Agreement, which was signed during the last months of the war, did not entirely end Switzerland's economic isolation. The Western powers, especially the US, were irritated by the German bank accounts and the Nazi gold in Switzerland. Thus, the "black list" (a list of Swiss companies, which were prohibited from the Allies' markets because of their business links with the Third Reich) was maintained, the Swiss accounts in the US remained blocked, and the Swiss export industry continued to suffer.¹⁴³

As this situation could not last, the Swiss and the Western Allies negotiated a settlement in the beginning of 1946. The negotiations were very tough. The Swiss delegation finally agreed to pay 50 percent of the German accounts to the Allies, and agreed "voluntarily" to pay an amount of SFr.250 million for the reconstruction of Europe. In compensation, the Swiss accounts in the US were released and the "black list" was abolished.¹⁴⁴ Another strategy to re-enter the world market was based on credits. In 1945 and 1946, the Swiss accorded large credits to France (SFr.250 million) and Britain (SFr.260 million).¹⁴⁵ Switzerland also made similar bilateral economic agreements with smaller countries, like Belgium and the Netherlands.¹⁴⁶ Through the double strategy of concessions and credits, the Swiss were again able to re-enter world commerce.

With the Cold War gathering pace, the Swiss saw themselves obliged to co-operate with the West, while keeping up the appearance of not taking sides. In response to the dilemma posed by the Marshall Plan, Petitpierre decided – in

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp.156-159.

¹⁴² Dirlewanger, Dominique; et. al., *La politique commerciale de la Suisse de la Deuxième Guerre mondiale à l'entrée au GATT (1945-1966)*, Zurich: Chronos, 2004, p.58.

¹⁴³ Bretscher-Spindler, Katharina, *Vom Heissen zum Kalten Krieg: Vorgeschichte und Geschichte der Schweiz im Kalten Krieg 1943-1968*, Zürich: Orell Füssli, 1997, p.90. For a more detailed account of Swiss-American relations during this period and the related disputes see Schiemann, Catherine, *Neutralität in Krieg und Frieden: Die Aussenpolitik der Vereinigten Staaten gegenüber der Schweiz 1941-1949: Eine diplomatiegeschichtliche Untersuchung*, Chur and Zürich: Rüegger, 1991.

¹⁴⁴ Trachsler, *op. cit.*, p.46.

¹⁴⁵ Dirlewanger, et. al., *op. cit.*, p.60.

¹⁴⁶ Perrenoud, Marc, « La diplomatie et l'insertion de la Suisse dans les nouvelles relations économiques internationales (1943-1950) », *Itinera*, No.18, 1996, p.133.

agreement with the other Federal Councillors and the ambassadors in Washington, London and Paris – to announce the intention to participate before the Soviet Union would have officially distanced itself from the American offer. Finally, Switzerland joined the OEEC in 1948 with certain caveats for its neutrality status, to which the other countries had agreed in the colder climate of the emerging East-West conflict.¹⁴⁷ From then on, Switzerland was, at least from an economic perspective, definitely part of the West.

From a military perspective, the non-involvement in the Second World War had clearly strengthened the belief in armed neutrality.¹⁴⁸ The Federal Council stated that the policy of neutrality was only possible if any infringement of it could be met with armed resistance. The better the military preparedness, the lesser the danger that neutrality would be violated.¹⁴⁹ Against whom was Switzerland supposed to be prepared? Already before the end of the war, the Swiss military authorities had feared the Soviet Union. The perception of Russia as the sole potential enemy further increased in the years following the war.¹⁵⁰ In the light of this “threat” the National Defence Commission¹⁵¹ decided that in the event of war the plateau with the bulk of the industry and the civil population could not be abandoned as it had been foreseen during the Second World War with the withdrawal into the “National Redoubt”, i.e. the alpine fortifications.¹⁵² From a purely strategic perspective, in a war between the West and the Soviets, it was also the East-West axis – the plateau –, and not the North-South axis – the Alps –, which had to be protected.¹⁵³ As a result, the plateau was included in the defence perimeter.

¹⁴⁷ Maurhofer, *Die schweizerische Europapolitik...*, *op. cit.*, pp.56-65. On Switzerland, the Marshall Plan and the OEEC see Fleury, Antoine, « La situation particulière de la Suisse au sein de l'organisation européenne de coopération économique (OECE) », in Poidevin, Raymond (ed.), *Histoire des débuts de la construction européenne (mars 1948 – mai 1950)*, Bruxelles : Bruylant, 1986, pp.95-117; *Ibid.*, « Le plan Marshall et l'économie suisse », in Comité pour l'Histoire économique et financière (ed.), *Le Plan Marshall et le relèvement économique de l'Europe*, Paris : 1993, pp.549-564.

¹⁴⁸ Breitenmoser, Christoph, *Strategie ohne Aussenpolitik: Zur Entwicklung der schweizerischen Sicherheitspolitik im Kalten Krieg*, Bern etc.: Peter Lang, 2002, p.39.

¹⁴⁹ Schweizerischer Bundesrat, “Bericht des Bundesrates an die Bundesversammlung zum Bericht des Generals über den Aktivdienst 1939-1945 (Vom 7. Januar 1947), *Bundesblatt*, Bd.1, Heft.3, 23.01.1947; Schindler, *op. cit.*, p.353.

¹⁵⁰ Braun, *op. cit.*, p.56. For the Swiss perception of the Soviet Union during the post-war years see Neval, Daniel A., „Mit Atombomben bis nach Moskau“: *Gegenseitige Wahrnehmung der Schweiz und des Ostblocks im Kalten Krieg 1945-1968*, Zürich: Chronos, 2003, pp.255-299.

¹⁵¹ NDC.

¹⁵² Cerutti, « La politique de défense... », *op. cit.*, pp.99-101.

¹⁵³ Braun, *op. cit.*, p.178.

The question was, however, how this was to be put into practice with the limited resources a small country like Switzerland had at its disposal. Although the military leaders agreed on the need to defend the plateau, they disagreed on how this was to be achieved. One group favoured a “mobile” defence, which was based on the belligerents’ experience during the war. But the group of the so-called reformers criticised the high cost in aircraft and tanks this doctrine would entail, and put forward a more “static”, infantry-based doctrine. Although the National Defence Commission never favoured a purely “static” defence, it finally included elements of it in a generally mobile defence doctrine. Despite this solution, the disagreements between the two groups were to last for more than a decade and would have an impact on defence and armament policies.¹⁵⁴

Meanwhile, neutrality forbade searching for refuge in military alliances. In addition, the Swiss believed in the strength of their neutral army, and did not trust “a weakened Western Europe, imperilled by communism”. From a Swiss perspective, the Brussels Treaty inaugurated a politically and militarily weak alliance.¹⁵⁵ As soon thereafter an American security guarantee to Europe loomed on the horizon in the form of the North Atlantic Treaty, Berne insisted on its neutrality to avoid being drawn into the East-West conflict on a military level. According to Mantovani, the reason why the Western powers accepted Switzerland’s non-participation in these two alliances was mainly that “nobody wanted to deter the economically strong Switzerland from participating in the reconstruction of Western Europe”.¹⁵⁶

Consequently, while Switzerland was politically linked to and economically part of the West, it remained militarily neutral.

1.2. Great Britain: Overstretched, Bankrupt, but Influential

In 1945, the Foreign Office held the view that because of Britain’s reduced position in the world relative to the Soviet Union and the US, and the need to prevent the resurgence of an aggressive Germany, the wartime alliance had to be maintained. The Chiefs of Staff (CoS), however, considered the USSR instead of Germany to be the

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.129-207.

¹⁵⁵ Cerutti, « La politique de défense... », *op. cit.*, pp.114-115.

¹⁵⁶ Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, *op. cit.*, pp.37-43.

future threat. It was their view that prevailed in Whitehall after the international developments, which took place in Eastern Europe, Iran and Turkey in late 1945 and early 1946. The success of communist parties in Western Europe, paired with the possibility of a sovietised Germany, increased the fear of the Soviet Union in Britain.¹⁵⁷ If cooperation with the former Soviet ally could not be maintained and evolved into an antagonistic relationship, could at least the “special relationship” be sustained, especially in the light of the “Soviet threat”?

Even though the relationship with the US had been the lynchpin of British post-war planning, the fears in Whitehall that the Americans would once again withdraw into isolationism seemed to be well-founded immediately after the war. The lack of US support appeared fully with Truman’s approval of the McMahon Act, which apparently terminated the atomic cooperation between the two countries and, more importantly, the termination of Lend-Lease and the ensuing difficulties to negotiate for a new loan.¹⁵⁸ US financial support was fundamental regarding Britain’s disastrous financial and economic situation after the war.

The war had been very costly for Britain. For the first time in nearly 200 years Britain had become a major international debtor. By 1945, the stock of external debt amounted to £5 billion, the equivalent to approximately half of the current gross national income. Moreover, the debt rose at the rate of £1.2 billion a year, because of Britain’s inability to match expenditures on imports of food and on the maintenance of large military operations with exports of goods and services. Furthermore, the war had also caused important physical loss manifested in the damage of houses, factories and commercial buildings.¹⁵⁹ Britain needed a dramatic increase in exports to earn the money necessary for essential supplies. However, not only were the export earnings not sufficient for buying the desperately needed supplies, but as these commodities could only be bought in dollars, gold and dollars were drained from the reserves.¹⁶⁰

Eventually, Britain’s financial situation was a determining factor for its role in the emerging Cold War. As the American Secretary of State, James Byrnes, offered in July 1946 to merge the British and US zones in Germany, London was eager to work

¹⁵⁷ Greenwood, Sean, *Britain and the Cold War, 1945-1991*, Basingstoke etc.: Macmillan, 2000, pp.6-19.

¹⁵⁸ Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled...*, *op. cit.*, pp.158-160.

¹⁵⁹ Alford, Bernard W.E., *Britain and the World Economy since 1880*, London etc.: Longman, 1996, p.172.

¹⁶⁰ Cairncross, Alec, *The British Economy since 1945: Economic Policy and Performance, 1945-1995*, Oxford etc.: Blackwell, 1995, pp.48-50.

towards a bi-zone – which furthered the division of Germany – to reduce its costs.¹⁶¹ As the British became aware of the trend towards containment in Washington, and were confronted with enormous financial difficulties, on 21 February 1947, they announced the termination of aid to Greece and Turkey, and forced the Americans to act immediately.¹⁶² The US took over these British responsibilities and announced the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan.¹⁶³ If Washington stepped in to help London in Europe, and the two Governments seemed to be marching in the same direction, how did London approach the continent from a military-strategic perspective and what was the place of Europe in British defence policy?

As argued by John Baylis, British defence policy planning encountered a variety of dilemmas: the question if a continental commitment to Europe was necessary or a maritime and air strategy was sufficient; whether the Empire and Commonwealth came prior to the continent; and if the “special relationship” was more important than Europe.¹⁶⁴ Still considering Britain as a Great Power, the CoS favoured a global strategy in cooperation with the US, based on the defence of the Middle East, which was considered more important than Western Europe.¹⁶⁵ During the war, Churchill had favoured that in the event of a future war in Europe, the emphasis should be on the defence of Britain, relying on air and maritime power. With the election of the Labour Government in the summer of 1945, and Bevin’s “Grand Design” of extensive political, economic and military cooperation throughout Western Europe to create a “Third Force” between the two superpowers, a continental commitment was seriously considered. However, the Foreign Secretary came to realise that such an alliance was impossible in the light of Western Europe’s military weakness and without American backing. Moreover, it could provoke the Soviets, and Anglo-French relations were deteriorating in 1946. Therefore, the “Third Force” concept remained at an ideational stage and was merely wishful thinking.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶¹ Greenwood, *Britain and...*, *op. cit.*, p.22. See Deighton, Anne, *The Impossible Peace: Britain, the Division of Germany, and the Origins of the Cold War*, Oxford etc.: OUP, 1990.

¹⁶² Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled...*, *op. cit.*, p.174.

¹⁶³ *Supra*, ch.I.1.

¹⁶⁴ Baylis, John, *British Defence Policy: Striking the Right Balance*, Basingstoke etc.: Macmillan, 1989, *passim*.

¹⁶⁵ Kent, John; Young, John W., “The ‘Western Union’ concept and British Defence Policy, 1947-8”, in Aldrich, Richard J. (ed.), *British Intelligence, Strategy and the Cold War, 1945-51*, London and New York: Routledge, 1992, p.168.

¹⁶⁶ Longden, Martin A.L., “From ‘Hot War’ to ‘Cold War’: Western Europe in British Grand Strategy, 1945-1948”, in Hopkins, Michael F.; et. al., *Cold War Britain, 1945-1964, New Perspectives*, Basingstoke etc.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003, pp.112-113.

As the French approached Britain for a defensive treaty at the beginning of 1947, Bevin changed attitude. Despite disagreements in British circles, negotiations with the new French government of Paul Ramadier led in a short time to the signing of the Dunkirk Treaty on 4 March 1947. Yet, the FO and the CoS still disagreed. While the former favoured British leadership in Western Europe, the latter emphasised the importance of Atlantic relations.¹⁶⁷ Nevertheless, Bevin understood that Western Europe could not defend itself without American assistance against aggression from the East, and in the spring of 1947, he did not intend to extend the Dunkirk Treaty to other smaller powers. However, the collapse of the London Council of Foreign Minister's Conference in December 1947, the ensuing pressure by Western European countries for a continental commitment, the belief that the threat to Western Europe came from communism "within", not from an external military power, and the Czechoslovak coup, finally led to the signing of the Brussels Treaty with France and the Low Countries on 17 March 1948.¹⁶⁸

This alliance, however, still lacked the means to be effective in the case of a Soviet attack. Thus, the British objective was to "entangle"¹⁶⁹ the US in the defence of Western Europe. The mounting tensions of the East-West conflict provided Bevin with the opportunity to seek American involvement, and he was able to start preliminary talks in spring 1948. With the imposition of the Berlin blockade by the Soviet Union on 24 June, the US finally overcame its hesitations and agreed on exploratory talks for a future security arrangement. After tough negotiations on the scope and binding force of the alliance, and arrangements with the isolationists in the US Congress, the North Atlantic Treaty was signed in Washington on 4 April 1949. Although this was a major achievement for Whitehall and in line with Britain's post-war defence planning, the policy leading to it was neither wholly deliberate nor consistent.¹⁷⁰ Meanwhile, did these security arrangements entail a "real" defence commitment by Britain to the continent?

When Field-Marshal Montgomery became Chief of the Imperial General Staff¹⁷¹ in 1946, he soon argued that Britain should build up the strength of its

¹⁶⁷ Baylis, John, *The Diplomacy of Pragmatism, Britain and the Formation of NATO, 1942-1949*, Kent OH: Kent State University Press, 1993, pp.57-62.

¹⁶⁸ Longden, *op. cit.*, pp.116-124.

¹⁶⁹ Ireland, Timothy P., *Creating the Entangling Alliance: The Origins of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, London: Aldwych Press, 1981.

¹⁷⁰ Baylis, *The Diplomacy...*, pp.92-116.

¹⁷¹ CIGS.

potential allies in Europe to establish a Western bloc to keep the war away from Britain. But his two CoS colleagues, Air Chief Marshal Lord Arthur Tedder and Admiral Sir John Cunningham, disagreed. Consequently, even after the signing of the Dunkirk Treaty, the strategic policy of May 1947 wrote Western Europe off.¹⁷² According to the Air and Naval Chiefs, British support for the Western European Allies in peace would have to be limited to political and economic backing and, in the event of war, to naval and air support. At the beginning of 1948, Montgomery again argued for a continental army. Although Prime Minister Attlee sided at the beginning with the other two CoS, a few days after the signing of the Brussels Treaty, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff made Tedder and Cunningham agree that the aim of the alliance would be to defend Western Europe as far East as possible. However, while Britain started to plan for the defence of Western Europe, it simultaneously coordinated plans with the US to withdraw from the continent in an emergency. Finally, with the backing of Defence Minister Alexander, Montgomery convinced the CoS that British forces should remain and fight on the continent. But in the light of the Naval and Air Chiefs' scepticism, it was decided that these forces would not be reinforced. This strategic policy remained in place until May 1949.¹⁷³

¹⁷² Longden, *op. cit.*, p.116.

¹⁷³ Baylis, *The Diplomacy...*, pp.83-88.

2. Anglo-Swiss Relations 1945-1949

2.1. Self-Interested British Advocacy for Switzerland

With the transition from war to peace, and later to the Cold War, “political pragmatism, an intuitive sense of Switzerland’s functional role within the European state system and an appreciation for Switzerland’s unique cultural and historical status continued to shape Britain’s outlook towards Switzerland”.¹⁷⁴ With this “evaluation”, Neville Wylie sums up well the background against which Anglo-Swiss relations evolved after the war from a British perspective.

Most probably it was with this outlook that Britain wished to help Switzerland in its difficulties with the Soviet Union. Already in December 1944, Anthony Eden had stated that Britain intended to intervene to help re-establish diplomatic relations between Switzerland and the USSR, if the opportune moment presented itself.¹⁷⁵ Yalta was not such a moment, because Stalin was still opposed to the solution of the problem, as Sir Alexander Cadogan, Permanent Under-Secretary in the Foreign Office, explained to Paul Rüeegg, the Swiss Minister in London.¹⁷⁶ Nevertheless, the intention to help Switzerland remained. At the beginning of July 1945, Rüeegg reported to Berne that the British intended to discuss the matter with the Soviets at the Conference in Potsdam.¹⁷⁷ The impetus to do so came simultaneously from the British Ambassador in Moscow, Sir Clark Kerr, and Cadogan.¹⁷⁸ In the end, however, Potsdam did not see the British approach the Soviets on this question. Bevin explained to Rüeegg in August that he thought it had been premature to do so, because the Russians were very “sensitive” on this issue.¹⁷⁹

Nevertheless, in December 1945, Bevin and Cadogan were still willing to help the Swiss.¹⁸⁰ At the beginning of 1946, as Switzerland had already started negotiating with the USSR through a backchannel, Bevin, Cadogan, and his successor, Sir Orme

¹⁷⁴ Wylie, Neville, “Switzerland and the United Kingdom during the Second World War and the early Cold War”, Keizer, Madelon de; Tames, Ismee (eds.), *Small Nations: Crisis and Confrontation in the 20th Century*, Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2008, pp.132-133.

¹⁷⁵ Rüeegg (London) to Pilet-Golaz (FPD), 13.12.1944, Archiv für Zeitgeschichte ETHZ (hereafter AfZ), Nachlass Paul Rüeegg (hereafter NLPR), III 25.1.

¹⁷⁶ Rüeegg (London) to Stucki (FPD), 03.05.1945, AfZ, NLPR, III 23.4.2.

¹⁷⁷ Rüeegg (London) to Stucki (FPD), 06.07.1945, dodis.ch/1914, SDD.

¹⁷⁸ Kerr (Moscow) to Eden (FO), 08.07.1945, *Documents on British Policy Overseas* (hereafter DBPO), Series I, Vol.I, p.52.

¹⁷⁹ Rüeegg (London) to FPD, 09.08.1945, SFA, E2300, 1000/716, Bd.39.

¹⁸⁰ Rüeegg (London) to Petitpierre (FPD), 24.12.1945, SFA, E2300, 1000/716, Bd.39.

Sargent, continued to advise Berne, and were strongly opposed to a unilateral Swiss apology to the Soviets.¹⁸¹ Soon thereafter, the Swiss re-established diplomatic relations with the USSR. Even though there is no proof that this was partially due to an intervention by the British, and we know that at Potsdam they had not intervened on Switzerland's behalf, it could be that they acted thereafter. Moreover, the sources are silent on the question why the Soviets finally gave in.¹⁸² Even if London did not intervene, Switzerland could count on Britain's "moral support". In addition, the British had prepared the ground for the re-establishment of diplomatic relations, because they had intervened in favour of Switzerland's position in the international system.

On 27 January 1945, Rüeegger reported from London that Eden had privately expressed his satisfaction with Swiss neutrality, and that Switzerland could count on British support in the upcoming negotiations between the Big Three.¹⁸³ If the British did not intervene at Yalta, they did so at Potsdam. On 20 July, Eden suggested to his American and Soviet counterparts, James Byrnes and Vyacheslav Molotov, that the Great Powers should declare themselves in favour of considering eventual admission of Switzerland, together with Italy, Sweden and Portugal, to the UN.¹⁸⁴ The American Secretary of State agreed with this proposal, while the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs did not oppose it.¹⁸⁵ After Potsdam, Rüeegger was confident that the British would continue to have a beneficial impact on the other great powers with regard to Swiss neutrality.¹⁸⁶ He even concluded that Switzerland could perhaps, with British help, convince the other Allies of Swiss UN membership with an explicitly recognised neutrality status.¹⁸⁷ This was, however, not to happen, and the Swiss decided to remain outside the international organisation. Nonetheless, the British intervention at Potsdam had paved the way for the acceptance of neutrals into the UN, and thus helped to bring back the Swiss and the other neutral countries into the post-war international system.

¹⁸¹ Rüeegger (London) to Petitpierre (FPD), 25.02.1946; 18.03.1946, SFA, E2800, 1990/106, Bd.13.

¹⁸² Möckli, *op. cit.*, p.158.

¹⁸³ Rüeegger (London) to FPD, 27.01.1945, SFA, E2300, 1000/716, Bd.39.

¹⁸⁴ Record of Third Meeting of Foreign Secretaries, Potsdam, 20.07.1945, *DBPO*, Series I, Vol.I, p.444.

¹⁸⁵ Third Meeting of the Foreign Ministers, 20.07.1945, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter *FRUS*), 1945, Vol.II, pp.147-148.

¹⁸⁶ Rüeegger (London) to Petitpierre (FPD), 09.08.1945, AfZ, NLPR, III 23.4.1.

¹⁸⁷ Möckli, *op. cit.*, pp.103-104.

In 1946, Winston Churchill himself – at the time Leader of the Opposition – came to Switzerland and thus helped improve (from a western perspective) with his aura the country's tarnished image.¹⁸⁸ Already in November 1945, the British wartime leader had told the Swiss Minister in Paris, Carl Jacob Burckhardt that, contrary to “his friend Stalin”, he had a great esteem for Switzerland and its neutrality.¹⁸⁹ Evidently, Churchill's “esteem” was more ambiguous, or he simply was not well-informed about Switzerland.¹⁹⁰ As Hans-Ulrich Jost has observed, Churchill's visit to Switzerland was the result of efforts deployed by Swiss companies, many of which had been on the infamous “black list” during the war, and thus wanted to make the victorious Allies forget their past through this gesture.¹⁹¹ Interestingly, the British Minister in Berne, T.M. Snow, advised Churchill that the companies behind his visit were “all of the best standing”, and that the temporary inclusion of Sulzer Brothers on the “black list” had been an “error of judgment”.¹⁹² With the eminent Statesman's visit on the horizon, the Swiss Minister in London advised Petitpierre to arrange a meeting of some form. He stressed that even though Churchill's visit to Switzerland was of a private nature, he was still Leader of the Opposition and a “very great national figure”.¹⁹³ When assessing the perception of Switzerland and its neutrality by British politicians, he recommended Churchill as “a defender of Swiss neutrality”.¹⁹⁴

The Federal Council invited Churchill to Berne during his stay. The visit to the Swiss war stronghold in General Henri Guisan's company, however, was dropped. The General had fallen out of favour with the Federal Council, because he had strongly criticised the government in his report on the Swiss Armed Forces during the

¹⁸⁸ On Churchill's visit to Switzerland see Bourgeois, Daniel, « La visite de Churchill en Suisse en 1946 », *Almanach de la Croix-Rouge Suisse 1989*, Berne, 1988, pp. 60-65; Mantovani, Mauro, „A Special Case“: Hintergründe von Churchill's Besuch in der Schweiz”, *NZZ*, 18.09.1966; Sauter, Max, *Churchills Schweizer Besuch 1946 und die Zürcher Rede*, Herisau: Schläpfer, 1976; Kämpf, Christian, *Winston Churchills Reden von Fulton und Zürich- Interpretation, Hintergründe, Reaktionen, Auswirkungen*, Lizentiatsarbeit, Universität Bern, 1988.

¹⁸⁹ Burckhardt (Paris) to Petitpierre (FPD), 13.11.1945, dodis.ch/1914, *SDD*.

¹⁹⁰ Wylie, *Britain, Switzerland...*, *op. cit.*, p.2; Bloch, Michael, „Churchill: Bomben auf die Schweiz“, *NZZ Online*, 22.11.2009, http://www.nzz.ch/nachrichten/startseite/churchill_bomben_auf_die_schweiz_1.4045164.html (accessed 23.11.2009).

¹⁹¹ Jost, Hans Ulrich, *Le salaire des Neutres : Suisse 1938-1948*, Paris: Denoël, 1999, p.283.

¹⁹² Snow (Berne) to Churchill, 15.06.1946, Churchill College Archive Centre, Cambridge (hereafter CCAC), Churchill Papers (hereafter CHUR) 2/238; TNA, FO 371/60490.

¹⁹³ Rüegger (London) to Petitpierre (FPD), 06.06.1946, dodis.ch/781, *SDD*.

¹⁹⁴ Rüegger (London) to Petitpierre (FPD), 29.07.1946, dodis.ch/1204, *SDD*.

war.¹⁹⁵ The British government, meanwhile, associated itself with Churchill's visit to Switzerland, but was unwilling to bear any responsibility for statements or speeches.¹⁹⁶ One day before the former British Prime Minister's famous speech at the University of Zurich on "The Tragedy of Europe", Petitpierre had the opportunity to discuss world politics with him. Churchill presented himself as the defender of Switzerland, emphasised the Russians' hatred for Switzerland, ruminated about the atomic bomb and how he would proceed with the Soviets, and expressed his understanding for Swiss neutrality. To Churchill's question whether his intended speech was politically problematic for the Swiss Government, Petitpierre replied that this was not the case.¹⁹⁷ Once the speech had been held, he even applauded it.¹⁹⁸

During his whole stay, Churchill was chaperoned by the Swiss Government, spoiled by his hosts and admirers, and cheered by the crowds. He received the visit of, among others, General Guisan, whom he told that Switzerland was considered an important "outpost" by the Western Allies.¹⁹⁹ While an account of Churchill's stay in Switzerland was sent to Bevin,²⁰⁰ there was no clearly discernible direct impact on Anglo-Swiss relations. However, it showed the respectful and amicable relations the two countries enjoyed, led to contacts between Statesmen at the highest level, and gave Switzerland important publicity, at least from a western perspective. Even though Churchill was for the time "only" Leader of the Opposition, he still was a respected politician, who was to return to power in some years.

For the Swiss Minister in London this was not sufficient. In 1947, he advised Petitpierre to establish through a visit to London personal contacts with those in power in Whitehall. Interestingly, this corresponded to the Swiss Foreign Minister's desire to visit Britain.²⁰¹ According to Rüegger, personal relationships with the British Statesmen were important, especially because they were "willing to understand" Switzerland.²⁰² In reaction to Petitpierre's wavering against the background of the mounting Cold War tensions, the Swiss Minister in London stressed that Switzerland

¹⁹⁵ Sturdee to Churchill, 20.08.1946, CCAC, CHUR 2/238; Gautschi, Willi, *Le général Guisan : Le commandement de l'armée suisse pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale*, Lausanne : Payot, 1991, pp.650-671.

¹⁹⁶ Reay (FO) to Snow (Berne), 28.08.1946, TNA, FO 371/60490.

¹⁹⁷ Entretien avec M. Winston Churchill, Petitpierre, 18.09.1946, SFA, E2800, 1990/106, Bd.14.

¹⁹⁸ Petitpierre (FPD) to Churchill, 19.09.1946, SFA, E2800, 1967/60, Bd.6.

¹⁹⁹ Bericht über den Besuch von Winston Churchill in der Schweiz, Bracher (FMD), 18.10.1946, p.18, SFA, E2800, 1990/106, Bd.14.

²⁰⁰ Snow (Berne) to Bevin (FO), 25.09.1946, TNA, FO 371/60490.

²⁰¹ Petitpierre (FPD) to Rüegger (London), 05.06.1947, SFA, E2800, 1967/59, Bd.91.

²⁰² Rüegger (London) to Petitpierre (FPD), 15.06.1947, SFA, E2800, 1967/59, Bd.91.

lacked access to an international platform, because it was not a member of the UN. Consequently, Petitpierre's visit to London was important to make up for the lack of international contacts, and to discuss about urgent issues such as the Marshall Plan and Anglo-Swiss tourism.²⁰³ But with the Federal Council's opposition to the visit in October 1947, Petitpierre had to postpone his trip to London.²⁰⁴

After having obtained his colleagues' approval, the Swiss Foreign Minister could finally visit Britain in March 1948. There he met Attlee, members of the Cabinet, such as Defence Minister Albert Alexander, Churchill, other members of the opposition, and his British counterpart, Bevin.²⁰⁵ In their meeting, the Foreign Secretary underlined that he wanted the Marshall Plan to remain a purely economic undertaking, and that he had always avoided to embarrass Switzerland by asking for more than economic cooperation. He then went on to expose his concept of a "Third Force": "the desire to create an economic unity composed by the countries of Europe, Northern Africa, and the Middle East, in order to escape from the hold of the dollar". It does not seem, however, that the Swiss had an active role to play in this idea. Bevin was aware of and respected Switzerland's desire to remain neutral, despite voicing some reservations on Swiss neutrality. Although he did not overtly criticise it, he was sceptical regarding its sustainability. The Swiss Foreign Minister replied that Switzerland could be a useful footbridge between the East and the West, and that while the Swiss were making the necessary sacrifices for a strong army, Western Europe could only become a force if every country had an army and fought against communism.²⁰⁶ Petitpierre also emphasised that Switzerland belonged ideologically to the Western world, and that it would cooperate on an economic level.²⁰⁷ But how did this economic cooperation for the recovery of Europe come about?

In July 1947, as the Swiss Minister in London advised Petitpierre on how to react to the Anglo-French invitation to participate in the Marshall Plan, his consultations with British politicians were important. According to Rüeegger, a negative reply would not be understood in Britain, the participation would be necessary to underline the positive aspects of neutrality, and thus to gain the Western

²⁰³ Rüeegger (London) to Petitpierre (FPD), 19.10.1947, SFA, E2800, 1967/59, Bd.91.

²⁰⁴ Petitpierre (FPD) to Rüeegger (London), 22.10.1947, SFA, E2800, 1967/59, Bd.91.

²⁰⁵ Séjour à Londres du 20 mars au 1^{er} avril 1948, Petitpierre, SFA, E2800, 1990/106, Bd.14.

²⁰⁶ Entretien avec M. Bevin, Petitpierre, 30.03.1948, SFA, E2800, 1990/106, Bd.19.

²⁰⁷ Bevin (FO) to Snow (Berne), 30.03.1948, TNA, FO 371/73394.

powers' acceptance for this policy.²⁰⁸ This advice was an important incentive for Swiss participation, even though the main reason lay with Switzerland's desire to have access to the European market and American raw materials. Nonetheless, in the ongoing negotiations in Paris, British and Swiss interests converged. At the beginning of 1948, both countries successfully opposed the creation of a supranational institution for European recovery. This enabled Switzerland to join the OEEC.²⁰⁹

During the negotiations leading up to the creation of this organisation, Whitehall assured Berne that there was no question of European integration, and that they were opposed to it. Consequently, there was supposedly no risk for Swiss neutrality.²¹⁰ Britain intended its participation in the Marshall Plan for the maintenance of its empire and the connected sterling area. As this was contrary to American plans, the British tried to enlist other countries for their "cause", with Switzerland among them. According to Peter Hug, these plans were in accordance with Bevin's "Third Force" policy, and it was this policy that brought the two countries closer to each other.²¹¹ This interpretation seems to be erroneous however. Although Switzerland's and Britain's interests coincided with regard to European integration, they did not with regard to pound sterling. London believed that Berne would be willing to cooperate with a British-led financial system, because it held a large amount of pounds. But it was exactly for this reason that the Swiss National Bank was against British plans, which would probably further increase its pound holdings.²¹² Moreover, as the Secretary-General of the Federal Political Department, Alfred Zehnder, told the British Deputy Under-Secretary of State, Roger Makins, the Swiss did not wish to upset the Americans.²¹³

Despite some disagreements, in the immediate post-war period, the British were willing to help the Swiss finding their place in the international system, respected Switzerland's neutrality, and both countries shared common goals with regard to European integration.

²⁰⁸ Rüegger (London) to Petitpierre (FPD), 06.07.1947, SFA, E2300, 1000/716, Bd.41.

²⁰⁹ Jost, Hans Ulrich, *Europa und die Schweiz 1945-1950: Europarat, Supranationalität und schweizerische Unabhängigkeit*, Zürich: Chronos, 1999, pp.114-116.

²¹⁰ Bevin (FO) to Snow (Berne), 04.03.1948, *British Documents on Foreign Affairs* (hereafter *BDFA*), IV, F, Vol.15, p.99; Rüegger (London) to Petitpierre (FPD), 04.03.1948, SFA, E2800, 1967/59, Bd.91.

²¹¹ Hug, Peter, „Vom Neutralismus zur Westintegration. Zur schweizerischen Aussenpolitik in der Nachkriegszeit“, in Leimgruber, Walter; Fischer, Werner (eds.), „*Goldene Jahre*“: *Zur Geschichte der Schweiz seit 1945*, Zürich: Chronos, 1999, pp.79-80.

²¹² Maurhofer, „Schweizerisch-britische Verständigung...“, *op. cit.*, pp.473-476.

²¹³ Record of Conversation between Zehnder (FPD) and Makins (FO), 02.08.1948, TNA, FO 371/71952.

2.2. Economic Interdependence

Before the war, Britain and the sterling zone had traditionally been important economic partners of Switzerland.²¹⁴ But not only had the commercial relations suffered during the war, there had also been measures of economic warfare, which were maintained by Britain even after the end of hostilities in Europe. Thus, Switzerland desired to re-launch its commercial relations with Britain, especially because it had lost its most important trading partner, Germany.²¹⁵ The moment seemed favourable. Albert Nussbaumer, Director General of the Swiss Bank Corporation, could report to Petitpierre – after discussions with the British economic and financial authorities in July 1945 – “that Switzerland remained the only European country which, through its industrial and financial potential and its capacity to absorb raw materials and products of Great Britain and the British Empire, plays a very important role in England’s plans”. Moreover, he considered Switzerland particularly well placed to create a strong position for itself for the export of its products to Britain and its empire. In the aim to re-launch Anglo-Swiss economic relations, he suggested a monetary agreement. The latter was also intended for the Swiss tourism industry, which wanted to re-attract British visitors, who had been among its most important customers in the pre-war era.²¹⁶

Even though Switzerland’s position in British plans was not as strong as suggested by Nussbaumer, Paul Keller, the Federal Council’s Delegate for Commercial Agreements, argued in favour of exploratory talks. He emphasised that a credit was, because of the British lack of gold and currencies, the only way to reactivate trade. The Federal authorities agreed after some hesitation and, on 25 October, Keller travelled to London. The outcome of these talks was disappointing from a Swiss perspective, as the British wished a credit rather for financial than trade purposes, and were not willing to guarantee the exchange rate. Consequently, Berne

²¹⁴ For a general account on Anglo-Swiss economic relations after the war see Andrès, Ernest, *Les relations économiques et commerciales entre la Suisse et la Grande-Bretagne depuis la 2^{ème} Guerre mondiale*, Thèse, Université de Fribourg, 1957; Hobi, Cassian, *Die Wirtschaftsbeziehungen Schweiz-Grossbritannien*, Dissertation, Universität Zürich, 1959.

²¹⁵ Paccaud, *op. cit.*, pp.34-37.

²¹⁶ Relations économiques futures entre la Suisse et l’Empire britannique, Nussbaumer, 06.08.1945, dodis.ch/322, SDD.

began to search for political reasons to compensate in the case that such a disadvantageous monetary agreement would be concluded.²¹⁷

On 30 November, as the Federal Council decided in favour of negotiations for such a monetary agreement, the political justification was that in view of the upcoming negotiations on German accounts and the “black list” with the Allies, it was important to secure a “friendly and understanding attitude” of the British Government.²¹⁸ During the negotiations, which lasted from 10 December 1945 to 15 February 1946, the British held to their demands, especially because they were aware of Switzerland’s political motivations.²¹⁹ The only “gain” from a Swiss perspective was a promise to resume tourism. Finally, on 12 March, the Federal Government granted Great Britain a credit worth SFr.260 million, and Britain’s only guarantee was to pay expenses, which would exceed the credit, in gold. Yet, Switzerland had secured Britain’s support for the forthcoming negotiations in Washington.²²⁰

The freshly concluded monetary agreement was, however, not sufficient to solve the problems underlying Anglo-Swiss financial relations. As early as October 1946, the whole amount of the credit for that year was used up, and additional British gold deliveries were necessary. This was caused by an important increase in tourism traffic to Switzerland. In 1946, the number of British arrivals (168,869) and overnight stays (1,114,000) in Switzerland had almost caught up with pre-war levels (1939: 181,339/1,429,000). The following year saw a twofold increase to 434,899 arrivals and 2,991,000 overnight stays, and similarly high levels of the years thereafter.²²¹ To prevent a further loss of currencies and gold, the British Legation even pressured British nationals in Switzerland to return to Britain.²²² Another problem was that important territories of the sterling area, such as India and South Africa, were sending no goods to Switzerland to counterbalance.²²³ In November, Britain and Switzerland again held talks. They agreed to limit the amount of money allocated to British

²¹⁷ Maurhofer, „Schweizerisch-britische Verständigung...“, *op. cit.*, pp.452-458.

²¹⁸ Petitpierre (FPD) to Rüegger (London), 30.11.1945, SFA, E2800, 1967/59, Bd.91.

²¹⁹ Rüegger (London) to Petitpierre (FPD), 27.12.1945, dodis.ch/1657, SDD.

²²⁰ Paccaud, *op. cit.*, pp.43-48. See also Truninger, Curt, *Swiss Relations with the United Kingdom in the Formation and Development of EFTA until 1967*, PhD Thesis, University of Aberdeen, 1976, pp.48-49. On Britain’s policy with regard to monetary agreements see Cairncross, Alec, *Years of Recovery: British Economic Policy 1945-51*, London: Methuen, 1985, pp.123-126.

²²¹ Hobi, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-130.

²²² Cuénoud to Sous-chef d’E.M. Front (both Federal Military Department (hereafter FMD)), 12.03.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 9626.

²²³ Annual Economic Report on Switzerland 1946, Berne, 05.11.1946, BDFA, IV, F, Vol.4, p.97.

tourists,²²⁴ and London promised to use its influence to favour the export of raw materials from the sterling area to Switzerland. These measures were still insufficient, and to prevent further payments in gold, the Treasury aimed at saving money in tourism. Consequently, the amount of money per tourist was first reduced from £75 to £50, and then to £35.²²⁵

In the light of this significant reduction, not only the Swiss tourism industry became nervous, but also the Swiss Minister in London. Rüeegg was preoccupied with Switzerland's image, because the authorisation office, which imposed the measures on British tourists, was composed by Swiss officials. On 17 July 1947, Switzerland's permanent economic delegation thus decided to make the British participate in the authorisation office, and even considered the possibility of a new credit to Britain.²²⁶ From London, Rüeegg suggested that the British should reserve the SFr.65 million, which they would receive for the first series of Vampire aircraft, exclusively for tourism.²²⁷ Initially, the Swiss succeeded in maintaining tourist traffic, and London accepted to share the responsibility for the measures. But for the winter season of 1947/48, the British government had to suspend all tourism travel. Although the negotiations of winter 1948 resulted in the lifting of the travel ban, the quota per tourist remained at £35. Later, the situation slightly improved with the devaluation of the pound, which allowed to raise the quota to £50.²²⁸

The Treasury was no longer willing or able to deliver gold to make up for the balance of payments deficit, and saw the solution in additional exports to Switzerland.²²⁹ Even though British exports increased significantly, they were not sufficient to counterbalance the fast-growing tourism traffic, and because of its domestic needs, Britain was not able to make the raw materials available which Switzerland would have bought. Therefore, it was difficult for Berne to convince Whitehall to accept the import of so-called non-essentials, and only in spring 1948, an agreement for the import of a limited amount of non-essentials was reached.²³⁰ Aware of these difficulties, the British Legation in Berne advised the Treasury to increase the

²²⁴ Hohl (FPD) to Burckhardt (Paris), 06.12.1946, dodis.ch/1658, *SDD*.

²²⁵ Maurhofer, „Schweizerisch-britische Verständigung...“, *op. cit.*, pp.464-465.

²²⁶ Notiz für Herrn Legationsrat Kappeler, Barazetti, 18.07.1947, dodis.ch/2172, *SDD*.

²²⁷ Rüeegg (London) to FPD and Federal Department of Public Economy (hereafter FDPE), 23.07.1947, dodis.ch/1656, *SDD*.

²²⁸ Maurhofer, „Schweizerisch-britische Verständigung...“, *op. cit.*, pp.465-466.

²²⁹ Notiz zur Besprechung Ellis Rees/Weston mit Graffenried/Umbricht, 23.12.1947, dodis.ch/4920, *SDD*.

²³⁰ Maurhofer, „Schweizerisch-britische Verständigung...“, *op. cit.*, pp.466-467.

arms sales to Switzerland, and to link them to the economic negotiations to avoid a further gold drain.²³¹

In December 1948, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Stafford Cripps, remained deeply worried about Britain's balance of payments problem with Switzerland.²³² In the talks, which followed, Switzerland promised to buy more from the sterling area, and more military material. The question was, however, if Switzerland was important enough for Britain and its Allies, and that the Americans would not oppose the sale of ever more weapons to the Swiss.²³³ Berne was willing to consider additional weapons purchases to equilibrate the balance of payments, which also caused problems to the Swiss export and tourism industries.²³⁴

Consequently, there was economic interdependence. While London needed Swiss money through exports and credits to survive, Switzerland wanted to increase the exports of non-essentials to Britain and to retain British tourism. In this situation, Anglo-Swiss arms transfers could be beneficial for both countries, for they could provide the UK with hard currency, which in turn could be spent on Swiss tourism and non-essentials.

2.3. The Field Marshal in the Alps

In February 1946, the British Minister in Berne, Sir Clifford Norton, reported to Bevin that "Switzerland, that is to say the great majority of the thinking Swiss people, look to Great Britain as the one Great Power which, by its traditions, its character and policy, can save Europe from its own weaknesses".²³⁵ Even though Berne's view was certainly more nuanced, Britain's standing in Switzerland was high, in any case higher than that of France, towards which the Swiss had looked for their security during the interwar years.

²³¹ Smith (Berne) to Minister (Berne), 30.11.1948; Harpham (Berne) to Weston (Treasury), 30.11.1948, TNA, FO 371/73398.

²³² Balance of Payments with Belgium and Switzerland, Memorandum by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, 31.12.1948, TNA, CAB 134/219/48.

²³³ Rowan to Cripps (both Treasury), 13.01.1948; Minute, Walmsley (FO), 19.01.1949, TNA, FO 371/79279.

²³⁴ Wirtschaftsverhandlungen mit Grossbritannien, Bundesratsprotokoll, 25.01.1949, dodis.ch/3092, SDD.

²³⁵ Norton (Berne) to Bevin (FO), 25.02.1946, BDFA, IV, F, Vol.3, p.158.

Therefore, while in autumn 1945 the Swiss Government had refused a request by the French to display their First Army in Switzerland on the ground of neutrality, in January 1946, it accepted an exhibition by the Royal Air Force (RAF).²³⁶ Petitpierre justified this decision on the grounds that the war was more remote than at the time of the French request, and the exposition was rather of a technical than a military nature, as Britain wanted to show its aeronautical achievements. In reality, however, Berne overcame its neutrality preoccupations, because it desired to please influential people in Whitehall.²³⁷ The exhibition allowed Defence Minister Kobelt, General Guisan, and the members of the National Defence Commission, to meet Air Marshal Sir Arthur Coningham, Head of the RAF Flying Training Command and the show's guest of honour.²³⁸ Norton was pleased to report to London that these contacts, the exposition, and the visit by Montgomery, showed that the Swiss could express "their admiration without being cramped by habits of neutrality".²³⁹

Yet, the RAF exhibition did not seem to have had a direct impact on Anglo-Swiss arms transfers, and the contacts with Coningham did not have any lasting effects. By contrast, those with Montgomery did. The British war hero's "semi-official" visit to Switzerland in February 1946 was seen by Norton as a "great proof of British friendship".²⁴⁰ This visit was, however, rather a recuperative holiday in the Swiss Alps, first in Saanenmöser, and then in Gstaad.²⁴¹ Nonetheless, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff received a hero's welcome by the Swiss population and press, and was accorded an audience by the President of the Swiss Confederation.²⁴² The Mayor of Berne made a speech in his honour,²⁴³ a troop demonstration was held for him²⁴⁴ and, more importantly, on the occasion of a reception at the British Legation, he could enter into contact with all the leading Swiss military figures.²⁴⁵ This first contact and Montgomery's habit to spend his winter holidays in Switzerland were to

²³⁶ Auszug aus dem Protokoll des Bundesrats, 15.01.1946, SFA, E2001(E), 1000/99, Bd.260.

²³⁷ Petitpierre (FPD) to Federal Council, 14.01.1946, SFA, E2001(E), 1000/99, Bd.260.

²³⁸ Bracher to de Montmollin (both FMD), 19.02.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 23347, Bd.11.

²³⁹ Norton (Berne) to Bevin (FO), 25.02.1946, *B DFA*, IV, F, Vol.3, p.158.

²⁴⁰ Note, Weber (FPD), 07.01.1946, SFA, E2001(E), 1967/113, Bd.156.

²⁴¹ Hamilton, Nigel, *Monty: The Field-Marshal, 1944-1976*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1986, p.611; Montgomery, Bernard Law, *The Memoirs of Field-Marshal Montgomery*, Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2007, pp.397-398.

²⁴² Rapport sur l'audience accordée au Maréchal Montgomery par le Président de la Confédération, 22.02.1946, SFA, E2800, 1967/60, Bd.7.

²⁴³ Welcoming address from the Mayor of Berne, 22.02.1946, Imperial War Museum, Montgomery Papers (hereafter IWM, MP), II, LMD 146.

²⁴⁴ Bericht über die Truppensdemonstration von Feldmarschall Montgomery am 15.2.46 in Gstaad, Uhlmann, 26.02.1946, E27, -/9001, 23347, Bd.3.

²⁴⁵ Weber to Kobelt (both FPD), 22.02.1946, E27, -/9001, 23347, Bd.3.

facilitate the exchange on military matters, which was to take place in the years to follow.

The first direct consequence was, however, that the Chief of the Imperial General Staff delegated Brigade General Shortt to Switzerland, to advise the Swiss General Staff on the country's defences.²⁴⁶ Shortt toured the Swiss fortifications from 7 to 9 October. While he praised the constructions of the "National Redoubt", he criticised the frontier defences and recommended large reserve troops supported by tanks. He also stressed the danger of airborne troops.²⁴⁷ Although the Chief of the Swiss General Staff, de Montmollin, had a profound respect for the British general's military knowledge,²⁴⁸ the sources are silent on whether this advice influenced Swiss defence doctrine. In December, Lieutenant General Thomas, Commander of the First British Army Corps, came to Switzerland "to discuss with Swiss soldiers about his war experiences". The Swiss President invited him to dinner, together with some of the highest ranking Swiss officers.²⁴⁹ Yet, the dinner and possible discussions are not documented in the archives. The British general is only said to have praised the Swiss Army shortly after his visit.²⁵⁰

The first well-documented encounter between high-ranking officers of the two countries took place in February 1947, between de Montmollin and Montgomery, when the latter returned to the Bernese Oberland. The British Field-Marshal was very well prepared for the meeting. The Chief of the Swiss General Staff had sent him beforehand a questionnaire about the role of the Swiss Army in a future war, military strategy, the effectiveness of the small Swiss Air Force²⁵¹, etc.,²⁵² and Colonel Hugh Fryer, the British Military Attaché in Berne, had translated for him a large part of General Guisan's report on the Swiss Army during the war. The discussion took place on 14 February in a chalet in Gstaad, in the presence of Fryer, and the Deputy Director of the Federal Military Administration²⁵³, Lieutenant-Colonel Hans Bracher. As Mantovani states, "Montgomery shook for the first time the Swiss defence

²⁴⁶ Fryer (Berne) to de Montmollin (FMD), 25.10.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 23347, Bd.11.

²⁴⁷ Résumé des entretiens avec le général Shortt, 7-9.10.46, 22.11.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 23347, Bd.11.

²⁴⁸ De Montmollin to Sous-chef E.M. Front etc. (all FMD), 09.12.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 23347, Bd.11.

²⁴⁹ Bracher to Frick (both FMD), 13.12.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 23347, Bd.11.

²⁵⁰ Political Affairs (FPD) to Frick (FMD), 17.01.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 23347, Bd.11.

²⁵¹ SAF.

²⁵² De Montmollin (FMD) to Fryer (Berne), 06.02.1947, Archives de l'Etat de Neuchâtel, Fond Montmollin (hereafter AEN, FM), 246b.

²⁵³ FMA.

system's foundations".²⁵⁴ He recommended the enlargement of the army's professional core; to replace the National Defence Commission by a Commander-in-Chief already during peacetime; and, more importantly, to abandon the "National Redoubt" strategy. As de Montmollin observed, at least the last recommendation was in agreement with the evolution of Swiss military thinking. Regarding the Swiss Air Force, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff stated that its 500 obsolete aircraft were sufficient.²⁵⁵ Coming from Montgomery, this is not surprising, because he did not believe in the dominance of air power in modern war.²⁵⁶ We do not know whether his ideas, which were revolutionary for Swiss standards, had a direct impact on Swiss military planning. Although de Montmollin gave the National Defence Commission a report on his meeting with the Field-Marshal,²⁵⁷ there is no trace in the archives on the Commission's reaction. Nevertheless, we do know that Montgomery's comment on the Swiss Air Force remained without consequences, for the Swiss were about to order a series of Vampires from Britain.

The British ban on travel for the winter season 1947/48 affected also Montgomery. Due to its neutrality, Berne was unwilling to extend to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff the official invitation he had asked for to circumvent the travel ban. Contrary to his plans, he could not come to Switzerland in February 1948 and, as a consequence, no military talks were held.²⁵⁸ Montgomery was not only eager to spend his 1949 winter holidays in the Alps, but he also desired to include Switzerland in Western European defence planning, as he now was Chairman of the Brussels Pact's Commanders-in-Chief Committee.²⁵⁹ The interest for a further exchange of views was reciprocal. Therefore, the Swiss Army started to organise his visit from autumn 1948 on.²⁶⁰ The FO was happy to leave the initiative to the Swiss, because, as they reminded the British Minister in Berne, Montgomery "is not a British commander but the servant of the five Brussels Powers".²⁶¹ Whitehall's and the Field-Marshal's perspectives converged. Both saw his military contacts in Switzerland only

²⁵⁴ Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, op. cit., p.96.

²⁵⁵ Note sur la visite au Maréchal Montgomery le 14.2.47, de Montmollin (FMD), 20.02.1947, dodis.ch/336, SDD; see also Cerutti, « La politique de défense... », op. cit., p.102.

²⁵⁶ Strachan, Hew, *The Politics of the British Army*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997, p.240.

²⁵⁷ Protokoll der Sitzung der Landesverteidigungskommission (LVK), 22.02.1947, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4061.

²⁵⁸ Bracher (FMD) to Rieser (London), 19.12.1947; Sitwell (Berne) to Bracher (FMD), 15.01.1948, SFA, E27, -/9001, 23347, Bd.6.

²⁵⁹ Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, op. cit., p.97.

²⁶⁰ Rieser (London) to Bracher (FMD), 14.09.1948, SFA, E27, -/9001, 23347, Bd.6.

²⁶¹ Crosthwaite (FO) to Snow (Berne), 18.12.1948, TNA, FO 371/73391.

insofar in the interest of Britain, as they concerned the Brussels Treaty. Moreover, according to the FO, there was no need to question Swiss neutrality, because not only was Berne unwilling to abandon it, but also an allied Switzerland would only bring a “slight” advantage in war.²⁶²

Nonetheless, the Swiss feared that the Field-Marshal intended to persuade them of the benefits of their participation in the Western Union. This fear became acute at the end of December, as the British Military Attaché in Berne, Lieutenant-Colonel Sitwell, told the Swiss Army’s Chief of Instruction, Corps Commander Hans Frick, that Montgomery would probably raise in the upcoming meeting the question of Switzerland’s cooperation with the Brussels Powers in the event of war. Frick reacted with a strong defence in favour of Swiss neutrality, and informed Defence Minister Kobelt of the discussion.²⁶³ Even though Kobelt consulted Petitpierre in this matter,²⁶⁴ the preparation for the meeting between Montgomery and de Montmollin continued uninterrupted.²⁶⁵ The only modification resulting from this was that the meeting was not to be held at de Montmollin’s house on the Lake of Neuchâtel, but in Mürren, where Montgomery stayed.²⁶⁶

The meeting between the two officers took place on 30 January 1949. While the Field-Marshal came unaccompanied, the Chief of the Swiss General Staff was assisted by Bracher and Lieutenant-Colonel Burckhardt from the General Staff’s operational section. After a survey of the general political situation, and stating that war was not likely in the next two years, Montgomery explained the Western Union’s aim to hold to the defence of the Rhine. In this design, if not attacked in case of war, he wished Switzerland to remain neutral, and if attacked, he expected the Swiss to fight for their independence. Informed by Bracher, Sitwell reported that Montgomery had said the following: “I am convinced, after the experiences of two world wars, that Swiss neutrality is advantageous to Western Defence, provided the Swiss Army will kill as many Russians as possible, if the country is attacked”.²⁶⁷ In de Montmollin’s

²⁶² Draft Note for Field Marshal Montgomery for his Visit to Switzerland, FO, 18.12.1948, TNA, FO 371/73391.

²⁶³ Aktennotiz über ein Gespräch mit dem englischen Militärattaché Oberstlt. Sitwell, 20.12.1948, dodis.ch/4321, *SDD*.

²⁶⁴ Kobelt (FMD) to Petitpierre (FPD), 20.12.1948, SFA, E2800, 1990/106, Bd.16.

²⁶⁵ Bracher (FMD) to Montgomery, 24.12.1948, SFA, E27, -/9001, 23347, Bd.6.

²⁶⁶ Snow (Berne) to Shuckburgh (FO), 28.02.1949, TNA, FO 371/79850.

²⁶⁷ Minute, Sitwell (Berne), 01.02.1949, TNA, FO 371/79850.

eyes, this was fully compatible with Switzerland's defence policy and understanding of neutrality.

As Montgomery asked, however, if Switzerland would join the Western Allies in the event of war, de Montmollin was evasive, and said that this was the Federal Government's decision. While the Field-Marshal insisted that, in the event of war, the Swiss had to contact the Allies as soon as possible, de Montmollin was more afraid of Switzerland not being supplied with weapons. He was promised help in this matter. Although during the discussion Montgomery had repeatedly expressed his respect for Swiss neutrality, de Montmollin feared that this meeting was part of an "offensive" to link Switzerland's destiny to that of Europe.²⁶⁸ Yet, he himself asked for automatic air support and somehow acknowledged that Switzerland would tolerate the Allies' use of its airspace.²⁶⁹

In additional encounters with high-ranking Swiss officers and the Defence Minister, Montgomery criticised again the Swiss command system in peace, called the National Defence Commission a "Soviet of six elderly colonels", and argued for a larger professional corps in the army. More importantly, to get the Swiss ready for the defence of Western Europe, the Field Marshal argued that the Swiss should rather buy tanks than Vampires, because the Allies could provide them with air-cover, but not with tanks and anti-tank guns!²⁷⁰ As noted by Snow, this was contrary to British efforts to sell the Swiss aircraft for financial gain. He was, however, confident that the Swiss would still buy aircraft, because their immediate aim was to protect their airspace and their cities from bombing campaigns. Thus, he considered Montgomery's visit a success, and – as will be seen – he was right in stating that the Swiss would still buy aircraft despite the Field-Marshal's comments.²⁷¹ Also A.R. Walmsley from the FO's Western Department rightly held the belief that "the FM's [Field-Marshal] decrying of 'Vampires'" should do Britain no commercial harm, especially because "the Swiss have already placed their orders".²⁷² In the light of

²⁶⁸ Note confidentielle sur l'entretien du 30.1.49 avec M. le Maréchal Montgomery, de Montmollin to Bracher (both FMD) 03.02.1949, dodis.ch/4321, *SDD*. See also Cerutti, « La Suisse et la sécurité européenne... », *op. cit.*, pp.213-220.

²⁶⁹ Minute, Sitwell (Berne), 01.02.1949, TNA, FO 371/79850.

²⁷⁰ Even in an informal discussion with a Swiss militia officer, Montgomery argued against Vampire aircraft in favour of tanks (Almen to Bracher (FMD), 17.02.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 23347, Bd.5.

²⁷¹ Snow (Berne) to Shuckburgh (FO), 28.02.1949, TNA, FO 371/79850.

²⁷² Minute, Walmsley (FO), 14.03.1949, TNA, FO 371/79850.

Montgomery's interest for Swiss defences, one can ask what the "official" British position about the Swiss Army and its role in the Western defence effort was.

In early 1946, Rüeegg reported from London that influential British military circles attributed to the Swiss "National Redoubt" an important strategic role in the defence of Western Europe. He emphasised that although this information came from the Ambassador of Portugal – a small neutral state, sometimes considered to be "reactionary" –, Portugal remained Britain's ally, and his informant was a well respected person in diplomatic circles.²⁷³ Whereas no British document to confirm this was found, London was informed on Switzerland's post-war defensive posture through its Legation's reports from 1946 on.²⁷⁴ Once Bevin had announced his plans for a Western Union in the House of Commons on 22 January 1948, Berne was worried about British intentions – even though Switzerland had not been mentioned. Consequently, the Swiss Legation emphasised to the FO that Swiss neutrality was not negotiable for inclusion in a Western Union.²⁷⁵ Yet, were these fears justified?

Following the Dunkirk Treaty in 1947, Switzerland – being on the flank of France – became of interest to British military planners. The common boundary with Italy, its position with regard to North-South communication lines, the mountainous nature of the country, and the possible resistance by its army, further ratcheted up interest in Switzerland. But in February 1948, the Joint Planning Staff²⁷⁶ had not made up its mind if Switzerland was to play its part in the defence of Western Europe as an ally or a "neutral".²⁷⁷ After the signing of the Brussels Treaty, the CoS instructed the Joint Planning Staff to prepare a report on the short-term strategic objectives in Europe at the outbreak of war. This report was intended for discussion with the Americans²⁷⁸ – most probably in the talks leading up to the Atlantic Alliance –, and brought Switzerland closer into the focus of British military planners.

The report stated that the allied strategic aim in Western Europe was to hold "the territories of the Western Union countries, i.e. France, Benelux and the UK". In this undertaking, the Joint Planning Staff thought that the natural defence line to hold the Russian advance was "the general line of the Yssel [*sic*] – Rhine – Switzerland – Franco/Italian frontier on the Mediterranean". Consequently, the security of

²⁷³ Rüeegg (London) to Petitpierre (FPD), 01.03.1946, SFA, E2300, 1000/716, Bd.40.

²⁷⁴ Snow (Berne) to Bevin (FO), 23.04.1946, *BDFA*, IV, F, Vol.3, pp.253-254.

²⁷⁵ Umbricht (London) to Petitpierre (FPD), 10.02.1948, *dodis.ch/4344*, *SDD*.

²⁷⁶ JPS.

²⁷⁷ Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, *op. cit.*, p.93.

²⁷⁸ Jago (JPS) to CoS, 06.08.1948, TNA, DEFE 6/6.

Switzerland was considered “essential to the defence of the Allied position in Western Europe”. However, Swiss neutrality was respected, as prior coordination was ruled out for this reason. The integration of Switzerland’s defence with that of the Western Allies was only considered necessary if it was unable to maintain its neutrality.²⁷⁹ The global aim to hold on to the Rhine remained, however, of a hypothetical nature. In the statement accompanying the report, the Joint Planning Staff noted that the “Allied resources will be totally inadequate to fight successfully on the Rhine”.²⁸⁰ Nonetheless, the CoS – at the time still with Montgomery as its Chief of the Imperial General Staff – approved the report.²⁸¹ During the elaboration of this report, Swiss neutrality was considered an unshakable reality. Meanwhile, signs from Switzerland seemed to point in the opposite direction.

In a report of 10 August 1948, the British Air Attaché Wing Commander R. Noel Smith commented on de Montmollin’s booklet about Swiss defence policy, which had been published in April.²⁸² According to Smith, the gist of the booklet was that the Swiss had abandoned their “National Redoubt” strategy, and that in the case of war, the Swiss Army would have to hold out until the arrival of foreign assistance.²⁸³ The Air Ministry (AM), to which the report was intended, did not react. About two months later, when the British Minister in Berne forwarded the report to the FO, he only underlined the abandoning of the “National Redoubt” strategy.²⁸⁴ It was finally in the FO’s Western Department that the Air Attaché’s paragraph about Swiss neutrality was noticed. According to J.W. Russell, this seemed “to show a remarkable advance from the traditional ostrich policy of Swiss neutrality to a more realistic and tougher attitude”.²⁸⁵ In the light of this “discovery”, the FO asked the CoS to “review the strategic attachment of Switzerland to the Western Union or at least of some degree of integration of her defences with those of the Western Powers”.²⁸⁶

²⁷⁹ J.P.(48)91(Final), Short Term Strategic Aims in Europe at the Outbreak of War, 01.09.1948, TNA, DEFE 6/6.

²⁸⁰ JPS to CoS, 01.09.1948, TNA, DEFE 6/6.

²⁸¹ C.O.S.(48) 124th Meeting, 08.09.1948, TNA, DEFE 4/16.

²⁸² On this booklet see Braun, *op. cit.*, pp.138f.

²⁸³ General Defence & Operational Policy Switzerland, Smith (Berne), 10.08.1948, TNA, FO 371/73409.

²⁸⁴ Snow (Berne) to Bevin (FO), 05.10.1948, TNA, FO 371/73409.

²⁸⁵ Minute, Russel (FO), 15.10.1948, TNA, FO 371/73409.

²⁸⁶ Crosthwaite (FO) to CoS, 10.12.1948, TNA, DEFE 5/9.

The Joint Planning Staff, which undertook the evaluation, argued in its paper of 31 December 1948 that while the Swiss Army was well equipped by “continental standards”, had a well trained and reasonably up-to-date air force, and would “give a good account of [itself] in a defensive war”, it would not succeed in holding the plateau, and the subsequent resistance from the “National Redoubt” would be of little use to the Allies. In peace, as Russia was aware that in case of attack the Swiss would defend their neutrality, Switzerland’s participation in the Western Union would not add to the deterrent value. In the event of war in the near future, the Allies would have no military gain from Switzerland’s participation, because the Swiss were neither expected to hold their own territory, nor to contribute outside of it, while the possibility remained, that the Soviets would respect their neutrality. Nonetheless, the Joint Planning Staff believed that in a war in 1957, when the Brussels Powers would be strong enough to defend themselves, Swiss participation in the Western Union would be desirable. For the moment, however, the inclusion of Switzerland would bring an “additional claimant for the supplies of arms and equipment which at present are urgently needed by France and the Benelux countries”. As the Swiss were already well armed, priority had to be given to these countries. Strategically, Britain was thus not interested in delivering weapons to Switzerland, or to use arms supplies to wean the Swiss from neutrality. On the contrary, the British preferred that the Swiss remained neutral, for they were not willing to give them military assistance. The Joint Planning Staff concluded that there was no military advantage to be gained for the Allies in Switzerland joining the Western Union, but previous coordination through staff talks was considered desirable.²⁸⁷

At the beginning of 1949, the CoS concurred with the Joint Planning Staff’s findings, and decided that the report could be used to reply to the FO. Yet, it is interesting that Lord Fraser, the First Sea Lord, could see the political benefits of Switzerland joining the Western Union “in the Cold War against Russia”, and Lord Tedder, the Chief of the Air Staff, was rather interested in its military benefits.²⁸⁸ Nonetheless, Montgomery, the CoS, and the Joint Planning Staff, saw no need to integrate Switzerland into the West’s defensive posture. The “acceptance” of Swiss neutrality was not so much caused by a particular respect for this policy, than by strategic calculations. While a neutral Switzerland was considered an “asset”,

²⁸⁷ J.P.(48)127(Final) Participation by Switzerland in Western Union, 31.12.1948, TNA, DEFE 6/7.

²⁸⁸ C.O.S.(49) 1st Meeting, 03.01.1949, TNA, DEFE 4/19.

integrated it was considered a “liability”. Therefore, the British strongly defended Switzerland’s neutrality when they discussed with the Americans about the possible members of the future Atlantic Alliance.²⁸⁹ The British had what they wanted, that the Swiss were willing to cooperate with the Western Allies once attacked.²⁹⁰

In sum, the military relationship was at least “ambiguous”. While Montgomery gave military advice to the Swiss during his winter holidays, the British military planners nevertheless preferred Switzerland as a neutral “asset”, and not as an allied “liability”.

²⁸⁹ Wiebes; Zeeman, *op. cit.*, pp.360-361.

²⁹⁰ Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, *op. cit.*, p.95.

3. Vampires “off the Shelf”

3.1. Establishing the Armament Link

The invention of the aircraft during the “Belle Époque” was met with great enthusiasm in many countries – including Great Britain, France, Germany and the US – by the people, adventurers, entrepreneurs, and governments alike, paving the way for the establishment of aircraft industries. In Switzerland, the idea of an aircraft industry was only a distant possibility, because of the country’s small size and modest population, as well as social and technological factors, and the Federal authorities’ refusal to support this promising innovation – even in the military field.²⁹¹ After the First World War, an embryonic aircraft industry started to take shape, but it was only during the 1930s that it began to attract the Federal authorities’ interest.²⁹² As a result, Switzerland was unable to produce its own fighter aircraft at the time, and the young Swiss Air Force had to be equipped with aircraft bought abroad or manufactured under licence, mainly from French and German designs.²⁹³

In 1938, the Military Technical Service²⁹⁴ – which was responsible for the Swiss Army’s armament – became genuinely interested in a British aircraft, in particular Vickers-Armstrongs’ Spitfire. Although the British company was willing to sell a licence, the Swiss preferred to buy the German Messerschmitt aircraft, and wished to purchase only a limited number of finished Spitfires for testing purposes.²⁹⁵ In August 1939, Vickers-Armstrongs and the Military Technical Service verbally agreed to the delivery of three Spitfires. But in December 1939, the AM successfully intervened against the release of these aeroplanes.²⁹⁶ Britain was already at war with Germany and needed the aircraft itself. This was unsurprising, even before the start of

²⁹¹ Simeon, Christophe, « Promotion et réception de l’aviation dans la Suisse de la Belle Époque », in Humair, Cédric ; Jost, Hans Ulrich (eds.), *Prométhée déchaîné : Technologies, culture et société helvétiques à la Belle Époque*, Lausanne: Antipodes, 2008, pp.51-65; *Ibid.*, *L’envol manqué de l’aviation militaire suisse à la fin de la Belle Époque (1910-1914)*, Neuchâtel: Alphil, 2008, *passim*.

²⁹² Grand, Julien, *N-20 et P-16, les raisons de l’échec d’une industrie aéronautique suisse autonome, 1945-1951*, Mémoire de licence, Université de Fribourg: 2005/2006, p.15.

²⁹³ Vautravers, *op. cit.*, pp.60-63.

²⁹⁴ MTS.

²⁹⁵ Fierz (Military Technical Service (MTS)) to FMD, 15.03.1939, *Documents Diplomatiques Suisses (DDS)*, Vol.13, pp.101-105.

²⁹⁶ Note, Fierz (MTS), 20.12.1939, *DDS*, Vol.13, pp.507-508.

hostilities Whitehall had been very reluctant to sell weapons to lesser European powers, as it needed them for its own rearmament efforts.²⁹⁷

With the beginning of the Second World War, the procurement of foreign aircraft became almost impossible for Switzerland. This stimulated the Swiss aircraft industry and underlined its necessity. First, it produced the D-3800, a replica of the obsolete French Morane-Saulnier 406. This type of aircraft was continuously improved, and once the war was over, two new prototypes – the D-3802 and D-3803 – were almost ready to enter production. Despite these efforts, if in 1939 the Swiss Air Force's equipment was already insufficient – as observed by the Head of the Swiss Army, General Henri Guisan²⁹⁸ – at the end of the war it was clearly obsolete. The best aircraft the Swiss had was the German Messerschmitt Bf-109, which was of pre-war design.²⁹⁹

This case is symptomatic of Switzerland's armament during the war. Although the country had undertaken enormous efforts, it had been unable to keep up with the belligerents, because not only had it lacked the necessary raw materials, but the nations at war had been unwilling to deliver weapons they needed themselves. Believing in the concept of "armed neutrality", Switzerland tried after the war to compensate for its lack of military equipment and rearmed, where possible through its own arms industry, which it had expanded during the war.³⁰⁰ The Federal Council recognised the insufficient tank and air defence, and was aware of Switzerland's delay in the development of modern weaponry. Nevertheless, it preferred a self-reliant armament policy to the purchase of weapons abroad, fearing dependence on foreign countries that might endanger supply in times of crisis or war.³⁰¹

A self-reliant armament policy remained, however, a distant ideal. Aware of its armament deficiencies, and with the military fortune on the Allies' side, in August 1944, the Swiss military authorities approached the British for Spitfire aircraft, but in January 1945, Berne was again rebuffed. Although the AM and the Ministry of Aircraft Production (MAP) had seen the request in a positive light, the Anglo-

²⁹⁷ Stone, Glyn, "The British Government and the Sale of Arms to the Lesser European Powers, 1936-39", *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol.14, No.2, pp.237-270.

²⁹⁸ Guisan, Henri, *Rapport du Général Guisan à l'Assemblée fédérale sur le service actif, 1939-1945*, Berne: DMF, 1946, pp.96-114.

²⁹⁹ Vautravers, *op. cit.*, pp.64-72.

³⁰⁰ Braun, *op. cit.*, pp.242-243. See also Kurz, Hans-Rudolf, *Zur Rüstungspolitik der neutralen Schweiz*, Bern: Technische Rundschau, 1960, pp.6-7.

³⁰¹ Schweizerischer Bundesrat, *op. cit.*, pp.563-567.

American Combined Munitions Assignment Board³⁰² had been against the sales, and so Whitehall did not receive American approval, which was necessary under Lend-Lease.³⁰³ During the negotiations on economic warfare between the Western Allies and Switzerland in Berne in early 1945, the Swiss reiterated their request. This time, they were supported by the Head of the British delegation, Dingle Foot, who saw in the Spitfire sales an inducement to and a reward for Berne's cooperation in economic warfare. At the same time, his main reason seemed to be that Britain "shall obtain a considerable windfall of Swiss francs".³⁰⁴

The AM agreed with Foot, but again, American approval in the Combined Munitions Assignment Board was needed.³⁰⁵ Once the formal Swiss request for three Spitfires had been made in March, the US member of the Combined Munitions Assignment Board wanted to submit it to Washington. There, the British had to lobby in support of the deal, because the Americans were only willing to give their agreement if the Swiss made "adequate" economic concessions.³⁰⁶ Even the British Chief of the Air Staff urged the RAF Delegation in Washington to persuade the Americans, because he was "personally interested in this case and most anxious that it should be dealt with immediately".³⁰⁷ Finally, the Americans gave their consent, although they would have preferred some specific military reasons as opposed to economic or financial reasons to justify the release of Spitfires.³⁰⁸

On 22 March, the Swiss Military and Air Attaché in London, Major Charles Schlegel, was able to report to the Head of the Military Technical Service, Colonel-Brigadier von Wattenwyl, that while the newest Spitfire XIV was not available, three Spitfire IXs were on offer.³⁰⁹ Despite renewed attempts by the Swiss to obtain the most recent version of this aircraft, the British offer was definitive. As Schlegel explained to von Wattenwyl, one could not expect London to deliver its newest aircraft to a neutral, while it refused to deliver it to its Allies. He firmly advised the Swiss to take up the offer, because it was not only the first time that the UK had been both willing and able to deliver, but because it would also create a precedent and

³⁰² CMAB.

³⁰³ Schlegel (London) to von Wattenwyl (MTS), 27.01.1945, SFA, E27, -/9001, 9766.

³⁰⁴ Foot (Berne) to Ministry of Economic Warfare (MEW), 24.02.1945, TNA, AIR 8/1218.

³⁰⁵ MEW to Foot (Berne), 27.02.1945, TNA, AIR 8/1218.

³⁰⁶ Dickson (AM) to Colyer (RAF Delegation (RAFDel) Washington), 05.03.1945; Colyer (RAFDel Washington) to Dickson (AM), 08.03.1945, TNA, AIR 8/1218.

³⁰⁷ Portal (AM) to Colyer (RAFDel Washington), 13.03.1945, TNA, AIR, 8/1218.

³⁰⁸ Willock (RAFDel Washington) to Portal (AM), 14.03.1945, TNA, AIR 8/1218.

³⁰⁹ Schlegel (London) to von Wattenwyl (MTS), 22.03.1945, SFA, E27, -/9001, 9766.

facilitate future acquisitions. Finally, he emphasised that the approval to deliver aircraft had only been obtained with the help of Foot, and if Switzerland did not wish to endanger its economic relations with Britain, it was advisable to take up the offer.³¹⁰ Schlegel's remarks had the intended effect, because a British assessment on the Swiss Air Force's strength of August 1945 mentioned three Spitfires, which had been supplied the same year.³¹¹ Thus, by the end of the Second World War, the British were interested in selling aircraft to the Swiss for predominantly financial reasons, in contrast to their wealthy American Allies who had no such financial interest.

The American reaction to a similar Swiss request in 1945 is instructive of these divergent interests. On 4 June 1945, the Swiss Minister in Washington, Carl Bruggmann, approached Secretary of State James Byrnes with a request to purchase between 50 and 100 P-51 Mustang fighter planes. While Bruggmann mentioned that the issue had already been brought up during the negotiations on economic warfare in early 1945, he expressed the hope that with the end of the war the request would receive favourable consideration.³¹² This hope was, however, misplaced. According to the British Embassy in Washington, with whom the Americans were in close touch regarding their armaments policy towards Switzerland, the "State Department cannot think of any good use to which the Swiss could put these aircraft and were opposed as a matter of policy to the request being met".³¹³ Bevin acknowledged that there was no obvious need for the Swiss to make such a substantial aircraft purchase, but he could see no harm in it and concluded that Britain, if approached by the Swiss, would be willing to sell them aircraft.³¹⁴

The small purchase of Spitfires "established an armament link" between Switzerland and Britain, which was to bear fruit during the early Cold War. The Swiss Air Force had finally obtained a fighter aircraft, which had been released during the war by one of the major belligerents. Whilst this was a step in the right direction for the Swiss, they had still a great leap forward to make if they wanted to catch up with the newest aeronautical developments. There was an enormous "technology gap"

³¹⁰ Schlegel (London) to von Wattenwyl (MTS), 04.04.1945, SFA, E27, -/9001, 9766.

³¹¹ Constitution of Swiss Air Force, Haynes (MAP), 28.08.1945, TNA, AVIA 15/2244.

³¹² Bruggmann (Swiss Legation Washington (Washington)) to Byrnes (DoS), 04.06.1945, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park (hereafter NARA), RG 59, Central Decimal File (CDF) 1945-49, 854.20-25.

³¹³ Halifax (British Embassy Washington) to FO, 14.07.1945, TNA, AIR 8/1218.

³¹⁴ Bevin (FO) to Halifax (British Embassy Washington), 21.09.1945, TNA, AIR 8/1218.

between Switzerland and the UK. While Britain emerged from the war as the leader in jet aircraft, the Swiss had not even started to work seriously on this new technology, which was the “single most important innovation in aviation to come out of the Second World War”.³¹⁵

3.2. *The Technology Gap*

In Switzerland during the 1930s, Professor Gustav Eichelberg and the engineers from Brown Boveri made considerable progress on gas turbines, while the problems of the axial-flow compressor were tackled by Professor Jakob Ackeret from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich.³¹⁶ This early progress was, however, not followed up by further R&D in jet technology during the war. The Swiss aircraft industry was confronted with a more fundamental problem: its survival. The companies, which were involved in the production of aircraft, were aware that they needed political support for their survival, and thus founded in 1939 the Swiss Association of the Aircraft Industry³¹⁷ to lobby the Federal authorities. With the war and the ensuing aircraft supply difficulties, the military and political leaders became aware of the need for an indigenous aircraft industry. In 1941, the Government set up a commission for aircraft acquisition, which concluded that it was necessary to support the aircraft industry. As a result, in January 1943, Defence Minister Kobelt set up the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement³¹⁸ – made up of representatives from the Military Technical Service, the Swiss Air Force, the Swiss Association of the Aircraft Industry and the scientific community – to advise him on aircraft matters. But it was only in early 1945 that the commission decided to start working on jet technology, and delegated this task to the Federal Aircraft Factory Emmen.³¹⁹

On 25 April 1945, in line with the ideal of a self-reliant armaments policy, the Military Technical Service called upon the Swiss machine industry to submit

³¹⁵ Hayward, Keith, *The British Aircraft Industry*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989, p.29.

³¹⁶ Postan, M.M.; et. al., *Design and Development of Weapons: Studies in Government and Industrial Organisation*, London: HMSO, 1964, p.187.

³¹⁷ Association Suisse de l'Industrie de l'Aviation (ASIA).

³¹⁸ KMF: Kommission für militärische Flugzeugbeschaffung.

³¹⁹ F+W Emmen: Eidgenössisches Flugzeugwerk Emmen. Grand, *op. cit.*, pp.15-26.

proposals for the development of engines for a Swiss jet aircraft.³²⁰ Switzerland's desire for its own jet aircraft after the Second World War was not an isolated phenomenon, as not only neutral Sweden, but also Spain, Argentina, India and the United Arab Republic started to work on their own jet aircraft.³²¹ However, the Military Technical Service's call for proposals met with only very limited success. By June 1946, Brown Boveri had only agreed to delegate an unspecialized engineer to Emmen, because all specialists were needed for private orders. Although it had started its own research on jet technology, the company was unwilling to develop an engine. Due to the economic boom, its gas turbine section was over-employed, and jet technology was judged an insecure investment. Escher-Wyss, for its part, had also begun with preliminary research. But the company refused to develop an entire engine, for it considered it an unrealistic venture, and argued that its present orders did not leave sufficient capacity for such an enormous project. The company suggested that the Military Technical Service purchase a jet engine licence abroad, in order to lay the foundations for future development. Only Sulzer agreed to sign a contract with the Military Technical Service for the development of a jet engine.³²²

Soon thereafter, however, the Federal Aircraft Factory – the government agency which was responsible for the development of a Swiss jet aircraft – was not satisfied with Sulzer's suggestions, and started working on a modified Mamba engine³²³ from the British Armstrong Siddeley Motors Company. From 1950 on, the "Swiss Mamba" became prioritised, only to be later abandoned, and in 1954, Sulzer stopped the research on its D-45 engine, which it had continued at its own expense.³²⁴ If this announced already the later failure of the development of an "indigenous" jet aircraft, it definitely put an end to Switzerland's attempt to develop its own jet engines.

The situation was completely different in Britain. Although the British did not "invent" the jet engine single-handedly, this technology was to take the country's aero-engine industry "to the forefront of world aviation", challenging the American

³²⁰ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to Escher Wyss, Brown Boveri, Gebr. Sulzer, 25.04.1945, SFA, E5155(-), 1971/202, Bd.88.

³²¹ Edgerton, David, "The Contradiction of Techno-Nationalism and Techno-Globalism: A Historical Perspective", *New Global Studies*, Vol.1, No.1, 2007, p.20.

³²² Aktennotiz über den Stand der Düsentriebwerkentwicklung Ende Juni 1946, König (MTS), 28.06.1946, SFA, E5155(-), 1971/202, Bd.88.

³²³ On the Mamba engine see Gunston, *op. cit.*, p.18.

³²⁴ Grand, *op. cit.*, pp.56-57.

post-war domination of the aerospace industry.³²⁵ Yet, this “success” did not come out of nowhere. The overall investment in the armament industry before and during the war was enormous. Between 1936 and 1945, the state alone had invested around £1 billion in armament capacity.³²⁶ In 1940, Churchill created the MAP, which controlled an already large industry because of the enormous pre-war investments. At its peak in the war, the manufacture of aircraft, engines, and all of the components and materials that went towards making them employed more people than the coal industry. Moreover, in contrast to the capacity in coal or shipbuilding, much of the aircraft plant was brand-new.³²⁷

The first definite proposal for a jet engine in Britain was made by Frank Whittle in 1929. But it took six more years until he obtained the private funding to form Power Jets to develop a commercial engine. After long and intense political wrangling, in 1938, the Air Ministry finally placed a contract with the company. A year later, it was decided to build an airframe for the engine. This aircraft, later called Meteor, made its first flight on 15 May 1943. Meanwhile, the MAP had identified the jet as a potentially vital technology, and wanted other firms involved in the development work. As a result, in July 1944, as the Meteor entered service, Rolls-Royce and de Havilland were producing jet engines in quantity. The German jet fighter, the Messerschmitt 262, was deployed the same year.³²⁸ With the destruction of the German aircraft industry – the main competitor in jet technology – after the war, Britain was the leading nation in the production of jet-powered military aircraft. In addition, the industry had become a powerful economic and strategic element in British manufacturing, and enjoyed strong political support.³²⁹

The investment in military aircraft during the war had created an artificially large production capacity. Whitehall wished to retain the majority of this capacity, not only for defence needs, but also to contribute to Britain’s economic recovery.³³⁰ Britain’s dire financial situation necessitated a massive influx of revenue from increased exports, and military aircraft and jet engines offered the new Labour

³²⁵ Hayward, *op. cit.*, p.29.

³²⁶ Edgerton, David, *Warfare State Britain, 1920-1970*, Cambridge: CUP, 2006, p.77.

³²⁷ Edgerton, David, *England and the Aeroplane: An Essay on a Militant and Technological Nation*, Basingstoke etc.: Macmillan: 1991, pp.71, 79.

³²⁸ Hayward, *op. cit.*, pp.29-35; Peden, George C., *Arms, Economics and British Strategy: From Dreadnoughts to Hydrogen Bombs*, Cambridge: CUP, 2007, pp.173-174.

³²⁹ Hayward, *op. cit.*, p.45.

³³⁰ Nahum, Andrew, *World War to Cold War: Formative Episodes in the Development of the British Aircraft Industry, 1943-1965*, PhD Thesis, University of London, 2002, p.20.

Government “an irresistible revenue source when they needed it most”. The Air Ministry therefore reduced export controls, offering foreign buyers the opportunity to acquire jet aircraft. More significantly, the Attlee Government was also prepared to sell know-how, because the Open List featured not only finished aircraft and engines, but also manufacturing licences for jet production. This created a conflict over aviation in the Anglo-American “special relationship” at the onset of the Cold War. While London considered it vital to sell to survive, Washington was afraid of technological dissemination.³³¹

After the war, while Britain was the leading country in jet aircraft, Switzerland had only just begun to work on jet technology. This technology gap, London’s intention to sell modern aircraft for Britain’s financial survival, and Berne’s realisation of Switzerland’s delay in the development of jet aircraft, strongly favoured arms transfers between the two countries.

3.3. Swiss Missions to Britain

In the summer of 1945, Captain Bartlett from the Bristol Aeroplane Company visited Switzerland, in an attempt to renew pre-war trade contacts supported by the MAP. The Swiss took the opportunity to present the British with their aeronautical wish list, which consisted of engines, a licence to manufacture engines or aircraft in Switzerland, a visit from a Rolls-Royce representative, and an invitation for a Swiss technical mission to the UK. According to E. Haynes, MAP Production Secretary, it was premature to deal with the first three wishes. He suggested to the Director-General, Sir Eric Bowater, that he first invite a Swiss technical mission, which would get “a complete picture of the British aero-engine industry before deciding what type of engine to buy or manufacture”. Seeking to gain the Minister of Aircraft Production’s approval for such a mission, he prepared a minute to gain other interested departments’ support.³³²

Haynes’ arguments were of a clearly economic nature. Writing to the Board of Trade³³³, he admitted that it would be better for the British industry to sell finished

³³¹ Engel, *Cold War at 30,000 Feet...*, *op. cit.*, pp.55-58.

³³² Haynes to Bowater (both MAP), 08.08.1945, TNA, AVIA 15/2244.

³³³ BoT.

aircraft and engines, than licences thereof. But he also emphasised that selling the Swiss licences alone would be a good business too. He understood that there was not much hope that the Swiss would give up the idea of manufacturing aircraft under licence, because they wanted to set up an aircraft industry, which would render the Swiss Air Force as independent from foreign supplies as possible. In addition, he feared that if the Swiss could not get what they wanted from the British, they would turn to the Americans. Finally, a licence would nonetheless lead to many direct exports, especially in the early days, “e.g. the Swiss will presumably start off by ordering a number of finished aircraft and engines of the types chosen, will later purchase components from the UK for assembly in Switzerland and for a long time be dependent upon us for accessories, instruments, armament, etc”.³³⁴ More generally, the MAP considered the immediate sale of aircraft overseas as a “‘a ground bait’ to catch orders in subsequent years”.³³⁵ British policymakers believed that to forestall an inevitable American monopoly, they had to win markets without delay. The Open List was used by aircraft companies, together with the MAP, to establish a lead in jet sales throughout the world.³³⁶

The Board of Trade agreed with this reasoning, although it favoured the export of finished goods wherever possible. Yet, in this case it recognised that it might be just as advantageous to export trade “to get the aircraft industry of a particular country established on British designs”, especially as it feared American competition.³³⁷ While the Department of Overseas Trade³³⁸, the Treasury and the AM also gave their green light, the FO did not even consider it necessary to inform the US State Department about the proposal to invite a Swiss mission.³³⁹ With other departments’ backing and Bowater’s approval, Haynes exposed the case to John Wilmot, who following the recent merger of the MoS and the MAP had been appointed Minister of Supply and Aircraft Production.³⁴⁰ He recommended inviting the Swiss to see enough of the British aircraft industry to be able to choose the types of aircraft that suited them best, with the option to purchase or manufacture them in Switzerland under

³³⁴ Haynes (MAP) to Skevington (BoT), 14.08.1945, TNA, AVIA 15/2244.

³³⁵ Minute, MAP, 07.12.1945, TNA, AVIA 15/2574.

³³⁶ Engel, *Cold War at 30,000 Feet...*, *op. cit.*, pp.59-60.

³³⁷ Skevington (BoT) to Haynes (MAP), 20.08.1945, TNA, AVIA 15/2244.

³³⁸ DOT.

³³⁹ Haynes to Bowater (both MAP), 28.08.1945, TNA, AVIA 15/2244.

³⁴⁰ Edgerton, David, “Whatever Happened to the British Warfare State? The Ministry of Supply, 1945-1951”, Mercer, Helen; et al. (eds.), *Labour Governments and Private Industry: the Experience of 1945-1951*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1992, p.95.

licence. He saw a great opportunity to re-equip the Swiss Air Force – which until then was mainly equipped with French and German aircraft types – with British designs, and foresaw a “very valuable export business for the British industry”.³⁴¹ The Minister acceded to the proposal, and on 10 September 1945, the British invited a mission of aircraft specialists from Switzerland – “a friendly power” – to visit the UK.³⁴²

The Head of the Military Technical Service had no difficulty in obtaining Federal Councillor Kobelt’s permission to send a mission to Britain.³⁴³ In late September, a Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement meeting was held to determine the mission’s aim from a Swiss perspective. It was observed that the Swiss Air Force desperately needed new fighter aircraft, if it did not want to be confronted with a shortage of 200 aeroplanes by 1949. Interestingly, even though there was neither a clear strategic nor a tactical doctrine, the need for an air force of 500 aircraft was considered an established fact.³⁴⁴ As a result, besides the foreseen 100 D-3802, additional aircraft were needed. The question whether these were to be procured through national production, manufacture under licence, or purchases abroad, was left unanswered. Nonetheless, it was agreed that the Swiss mission would get an overview of the engines and aircraft available, of which the commission would then choose some for testing and learning purposes. The idea was not to buy finished aeroplanes, but to develop the airframe for a new aircraft series in Switzerland, or to manufacture the aeroplanes under licence.³⁴⁵ Accordingly, von Wattenwyl informed the British Air Attaché in Berne, Group Captain Stevens, that the mission was interested in everything related to aviation, with a particular interest in modern military aircraft, and the possibility of acquiring aero-engines.³⁴⁶

While preparing the Swiss visit, the MAP emphasised that the “Minister [of Supply] attaches the utmost importance” to it, “the chief object of which is to promote export business in the aircraft industry”.³⁴⁷ The Society of British Aircraft Constructors³⁴⁸ was fully aware that the Swiss mission was to the benefit of its

³⁴¹ Haynes (MAP) to Wilmot (MoS), 29.08.1945, TNA, AVIA 15/2244.

³⁴² Lamus (Berne) to von Wattenwyl (MTS), 10.09.1945, SFA, E27, -/9001, 9815.

³⁴³ Burgunder (FMA) to MTS, 22.09.1945, SFA, E27, -/9001, 15749, Bd.1.

³⁴⁴ Grand, *op. cit.*, p.74.

³⁴⁵ Protokoll der 6. Plenarsitzung der KMF, 25.09.1945, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18882.

³⁴⁶ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to Stevens (Berne), 01.10.1945, TNA, AVIA 15/2244.

³⁴⁷ Jenkins (MAP) to Secretary (Government Hospitality Fund), 02.10.1945, TNA, AVIA 15/2244.

³⁴⁸ SBAC.

members, and thus offered the MAP its services.³⁴⁹ Even though economic reasons for the sale of aeronautical products to Switzerland were predominant, Whitehall had also British defence needs in mind. The MAP wished to encourage the Dominions and other foreign countries to look to the UK for aircraft supplies and licences, because “success in this field would not only yield dividends of a political, strategic and financial character, but would also help to support the war potential of the aircraft industry in this country”.³⁵⁰

The mission, composed by aircraft specialists of the Federal Aircraft Factory, the Military Technical Service, and the Direction of Military Airfields³⁵¹, left Switzerland on 28 October 1945 and remained in Britain for almost a month. During their stay, the Swiss delegates were accompanied by high-ranking MAP officials, and received privileged treatment. The British kept their promise, and the Swiss got a thorough overview of the UK’s aircraft industry and its aeronautical research. They visited the Royal Aircraft Establishment³⁵² in Farnborough – the MAP’s most important research establishment – the AM, an RAF station, and the main British aircraft producers, including Bristol, Gloster, Vickers, de Havilland and Rolls-Royce. The Minister of Aircraft Production and Supply gave a reception in honour of the Swiss delegation, and Sir Eric Bowater received them at the MAP.

Bowater predicted that the jet engines were the future, and investments had therefore to be made in this technology, and not in piston engines. Meanwhile, he was intrigued by the fact that Switzerland had chosen Britain, and not the US, for its aircraft and engine purchases, reflecting a real fear of American competition that had also been voiced by Rolls-Royce. Most probably, this nervousness was caused by the information obtained from de Havilland – which at the time was trying to sell its Goblin jet engines to the Swedes – that the American company Lockheed had offered Sweden aircraft with General Electrics jet engines based on the Whittle engine. The MAP was worried, even though it was unlikely that the United States Army Air Force (USAAF) would agree to the export of a jet aircraft which it had not yet received itself.³⁵³ Moreover, the British worries were – at least in the Swiss case –surprising,

³⁴⁹ SBAC to Haynes (MAP), 23.10.1945, AVIA 15/2244.

³⁵⁰ Elliot (MAP) to West (AM), 16.11.1945, TNA, AVIA 15/2244.

³⁵¹ DMA.

³⁵² RAE.

³⁵³ Goffey (MAP) to Ashton (British Air Commission Washington), 06.11.1945, TNA, AVIA 15/2244.

because the FO was informed that the Americans were unwilling, “as a matter of policy”, to export aircraft to the Swiss.³⁵⁴

During its visit, the mission was not only shown piston-engined aeroplanes, which the British aircraft industry had developed during the war, but also its major achievements in jet technology: the Meteor and the Vampire.³⁵⁵ Between these two aircraft, the mission favoured the Vampire, for it appeared – due to its short take-off distance – to be more appropriate to short Swiss runways.³⁵⁶ Such was the delegates’ enthusiasm that in discussions with the MAP and the AM they expressed an interest in acquiring 50 to 100 aircraft, although they had only been sent to Britain for “sightseeing”. They even spoke about the modalities for the delivery of aircraft and engines for test purposes.³⁵⁷ On their return, the delegates were convinced that the key to Switzerland’s future aircraft procurement lay in the UK. The MAP’s sale strategy had borne its first fruits.

On 21 December, the Head of the mission, Director of the Federal Aircraft Factory Max Buri, informed the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement about what they had seen and learned in Britain. He argued that jet engines were the future and piston engines were soon to be obsolete. Moreover, almost all engines and aircraft were obtainable, except the newest types, such as the Vampire and the Meteor. Nonetheless, a small amount of these could be made available. Indeed, Hawker Siddeley Aircraft had already obtained the MAP’s and the AM’s approval for the sale of the Meteor to Switzerland (and Sweden).³⁵⁸ Buri went on to suggest that another delegation would have to be sent to Britain to fly and evaluate the various aircraft. Then, two to three of the corresponding planes should be bought and tested in Switzerland. Finally, if an aircraft proved satisfactory, it would have to be manufactured under licence in Switzerland.³⁵⁹

³⁵⁴ *Supra*, ch.2.1.

³⁵⁵ Reisebericht der Schweizerischen Mission nach England zum Besuche der englischen Flugzeugindustrie, Tagebuch, SFA, E27, -/9001, 15749, Bd.1; Swiss Air Mission Programme of Visits, Lamus (Berne), 12.12.1945, TNA AVIA 15/2244.

³⁵⁶ Reisebericht der Schweizerischen Mission nach England zum Besuche der englischen Flugzeugindustrie, Schaetti (DMA), SFA, E27, -/9001, 15749, Bd.1.

³⁵⁷ Notes of Meeting with Swiss Air Mission on 20th November, Roxburgh (MAP), 24.11.1945; Note of Conversation with Major Buhler of the Swiss Air Mission, Roxburgh (MAP), 29.11.1945, TNA, AVIA 15/2244.

³⁵⁸ Elliot (MAP) to Jones (Hawker Siddeley Aircraft), 17.11.1945; Elliot (MAP) to West (AM), 16.11.1945, TNA, AVIA 15/2244.

³⁵⁹ Reisebericht der Schweizerischen Mission nach England zum Besuche der englischen Flugzeugindustrie, Buri (F+W Emmen), SFA, E27, -/9001, 15749, Bd.1.

This proposition divided the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement's members into two groups. The first was composed by Divisionary-Colonel Friedrich Rihner, Head of the Swiss Air Force, and von Wattenwyl, Head of the Military Technical Service. Although they feared the dependency on a foreign country for aircraft supplies, they saw the purchase of a licence in Britain as a necessary evil to modernise the air force. Von Wattenwyl acknowledged that his service had raised the question if other countries, like the US, should be considered for the purchase of a licence, but he argued that Britain was the best supplier, because of its technical advancement, commercial relations with Switzerland (the Trade Section favoured purchases in the UK), and its geographic proximity, at least in comparison to the US. The second group, composed of scientific and industrial representatives, was against foreign aeroplanes in principle. Professor Ackeret and Swiss Association of the Aircraft Industry representative Dechevrens feared that the manufacture of British aircraft under licence would consume resources which were needed for domestic aircraft production and development. Finally, with the commission's President, Alfred Büchi – a militia colonel, engineer and politician – on their side, the military group prevailed.³⁶⁰ Buri's initial request was thus forwarded to Defence Minister Kobelt.³⁶¹

Simultaneously, the Head of the Swiss Air Force turned to the Defence Minister to emphasise the need for modern foreign aircraft, until the Swiss aeronautical industry was able to deliver adequate aeroplanes. In addition, he argued that London, due to its financial situation, seemed to be interested in selling aircraft to Switzerland. Nevertheless, Rihner saw aircraft purchases abroad as a temporary solution, for he feared that in time of crisis, neither the British nor the Americans would be willing to deliver – as it had happened during the Second World War.³⁶² Through the mission's report, Kobelt was already favourably inclined towards British aircraft supplies. On 10 January 1946, he expressed to John Wilmot the hope “that it will soon be possible for us to acquire some aircraft material from your industry or arrange some agreements for manufacturing licences”.³⁶³ In his reply, the Minister of Supply expressed his hope that a first deal would “mark the beginning of a period of close co-operation between our two countries in the field of aviation”.³⁶⁴

³⁶⁰ Protokoll der 7. Plenarsitzung der KMF, 21.12.1945, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18882.

³⁶¹ Büchi (KMF) to Kobelt (FMD), 28.12.1945, SFA, -/9001, 18961, Bd.1.

³⁶² Rihner (SAF) to Kobelt (FMD), 04.01.1946, SFA, -/9001, 18962, Bd.2.

³⁶³ Kobelt (FMD) to Wilmot (MoS), 10.01.1946, TNA, AVIA 15/2244.

³⁶⁴ Wilmot (MoS) to Kobelt (FMD), 02.02.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 15749, Bd.1.

Meanwhile, the Chief of the General Staff and the National Defence Commission had approved another mission to Britain, even though they questioned the efficiency of the Swiss Air Force, which had only a subordinate role in their defence planning; comprising the protection of the army's mobilisation in case of war and, if not destroyed during the first days of conflict, ground support.³⁶⁵ In addition, they preferred an autonomous armaments policy, and thus stressed the importance of developing a Swiss jet aircraft.³⁶⁶ Nevertheless, they had given their approval, and on 7 February, Kobelt authorised the Military Technical Service and the Swiss Air Force to send a delegation to Britain.³⁶⁷

The mission left Switzerland on 11 March 1946 and stayed in Britain for almost a month. They tested the piston-engined Hawker Tempest II and Seafury X, Vickers Supermarines Spitfire 22, Seafire 46 and Spiteful XIV, Martin Baker 5, de Havilland 103 Hornet, and the jet-engined de Havilland 100 Vampire. The delegates were again welcomed in each of the factories they visited, and were given the freedom to take all the test flights they desired. Before the visit to de Havilland, they had preferred the Hawker Seafury X. But once the delegates had flown the Vampire, they agreed that it was the best and most suitable aircraft for Switzerland. The prototype of this aircraft had first been flown in September 1943, and in May 1944, the RAF had placed a contract for 120 Vampires, which became the first aircraft of any nation with a top speed above 500mph. By the time the Swiss became interested in the Vampire, it had been equipped with the stronger second-generation Goblin engine.³⁶⁸ This accounted for the impressive start and landing performances, which strongly appealed to the Swiss, who had their short alpine runways in mind. The delegation had also the opportunity to observe the Vampire in daily use in an RAF unit, to discuss technical details with specialists, and to discuss with leading figures from the RAF and the MAP.

On the mission's return, Lieutenant-Colonel Primault, Head of the delegation and the Swiss Air Force's Chief of Staff, immediately requested the purchase of four

³⁶⁵ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 13.02.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4060.

³⁶⁶ De Montmollin to Kobelt (both FMD), 15.01.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18962, Bd.2; Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 19.01.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4060.

³⁶⁷ Kobelt (FMD) to Büchi (KMF), 07.02.1946, E27, -/9001, 18962, Bd.2.

³⁶⁸ Jackson, A.J., *De Havilland Aircraft since 1909*, London: Putnam, 1987, pp.423-424. On the Vampire see also Watkins, David, *De Havilland Vampire: The Complete History*, Phoenix Mill etc.: Budding Books, 1996. On the Goblin engine see Gunston, Bill, *World Encyclopaedia of Aero Engines*, Wellingborough: Patrick Stephens, 1986, p.51.

Vampires to test in Switzerland. He emphasised that, according to the MAP, it was possible to take these aircraft out of a series which was intended for the RAF, and that even Air Commodore J.W.F. Merer, Director of Allied Air Cooperation and Foreign Liaison, was willing to support such a demand.³⁶⁹ This request was strongly supported by Rihner and von Wattenwyl.³⁷⁰ The Head of the Swiss Air Force was so enthusiastic about the possible purchase of a Vampire series or licence that he instructed the Legation in Washington to cease further enquiries over aircraft purchases with the US administration.³⁷¹ Although Rihner could not have known it, Washington would have rejected further enquiries anyway. On 21 March 1946, the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee³⁷² stated that “[i]t is not considered consistent with United States policy to support with United States military supplies the armed forces of Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Austria, Hungary, Albania, Spain, Finland, *Switzerland* [italics added], and, of course, Germany”.³⁷³ Thus, Switzerland was thrown into the same basket as (future) Soviet satellites, the nucleus of the beaten Third Reich, and the internationally ostracised Spain.

Notwithstanding the US position, in early May 1946, the Swiss were convinced that the future of their aircraft procurement lay in the UK – at least until an indigenous jet aeroplane would become available. On 6 May, Defence Minister Kobelt authorised the Military Technical Service to negotiate with de Havilland for the purchase of four Vampires.³⁷⁴ This was a first success for the British, who wished to export their aeronautical products to rebalance their finances and keep their defence production base intact.

3.4. *British Aircraft against Home Production*

As long as the Vampire was not thought to be in competition for budgets with homemade aircraft, the Swiss military authorities were in agreement that the British

³⁶⁹ Bericht der England-Mission vom 11.3.-7.4.1946, Primault (SAF), SFA, E27, -/9001, 15749, Bd.2.

³⁷⁰ Rihner (SAF) to FMD, undated; Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to FMD, 12.04.1946, E27, SFA, -/9001, 18964, Bd.1.

³⁷¹ Rihner (SAF) to Notz (Washington), 24.04.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18964, Bd.1.

³⁷² SWNCC.

³⁷³ Report by the Subcommittee on Rearmament to the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee, 21.03.1946, *FRUS*, 1946, Vol.I, pp.1149-50.

³⁷⁴ Kobelt (FMD) to MTS, 06.05.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18964, Bd.1.

aircraft was the right choice for the Swiss Air Force. However, conflict became inevitable once the idea was put forward to buy a whole Vampire series instead of manufacturing it under licence. The problem was not the proposition itself, but that budget constraints dictated a choice between buying from abroad and developing a Swiss aircraft. This conflict set in opposition two services, and more specifically two men, who until now had been united in their quest for the ideal aircraft: the Swiss Air Force, led by Rihner, and the Military Technical Service, led by von Wattenwyl.

During the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement meeting of 14 May, in which the next steps for aircraft procurement were discussed, a conflict emerged over whether the D-3802 should be produced in series, or if instead, a series of Vampires should be bought. Von Wattenwyl mentioned three arguments in favour of the D-3802: first, its acquisition would be more efficient than the purchase of Vampires; secondly, its armament was superior; finally and most importantly, its production was necessary for the maintenance of the Swiss aircraft industry, because there was no guarantee that in some years time Switzerland would still be able to buy aircraft abroad. Especially in this last argument, he was strongly supported by Buri, the director of the Federal Aircraft Factory, and Dechevrens of the Swiss Association of the Aircraft Industry. Opposed to this group, Rihner argued against the D-3802 that jet aircraft were on the agenda, and that piston-engined aeroplanes were obsolete; that the Vampire's performance was much better; and finally, that its purchase was cheaper. He thus suggested scrapping the D-3802, and using the remaining budget to purchase modern jet aircraft. In this request he was supported by his subordinates Burkhard (Direction of Military Airfields) and Primault, and Büchi, the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement's President.

After tenacious discussions and no agreement, both parties set out their individual demands to the Defence Minister. The Military Technical Service asked for the production of one hundred D-3802; the manufacture under licence of a foreign jet aircraft (e.g. the Vampire); and the construction of a Swiss jet aeroplane. By contrast, the Swiss Air Force wanted to buy a few Vampires for tests, and if these proved satisfactory, to buy a series of this aircraft. In parallel, they wished to enquire whether the manufacture under licence of the Vampire or another, more developed aircraft,

was technically and financially feasible. The only request in common with the Military Technical Service was the development of a Swiss jet aircraft.³⁷⁵

The idea to scrap the D-3802 in favour of the Vampire was not completely new. Some weeks earlier, National Councillor and Leader of the Swiss Labour Party, Dr. Hans Oprecht, had suggested purchasing the technologically more advanced Vampires to Kobelt, as the Swedes had done,³⁷⁶ rather than producing Swiss aircraft at a higher price. He also believed that an aircraft purchase from Britain would improve Berne's political and commercial relations with London, which could be influenced to use its Swiss credit³⁷⁷ to Switzerland's advantage.³⁷⁸ Even though this suggestion played into Rihner's hands, it does not seem that he and Oprecht worked together on this issue. Still, the Defence Minister asked his subordinates to comment on the Labour politician's proposition, and this was an excellent opportunity for them to express their point of view.³⁷⁹

On 17 May, the commission's president advised Kobelt to scrap the D-3802, on the basis that the production of this aircraft was not *sine qua non* for the survival of the Swiss aircraft industry. Büchi argued that "an important order in England would at the actual time leave a good impression for us in foreign affairs".³⁸⁰ He was followed by Rihner, who emphasised the technical superiority of the Vampire over the Swiss aircraft.³⁸¹ Even though the Head of the Military Technical Service was losing ground, he defended his position. For the sake of the Swiss aircraft industry, the D-3802 had to be produced. While von Wattenwyl accused the Swiss Air Force of being dependent on "trends", he emphasised that changes in the political and economic environment could endanger aircraft deliveries from abroad.³⁸²

Kobelt took these concerns seriously and ordered the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement to clarify whether the aircraft industry could be sustained were the D-3802 to be scrapped. In the meeting of 5 June, von Wattenwyl and Buri argued that this would endanger the aircraft industry, because, if underemployed, the qualified workforce would leave. Rihner retorted that the lack of orders in this sector

³⁷⁵ Protokoll der 8. Plenarsitzung der KMF, 14.05.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18882.

³⁷⁶ The Swedes signed their first contract for 70 Vampires in 1946 (Aunesluoma, *op. cit.*, p.9.).

³⁷⁷ *Supra*, ch.1.3.

³⁷⁸ Oprecht (Swiss Labour Party) to Kobelt (FMD), 17.04.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18964, Bd.3.

³⁷⁹ Bracher (FMD) to Rihner (SAF), 16.05.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18964, Bd.3.

³⁸⁰ Büchi (KMF) to Kobelt (FMD), 17.05.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18882.

³⁸¹ Rihner (SAF) to KMF, 20.05.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18962, Bd.2.

³⁸² Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to Kobelt (FMD), 03.06.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, Bd.2.

was bearable in the light of the good economic situation, and repeated – together with Büchi – the Swiss Air Force's desire to buy a series of foreign jets instead of indigenous aircraft. Von Wattenwyl was outweighed, and thus abandoned his position. But he fell back on the eventual production of a series of jet aircraft under licence. The commission agreed on the purchase of test Vampires, a series of foreign aircraft, and to start licence negotiations immediately with the aim of providing as soon as possible an order for the Swiss aeronautical industry.³⁸³ Almost instantly, the Chief of the General Staff and the Chief of Training endorsed these conclusions.³⁸⁴

Thereupon, without further consultation, Kobelt ordered that the D-3802 be scrapped and three (instead of four) Vampires purchased for test purposes.³⁸⁵ Thus, at the beginning of summer 1946, the Swiss military authorities determined the course for the purchase of finished British aircraft, instead of a manufacturing licence or the production of their own aeroplane. However, this did not mean that after successful tests the purchase of a Vampire series would be the logical consequence, for there were still obstacles ahead.

3.5. An Unfinished Business?

On 27 July 1946, as the first Vampire was flown over from Britain, Switzerland entered the jet propulsion age. To oversee the delivery of the first two jets, and the tests with the third Swiss Vampire, Military Technical Service personnel repeatedly stayed in Britain during the second half of 1946, and established ever closer links with the MAP and de Havilland.³⁸⁶ On 26 September, von Wattenwyl and Rihner informed Kobelt and the National Defence Commission that 100 Vampires would cost SFr.70 million, and the delivery would be possible between April 1947 and summer 1948.³⁸⁷ Soon thereafter, the first report on the Vampire tests carried out in Switzerland painted an enthusiastic picture.³⁸⁸ But with the emerging Cold War, the British jet

³⁸³ Protokoll der 9. Plenarsitzung der KMF, 05.06.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18882.

³⁸⁴ De Montmollin to FMD, 14.06.1946; Frick to FMD, 21.06.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18962, Bd.2.

³⁸⁵ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 25.06.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4060.

³⁸⁶ Reisebericht über die Englandreise gemäss Verfügung vom 26.06.1946, Greinacher (MTS), SFA, E27, -/9001, 18961, Bd.1.

³⁸⁷ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 26.09.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4060.

³⁸⁸ Zwischenbericht über die Erprobung des Düsen-Flugzeuges „Vampire“ DH-100, Frei (SAF), Läderach (MTS), 07.10.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18961, Bd.3.

aircraft was in great demand, not only by the RAF, but also by other countries. If the Swiss intended to start equipping their air force with modern aircraft at an early date, they had to take a decision.

In August 1946, de Havilland informed the Swiss that the British Government had instructed the company to prioritise equipping the RAF over deliveries abroad. This implied that more powerful engines were for the moment unavailable.³⁸⁹ After various unsuccessful attempts to obtain the more powerful Goblin III engine (instead of the Goblin II) for a Vampire series,³⁹⁰ the Head of the Swiss Air Force expressed his frustration that the British were unwilling to deliver first class material, even though they were after Switzerland's hard currency.³⁹¹ Nonetheless, Military Technical Service and Swiss Air Force delegates reported from Britain that among foreign customers the Swiss received priority in the delivery of Vampires. However, with Australia, the Netherlands and Turkey now interested in the same aircraft, the situation could change, especially if Switzerland continued to postpone the decision to order.³⁹² Writing from Britain, the Swiss test pilot Major Frei stressed that the goodwill from de Havilland and the British authorities could disappear if no order was placed soon.³⁹³ These fears were justified, because in late autumn 1946, Director Thom of de Havilland informed the Swiss that if no order was placed the same year, the production capacity reserved for them would be given to others.³⁹⁴

Aware of the time constraint, the Federal Military Department³⁹⁵ started to prepare the political terrain for an aircraft order. On 10 October 1946, the Head of the Military Technical Service informed the Federal Department of Public Economy's³⁹⁶ Trade Section about the intended purchase of 100 Vampires.³⁹⁷ A few weeks later, the Trade Section responded enthusiastically that they were very interested in this business, because it would provide the British with Swiss francs, and thus help rebalancing the balance of payments with Britain. In addition, the credit, which

³⁸⁹ Bericht über die Reise nach England vom 14. bis 24 August 1946, König (MTS), 04.09.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18961, Bd.1.

³⁹⁰ See SFA, E27, -/9001, 18964, Bd.1.

³⁹¹ Rihner (SAF) to MTS, 21.11.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18964, Bd.1.

³⁹² I. Bericht der Militärmission nach Frankreich u. England November-Dezember 1946, Frei (SFA), Läderach (MTS), 07.12.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18961, Bd.1.

³⁹³ Frei to Rihner (SFA), 07.12.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18961, Bd.1.

³⁹⁴ Bericht über die Reise nach England und Frankreich vom 18. bis 29. Nov. 1946, König (MTS), SFA, E27, -/9001, 18961, Bd.1.

³⁹⁵ FMD.

³⁹⁶ FDPE.

³⁹⁷ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to Trade Section (FDPE), 10.10.1946, SFA, E27, 18964, Bd.1.

Switzerland had made available through the Anglo-Swiss payments agreement, was already exhausted. Consequently, the purchase of British aircraft “would signify a substantial relief of the Swiss pound sterling accounts in London”.³⁹⁸ Strengthened through this support, the Federal Military Department drafted a parliamentary bill for the Vampire purchase.³⁹⁹ It seemed as if things progressed swiftly, though the British Legation in Berne stressed to the FO that “announcements over the BBC and in [the] British press regarding [the] purchase by Switzerland of 100 Vampires” were premature.⁴⁰⁰

During the National Defence Commission meeting of 19 October, Corps Commander Jakob Labhardt questioned whether the Vampire was appropriate for ground support, which was the Swiss Air Force’s main role. Rihner tried to dispel these fears by emphasising the Vampire’s qualities. In addition, he had to admit and justify the price increase of the aircraft, which was due to wage increases in Britain and rising foreign demand.⁴⁰¹ The Head of the Swiss Air Force was determined to equip his fleet with jets, and a week later, he urged the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement to act before it would no longer be possible to buy aircraft from Britain. Impressed by the Vampire’s test results, the commission followed Rihner and voted in favour of its acquisition.⁴⁰² The Defence Minister agreed, and in late November, he submitted a draft bill for 100 Vampires at the cost of SFr.98,550,000 to the Federal Council for approval.⁴⁰³ Kobelt was conscious, however, that not all Federal Councillors were enthusiastic about such a costly aircraft purchase.⁴⁰⁴ In early December, Director Thom of de Havilland was informed by the Military Technical Service that it was unlikely that an order would be placed in 1946. Even though Thom could not give any firm delivery dates for a later order, he was still looking forward to an eventual conclusion of the deal.⁴⁰⁵ The stumbling block for the aircraft bill was the Labour Party’s Federal Councillor Ernst Nobs, Head of the Federal Finance Department.⁴⁰⁶

³⁹⁸ Trade Section (FDPE) to MTS, 01.11.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18964, Bd.1.

³⁹⁹ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to FMD, 14.10.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18962, Bd.2.

⁴⁰⁰ Snow (Berne) to FO, 15.10.1946, TNA, FO 371/60491.

⁴⁰¹ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 19.10.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4060.

⁴⁰² Protokoll der 12. Plenarsitzung der KMF, 26.10.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18882.

⁴⁰³ Kobelt (FMD) to Federal Council, 30.11.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18962, Bd.1.

⁴⁰⁴ Kobelt (FMD) to Büchi (KMF), 05.12.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18964, Bd.1.

⁴⁰⁵ Thom (de Havilland) to von Wattenwyl (MTS), 09.12.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18964, Bd.1.

⁴⁰⁶ FFD.

On 11 January 1947, Nobs emphasised to Kobelt that, because of the current financial reform, he was against additional credits for the armed forces. He noted that if the air force wanted new aircraft, the money would have to be taken from the regular defence budget.⁴⁰⁷ In his reply, Kobelt argued that new aircraft was a military necessity, that it was impossible to take the money from the other armed services, and that the very existence of the Swiss Air Force and the fulfilment of its role were at stake.⁴⁰⁸ Consequently, in early 1947, there was a deadlock between the Federal Military Department and the Federal Finance Department, and the purchase of a Vampire series appeared uncertain. While Kobelt believed that Switzerland needed modern aircraft for its defence, Nobs was worried for the country's financial health.

3.6. *Dénouement*

Confronted with the stalemate between the two Federal Councillors, and worried about the Swiss Air Force's preparedness in the light of the deteriorating international situation, Rihner suggested an interim solution. In mid-January 1947, he submitted to Kobelt a request for 100 Mustang P-51 aeroplanes from American surplus stocks for approximately SFr.4,600,000, Washington having apparently signalled that it was willing to sell these aircraft to Switzerland.⁴⁰⁹ But he nevertheless remained convinced that the Vampire was the right aircraft for the Swiss Air Force. Not only did he consider the Vampire superior to the Mustang, but he also emphasised that after years of negotiations with the British, a withdrawal could upset them, and jeopardise the negotiations for a future aircraft licence. Moreover, he was aware that from a trade perspective, the purchase of British equipment was desirable.⁴¹⁰

Kobelt picked up Rihner's interim solution, and on 13 February, he suggested to the National Defence Commission purchasing 100 Mustangs, a reduced number of Vampires, and a licence thereof. The Defence Minister feared that the Federal Assembly would react negatively to a Vampire bill if it heard of obtainable and cheap American fighter aircraft.⁴¹¹ Some days later, Rihner informed the Commission for

⁴⁰⁷ Nobs (FFD) to Kobelt (FMD), 11.01.1947, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18964, Bd.1.

⁴⁰⁸ Kobelt (FMD) to Federal Council, 17.01.1947, 17.01.1947, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18962, Bd.1.

⁴⁰⁹ Rihner (SAF) to FMD, 16.01.1947, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18964, Bd.1.

⁴¹⁰ Rihner (SAF) to Kobelt (FMD), 21.01.1947, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18964, Bd.1.

⁴¹¹ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 13.02.1947, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4061.

Military Aircraft Procurement about the “Mustang solution”, and that the National Defence Commission and the Defence Ministry had endorsed it. The commission, which had not been consulted on this issue beforehand, acknowledged that this acquisition strategy was wise.⁴¹² Evidently, because of their attractive price, the Mustangs were also favoured by the Federal Finance Department.⁴¹³ In early March, the Chief of the General Staff urged the National Defence Commission to purchase the Mustangs as quickly as possible, because they were technically more advanced than any other aircraft the Swiss Air Force had, and they were cheap.⁴¹⁴ Simultaneously, the Swiss Legation approached the State Department for 100 P-51s.⁴¹⁵ This time, the request was considered, and the Division of Western European Affairs favoured a positive reply, as mounting Cold War tensions meant the strengthening of Switzerland’s defences was in line with its policy.⁴¹⁶

But did the Swiss need to inform the British about this new situation? On March 14, the Swiss Military and Air Attaché in London, Lieutenant-Colonel Rieser – fearing for the good Anglo-Swiss relations – suggested he inform the British authorities about the intention to buy American aircraft. He had been forced to reply evasively to questions from the AM and the MoS regarding the Vampire, and thus advised Berne to explain to Whitehall its financial problems, and that the Mustangs were only an interim solution.⁴¹⁷ The Swiss Minister in London backed this idea and even suggested that Kobelt explain the new situation personally to the British Military Attaché in Berne.⁴¹⁸ The sources are silent on whether the Defence Minister followed this advice. Yet, it seems probable that a meeting between Kobelt and the British Military Attaché took place, and the usually well-informed British Legation was certainly aware of the intended Mustangs purchase anyway.

Nonetheless, Whitehall remained strongly interested in Swiss arms purchases. In spring 1947, shortly after the announcement of the “Truman Doctrine”, the Joint Planning Staff reported to the CoS concerning the supply of arms and equipment to armed forces of other countries. Strategically, the report concluded that the supply of weapons to as many countries as possible was advantageous for the maintenance of a

⁴¹² Protokoll der 14. Sitzung der KMF, 18.02.1947, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18882.

⁴¹³ Reinhardt (FFD) to Kobelt (FMD), 21.02.1947, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18962, Bd.2.

⁴¹⁴ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 06.03.1947, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4061.

⁴¹⁵ Grässli (Washington) to Acheson (DoS), 06.03.1947, NARA, RG 59, CDF 1945-49, 854.20-25.

⁴¹⁶ Kittredge (WE) to Pomeroy (MD), 07.03.1947, NARA, RG 59, CDF 1945-49, 854.20-25.

⁴¹⁷ Rieser (London) to Kobelt (FMD), 14.03.1947, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18964, Bd.1.

⁴¹⁸ Rüegger (London) to Kobelt (FMD), 14.03.1947, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18964, Bd.1.

healthy armaments industry, which formed the basis of Britain's war potential. More specifically, Switzerland came only fourth in strategic importance. But from an economic perspective, Switzerland held – thanks to its francs – together with Canada and Sweden, pole position.⁴¹⁹

Meanwhile in Berne, the Federal Military Department began to draft a special bill for 100 Mustangs and 30 Vampires.⁴²⁰ This effort was, however, in vain. Despite the intervention of the Chief of the Munitions Division,⁴²¹ the USAAF refused to release aircraft to Switzerland, and the State Department informed the Swiss Legation that no Mustangs were available.⁴²² As a result, Kobelt and his subalterns decided in mid-April to work on a new bill for 50 Vampires.⁴²³ In early May, since there seemed to be more room for manoeuvre in the federal budget, the bill was upgraded to 75 Vampires and presented to the National Council's Military Commission.⁴²⁴ Although the three representatives of the Labour Party were not categorically opposed, they were sceptical that the Vampire was the suitable aircraft. Nevertheless, they agreed to reconsider the issue in a later meeting.⁴²⁵ What neither the national councillors nor the Federal Military Department knew at the time, was that Washington's armaments policy towards Switzerland was beginning to shift.

On 7 May, the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee State Member, Assistant Secretary of State Major General Hilldring, submitted a memorandum to his colleagues from the Army and the Navy, in which he argued for a reversal of the armaments policy towards Switzerland, and to release the 100 P-51s. He argued that "[m]easures designed to increase Swiss defenses are in accord with United States policy".⁴²⁶ This initiative was well received within the War Department. But in the Navy Department, Under Secretary John Sullivan feared that as soon as the Swiss

⁴¹⁹ Supply of Arms and Equipment to the Armed Forces of Other Countries – Strategic Implications, JPS, 24.04.1947, TNA, DEFE 10/196.

⁴²⁰ Rihner (SAF) to General Staff's Materiel Section (FMD), 27.03.1947, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18962, Bd.2.

⁴²¹ Cummins (MD) to Powers (USAAF), 11.03.1947, NARA, RG 59, CDF 1945-49, 854.20-25.

⁴²² Hilldring (DoS) to Bruggmann (Washington), 08.03.1947, NARA, RG 59, CDF 1945-49, 854.20-25.

⁴²³ König (MTS) to SAF, 22.04.1947, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18962, Bd.3.

⁴²⁴ König (MTS) to SAF, 05.05.1947, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18962, Bd.3.

⁴²⁵ Protokoll der Sitzung der Militärkommission des Nationalrates, 5.-6.05.1947, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4343.

⁴²⁶ P-51 Aircraft for Switzerland, Memorandum by the State Member, SWNCC, 07.05.1947, NARA, RG 335, Entry 41, Box 26.

received the Mustangs, they would sell their old aeroplanes to other countries.⁴²⁷ He only gave in after the Swiss had given guarantees that they would not export their old aircraft.⁴²⁸ On 1 July 1947, the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee approved the sale of one hundred P-51s to Switzerland.⁴²⁹ This US policy shift was contemporaneous to the announcements of the Truman Doctrine and the Marshall Plan. One can thus assume that Washington changed its armament policy towards Switzerland, because it had decided to fight the Cold War, and the Swiss had already indicated whose side they were on through their participation in the European Recovery Program (ERP).

However, the US policy shift occurred too late to derail the Vampire purchase. This was not to the liking of the American Minister in Berne. In June, Leland Harrison angrily wrote to the State Department that “an opportunity to market U.S.-manufactured aircraft abroad has been lost and a substantial sum for the purchase of such aircraft will benefit not the American, but the competing British aircraft industry”.⁴³⁰ His commercial arguments were, however, premature for Washington, where officials were first and foremost preoccupied with strategic considerations. Nonetheless, Harrison was right in stating that the American position would benefit the British aircraft industry.

In the strained international situation of late spring 1947, the Swiss military authorities decided to draft a second variant of the Vampire bill with 100 instead of 75 aircraft.⁴³¹ On 12 May, the two variants were submitted to the National Defence Commission. Even though Rihner argued for 100 aeroplanes, Kobelt and the corps commanders believed that this was too expensive to pass the Federal Council and the Federal Assembly, and thus chose the more modest variant of the bill.⁴³² In the Federal Council, the Vampire purchase was again opposed by the Finance Minister.⁴³³ But this time, Kobelt’s military arguments prevailed over Nobs’ financial

⁴²⁷ Memorandum for Mr. Petersen, P-51 Aircraft for Switzerland, A.G.P. (DoW), 16.06.1947; P-51 Aircraft for Switzerland, Memorandum by the Navy Member, SWNCC, 26.05.1947, NARA, RG 335, Entry 41, Box 26; Minutes of the 57th Meeting of the SWNCC, 20.05.1947, NARA, RG 335, Entry 38, Box 1.

⁴²⁸ Military Attaché to Harrison and Plitt (all three Berne), 04.06.1947; Harrison (Berne) to DoS, 04.06.1947, NARA, RG 84, Entry 3208, Box 46.

⁴²⁹ SWNCC, Decision Amending SWNCC 367, P-51 Aircraft for Switzerland, 02.07.1947, NARA, RG 335, Entry 41, Box 26.

⁴³⁰ Harrison (Berne) to DoS, 04.06.1947, NARA, RG 59, CDF 1945-49, 854.20-25.

⁴³¹ König (MTS) to SAF, 10.05.1947, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18962, Bd.3.

⁴³² Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 12.05.1947, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4061.

⁴³³ Nobs (FFD) to Federal Council, 17.05.1947, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18962, Bd.1.

reservations, and on 21 May, the Federal Council approved the purchase of 75 Vampires at a cost of SFr.64,45 million.⁴³⁴

Even though the bill had still to pass the Federal Assembly, on 23 May, *The Times* proudly announced that the Swiss had ordered 75 Vampires.⁴³⁵ The British were not disappointed by the Federal Assembly. In late May 1947, the bill was discussed by the National Council's Military Commission. Although the Labour Party representatives criticised the Vampire's high price, the commission approved its purchase.⁴³⁶ On 18 June, the bill passed the National Council, and after the parliamentary summer break, on 23 September, the State Council followed suit.⁴³⁷ The Federal Military Department had finally overcome the political obstacles, and could order a Vampire series from de Havilland.

Was this deal in any way linked to the ongoing economic negotiations and balance of payments difficulties between the two countries, as it had been suggested by the Swiss Minister in London and National Councillor Oprecht? Apparently, this was not the case, because there was no serious attempt by the Swiss authorities to link the purchase of jet aircraft to Anglo-Swiss economic relations. Switzerland ordered the Vampires out of a desire to strengthen its armed neutrality. Britain, which from the beginning had been willing to sell its aeronautical achievements, gained the hard currency it so desperately needed, and was able to keep its defence production capacity at a high level. Even though Whitehall saw a militarily strong Switzerland in a favourable light, the predominant reason for selling military equipment was economic, and it did not care whether Switzerland was a military ally or a neutral. Berne, on the contrary, acted out of perceived military needs. Nonetheless, the Swiss Government was aware that the aircraft purchase could benefit its economic relations with London. The aim of a self-reliant armament policy had to be temporarily set aside, because the Swiss believed that it was urgent to equip their air force with modern aircraft. For this reason, even the option of manufacturing foreign aircraft under licence was not seriously considered. One can question, however, whether

⁴³⁴ Auszug aus dem Protokoll des Bundesrates, 21.05.1947; Botschaft des Bundesrates an die Bundesversammlung über die Beschaffung von Flugzeugen, 21.05.1947, SFA, E27, -, /9001, 18962, Bd.1.

⁴³⁵ "Modern Air Force for Switzerland, 75 Vampires Ordered", *The Times*, 23.05.1947, p.3.

⁴³⁶ Protokoll der Sitzung der Militärkommission des Nationalrates, 28.05.1947, SFA, E27, -, /9001, 4343.

⁴³⁷ Bundesbeschluss über die Beschaffung von Flugzeugen für die Armee, 23.09.1947, SFA, E27, -, /9001, 18962, Bd.1.

Switzerland would try to produce the next aircraft series under licence, and if the UK would favour this by maintaining an open export policy, which had already allowed for the export of jet engines to the USSR in 1946 and 1947.⁴³⁸

⁴³⁸ Engel, *Cold War at 30,000 Feet...*, *op. cit.*, pp.65-76.

4. “Homemade” Vampires?

4.1. *Mutual Interests*

In late 1947, Berne ordered a Vampire series to strengthen its defences, and simultaneously provided the British with money, which they could spend on Swiss luxury goods and hotels. Britain was able to sell aircraft for desperately needed hard currency, and could at the same time strengthen the air force of a friendly country, which was not of prime, but nonetheless of some strategic importance. This arms transfer was, however, not sufficient for both countries. While the Swiss desired additional aircraft for their military security, the British were eager to continue to export aeronautical technology for their financial security.

In autumn 1947, the Swiss military authorities again envisaged the purchase of American Mustangs, which had finally become possible after an almost yearlong odyssey. Although the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee had agreed to their release on 1 July, during the summer, the deal had nearly been blown off by the USAAF Commanding General, Carl Spaatz, who had been more interested in sending aircraft to Iran and Turkey than to Switzerland.⁴³⁹ It had only been under pressure from the State Department and the Swiss Legation that he had finally given way,⁴⁴⁰ and on 24 September, the Swiss were informed that they could have the P-51s.⁴⁴¹ Thereupon, the Head of the Swiss Air Force argued to the National Defence Commission that the Mustangs were a necessary interim solution to maintain the air force's strength until the purchase of more jet aircraft. Kobelt and the corps commanders agreed with this reasoning, because they believed that the Swiss Air Force needed more than 100 additional aeroplanes, and that the Mustang, which had been developed during the war, could not be used for long as a fighter aircraft.⁴⁴² In its meeting of 8 January 1948, the Federal Council authorised on Kobelt's request the acquisition of 100 Mustangs at the cost of SFr.11,100,000.⁴⁴³

Meanwhile, advocacy by the Head of the Swiss Air Force for another Vampire series became more concrete. In early January 1948, Rihner told the Commission for

⁴³⁹ USAAF Headquarters to COMGENUSAFE, 12.08.1947, NARA, RG 335, Entry 41, Box 26.

⁴⁴⁰ Memorandum of Conversation: Postponement of Delivery of P-51s to Switzerland, DoS, 09.09.1947; DoS to Berne, 29.09.1947, NARA, RG 84, Entry 3208, Box 46.

⁴⁴¹ DoS to Berne, 29.09.1947, NARA, RG 84, Entry 3208, Box 46.

⁴⁴² Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 13.10.1947, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4061.

⁴⁴³ 38. Beschaffung von 100 Kampfflugzeugen “Mustang”, 08.01.1948, dodis.ch/5862, SDD.

Military Aircraft Procurement that the time was ripe to purchase a licence to manufacture the Vampire in Switzerland. He emphasised that this was necessary, because a Swiss jet would not be available for years to come. The Vampire was also the right choice, for it would remain competitive for a long time, and could be continuously improved through more powerful engines. Rihner was backed by von Wattenwyl, who suggested immediately starting negotiations with de Havilland, and informing the Swiss aircraft industry that it had not been forgotten and would have to carry out the manufacture of 100 Vampires.⁴⁴⁴

The purchase of finished aircraft abroad was not appreciated by Swiss aircraft companies. According to the British Minister in Berne, they reacted by increasing their lobbying for government contracts to maintain their level of production. Apparently, some officials in Berne succumbed to this lobbying and “insist[ed] on the elimination of foreign tenders”.⁴⁴⁵ Yet, there was also genuine support for the aircraft industry in Switzerland. In October 1947, in a memorandum to the Defence Minister, the Head of the Swiss Air Force stressed the need for an indigenous aeronautical industry. He admitted that the maintenance of this industry was costly, but he believed that it was necessary to become independent from foreign aircraft supplies. The negotiations with the British had shown how complicated foreign procurement could be, and the time until the aircraft’s delivery was long due to Britain’s own military needs and its deliveries of hardware to other states. Moreover, there was no guarantee that the commercial advantages, which could be gained from providing hard currency to the UK, would remain eternally. Technically, an autonomously developed aircraft could be adapted to Switzerland’s topographic particularities and own weapons. According to Rihner, it was only a “coincidence” that the Vampire suited the Swiss Air Force’s needs. Finally, and most importantly, Britain’s willingness to deliver aircraft was not guaranteed forever. He identified hunger for hard currency as the main British incentive, and suspected an underlining intention of making Switzerland dependent on their supplies.⁴⁴⁶

How accurate was Rihner’s evaluation of Whitehall’s motivations? In early 1948, the Joint War Production Staff⁴⁴⁷ prepared – on the CoS’ request and in consultation with the Joint Planning Staff – a report on the “Supply of Arms and

⁴⁴⁴ Protokoll der 16. Sitzung der KMF, 09.01.1948, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18882.

⁴⁴⁵ Switzerland: Annual Report, Economic(B), Snow (Berne), 13.11.1947, *B DFA*, IV, F, Vol.9, p.307.

⁴⁴⁶ Rihner (SAF) to Kobelt (FMD), 08.10.1947, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18963, Bd.2.

⁴⁴⁷ JWPS.

Equipment to Foreign and Commonwealth Countries”. From a strategic perspective, the paper emphasised the military advantages of supplying arms to as many countries as possible. However, as the requirements from foreign countries could conflict with each other, it was important to consider strategic and economic factors when making allocations. Strategically, the report stressed the importance for the UK’s security that friendly countries should be adequately equipped with British weapons, especially as this would facilitate cooperation in case of war. Among these British friends to whom it was strategically advisable to supply arms and equipment, Switzerland was hardly the most important.⁴⁴⁸ Yet, as the economic factor appeared to be at least as important as the strategic one, the Swiss were nevertheless desired customers.

It was observed that foreign aircraft orders were economically advantageous in general. Aircraft were high-up in the list of desirable exports, for they had a high conversion factor and sold well in hard currency countries. It was also expected that half of the £10 to £15 million estimated annual value of the export of military aircraft would come from hard currency countries, such as Argentina, Sweden and Switzerland. Consequently, there was a strong economic incentive to sell aeroplanes to the Swiss. In addition, the sale of aircraft abroad was also important for the UK’s war potential. The weapons exports allowed maintaining the current level of production, despite calls for adapting the arms industry to the post-war reductions of the armed forces.⁴⁴⁹

The CoS concurred with the report and Minister of Defence Albert Alexander forwarded it to Attlee and the Defence Committee with his comments: “(1) The vital importance of maintaining our armament exports to friendly countries should be taken fully into account in the reshaping of the pattern of our export trade now being undertaken to meet the economic crisis. (2) The production of Naval, Army and Air Force arms and equipment to meet foreign and Commonwealth orders on the largest practicable scale be approved. (3) The Admiralty, War Office and Air Ministry be authorised to invite foreign and Commonwealth countries to indicate their probable requirements on the understanding that there is a reasonable prospect that these

⁴⁴⁸ JPS(47)49(Final), Supply of Arms and Equipment to the Armed Forces of other Countries – Strategic Implications, JPS, 14.01.1948, TNA, PREM 8/1399.

⁴⁴⁹ JWPS(47)24, Supply of Arms and Equipment to Foreign and Commonwealth Countries, Joint War Production Staff (JWPS), 13.01.1948, TNA, PREM 8/1399.

requirements can be met, subject to satisfactory subsequent negotiations as to delivery and financial settlement. [...]”.⁴⁵⁰

In March 1948, the Joint Planning Staff reviewed the priorities of countries to which it was desirable to supply arms and equipment, and confirmed Switzerland's positions in the fourth most important category from a military perspective, and in the first category with regard to economic importance.⁴⁵¹ Interestingly, although Sweden was on paper of similar if not of higher importance, it received a different treatment. In line with the American position to pull the Scandinavians into a closer military association with the West, officials in the FO were in favour of increasing the political pressure on the Swedes. Whitehall thus reviewed Sweden's place in British supply priorities, and in late May 1948, the weapons deliveries to Sweden were temporarily suspended. But soon thereafter, this measure was cancelled because Bevin preferred a pragmatic and less menacing approach based on persuasion rather than coercion.⁴⁵²

The British arms export policy towards Switzerland stood in stark contrast to the American one. Even though Washington had agreed to the delivery of Mustang aircraft, it was not yet willing to deliver modern weaponry. In August 1948, the State-Army-Navy-Air Coordinating Committee⁴⁵³ listed Switzerland in the category of countries without priority in military aid.⁴⁵⁴ In sum, while the US saw no interest in supplying Switzerland with modern weaponry, Britain strongly favoured equipping the Swiss Armed Forces for mainly economic reasons. And Switzerland desired additional jet aircraft until its own would be ready.

4.2. *Independence?*

In the aim of a more autonomous armaments policy, the decision-makers in the Federal Military Department agreed that the next step before the production of a Swiss jet aircraft would be to manufacture a Vampire series under licence. One can question, however, whether the Swiss decided to manufacture the entire aircraft, with the jet engine, or only the less technologically demanding airframe? This question is

⁴⁵⁰ Alexander (MoD) to Attlee, 23.01.1948, TNA, PREM 8/1399.

⁴⁵¹ Supply of Arms and Equipment to other Countries, JPS, 25.03.1948, TNA, DEFE 10/196.

⁴⁵² Aunesluoma, *op. cit.*, p.62. See also Nilsson, *Tools of Hegemony...*, *op. cit.*, pp.130-134.

⁴⁵³ SANACC.

⁴⁵⁴ Report by the SANACC Subcommittee for Rearmament Military Aid Problems, 18.08.1948, *FRUS*, 1949, Vol.I, p.263.

important, for if they were only willing or able to produce the airframe, they became only a little more independent from foreign supplies.

In mid-February 1948, the Defence Minister and the Head of the Military Technical Service presented the National Council's Military Commission with the idea to manufacture a Vampire series under licence. Kobelt explained that additional Vampires were necessary because the Mustangs were not sufficient and a modern Swiss aircraft was not yet ready. While some national councillors questioned the viability of a Swiss aircraft industry, no one seemed to oppose the Vampire licence.⁴⁵⁵ Two weeks later, Kobelt and his subordinates argued to the same commission that the licence manufacture was a first step towards independence from foreign supplies, because Switzerland could not eternally count on Britain's willingness to deliver finished aircraft – especially in times of crisis. In light of this argument, it is rather surprising that the licence was only intended for the airframe, and not for the engine. This was justified on the grounds that the establishment of a production plant for only 100 engines would be too costly and too lengthy, the bottleneck in Britain's airframe production capacity appeared to be more important than that for engines, the manufacture of the airframes was considered sufficient to keep the Swiss aircraft industry alive, and finally, the purchase of engines in Britain would entail commercial advantages. On these grounds, the Commission agreed.⁴⁵⁶

Thereafter, things were not moving swiftly enough for the Head of the Swiss Air Force. On 12 April, he impatiently argued to the Chief of the General Staff that the licence could already be bought before the political decision in favour of a Vampire series would have been taken. Rihner, who feared the deteriorating international situation, observed that this measure was necessary for a timely replacement of the Swiss Air Force's obsolete aircraft. In support of his request, he mentioned the aircraft procurement policy of the other traditional European neutral: Sweden had not only bought a series of finished Vampires, but had already started to produce Goblin engines under licence, while it continued to buy the airframes.⁴⁵⁷

The Head of the Swiss Air Force probably had the Swedish case in mind, as he enquired only two days later about the feasibility to also produce the engine under

⁴⁵⁵ Protokoll der Sitzung der Militärkommission des Nationalrates, 16-18.02.1948, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4343.

⁴⁵⁶ Protokoll der erweiterten Sitzung der Militärkommission des Nationalrates, 01.03.1948, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4343.

⁴⁵⁷ Rihner (SAF) to de Montmollin (FMD), 12.04.1948, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18963, Bd.2.

licence. Against the background of the communist coup in Czechoslovakia,⁴⁵⁸ Rihner argued that if this was possible, Switzerland would not be dependent on British deliveries anymore, could produce its own spare parts, and would learn important lessons for the development of its own jet aircraft.⁴⁵⁹ In response, the Head of the Military Technical Service argued that the production of jet engines would delay the delivery by ten months, and no Swiss company could make an offer for it.⁴⁶⁰ The Director of the Military Airfields, Walter Burkhard, argued that the machine industry had more interesting orders, Switzerland lacked the engineers with the necessary experience, and even if feasible, it would further delay the delivery. Finally, he underlined that a comparison with Sweden was not appropriate because it had an existing and important aero-engine factory.⁴⁶¹ After having received these arguments, the Head of the Swiss Air Force did not make any further enquiries.

In a meeting on 7 May between the Chief of the General Staff, the Military Technical Service, and the Swiss Air Force, the findings were paradoxical. While they agreed that a modern indigenous aircraft would not be ready for years to come and the procurement of aircraft abroad was dependent on the international situation, they opted only for a partial licence.⁴⁶² On 16 June 1948, Kobelt made the request to the Federal Council that another series of Vampires was to be purchased, with the airframe produced in Switzerland under licence, and the engine to be bought abroad. He argued that an earlier delivery of aircraft to the troops would become possible through a licence, because de Havilland was overloaded with orders. Yet, he did not justify the choice for a partial licence.⁴⁶³

If in a crisis period airframes might not be delivered, why did the military establishment believe there was a greater chance of receiving the more complex jet engines? The Finance Minister detected this problem, and criticised that the argument for independence became null and void through a partial licence, underlining that the only remaining reason for this was to speed up delivery dates. Favouring the purchase

⁴⁵⁸ *Supra*, ch.1.

⁴⁵⁹ Rihner (SAF) to Burkhard (DMA), 14.04.1948, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18964, Bd.2.

⁴⁶⁰ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to SAF, 22.04.1948, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18964, Bd.2.

⁴⁶¹ Burkhard (DMA) to Rihner (SAF), 29.04.1948, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18964, Bd.2.

⁴⁶² Aktennotiz über die Besprechung vom 07.05.1948, Lussi (FMD), 10.5.1948, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18963, Bd.2.

⁴⁶³ Kobelt (FMD) to Federal Council, 16.06.1948, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18964, Bd.2.

of finished aircraft, he complained about the higher cost resulting from the manufacture of airframes in Switzerland.⁴⁶⁴

Even though von Wattenwyl first reacted by also suggesting the purchase of the engine licence,⁴⁶⁵ he continued to defend the partial licence. Writing to de Montmollin, he argued that independence was not immediately achievable, and a step-by-step approach was necessary. The licence manufacture of the airframes together with the shorter delivery times for engines would help in speeding up the production of Swiss Air Force equipment.⁴⁶⁶ Rihner stressed that not only the immediate purchase of a licence, but also a later purchase of aircraft abroad would be necessary to maintain the air force's strength.⁴⁶⁷ He took 500 aeroplanes as a basis, even though the National Defence Commission intended to level down the air force's strength in light of budget constraints.⁴⁶⁸ The Chief of the General Staff forwarded Rihner's and von Wattenwyl's statements to Kobelt, and added that the engine licence would be the next step, and there was an urgent need for new aircraft even if the Swiss Air Force's strength would be reduced to 300.⁴⁶⁹ These arguments were summed up by Kobelt in his reply to Nobs.⁴⁷⁰ The Finance Minister nevertheless remained worried about the cost of the air force's continuous re-equipment with new aircraft.⁴⁷¹

Yet it became increasingly urgent to purchase the Vampire licence. The Swiss delegates to the Society of British Aircraft Constructors Flying Display and Exhibition in Farnborough (7-9 September) called on Berne to prepare the manufacture of aircraft under licence. They had been informed by British aircraft companies and the MoS that it would be very difficult to buy finished aircraft during the next years – even for “expensive” money –because the production capacity was predominantly reserved for Britain's own rearmament.⁴⁷² The findings of another delegation were similar. De Havilland warned the Swiss that if they would start too late with the production of airframes, the corresponding engine supplies could be endangered. Moreover, Director Burke believed that the manufacture of the engines

⁴⁶⁴ Nobs (FFD) to FMD, 21.6.1948, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18963, Bd.2.

⁴⁶⁵ Protokoll der 17. Sitzung der KMF, 29.06.1948, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18882.

⁴⁶⁶ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to de Montmollin (FMD), 02.07.1948, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18964, Bd.2.

⁴⁶⁷ Rihner (SAF) to de Montmollin (FMD), 12.07.1948, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18964, Bd.2.

⁴⁶⁸ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 05.07.1948, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4061.

⁴⁶⁹ De Montmollin to Kobelt (both FMD), 23.07.1948, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18963, Bd.2.

⁴⁷⁰ Von Steiger (FMD) to FFD, 12.08.1948, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18964, Bd.2.

⁴⁷¹ FFD to Federal Council, 23.08.1948, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18964, Bd.2.

⁴⁷² Ninth Flying Display and Exhibition in Farnborough, 07.-09.09.1948, Frei (SAF), SFA, E27, 15749, Bd.4.

under licence in Switzerland was unrealistic. Finally, the purchase of finished aircraft was no longer an option, because de Havilland was working for the RAF's rearmament effort, had to fulfil large orders for the Benelux countries, and additional orders from Canada, Sweden, Norway, India and Venezuela were about to materialise. Consequently, the delegation argued that the licence for the airframe had to be acquired as soon as possible.⁴⁷³ In addition, the Head of the Swiss Air Force saw the possibility of war looming on the horizon, and stressed to the Defence Minister that in times of crisis or war, there would be no aircraft deliveries from abroad because other countries would obviously prefer to equip their own air forces.⁴⁷⁴

Confronted with these alarming reports and requests, on 6 October, Kobelt ordered the Military Technical Service to start preliminary negotiations with de Havilland for both the airframe and the jet licence.⁴⁷⁵ Finally, at the Federal Council's meeting on 19 October, the Defence Minister submitted three variants for the acquisition of a further series of Vampires to his colleagues: 1. Manufacture of the whole aircraft under licence; 2. Production of airframes under licence and purchase of the engines; 3. Purchase of the entire aircraft. They finally opted for the second option, which had been favoured by the Federal Military Department in the first place.⁴⁷⁶ It is unclear how exactly this decision came about. Yet, there certainly were strong military and economic reasons. From a military perspective, although there was a strong desire for independence, the establishment of a production plant for jet engines would have further delayed the delivery of aircraft. With the bottleneck mainly in the production of airframes, the partial licence could reduce the timeframe. On economic grounds, the production of jet engines for a Vampire series of 100 was considered too expensive, but with a partial licence, the Swiss aircraft industry would nonetheless be satisfied. Finally, the purchase of engines in Britain would positively influence the Anglo-Swiss balance of payments, and thus entail economic benefits for Switzerland.

Probably, the British Air Attaché in Berne was right by stating that solution number two was smart, because "(1) is impracticable because of time involved and (3)

⁴⁷³ Reisebericht Englandreise, 07-25.09.1948, König (MTS), SFA, E27, -/9001, 15749, Bd.4.

⁴⁷⁴ Rihner (SAF) to Kobelt (FMD), 20.09.1948, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18964, Bd.2.

⁴⁷⁵ Kobelt (FMD) to MTS, 6.10.1948, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18964, Bd.2.

⁴⁷⁶ Extrait du procès-verbal de la séance du Conseil Fédéral, 19.10.1948, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18964, Bd.2.

does not give support to native aircraft industry”.⁴⁷⁷ Thus, although in July 1947 the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement’s members had acknowledged that the visits to Britain for the first Vampire deal had enabled them to study the research on the development and production of jet aircraft and jet engines,⁴⁷⁸ the Federal Council decided against the licence for the engine. Consequently, Swiss independence from abroad for aircraft supplies would only increase slightly.

4.3. Gold and Tourism

The Federal Council had given in to the Federal Military Department’s request and had determined the course for the purchase of another Vampire series, with the production of the airframes under licence in Switzerland and the import of finished jet engines from Britain. However, the deal with de Havilland was not yet sealed. The Federal Assembly had first to be convinced that this was the appropriate armament policy. Besides military reasons, did the Swiss politicians have economic incentives to approve the purchase of another Vampire series? On the British side, would the sale of aircraft have been beneficial to the balance of payments problems with Switzerland?

Immediately after the Federal Council’s decision for the second Vampire variant, the Defence Minister ordered the Military Technical Service to draft a bill for a series of 100 aircraft.⁴⁷⁹ Nonetheless, there were political obstacles, of which the British Air Attaché in Berne was aware. On 26 October 1948, Smith stressed to London that the information about the Swiss intention to acquire another Vampire series was confidential, because “premature disclosure of the proposed purchase of these aircraft might seriously jeopardize the passing of the necessary credits”.⁴⁸⁰ The Air Attaché also wrote a memorandum on the future of Swiss aircraft purchases in the UK for the British Legation’s Commercial Counsellor. Regarding military aircraft, he was optimistic for the second Vampire series. Yet, he warned that the aircraft, which was under development in the UK and the US, were, because of their long take-off and landing distances, not suitable for Switzerland’s alpine runways. Consequently,

⁴⁷⁷ Smith to Commercial Counsellor (both Berne), 30.11.1948, TNA, FO 371/73398.

⁴⁷⁸ Protokoll der 15. Sitzung der KMF, 21.07.1947, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18882.

⁴⁷⁹ FMD to MTS, 21.10.1948, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18963, Bd.2.

⁴⁸⁰ Smith (Berne) to Assistant Chief of Air Staff (AM), 26.10.1948, TNA, AIR 20/7144.

the Swiss would focus on the development of their own aircraft, which would better suit their conditions. Although this entailed that Berne would in the future no longer place orders for complete aircraft or airframes in Britain, Switzerland remained a good market for jet engines, for its industry was “not at the moment capable of building high efficiency gas-turbine aero-engines”.⁴⁸¹

With regard to the ongoing economic negotiations with Switzerland, the British Legation’s Commercial Counsellor, W. Harpham, took a particular interest in Anglo-Swiss arms transfers. In the aim “to reduce the prospective gold loss by orders from the Swiss for aircraft and other equipment”, he forwarded the Air Attaché’s memorandum to the Treasury. He emphasised that the Air and Military Attachés could not show too much interest in the commercial aspects of arms transfers, because it would undermine their position if they were suspected of promoting British weapons sales. However, he suggested to Whitehall to use this information in its coming negotiations with the Swiss, who should be requested to provide a forecast of their future arms purchases. According to Harpham, this could also “stimulate the Swiss to make up their minds about certain potential orders rather more quickly than they are normally accustomed to do”.⁴⁸² Yet, before the purchase of another series of Vampires could benefit Britain’s balance of payments, the Federal Assembly had to authorise it first.

On 1 December 1948, the Chief of the General Staff, the Chief of Training, the Heads of the Swiss Air Force and the Military Technical Service, and the Director of the Federal Military Administration, Colonel-Brigadier Burgunder, met with the Defence Minister to discuss the aircraft bill. They agreed that the bill had to be prepared in two parts, one for public consumption, and a secret part, which mentioned sensitive information, for the Federal Assembly’s military commissions. Although they feared that the aircraft’s high cost might deter the parliamentarians from accepting the bill, they nevertheless decided to include the cost of ammunition, and to mention that the limit of the military budget, which was of SFr.400 million, would be exceeded.⁴⁸³ On 22 December, Kobelt submitted this bill to his fellow Federal Councillors with the request to discuss it in the meeting of the following day.⁴⁸⁴

⁴⁸¹ Smith to Commercial Counsellor (both Berne), 30.11.1948, TNA, FO 371/73398.

⁴⁸² Harpham (Berne) to Treasury, 30.11.1948, TNA, FO 371/73398.

⁴⁸³ Aktennotiz über die Besprechung betr. Flugzeugbeschaffungsvorlage, 01.12.1948, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18963, Bd.2.

⁴⁸⁴ Kobelt (FMD) to Federal Council, 22.12.1948, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18963, Bd.1.

On the Federal Finance Department's request, however, the discussion was postponed. Nobs asked for additional time to comment on the draft bill. On 27 December, his report was forthcoming. He saw no need for a separate bill and advised the Federal Military Department to include the needed credits in the regular military budget, because the purchase of Vampires was intended to replace obsolete machines and was not linked to a change in defence strategy or an increase of the fleet. Yet the caveat was that he questioned the need for 400 to 500 aeroplanes if this entailed a military budget exceeding SFr.400 million. Thus, he requested to withdraw the draft bill and to limit the Swiss Air Force to 300 aircraft. If the Federal Military Department would not agree with the above, he proposed as a second motion to complement the draft bill by a presentation of its full financial consequences.⁴⁸⁵ Confronted with the Finance Minister's motions, the Defence Minister decided to temporarily withdraw the draft bill.⁴⁸⁶

Within the Federal Military Department, reactions to Nobs' report were rather paradoxical. In early January 1949, the Head of the Military Technical Service argued that the National and State Councils would request a separate bill for a purchase of this size. Thus, he believed that if the Federal Finance Department's advice would be followed, this would lead to a loss of precious time. Von Wattenwyl also refused to fix the Swiss Air Force's size, for it was unclear whether the technological developments would continue to increase the combat strength of the fighter aircraft, or if there would be a return to light aircraft. In the former case, a smaller fleet could be envisaged, whereas in the latter case, a larger fleet would be necessary. Finally, in the belief that the second Vampire series would even be necessary with an air force of only 300 aircraft, he refused to "buy" the Federal Finance Department's approval through guarantees on the future size of the Swiss Air Force.⁴⁸⁷ Interestingly, the Chief of the General Staff, although he was against determining in advance the size of the air force, stated that 300 aircraft were – from a financial perspective – the maximum. Moreover, he commended the idea of integrating the purchase of new aircraft into the annual military budget.⁴⁸⁸ The Head of the Swiss Air Force took the middle ground. While he was revolted by the prospect of an air force of 300

⁴⁸⁵ Nobs (FFD) to Federal Council, 27.12.1948, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18963, Bd.1.

⁴⁸⁶ Auszug aus dem Protokoll der Montagkonferenz, FMD, 30.12.1948, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18963, Bd.1.

⁴⁸⁷ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to FMD, 06.01.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18963, Bd.1.

⁴⁸⁸ De Montmollin to Kobelt (both FMD), 07.01.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18963, Bd.1.

aeroplanes, he did not oppose the idea of integrating the second Vampire series into the regular military budget.⁴⁸⁹

Kobelt followed de Montmollin's advice, and on 10 January, he submitted a draft report for the Federal Assembly's finance and military commissions on the Vampire purchase to the Federal Council for approval.⁴⁹⁰ Besides the military reasons and the desire to maintain the Swiss aircraft industry, the report contained a strong economic argument in favour of the aircraft order: "The procurement of engines in England is in the interest of our commerce with England, by making available currency for tourism".⁴⁹¹ Most probably, this argument was decisive for the Federal Council's approval of the report the following day.⁴⁹²

Already on 23 December 1948, the Swiss Delegate for Trade Agreements, Hans Schaffner, had argued in favour of the Vampire purchase, for he believed that it could be helpful in the upcoming economic negotiations with the British. In a note to Federal Councillor Rodolphe Rubattel, Head of the Federal Department of Public Economy, he had stated that it would be advantageous for Switzerland's trade with Britain.⁴⁹³ Rubattel had agreed with these observations and had forwarded the note to Kobelt.⁴⁹⁴ The Anglo-Swiss economic negotiations of early 1949 showed that Schaffner had been right. The British made it clear that in view of Britain's balance of payments position vis-à-vis Switzerland, they could not "continue to pay gold for tourism". In the aim to help their tourist industry, the Swiss promised to increase Britain's export earnings from Switzerland, and promised – among other things – "additional purchases of aircraft and other military equipment".⁴⁹⁵ Not only Whitehall, but also Berne endorsed this solution. In its meeting of 25 January, the Federal Council approved a report by the Federal Department of Public Economy, which not only called for the purchase of the second Vampire series, but also for buying other military equipment from Britain as the main measure to provide the British with money for tourism in Switzerland.⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁸⁹ Rihner (SAF) to FMA, 08.01.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18963, Bd.1.

⁴⁹⁰ Kobelt (FMD) to Federal Council, 10.01.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18963, Bd.1.

⁴⁹¹ Federal Council to Federal Assembly's finance and military commissions, Draft, 10.01.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18963, Bd.1.

⁴⁹² Auszug aus dem Protokoll des Bundesrats, 11.01.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18963, Bd.1.

⁴⁹³ Schaffner (Trade Section) to Rubattel (FDPE), 23.12.1948, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18963, Bd.1.

⁴⁹⁴ Rubattel (FDPE) to Kobelt (FMD), 24.12.1948, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18963, Bd.1.

⁴⁹⁵ Rowan to Cripps (both Treasury), 13.01.1949, TNA, FO 371/79279.

⁴⁹⁶ Wirtschaftsverhandlungen mit Grossbritannien, Bundesratsprotokoll, 25.01.1949, dodis.ch/3092, SDD.

Despite this strong economic argument, the finance and military commissions of the National and the State Councils did not approve the purchase of these aircraft under the normal military budget. As von Wattenwyl had foreseen, they feared for the Federal Assembly's prerogatives and refused to leave a business of this size to the annual military budget. Without discussing the military and economic reasons for or against this purchase, they requested a separate bill.⁴⁹⁷ As a result, the Federal Military Department was back where it had been in December 1948, and in mid-February 1949, the Defence Minister submitted again a draft bill for the purchase of 100 Vampires to the Federal Council for approval.⁴⁹⁸ In his response to this request, the Finance Minister reiterated his secondary motion that the draft bill had to be complemented by a presentation of its financial consequences.⁴⁹⁹ This time, however, Nobs was not successful and the bill passed the Federal Council on 15 February 1949.⁵⁰⁰

It is very likely that the "tourism argument" played a critical role in bringing this decision about. The *Schweizer Hotel-Revue* (Swiss Hotel Journal) saw the "'Vampires' in the service of the tourism industry". Its article of late February noted that the purchase of aeroplanes gave the British the needed currency for their holidays in Switzerland, and thus "the interests of our national defence could be put [...] into the service of Swiss tourism".⁵⁰¹ Consequently, the mutual economic interests had brought this second major Anglo-Swiss arms transfer closer to fruition and, especially in the Swiss case, the support for the tourism industry had been helpful in gaining the Federal Council's approval.

4.4. Supply Priorities and US Intervention

Apparently, the desire to help the Swiss tourism industry had led the Federal Council to approve another Vampire series. It was likely that the aircraft bill would also pass

⁴⁹⁷ Sitzung der Militärkommission und der Finanzkommission des Nationalrates, 09.02.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4343.

⁴⁹⁸ Kobelt (FMD) to Federal Council, 10.02.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18963, Bd.1.

⁴⁹⁹ Nobs (FFD) to Federal Council, 14.02.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18963, Bd.1.

⁵⁰⁰ Auszug aus dem Protokoll des Bundesrats, 15.02.1949; Botschaft des Bundesrates an die Bundesversammlung über die Beschaffung von Kampfflugzeugen, 15.02.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18963, Bd.1.

⁵⁰¹ "Die britisch-schweizerischen Wirtschaftsverhandlungen vor ihrem Abschluss: 'Vampires' im Dienste des Fremdenverkehrs", *Schweizer Hotel-Revue*, No.8, 24.02.1949.

the Federal Assembly for the same reason. Yet, it seemed as if this second major Anglo-Swiss arms transfer could nevertheless be threatened. By early 1949, the British began to fear a strategically-motivated American intervention against their financially driven arms sales to Switzerland.

Commenting on the Swiss declaration during the economic negotiations of mid-January 1949 to buy more weapons, Walmsley from the FO feared that the Americans could try to prevent additional arms sales to Switzerland. The US would criticise that “the British sell arms for hard currency to non-Western Union countries while [...] the Americans are giving arms to [the] Western Union”. Although he assumed that the Ministry of Defence (MoD) considered the sale of weapons to Switzerland strategically worthwhile, he did not understand why. Especially, the Joint Planning Staff paper on Switzerland’s value to the Western Union was according to him “lukewarm”.⁵⁰² He thus concluded to let the negotiations with the Swiss move on as long as the US did not interfere, because “[i]f we ask the US now they will no doubt issue a warning, whereas if we have already concluded a contract we shall be in a stronger position to resist US pressure”.⁵⁰³

On the British side, however, there had been no firm commitment to supply additional war material to Switzerland. The FO representative to the Joint War Production Staff’s Arms Working Party⁵⁰⁴ – which was composed by representatives from the MoD, all three armed services, the MoS, the Treasury and the FO, and had to decide on arms supplies – advised that no such commitment should be forthcoming. Also in the case of the Goblin jet engines, which the Swiss would need to power the licence-built airframes of the second Vampire series, London could not promise their delivery. But despite these observations, he favoured the lucrative export of these engines to Switzerland from late 1950 on, when the British engine supply position was expected to improve.⁵⁰⁵ The delivery of weapons to the Swiss was also strongly favoured by the Treasury, which asked the Arms Working Party in mid-February “that everything possible should be done to facilitate the acceptance of Swiss orders for Defence equipment, as these orders will be a considerable factor in our balance of payments with the Swiss”. Accordingly, the Treasury furnished a list that included the

⁵⁰² *Supra*, ch.2.3.

⁵⁰³ Minute, Walmsley (FO), 19.01.1949, TNA, FO 371/79279.

⁵⁰⁴ AWP.

⁵⁰⁵ Pridham (JWPS AWP) to Shuckburgh (FO), 27.01.1949, TNA, FO 371/79847.

engines for the second Vampire series.⁵⁰⁶ Thus, while Field-Marshal Montgomery advised the Swiss General Staff in the Bernese Oberland to buy tanks instead of jets,⁵⁰⁷ officials in Whitehall were looking forward to aircraft exports to Switzerland for financial reasons.

The problem was, however, that the Swiss orders could interfere with the rearmament of the Western Union and the forthcoming Atlantic Pact, and therefore upset the Americans. On 19 February, two days before the beginning of another round of economic negotiations with the Swiss, the British tried to find a solution to this problem. Representatives from the FO, the Board of Trade, the MoS, the Treasury and the AM met at the MoD to discuss not only the delivery of jet engines, but suddenly, also that of the first Vampire series. The various ministries agreed on the compromise to advise Bevin to authorise that the British delegation “may tell the Swiss that we have ‘every expectation’ that the armaments orders will be fulfilled”. Yet, he should only do so if the Ministers of Defence and Supply were “reasonably satisfied that the supply position is such that we can a) meet the probable demands of members of the Western Union and signatories of the Atlantic Pact without interfering the Swiss order, and b) have a reasonable hope of persuading American public and Governmental opinion that we are doing a) above”. Regarding these two points, the interdepartmental meeting concluded that the deliveries to Switzerland did not – from a production point of view – conflict with a), but that they could have a negative impact on American opinion.

Besides the fact that the Swiss orders did not collide with the needs of the Allies, the meeting produced three subsidiary arguments to justify them, if necessary, to the US. First, even though Switzerland was not a member of the Western Union, the strengthening of its defences was in the interest of the West. The strategic importance was not, however, to be overemphasised.⁵⁰⁸ Second, Britain owed Switzerland “a debt of gratitude”, as it had been thanks to Swiss (and Swedish) Vampire orders in 1947 that de Havilland could set up a new production line, which allowed Britain’s emergency measures of 1948. Finally, arms exports to Switzerland were of the greatest importance to limit the loss of gold, because otherwise it would

⁵⁰⁶ Supplies to Switzerland, Note by the Joint Secretaries, JWPS/AWP, 16.02.1949, TNA, DEFE 10/199.

⁵⁰⁷ *Supra*, ch.2.3.

⁵⁰⁸ The AM for instance noted that “from the military point of view there are no real grounds for aircraft wishing to go to Switzerland” (Commonwealth and Foreign Orders for Aircraft 1949-50, AM, 03.03.1949, TNA, DEFE 10/199).

be impossible to receive certain essential goods in return. The note concluded that if an assurance for the delivery of war material would be given to the Swiss, it could not be retracted lightly, for they would count on the delivery of the engines to power their licence-built airframes.⁵⁰⁹

The Foreign Secretary endorsed these recommendations, and on 22 February, the British delegation in Berne was informed “that there is every expectation that [the] UK will be able to fulfil [the] current orders for Vampires and [the] proposed order for Goblins”.⁵¹⁰ Yet, it was exactly the successful conclusion of an Anglo-Swiss trade agreement – largely thanks to the foreseen arms transfers – which attracted American interest. In early March, after having learnt about the proposed sale of jet engines in a newspaper article on the Anglo-Swiss trade agreement, the US Embassy enquired with the FO whether these engines were surplus to Western Union requirements.⁵¹¹ Thereupon, Walmsley decided to coordinate a response with the other interested departments.⁵¹²

In agreement with the AM, the Board of Trade, the MoD, the MoS and the Treasury, the FO replied to the US Embassy that the promise to meet the Swiss engine orders had only been made “after a searching examination of the possible needs of Western Union powers”, and “it was found that no conflict exists”. In addition, the delivery would not start until early 1951, when the demand for this engine type would be lower following the introduction of newer types. Finally, the production of the Goblin in 1950/51 and 1951/52 would be sufficient to cover RAF needs, the French requirements, the Swiss order for 150 engines, probable orders from various parts of the British Commonwealth and elsewhere, and spare engines to meet the requirements for the maintenance of the RAF and the French air force.⁵¹³ For the time being, this argumentation was sufficient to repel the American “attack”.⁵¹⁴

Meanwhile in Switzerland, the promise for additional arms purchases in the trade agreement made it difficult to oppose the second Vampire series. In mid-March,

⁵⁰⁹ Sale of Armaments to Switzerland, Walmsley (FO), 19.02.1949, TNA, FO 371/79848; JWPS(AWP) (Arms)(49), 2nd Meeting, 19.02.1949, TNA, DEFE 10/198.

⁵¹⁰ FO to Berne, 22.02.1949, TNA, FO 371, 79847.

⁵¹¹ Minute, Shuckburgh (FO), 02.03.1949, TNA, FO 371/79848.

⁵¹² Minute, Walmsley (FO), 02.03.1949, TNA, FO 371/79848.

⁵¹³ Walmsley (FO) to Short (AM), Gresswell (MoD), Woodford (MoS), Elliott (BoT), Eggers (Treasury), 04.03.1949; Gresswell (MoD) to Walmsley (FO), 07.03.1949; Short (AM) to Walmsley (FO), 08.03.1949; Bailey (MoS) to Walmsley (FO), 09.03.1949; Shuckburgh (FO) to Willis (US Embassy London), 11.03.1949, TNA, FO 371/79848.

⁵¹⁴ Willis (US Embassy London) to Shuckburgh (FO), 16.03.1949, TNA, FO 371/79848.

the Defence Minister emphasised to the State Council's Military Commission the economic importance of this arms transfer: "The order of another series of aircraft in England made the trade agreement negotiations with England tremendously easier. This order enables England to provide currencies for tourism in Switzerland". Most probably, it was due to this argument that the commission unanimously decided in favour of another Vampire series.⁵¹⁵ On 23 and 24 March, the National and State Councils voted in favour of 100 more Vampires, with imported engines from Britain, and the airframe produced under licence in Switzerland.⁵¹⁶ Consequently, the offer made by the Chief of Staff of the French Air Force, General Charles Lechères, to buy Vampires produced under licence in France in exchange for Swiss weaponry, came too late and was never seriously considered.⁵¹⁷

Yet, although this arms transfer seemed to satisfy all parties involved, its implementation was criticised by the Delegate for Job Creation, who acted on behalf of the Swiss aircraft company Flug- und Fahrzeugwerke Altenrhein⁵¹⁸. Otto Zipfel criticised that the final assembly of the aircraft was not supposed to take place in the private industry, but at the Federal Aircraft Factory.⁵¹⁹ The Defence Minister was unhappy with this reproach. He replied that the partial licence solution had only been chosen to help the Swiss aircraft industry, which would be responsible for producing the airframe, and that the purchase of finished aircraft in the UK would not only have been cheaper, but also more favourable to Anglo-Swiss commercial relations.⁵²⁰ According to von Wattenwyl, the licence production was also a means to make up the technological delay and to "train" the Swiss aeronautical industry for the future production of an indigenous aircraft.⁵²¹

In sum, the Federal Military Department had been able to find a compromise for the second Vampire series, which took into account military prerogatives and the survival of the aircraft industry, and was finally favoured by the need to provide Britain with money to help the Swiss tourist industry. Whitehall, on the other hand,

⁵¹⁵ Protokoll der Sitzung der Militärkommission des Ständerates, 16.03.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4344.

⁵¹⁶ Bundesbeschluss über die Beschaffung von Flugzeugen, 24.03.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18963, Bd.1.

⁵¹⁷ Schafroth (FMD) to MTS, 21.03.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18964, Bd.2.

⁵¹⁸ FFA.

⁵¹⁹ Zipfel (Delegierter für Arbeitsbeschaffung) to Kobelt (FMD), 02.04.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18964, Bd.2.

⁵²⁰ Kobelt (FMD) to Zipfel (Delegierter für Arbeitsbeschaffung), 04.04.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18964, Bd.2.

⁵²¹ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to Kobelt (FMD), 22.04.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18964, Bd.2.

wanted to sell engines to Switzerland against all odds for predominantly financial reasons, and thus to limit the loss of gold.

Intermediate Conclusion I

The Second World War had changed the World, as well as the British and Swiss positions therein. Britain was on the verge of bankruptcy, and Switzerland was diplomatically isolated. In the immediate post-war period, both countries tried to adapt first to their new situation, and then to the emerging Cold War. In this undertaking, Berne and London discovered each other as partners in certain fields of mutual interest, or intervened on behalf of one another as a *quid pro quo*.

Politically, the UK helped Switzerland find its way into the new international system, by favouring the establishment of Soviet-Swiss diplomatic relations, advocating the membership of neutrals into the UN, and helping Switzerland in its dealings with the US. Even though the Swiss had to some extent bought the British support through an important credit, London maintained a pragmatic approach towards neutrality, and could still see a role for this policy in a world which was not yet bipolar. Britain, which had decided to maintain its world role, found a useful political partner in Switzerland, which stuck to its neutrality. In cooperation with Scandinavian countries, the British and the Swiss cooperated in the OEEC to prevent the political integration of Western Europe.

In the realm of economics, one could even speak of interdependence between Britain and Switzerland. The “unbalanced” balance of payments was to the disadvantage of both countries. The British had to compensate their debtor position through gold payments, and were not willing to increase or even maintain their quota for Swiss non-essentials and tourism. In order to enable the British to purchase their luxury goods and to spend their holidays in Switzerland, the Swiss, on the other hand, tried to provide Britain with additional money, whether in the form of credits or additional purchases.

On a security level, Britain and Switzerland began after the war to lay the foundations for what would later turn into a silent security partnership, if not a “special relationship”. During his winter holidays in the Swiss Alps, Montgomery began to advise the Chief of the Swiss General Staff on defence issues. Although the Field-Marshal acted mainly in his Western Union function, both the Joint Planning Staff and the CoS saw it in a favourable light. Like Montgomery, they preferred a neutral Switzerland, which would cooperate in the event of war. Both wishes were fulfilled, for the Swiss were not only convinced of their armed neutrality, but they

also signalled that if they were attacked, they would be willing to cooperate. De Montmollin, who oversaw the adaptation of Swiss strategy to new conditions, was also happy to have the external view of the British Field-Marshal, the hero of Alamein.

Yet, the Anglo-Swiss relationship between 1945 and 1949 was “not special”. As the analysis of the two Vampire deals illustrates, the cooperation and close relations between the two countries were motivated by punctual and rather selfish national interests. London viewed the strengthening of Swiss defences as a beneficial side-effect of the arms transfers, but not as a strategic necessity. The selling of weapons to Switzerland was neither politically nor militarily, but rather financially motivated. The British saw no need for a formal defence relationship with the Swiss, and preferred selling them weapons to having them as a member of the Western Union. Whitehall feared that if Switzerland integrated the Brussels Pact, it would become entitled to military aid, and Britain would suffer a loss in valuable hard currency earnings. In addition, the arms transfers had no direct impact on the political or military relations, or vice-versa. On the one hand, the British did not try to use the arms sales as a tool to align the Swiss with the West, and on the other hand, the bilateral meetings between military and political dignitaries had no direct impact on the arms transfers.

Although Berne looked towards London for punctual diplomatic support and military advice, it was not searching for closer political or security relations. The Federal authorities turned to Britain for the material strengthening of their army, because there seemed to be no other choice: the German and French armaments industries were destroyed, the US refused to sell modern weapons, and the Swiss did not even consider the USSR as a potential source for military hardware. Yet, as the second case study has demonstrated particularly well, Anglo-Swiss economic relations were so interdependent and of major importance to both countries, that they strongly favoured Swiss arms purchases in Britain. Consequently, although Switzerland and Britain had cordial political relations, cooperated against the first signs of European political integration, and laid the foundations for an informal security partnership, the most intense relations were in the realm of economics. Britain needed Swiss money, and Switzerland desired British customers.

Thus, British arms sales to Switzerland were financially motivated, and even though the Swiss were aware of the economic benefits, which their weapons

purchases in Britain could entail, they bought the Vampires mainly for military reasons. In early 1949, the British acknowledged that they owed the Swiss “a debt of gratitude” for their Vampire order of 1947, which had helped to maintain Britain’s war potential. But this was just another beneficial side-effect of arms sales to Switzerland. The prime reason for selling weapons to Switzerland was financial, i.e. the desire to rebalance the Anglo-Swiss balance of payments and to earn hard currency to refill the empty Treasury. Therefore, and in the larger design of capturing the European arms and aircraft market, London wanted to make the Swiss dependent on British weaponry. Yet, with the increasing international tension of the early Cold War, Whitehall became aware that the lucrative arms exports to Switzerland could be endangered in the event of a crisis or war. Equipping British and allied armed forces was strategically necessary, and was thus given priority over the predominantly financially motivated sale of weapons to Switzerland. Nevertheless, the British were so desperate to get Swiss francs that they tried to accommodate arms exports to Switzerland with their own and Allies’ needs, as well as with Washington’s security outlook.

With their experience from the Second World War in mind – a period where they were largely cut off from foreign arms supplies – the Swiss were aware of the danger that Britain might one day stop delivering weapons. Yet they had no other choice than to purchase weapons, or at least the technology thereof, in the UK. Firstly, Britain was the only country with a highly advanced armaments industry that was willing to sell modern aircraft to neutral Switzerland. Second, even though the Swiss intended an autonomous armaments policy, they encountered important delays in the development of weapons, and thus had to search for modern aircraft abroad. Finally, because of Switzerland’s armed neutrality, the perception of the Red Army as the sole potential aggressor, and the change of strategy (which included the plateau in the defence perimeter), the Federal authorities simply believed that Switzerland had to rearm. Consequently, while the UK mainly “pursued its wealth”, the Swiss purchased weapons mainly for “regional security reasons”.

The important technological gap between Britain and Switzerland, especially in the field of jets and aeronautics, did not only favour arms, but also technology transfers. In the first Vampire deal, jet technology was “materially transferred” from the UK to Switzerland, because the Swiss believed that the renewal of their air force fleet was urgent. In the purchase of the second aircraft series, there was a partial

“design transfer”. Despite the intention of producing a second Vampire series under licence with the aim of achieving a self-reliant armament policy, the Federal Military Department finally opted for a partial licence, with the manufacturing of the airframe in Switzerland and the importation of finished jet engines from Britain. The reasons for this settlement included the costs and time needed to set up a production plant for only 100 engines; the existence of a bottleneck in the British production of airframes but not engines; the commercial advantages of purchasing finished engines; the belief that the arrangement would be sufficient to keep the Swiss aircraft industry alive; the reduced time it would take to deliver aircraft to the troops; the fact that Switzerland did not possess an aero-engine industry comparable to that of Sweden; and that the major Swiss machine industry companies were reluctant to include the development of jet technology in their business strategy. Consequently, the step-by-step approach won out, despite the fact that it endangered Switzerland’s potential supply in times of crisis or war, as the country remained dependent on the delivery of jet engines from Britain alone. Despite Britain’s willingness to sell its jet technology in the form of licences and an arms transfer system allowing for important technology transfers, the Federal authorities lacked the political will to compensate for the absence of certain domestic factors, such as an important aero-engine industry. Thus, the Swiss did not significantly increase their independence from foreign arms supplies.

Switzerland’s quest for modern weaponry was strongly motivated by its armed neutrality. *Yet, it was through a reliance on British arms supplies that the Swiss demonstrated their western preferences and risked to discredit their neutrality.* After the war, the Swiss maintained their neutrality against all odds. In line with the corresponding policy of armed neutrality, they decided to rearm, if possible, with American or British weapons. Washington was, however, reluctant or unwilling to deliver modern aircraft to the Swiss, because of their dubious war record. London, by contrast, approached Switzerland pragmatically with a desire to sell weapons for desperately needed currency, and even to establish a relationship of dependency. In this constellation, the Swiss became dependent on Britain – the leading Western European power – for the supply of jet aircraft, and thus showed their western preferences. The Soviets did not overtly complain about the provenance of the

weapons, but they were nevertheless disturbed by Switzerland's rearmament, which they knew was directed against the Red Army.⁵²²

Meanwhile, Britain respected Swiss neutrality, not for ideological reasons, but for strategic and economic ones. While the international system and the two superpowers were hostile to neutrality, the UK favoured a pragmatic approach towards this policy. In their dealings with the Americans and the Soviets, the British continued to defend Swiss neutrality. Whitehall considered Switzerland's neutrality an unshakeable reality, a strategic asset in the defence of Western Europe and, as mentioned above, a policy entailing arms purchases in Britain on a commercial basis. For London it did not matter whether an arms customer was neutral or not, all that seemed to be important was that he paid well and, if possible, in hard currency. Consequently, it was to Britain's advantage that the US approached the neutrals differently, and refused to become a competitor on the Swiss arms market.

After the war, Britain was still a global power. Yet its international role was threatened by its weak, if not disastrous, financial foundations. The export of aircraft and related technology was largely dictated by a need to stabilise Britain's economic situation. The financial motivations were so predominant, that London did not even have the possibility to use weapons to gain political or strategic leverage over a country. Whitehall seemed to be as dependent on the Swiss franc, as Berne was dependent on British weapons. In addition, foreign orders were also necessary to maintain the war potential of a great power. Washington, by contrast, feared that Britain undermined its military preparedness and diffused advanced military technology to potential enemies through the large-scale export of its state of the art aircraft.⁵²³ Yet, policymakers in Whitehall saw themselves in a competition for markets, if not a zero-sum game against the Americans. In the belief that British technology would ultimately remain supreme, they even permitted technology transfers beyond the Iron Curtain. The sale of jet engines to Stalin attracted, however, Washington's ire. Nevertheless, the British believed that they were fighting for their economic survival, remained convinced that the US used the security argument to favour its own commercial interests, and thus discounted American arguments calling for a restrictive export policy.⁵²⁴ For the moment, London maintained at least some

⁵²² Fuhrer, Wild, *op. cit.*, p.238.

⁵²³ Cain, *op. cit.*, pp.17-18.

⁵²⁴ Engel, *Cold War at 30,000 Feet...*, *op. cit.*, pp.76-85.

freedom in its arms sales, and was able to fight off Washington's intervention against its liberal export policy. Although British power was greatly diminished, the Swiss nonetheless perceived Britain as one of the "Big Three", which was powerful enough to assist them, whether diplomatically or through aircraft deliveries.

PART II
STORMY HONEYMOON
1949-1953

PART II

STORMY HONEYMOON 1949-1953

5. A Divided and Unstable World

By 1949, Europe was a divided continent. Both the Soviet Union and the United States – together with its Allies – held on to their respective parts of Germany. While the Americans had accepted the “invitation” to form a defensive bloc in Western Europe, the Soviets had set up an Eastern bloc of their own, mainly by the use of force. Yet, this division did not bring peace, as none of the two sides could accept the status quo or any eventual gain by the opponent.⁵²⁵

In 1949 and 1950, the West experienced a series of setbacks. In early September 1949, the US discovered that the Soviets had successfully tested a nuclear weapon, and thus learned that their atomic monopoly was lost. A few weeks later, the communists under Mao Zedong’s leadership seized control of the Chinese mainland. Even though these events were not particularly surprising to US officials, and did not endanger the basic strategy to contain the USSR, they nonetheless had major implications. Instead of developing specific responses, the White House decided to expand its Cold War policies. In early 1950, Truman authorised the building of a hydrogen bomb, and asked the National Security Council (NSC) to review US Cold War policy in the light of the new developments. The resulting document, NSC-68, argued for fighting communism by every means, not only political and economic, but also military.⁵²⁶ The North Korean invasion of South Korea on 25 June 1950 ensured the implementation of NSC-68, which considered all interests equally vital and stressed that any further shift in the balance of power could be fatal to the US.⁵²⁷ Taking advantage of the Soviet boycott of the UN Security Council – to protest the People’s Republic of China’s exclusion from the UN – the Americans intervened together with their Allies in Korea under a UN mandate.⁵²⁸

⁵²⁵ Lundestad, Geir, “Empire by Invitation? The United States and Western Europe, 1945-1952”, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol.23, No.3, 1986, pp.263-277; Trachtenberg, *op. cit.*, p.95.

⁵²⁶ Craig, Campbell; Logevall, Fredrik, *America’s Cold War: The Politics of Insecurity*, Cambridge MA: Belknap, 2009, pp.102-111.

⁵²⁷ Gaddis, John L., *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy during the Cold War*, Oxford: OUP, 2005, p.107.

⁵²⁸ Campbell, Logevall, *op. cit.*, p.118.

The Korean War had its prelude in December 1949, when Mao arrived in Moscow to establish a relationship between the USSR and his People's Republic of China (PRC). On 14 February 1950, the Sino-Soviet Treaty was signed – a great success for Soviet foreign policy. Simultaneously, Stalin's strategies shifted from Europe to the Far East. He authorised Kim Il Sung to attack South Korea, because he saw a long and protracted war involving the US to the Soviet Union's advantage. For the USSR would gain time to grow in strength; the US would be distracted from Europe; the third world war would be postponed and socialism in Europe could be consolidated; the Soviet geopolitical position in the Far East would be advanced; and it would strengthen the USSR's prestige as a revolutionary vanguard.⁵²⁹ Despite humiliating military reversals, the US succeeded in keeping the Korean War limited, and accepted an indefinite stalemate in July 1953. According to John Gaddis, the decisive outcome of the war was that it set the precedent that there could be a protracted war between nations possessing atomic weapons without using them.⁵³⁰

After the signing of NAT and, especially, with the loss of the nuclear monopoly, the US decided to rearm itself and Europe to counterbalance the Soviets' superiority in ground forces. Washington feared that Stalin, emboldened by his successes, had unleashed the war in Korea to go on the offensive in Europe. With the aim of opposing the Russian forces in Europe, the US tripled military spending. While the European allies counted on American assistance in their armament effort, they also greatly expanded their own defence budgets.⁵³¹ This was especially because the American military aid under the Mutual Defense Assistance Program was granted in the expectation that the other NATO members would also make substantial efforts.⁵³²

The rearming had to help prevent Western Europe from being overrun by the Red Army. In line with the "forward defence" strategy, the continent had to be defended on the ground as far east as possible. The problem was, however, that to make this strategy effective, Germany had to be included in some way in the Western defence scheme. While the US desired to integrate the Germans into NATO, the European Allies, especially the French, feared a remilitarised Germany. To achieve

⁵²⁹ Zubok, Vladislav; Pleshakov, Constantine, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War: From Stalin to Khrushchev*, Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1996, pp.54-56; Zubok, *A Failed Empire...*, *op. cit.*, pp.79-81.

⁵³⁰ Gaddis, *The Cold War...*, *op. cit.*, p.50.

⁵³¹ Trachtenberg, *op. cit.*, pp.95-100.

⁵³² Wampler, Robert A., *Ambiguous Legacy: The United States, Great Britain, and the Foundations of NATO Strategy, 1948-1957*, PhD Thesis, Harvard University, 1991, p.55.

the American objective while keeping the Germans under control, the French suggested the creation of a European army with German troops under the command of a supranational authority, similar in structure to the Schuman Plan for a European Coal and Steel Community. Yet, by the time the Korean armistice was signed and NATO's former Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), Dwight D. Eisenhower, had become the 34th President of the US, the intended European Defence Community (EDC) had still not become a reality. Fear from a Soviet reaction to the rearmament of Germany, disagreements between NATO Allies themselves and with Germany, and varying American support, had made it difficult to come to an agreement.⁵³³

The strategic imperatives during this period of strong international tensions also expanded the Cold War's economic front. In December 1947, the Truman administration decided to implement an embargo on East-West trade. In the light of the Cold War and congressional pressure to prohibit exports of strategic value to the Soviet Union, this added an economic dimension to the containment strategy.⁵³⁴ From mid-1948 on, Washington tried to engage its European Allies in the strategic embargo. However, this was initially opposed by the Europeans, who desired to maintain their traditional trading links with Eastern Europe for their economic recovery. To overcome their reluctance, the US moved to establish an ad hoc consultative group of the OEEC members, which would review policy and share intelligence on exports and their end destination. This group was established in Paris in 1950, together with a Coordinating Committee (CoCom) to oversee day-to-day operations. In response to the establishment of the PRC and the Korean War, the US pressured its European Allies to increase their efforts in enforcing the trade embargo, tried to expand the list of embargoed goods, and took steps to enlarge CoCom's membership to non-allied countries.⁵³⁵

⁵³³ Trachtenberg, *op. cit.*, pp.100-122.

⁵³⁴ Jackson, *op. cit.*, p.18.

⁵³⁵ Cain, *op. cit.*, p.20-33.

5.1. Switzerland: The Western Neutral

In a speech to the Conference of Swiss Ministers in 1952, Petitpierre summarized Switzerland's position between East and West as follows: Switzerland was part of the Western world, which the communist world aimed to destroy, and was thus threatened like any other European country; the existence of the Western European countries, including Switzerland, depended on US economic and military power; and, because of the ideological nature of the conflict, it was hard to distinguish between political and moral neutrality. The Foreign Minister concluded that Switzerland had a vital interest in an economically, politically and militarily organised Europe, backed by the US.⁵³⁶ In the period under study, however, how far was Switzerland ready to participate in this reorganisation of Europe, and to cooperate with the Western powers?

In the wake of the European Congress of May 1948 in The Hague – under Churchill's chairmanship – on 5 May 1949, Belgium, Denmark, France, Great Britain, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden signed the Statutes of the Council of Europe in London. Despite the hosting of Churchill's call for a United States of Europe in 1946, the Federal Council decided not to join the Council of Europe. It was feared that this organisation would try to establish a common European foreign and military policy, which ran contrary to Swiss neutrality.⁵³⁷ Berne's reaction to the announcement of the Schuman Plan in 1950 was less clear-cut. Switzerland did not have an important coal and steel industry, and was thus not interested in participating in this scheme. Yet, as three quarters of its coal and steel imports came from the six participating countries, the Swiss could not ignore the process and had to keep a watchful eye on it. After the European Coal and Steel Community's (ECSC) establishment in 1951, the Federal authorities were able to negotiate an agreement to ensure their coal and steel supplies.⁵³⁸ In its European policy, Berne clearly prioritised the OEEC,⁵³⁹ which had initiated the trade liberalisation process in Western Europe.

The trade discriminations against countries with strong currencies, like Switzerland, were progressively eliminated. International payments, however,

⁵³⁶ Neval, *op. cit.*, pp.120-121.

⁵³⁷ Linke, *op. cit.*, pp.72-73; Du Bois, Pierre, *La Suisse et le défi européen: 1945-1992*, Lausanne: Favre, 1989, pp.20-21.

⁵³⁸ Maurhofer, *Die schweizerische Europapolitik...*, *op. cit.*, pp.87-109.

⁵³⁹ Jost, *Europa und die Schweiz...*, *op. cit.*, p.128.

remained an obstacle to further liberalisation. Despite domestic demand, some OEEC countries did not have the financial means to increase their imports from Switzerland. The Swiss, for their part, could not indefinitely grant credits to maintain their exports. Partially in the aim to resolve this dilemma, the European Payments Union (EPU) came into existence on 19 September 1950. This multilateral payments system, which was composed by the OEEC countries, was also extended to the Commonwealth. It allowed for a *de facto* free convertibility between European currencies. Even though the Swiss political and economic leaders acknowledged the EPU's importance, the process leading up to the Federal Assembly's vote of October 1950 to join it, was hesitant and controversial.⁵⁴⁰ However, once the members of the Payments Union had agreed to grant Switzerland – because of its financial strength – a special status, refusal to join would have been interpreted as a rejection of European solidarity, and would have been followed by discrimination against the Swiss franc. Interestingly, Berne was mainly preoccupied with the economic consequences of EPU-membership, and did not question whether it was in conflict with the status and policy of neutrality.⁵⁴¹

Yet, the “militarization” of American aid to Europe in the wake of the escalating Cold War preoccupied Swiss policymakers from a neutrality policy perspective. US military aid within NATO increasingly outweighed its economic aid in the framework of the OEEC. The ensuing discussions about the relationship between these two organisations – which tended towards increased collaboration – threatened to undermine Swiss neutrality. But to Switzerland's fortune, a stronger organisational association between the Atlantic Alliance and the OEEC failed to materialise, because of disagreements between NATO Allies, and opposition by the neutrals. By contrast, the American idea to coordinate Western European rearmament through the OEEC was more successful. As long as this did not happen in a formal setting, it was not opposed by Switzerland. The transfer of the NATO headquarters from London to Paris further improved the exchange between the two organisations. This step, which also aimed at improving the relations between the neutrals and the Atlantic powers, was welcomed by the Swiss. Moreover, NATO's Financial and Economic Board, which dealt with the distribution of raw materials for the

⁵⁴⁰ Dirlewanger; et. al., *op. cit.*, pp.107-113.

⁵⁴¹ Maurhofer, *Die schweizerische Europapolitik...*, *op. cit.*, pp.69-70.

rearmament programme, was another important liaison between Switzerland and the Western alliance.

Mantovani concludes that Switzerland was not against closer relations between NATO and the OEEC *per se*, but only if they risked discrediting Swiss neutrality. Berne was interested in the rearmament of Europe, desired a liaison with the Atlantic Alliance, and could not withdraw – because of its economic interests – from the OEEC. Nevertheless, it was mainly because of the neutrals and their lobbying that the two organisations never merged. The Americans were willing to accept Switzerland’s ambivalence, which allowed for its informal inclusion in the Western European defence efforts.⁵⁴² When it came to economic warfare, however, they expected a stronger commitment.

Washington feared that – despite the embargo – strategic material would continue to leak to Eastern Europe through the neutrals. Switzerland was first approached to participate in the strategic embargo in 1948, and then again in 1949. Against Berne’s refusal to restrict its trade with the Eastern bloc, the Americans tried to obtain concessions through raw material supplies, the threat of blacklisting companies, which exported embargoed goods to the East, and continuous diplomatic pressure. Initially, this strategy did only achieve little success, because, as mentioned above, other OEEC states were also reluctant to join the embargo, and the US Legation in Berne preferred to keep the Swiss friendly through a moderate approach. Nevertheless, Switzerland gave in to an informal agreement on the end-use of American products, and took “autonomous measures” against the transit of strategic goods.

With the Korean War, however, US pressure increased significantly, and led to the “Hotz-Linder-Agreement” of 23 July 1951. Through this “gentlemen’s agreement”, named after Jean Hotz, Director of the Federal Department of Public Economy’s Trade Section, and Harold Linder, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Economic Affairs, Switzerland agreed to take “autonomous measures” against the export of its own strategic goods beyond the Iron Curtain. Some days earlier, Sweden had made similar, albeit more concessions. Washington had thus obtained the neutrals’ informal participation in the strategic embargo against the Eastern bloc.⁵⁴³

⁵⁴² Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, *op. cit.*, pp.27-36.

⁵⁴³ Cerutti, Mauro, « La Suisse dans la Guerre froide : la neutralité suisse face aux pressions américaines à l’époque de la guerre de Corée », in Porret, Michel ; et al. (eds.), *Guerres et paix :*

Paradoxically, while the escalating Cold War provoked such a forceful intervention, it also led the United States, and to a lesser extent the Soviet Union, to approach neutrality more pragmatically.

By the early 1950s, Soviet leaders foresaw the political and strategic benefits, which a neutralisation of Central Europe could offer. But a full reappraisal of neutrality occurred in Moscow only after Stalin's death.⁵⁴⁴ In addition, during the period of the Korean War, the Eastern bloc accused Switzerland of being in the Western camp and violating neutrality.⁵⁴⁵ The Truman administration, by contrast, became more receptive to Swedish neutrality,⁵⁴⁶ and began to re-evaluate Switzerland. The impetus came from the State Department, which expressed its position on Switzerland in a policy statement of 17 August 1950. Despite its neutrality, the Swiss Confederation was seen as an important factor in European economic recovery, a positive force in the maintenance of free democratic institutions in Europe, and a reliable defender of its territory against any aggressor. Consequently, Switzerland was "a deterrent to the expansion of Soviet influence in Western Europe and a strategic asset [...] within the frame of United States objectives". The paper recommended the encouragement of increased Swiss economic cooperation, and "to enable Switzerland to maintain as strong a position of military neutrality as possible". It was acknowledged that a direct attempt to modify Swiss neutrality would be counterproductive, and recommended convincing Berne that fuller partnership with the Western powers was in its interest, and necessary to survive as a free and democratic nation. Even though neutrality prevented Switzerland from becoming a NATO member, Swiss resistance in case of a Soviet attack was considered a positive and calculable factor in Western strategic planning. Accordingly, Switzerland's military potential had to be strengthened through American weapons, but only on a commercial basis, and insofar as commitments to Allies would permit.⁵⁴⁷

mélanges offerts à Jean-Claude Favez, Genève : Georg, 2000, pp.325-331; Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, op.cit., pp.61-65; Flury-Dasen, op. cit., pp.135-137; Schaller, André, *Schweizer Neutralität im West-Ost-Handel: Das Hotz-Linder-Agreement vom 23. Juli 1951*, Bern etc.: Haupt, 1987, passim; Ooyen, Robert Christian van, *Die schweizerische Neutralität in bewaffneten Konflikten nach 1945*, Frankfurt a.M. etc.: Peter Lang, 1992, passim.

⁵⁴⁴ Allison, op. cit., p.8.

⁵⁴⁵ Fuhrer, Wild, op. cit., p.241.

⁵⁴⁶ Hanhimäki, Jussi M., *Containing Coexistence...*, op. cit., p.105.

⁵⁴⁷ Policy Statement Prepared in the Department of State Switzerland, 17.08.1950, *FRUS*, 1950, Vol.III, pp.1584-1597.

But it took more than a year until this view became common policy in Washington. To improve Swiss access to American weapons, on 7 November, the State Department transmitted to the NSC a draft statement on the US position towards Switzerland, which observed that “[b]y virtue of its geographic position Switzerland is of strategic importance to the defense of Western Europe and therefore of security interest to the United States”. Moreover, the Swiss recognised the “USSR as the only potential aggressor in Europe”, and their concept of neutrality had become “less inflexible”, as their compliance in the strategic embargo illustrated. In addition, the Swiss Army was considered one of the strongest in Western Europe. Yet, it suffered from a lack of equipment. Therefore, the paper recommended making Switzerland eligible for reimbursable military assistance, as a *quid pro quo* for increased Swiss cooperation in the Western defence effort.⁵⁴⁸ By late November, the NSC Staff had prepared this draft for the council’s consideration as NSC-119, divided into a statement of policy and a study.⁵⁴⁹

Not everyone was convinced by these arguments. The Joint Strategic Survey Committee was more moved by the fact that Switzerland was not on the frontline of any future Soviet ground attack, that the country was “itself a strong natural bastion” and, besides, its neighbours were much more in need of US military assistance than it was. Switzerland was not of major importance in NATO defences, and there was little likelihood of the USSR attacking it. Moreover, the qualification of neutral Switzerland for military assistance could jeopardise American efforts to obtain mutual security guarantees from other non-allied states, and it could endanger the cooperation of Allies in return for military aid.⁵⁵⁰

Fortunately for the Swiss, Army Chief of Staff General Joseph Collins favoured the proposal. Irrespective of whether Switzerland was neutral or not, he argued, the arms transfers would “considerably augment the defense capabilities of the North Atlantic Treaty Area”. He considered the Swiss Army not only an “anchor for the defense of the Rhine”, but also a protection of a large part of “Italy’s northern

⁵⁴⁸ The Position of the United States With Respect to Switzerland, Draft Statement of Policy by the Department of State, 07.11.1951, *FRUS*, 1951, Vol.IV, pp.874-879.

⁵⁴⁹ NSC-119, Draft Statement of Policy by the National Security Council, 20.11.1951?, *FRUS*, 1951, Vol.IV, pp.880-881; NSC-119, National Security Council Staff Study, The Position of the United States With Respect to Switzerland, 20.11.1951?, *FRUS*, 1951, Vol.IV, pp.881-886.

⁵⁵⁰ Report by the Joint Strategic Survey Committee to JCS; Draft Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, The Position of the United States with Respect to Switzerland, JSSC, 29.11.1951, NARA, RG 218, Entry 13, Geographic File, 1951-53, Box 53.

frontier and the eastern frontier of France”. Therefore, Swiss neutrality had to be maintained through strength. Yet, even if Switzerland qualified for military assistance, it would be subject to higher priorities, and as it was on a reimbursable basis, it would not divert funds. The Swiss would thus be unable to buy “new U.S. materiel within the next two or three years”, but they could immediately receive “World War II substandard items”. Finally, he emphasised that the approval of NSC-119 “would facilitate Swiss production for the NAT countries”, and could for example expedite the delivery of Oerlikon-Bührle rockets.⁵⁵¹

Collins’ memorandum tipped the balance in favour of NSC-119, and on 3 December, the JCS recommended it to the Secretary of Defense.⁵⁵² Two days later, the NSC itself adopted it, and on 11 December, President Truman approved the Statement of Policy on Switzerland and declared it binding for all government agencies.⁵⁵³ On 9 January 1952, the State Department informed the Swiss Minister in Washington that Switzerland had been declared eligible for reimbursable military aid under the Mutual Defense Assistance Act.⁵⁵⁴ There was, however, a caveat. As Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs James Bonbright rightly pointed out, Swiss requests remained subject to “prevailing shortages”, and “possible higher priority demands” from US Armed Forces and Allies. Moreover, he stressed that the new policy was not a *quid pro quo* for the Federal Council’s recent approval of rocket sales to the US Air Force (USAF), for the process leading to Switzerland’s eligibility had already been initiated in autumn 1951.⁵⁵⁵ Interestingly, Swiss compliance with the strategic embargo and its arms deliveries were only arguments in favour of NSC-119. But it was Switzerland’s strategic position in NATO’s continental defence and its clearly western attitude against the background of the Korean War scare, which made it eligible for US military assistance.

Meanwhile, one can question whether NSC-119 was compatible with Swiss defence policy? In 1948, the Chief of the Swiss General Staff wrote a study on

⁵⁵¹ The Position of the United States with Respect to Switzerland, Memorandum by the Chief of Staff U.S. Army, 03.12.1951, NARA, RG 218, Entry 25, Geographic File, 1957, Box 16.

⁵⁵² Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense, The Position of the United States with Respect to Switzerland, Bradley (JCS), 04.12.1951, NARA, RG 218, Entry 25, Geographic File, 1957, Box 16.

⁵⁵³ NSC-119, Draft Statement of Policy by the National Security Council, 20.11.1951?, *FRUS*, 1951, Vol.IV, p.880, n.1.

⁵⁵⁴ MDAA.

⁵⁵⁵ Memorandum of Conversation, Advising Swiss Government of Its Eligibility under MDA, Vance (WE), 09.01.1952; Aide-Mémoire, Bonbright (EUR) to Bruggmann (Washington), 09.01.1952, NARA, RG 59, CDF 1950-54, 745.5; Bonbright (EUR) to Berne, 10.01.1952; Acheson (DoS) to Berne, undated, NARA, RG 59, CDF 1950-54, 454.1181-1184.

national defence policy, which the National Defence Commission approved the same year. De Montmollin argued therein that even though Switzerland could not prevail if attacked, it could delay the enemy's advancement, whether until an allied country would come to help, or until the adversary would endure a defeat on the main battlefield. With regard to equipment, he admitted that Switzerland could not keep up with the great powers, and had thus to do without certain desirable weapons. But despite financial limitations, the acquisition of tanks was unavoidable, because there could be no successful defensive action without this weapon. The purchase of tanks became also more realistic, for the Federal Assembly had agreed to increase the defence budget after the Czechoslovak Coup and the Berlin Crisis. In March 1950, another General Staff study clearly stated that tanks were necessary for anti-tank defence, and as a support weapon for attacks. These ideas became an integral part of the new defence doctrine *Truppenordnung 51* (Troops Order 51), which the Federal Council endorsed on 26 December 1951.⁵⁵⁶

The outbreak of the Korean War strengthened Swiss armed neutrality, by providing the Federal Military Department with large sums of money. In the wake of the war scare, the Federal Assembly authorized a military five-year plan at a cost of approximately SFr.1.5 billion for the period between 1951 and 1955. The bulk of it – SFr.1.12 billion – was for war material, of which SFr.455 million were for tanks. Even the usually critical Labour Party was finally prepared to fully endorse the concept of armed neutrality.⁵⁵⁷ But despite initial fears, it was not believed that a third world war was imminent. In 1951, de Montmollin noted that the Korean War had not resulted in a new world war. Nonetheless, he still believed that the situation was abnormal, because of the West's conventional inferiority. Consequently, Soviet aggression remained possible until at least spring 1953, when the Americans would have built up sufficient conventional counterweight.⁵⁵⁸

Another consequence of the Korean War was Switzerland's participation after the armistice in the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission and the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission for POWs and displaced persons. Although this allowed Switzerland to strengthen its international profile, the fact that it had been chosen – together with Sweden – by the Western side, seemingly discredited its neutrality on

⁵⁵⁶ Braun, *op. cit.*, pp.194-206.

⁵⁵⁷ Ooyen, *op. cit.*, pp.59-60.

⁵⁵⁸ Neval, *op. cit.*, pp.344-345.

the Eastern side.⁵⁵⁹ In sum, Switzerland – like Sweden – was a “Western neutral”. For it was western in its trade orientation, contributed to and participated in economic warfare, and could be seen as an extension of NATO.⁵⁶⁰

5.2. Great Britain: Clinging to Grandeur

On the threshold of the 1950s, “Britain’s position was eased, not transformed”. At home, the “threat” posed by the Soviet Union was recognised, and this reduced criticism on defence spending. Abroad, US commitments to Europe allowed to reduce British overstretch, especially by relieving London from the prime responsibility for European security. Despite a certain reliance on Washington, Whitehall believed that Britain could remain a great power.⁵⁶¹ The FO saw Britain’s future in the consolidation of the West with the US as the most powerful force. Bevin and his advisers hoped to replace British dependence by Anglo-American interdependence over time, but the “Third Force” idea was rejected for good.⁵⁶² Meanwhile, the international situation of the 1950s, especially the Korean War, endangered the British position. London tried to adapt its foreign and security policies to a changing world, while avoiding further loss of status and prestige. It sought to remain in control of events and to maximize British power, in spite of shrinking economic and military means.⁵⁶³ Britain’s war-making potential was increasingly falling behind the two superpowers, as the table 4 shows.⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁵⁹ Fanzun, Jon A.; Lehmann, Patrick, *Die Schweiz und die Welt: Aussen- und sicherheitspolitische Beiträge der Schweiz zu Frieden, Sicherheit und Stabilität 1945-2000*, Zürich: CSS ETH, 2000, pp.110-111.

⁵⁶⁰ Hanhimäki, “The First Line of Defence...”, *op. cit.*, pp.388-389.

⁵⁶¹ Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled...*, *op. cit.*, p.177.

⁵⁶² Greenwood, *Britain and...*, *op. cit.*, pp.69-70.

⁵⁶³ Turner, Michael J., *British Power and International Relations during the 1950s: A Tenable Position?*, Lanham MD: Lexington, 2009, pp.1-2.

⁵⁶⁴ Ikenberry, John G., *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order after Major Wars*, Princeton etc.: Princeton University Press, 2001, p.279.

Table 4

<i>Correlates of War Index⁵⁶⁵ for the United Kingdom, the United States and the Soviet Union, 1945-1955</i>			
	1945	1950	1955
USA	42.9	38.7	41.2
USSR	25.5	37.6	39.4
UK	17.5	14.1	12.2

The UK's economic position at the time, however, should not be underestimated. In 1951, British industrial production and exports were still as great as those of France and Germany combined. While the latter two countries, Italy and the Netherlands had large and persistent deficits, Britain had balanced its current account by 1948.⁵⁶⁶ The devaluation of sterling in 1949 put the pound in a more realistic balance with the dollar, and thus enhanced Britain's competitive position. By September 1949, the Americans abandoned the campaign to demolish the British trading bloc, and acquiesced in London's position on the special role of the sterling area. Although this understanding allowed for a partially independent international economic role, Britain finally remained reliant on the US for maintaining international liquidity. London thus focused on the sterling area, and was exempted from Washington's plan for an integrated Europe. Consequently, Britain approached Europe from a global perspective: the Commonwealth and sterling were prioritised, whereas the interest in European integration – seen as a framework for Franco-German rapprochement – was limited.⁵⁶⁷

In 1949 and 1950, Britain participated in the OEEC's trade liberalisation programme, which gave a new boost to intra-European trade. But in 1950, the EPU was met by resistance, for it was feared that it would weaken the sterling area and further tie Britain to the continent. The Attlee Government finally agreed to join, but only because all sterling payments – whether from the UK or the rest of the sterling area – were included in the scheme. In addition, a country in deficit could settle part

⁵⁶⁵ Index of a state's war-making potential based on military personnel, military expenditure, energy production, iron and steel production, urban population, and total population (*Ibid.*).

⁵⁶⁶ Cairncross, *The British Economy...*, *op. cit.*, p.84.

⁵⁶⁷ Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled...*, *op. cit.*, pp.178-180, 192.

of the credit in gold and receive credit from the EPU on the other part.⁵⁶⁸ While Whitehall could accept limited economic European integration, it was against supranational political or military institutions.

In the Council of Europe, Britain continuously obstructed French attempts towards European political integration, and thus stimulated Paris to search for an alternative European concept without British participation. The result was the Schuman Plan, which did not require British membership, attracted the West Germans, and was favoured by the Americans. The ECSC became a reality without the UK, which did not wish to commit itself to the supranational principle or to a continuous integration process. Cooperation with the organisation's members did not seem economically necessary, as British coal and steel production was still very high if compared to the Six. In 1954, Britain nevertheless concluded a consultative association treaty with the ECSC. Thereafter, British participation in the EDC never was a realistic option. The CoS wanted to remain in control of British forces, and dismissed the idea of a European Army as militarily ridiculous. When the Conservatives returned to power in 1951, this policy remained unchanged, and again-Prime Minister Churchill hoped for the EDC's failure.⁵⁶⁹ Yet, again-Foreign Secretary Eden believed that a European Army was the only way to secure German rearmament, and feared that Britain could be accused of sabotaging it. Therefore, he convinced the Cabinet to support the EDC without joining it.⁵⁷⁰

The US accepted that the UK stayed out of the European integration process, but it looked to its closest Ally for leading the Western European response to its economic containment strategy. When approached to do so in autumn 1948, the Attlee Government agreed, because it wanted to shape the embargo to reflect British security and trade interests. London understood the strategic importance of the embargo, but it feared for its traditional trade with Eastern Europe. It thus created its own list of embargoed products – which was significantly smaller than the American list – and tried to obtain the OEEC's support for it to improve the bargaining position vis-à-vis

⁵⁶⁸ Alford, *op. cit.*, p.200; Cairncross, *Years of Recovery...*, *op. cit.*, pp.287-289; Cairncross, *The British Economy...*, pp.84-85.

⁵⁶⁹ For a detailed account of Churchill's role as Prime Minister during the Cold War see Larres, Klaus, *Churchill's Cold War: The Politics of Personal Diplomacy*, New Haven etc.: Yale University Press, 2002; Young, John W., *Winston Churchill's Last Campaign: Britain and the Cold War 1951-5*, Oxford: Clarendon, 1996.

⁵⁷⁰ Kaiser, Wolfram, *Using Europe, Abusing the Europeans: Britain and European Integration, 1945-63*, Basingstoke etc.: Macmillan, 1996, pp.15-22; Young, John W., *Britain and European Unity, 1945-1992*, Basingstoke etc.: Macmillan, 2000, pp.27-36.

the US. In January 1949, the British call for a limited strategic embargo provoked negative reactions among several OEEC states. Nevertheless, thanks to French support, most member states moved in principle towards a multilateral embargo. Yet, they were unwilling to imitate Britain's domestic controls on trade with Eastern Europe. Thereupon, Washington decided to intervene itself, instead of relying on Britain.

The US intervention led to the establishment of CoCom, and the general acceptance of the American list. However, Washington wanted also to extend the embargo to a list of so-called dual-purpose items. Britain could not afford to curtail its trade with Eastern Europe to this extent, and thus led the European opposition to reach a compromise on the second list in November 1950. Yet, with the military situation in Korea escalating, the Truman administration faced increasing pressure from Congress, which in 1951 culminated in the Battle Act. On the one hand, this law called for the withdrawal of aid to those European Allies, which did not comply with the US embargo policy. On the other hand, it was defused by a clause whereby the President could allow a European country to export an embargoed item to the East without withdrawing aid, if major US security interests were at stake. Nevertheless, the Battle Act provoked tensions and resentments in Anglo-American relations, because they and the other CoCom states disagreed about the application of exceptions to the Battle Act. Finally, yet another Anglo-American compromise averted further transatlantic discord over East-West trade.⁵⁷¹

Even in the traditional area of defence, the "special relationship" was not unproblematic. London aimed at a defence policy, which was geared towards its global interests, whereas Washington desired a stronger British commitment to the defence of Western Europe and the Korean Peninsula. Yet, this added to Britain's military overstretch, and constituted a dangerous economic burden. After the loss of India, the UK tried to build up the Middle East as a sphere of British power and influence, while NATO strategy⁵⁷² obliged it to shift its defence priorities towards Europe. Despite the expansion of its commitments there, the Attlee Government was still reluctant to give assurances to NATO partners.⁵⁷³ Only in March 1950, with the War Office (WO) favouring a continental commitment and the need to encourage the

⁵⁷¹ Jackson, *op. cit.*, pp.26-105; Cain, *op. cit.*, pp.20-49.

⁵⁷² For a detailed account of NATO strategy and Britain see Wampler, *op. cit.*.

⁵⁷³ Dockrill, Michael, *British Defence since 1945*, London: Blackwell, 1988, pp.29, 33, 41-42.

French, the Defence Committee promised that in the event of war it would double its divisions in Germany.⁵⁷⁴ Meanwhile in Southeast Asia, Britain was since 1948 engaged in fighting an anti-insurgency war in Malaya to maintain its global interests. Consequently, with the outbreak of the Korean War, the UK had already engagements beyond its means.

Although London did not consider the communist danger as monolithic as did Washington, and recognised the PRC in January 1950,⁵⁷⁵ it immediately supported the American-sponsored resolution to intervene in Korea. During the first months of the war, the British resisted American pressure to provide ground forces, arguing that there were other priorities in Asia and Europe. Yet, for political motives, Attlee decided – against the recommendation of the CoS – to send an infantry brigade to Korea. He believed that this would improve Anglo-American consultation, whereas a refusal would have the opposite impact. Throughout the war, London attempted to moderate the bellicosity of Washington without offending it. Britain was certainly helpful in keeping the conflict limited, but an escalation leading to a third world war was neither in America's interest. Thus, for too little influence, the British tended to be too submissive. Nonetheless, the US "rewarded" the UK for its active participation in Korea with an increased contribution to the defence of Europe. The Americans increased their European forces between 1950 and 1953 from two to six divisions, and an expanded NATO received an integrated structure with an American commander at the top. However, Washington saw the strengthening of Western European defences in its own interest, and its support resulted in even more efforts by Britain.⁵⁷⁶

As a result of American pressure and promises in aid, the intention to prove its credentials as a close ally, the need to encourage the European Allies, and the urgency to repair its own military deficiencies, the Attlee Government approved a large rearmament programme on 18 December 1950. The sum of £3,700 million, which the programme required over three years, had to be increased to £4,700 million in January 1951,⁵⁷⁷ mainly because the expected financial aid from the US was not forthcoming.⁵⁷⁸ This armament effort gave a boost to the already high post-war levels of arms production, and was a major emergency for Britain and its arms industry.

⁵⁷⁴ Peden, *Arms, Economics...*, *op. cit.*, p.265.

⁵⁷⁵ Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled...*, *op. cit.*, p.183.

⁵⁷⁶ Greenwood, *Britain and...*, *op. cit.*, pp.78-98.

⁵⁷⁷ Bartlett, Christopher J., *British Foreign Policy in the 20th Century*, Basingstoke etc.: Macmillan, 1989, pp.87-88; Dockrill, *British Defence...*, *op. cit.*, p.43.

⁵⁷⁸ Greenwood, *Britain and...*, *op. cit.*, p.98.

Nevertheless, the implementation of the programme was facilitated by the industry's excess capacity.⁵⁷⁹

Yet, Washington was still not satisfied with these defence efforts, which caused a significant deficit in Britain's balance of payments, another dollar shortage, and thus endangered a fragile economic recovery. The fact that the Americans complained while they were withholding financial aid, coupled with Britain's economic problems, caused a political crisis in Attlee's cabinet. This crisis precipitated the fall of the Labour Government, and created the appropriate political context for the incoming Tory Government to stand up to the US and reduce defence expenditure.⁵⁸⁰

In October 1951, the Conservatives agreed on the need to cut defence spending, and in December, the rearmament programme was reviewed and new priorities were set.⁵⁸¹ Yet, Churchill and Eden were not willing to reduce Britain's role. While they acknowledged the economic overstretch, they refused to withdraw from the major overseas commitments, because they feared that the Soviets would fill the vacuum. To maintain the status of a great power despite dwindling resources, they tried to convince friendly powers to share their burdens, and to establish a less costly defence strategy.⁵⁸² In addition to economic arguments, Churchill believed that current British defence planning had to be reviewed, for it did not sufficiently take into account the value of nuclear weapons.⁵⁸³

The CoS reviewed British strategy in spring 1952. The result was the "Report on Defence Policy and Global Strategy", which was submitted to the Cabinet's Defence Committee and finalised on 17 June 1952. The paper called for more burden-sharing in all "three circles", and outlined the possibility of reducing the defence budget through an increasing reliance on nuclear weapons. The Chiefs believed that in the event of war, Britain was likely to be the main target of a Soviet nuclear attack, and thus war had to be prevented through nuclear deterrence. Although they counted on the US for the bulk of the nuclear deterrent, they nevertheless argued that the UK

⁵⁷⁹ Edgerton, *Warfare State...*, *op. cit.*, p.103; Geiger, Till, *Britain and the Economic Problem of the Cold War: The Political Economy and the Economic Effect of the British Defence Effort, 1945-1955*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004, p.131.

⁵⁸⁰ Geiger, *op. cit.*, pp.112-117.

⁵⁸¹ Peden, *Arms, Economics...*, *op. cit.*, pp.253-256.

⁵⁸² Greenwood, *Britain and...*, *op. cit.*, p.103-106.

⁵⁸³ Baylis, John; Macmillan, Alan, "The British Global Strategy Paper of 1952", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.16, No.2, 1993, p.200.

should also take its share in the Western nuclear forces. Strategically, the British contribution was necessary to deal with Soviet nuclear forces, which would be pointed at Britain. From a political perspective, a British nuclear capacity was seen as a means to influence American policy, and could eventually lead to joint US-British decision-making on the use of nuclear weapons. Yet, despite increased efforts, Britain only became a nuclear power in October 1952, and already a month later, the American test of a thermonuclear device overshadowed this achievement. Finally, despite the idea to compensate the conventional weakness with tactical nuclear weapons, the CoS concluded that significant conventional forces remained necessary. As a result, there were no radical reductions in sight.⁵⁸⁴

The British were aware of their economic and military limitations. Yet, both the Attlee and the Churchill Government wanted Britain to remain a power of the first rank, and thus tried to find ways and means to adapt to shrinking resources and an apparently dangerous environment. But it was this “clinging to grandeur”, which prevented Whitehall from making drastic, but urgent reforms.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp.200-221; Heuser, Beatrice, *NATO, Britain, France and the FRG: Nuclear Strategies and Forces for Europe, 1949-2000*, Basingstoke etc.: Macmillan, 1997, pp.63-71.

6. Anglo-Swiss Relations 1949-1953

6.1. *Different Perceptions but Common Interests*

On 26 January 1948, Petitpierre received the British Conservative Duncan Sandys, who was in charge of the campaign for European unity of his father-in-law, Winston Churchill. After discussing Bevin's plan for a Western Union, Petitpierre emphasised Switzerland's neutrality. Sandys retorted that this was a policy of the past, which the Swiss put before their freedom and independence. He argued that neutrality did not prevent Berne from participating in the reconstruction and organisation of Europe, and invited Petitpierre to the European Congress in The Hague. The Foreign Minister replied evasively that the issue of participation first had to be discussed in the Federal Council.⁵⁸⁵

Sandys' reasoning was largely shared by the Labour Government. In late May 1949, the Swiss Minister in London, Henry de Torrenté, reported to Petitpierre on the British view of neutrality in respect of the Council of Europe. He observed that while London did not "attack" Swiss neutrality and considered it with a "very kind scepticism", there was a certain tendency to approach the problem "indirectly". British policymakers gave him to understand that Switzerland's neutrality was compatible with membership in the Council of Europe. Bevin himself had expressed his regret regarding Berne's decision to stay away from the organisation.⁵⁸⁶ The British desire for Swiss membership persisted. In November 1949, a foreign policy speech by Petitpierre in Solothurn, in which he addressed Switzerland's attitude towards the Council of Europe, gave some hope. The British Legation erroneously interpreted it as an attempt "to educate Swiss opinion with a view to the ultimate participation of Switzerland in the Council's activities as a full member". It was believed that while Switzerland preferred to remain outside the UN, it was willing to "collaborate with the (at present) purely Western European organisation".⁵⁸⁷ Back in the FO, Walmsley concluded from this report that "Swiss policy has moved distinctly away from neutrality, no matter how firmly the Swiss protest that they are sticking to

⁵⁸⁵ Entretien avec M. Duncan Sandys, Petitpierre (FPD), 26.01.1948, SFA, E2800, 1990/106, Bd.19.

⁵⁸⁶ De Torrenté (London) to Petitpierre (FPD), 25.05.1949, SFA, E2300, 1000/716, Bd.43.

⁵⁸⁷ Tull (Berne) to Bevin (FO), 23.11.1949, TNA, FO 371/79823.

it”.⁵⁸⁸ Accordingly, before taking up his post as British Minister in Berne in early 1950, Patrick Scrivener was instructed to watch this “trend” and to make forecasts.⁵⁸⁹

Following the instructions, in late January 1950, Scrivener enthusiastically reported that Petitpierre had become President of the Swiss Confederation. He attributed to the Swiss Foreign Minister the eagerness and willingness to associate Switzerland more closely with Europe, whether through the OEEC or the Council of Europe.⁵⁹⁰ The FO was genuinely interested in a closer association of Switzerland with the West. Although there is no evidence that the British pressured the Swiss to join the Council, there was at least the intention to do so. In May 1950, the FO’s Information Research Department⁵⁹¹ informed the British Legation in Berne about an article in the Soviet *Literaturnaya Gazeta* entitled “The ‘Neutral’ Hypocrites”. According to the Information Research Department, this article – which saw Swiss neutrality in the service of the Western “warmongers” – could be used in discussions with Berne to bring about cooperation on issues such as East-West trade. Yet, this was to be done indirectly, for Britain’s “policy of ostentatiously respecting the Swiss desire for neutrality” should not be infringed.⁵⁹² The Legation agreed, seeing in this documentation a valuable argument for high-level discussions with the Swiss on East-West trade, and the Council of Europe.⁵⁹³

Meanwhile, Berne was not aware of such machinations, and more importantly, of Britain’s more ambiguous view of neutrality. In spring 1950, the Swiss Minister in London reported that during recent years no other great power had had as much understanding for Switzerland’s neutrality as Britain. On the one hand, London seemed to see the advantage of a neutral and economically healthy state within European countries in need for economic and military assistance. On the other hand, the two countries had a similarly careful position towards political questions such as a European customs union or a European federation. De Torrenté noted that Britain distinguished between Swiss and Swedish neutrality. The latter was considered political, without sufficient stability. Therein he saw the reason why the British did not pressure the Swiss on the question of the Council of Europe, whereas they had

⁵⁸⁸ Minute, Walmsley (FO), 30.11.1949, TNA, FO 371/79823.

⁵⁸⁹ Walmsley to Shuckburgh (both FO), 13.12.1949, TNA, FO 371/79871.

⁵⁹⁰ Scrivener (Berne) to McNeil (FO), 30.01.1950, *BDFA*, IV, F, Vol.25, p.437.

⁵⁹¹ IRD.

⁵⁹² IRD (FO) to Chancery (Berne), 12.05.1950, TNA, FO 371/89070.

⁵⁹³ Tull (Berne) to IRD (FO), 03.06.1950, TNA, FO 371/89070.

pressured the Swedes on various occasions.⁵⁹⁴ With Herbert Morrison succeeding Bevin, the respect for neutrality in London seemed even to improve.

In mid-April 1951, the Swiss Minister reported that in his first visit to the new Foreign Secretary, the latter told him that he fully understood Swiss neutrality, would never propose a military alliance, and hoped that Switzerland could remain outside a future conflict. Although Morrison had previously flirted with the “Third Force” concept, which apparently helped explaining his stance on neutrality, de Torrenté was not convinced of his sincerity.⁵⁹⁵ Nonetheless, Morrison’s declarations were to Petitpierre’s liking.⁵⁹⁶ The British position on neutrality did not seem to depend on party adherence. After the Tories had returned to power, Eden told the Swiss Minister in February 1952, that although officially he should ask Switzerland to join NATO, “semi-officially” he admitted to understand its neutrality.⁵⁹⁷

Even though Berne looked to London for the understanding of its neutrality, it became aware of Britain’s diminishing world role, especially with the unfolding of the Korean War. London knew of this development. In early January 1951, in a discussion with the British Minister, the Federal Political Department’s Secretary-General, Zehnder, expressed his concerns about the situation in Korea, and deplored “the fact that the UK had been so ‘éprouvé par la guerre’ that [it] was not the primary directing force in world politics”.⁵⁹⁸

Despite the varying perceptions both countries had of each other, and the disagreement on the Council of Europe, they continued to have common interests. The British and the Swiss, together with the Swedes, systematically undermined any attempt in the OEEC towards European political integration. Finally, this favoured the creation of the ECSC, through which the Six intended to emancipate themselves from the intergovernmental OEEC.⁵⁹⁹ Even before Schuman had presented his plan, in December 1949, the FO warned the Swiss Minister about the danger of encirclement by an economic area, which could apply discriminatory economic measures. The British wondered about Switzerland’s reaction in such a case, and if it would join the

⁵⁹⁴ De Torrenté (London) to Zehnder (FPD), 24.04.1950, SFA, E2200.40, 1000/1667, Bd.7.

⁵⁹⁵ De Torrenté (London) to Petitpierre (FPD), 14.04.1951, SFA, E2800, 1967/59, Bd.94.

⁵⁹⁶ Petitpierre (FPD) to de Torrenté (London), 23.04.1951, SFA, E2800, 1967/59, Bd.94.

⁵⁹⁷ Gygli (London) to Nachrichtensektion der Generalstabsabteilung (FMD), 21.02.1952, SFA, E5560(C), 1975/46, Bd.180.

⁵⁹⁸ Scrivener (Berne) to Young (FO), 02.01.1950, FO 371/96016.

⁵⁹⁹ Kaiser, *Using Europe...*, *op. cit.*, pp.25-26.

area.⁶⁰⁰ However, neither a discriminatory economic area nor Swiss participation therein materialised. Moreover, London's negotiations with the ECSC – which had priority – allowed the Swiss to gain time and prepare themselves for their own negotiations with the Six.⁶⁰¹

Despite intense Anglo-Swiss cooperation and mutual understanding in European affairs, the Swiss were confused by Britain's Atlantic approach towards the OEEC. In spring 1950, London aimed at the transfer of the OEEC's economic functions and organs to NATO. The reasons were manifold: US membership would counterbalance West Germany's economic potential; it would enable Britain to maintain both its traditional overseas interests and an important role in continental affairs; and, most importantly, it would thwart French efforts for European integration. In the light of opposition from the neutrals, Whitehall argued that this would allow for their closer association with NATO.⁶⁰² Berne was, however, against institutionalised relations with the Atlantic organisation, and in early June, increasingly alarming signals emanated from London. After a discussion with Eric Berthoud, Assistant Under-Secretary at the FO and member of the British OEEC delegation, the Swiss Minister reported that the British were convinced that the demarcation between the OEEC and NATO was to disappear, because of common interests and almost similar membership. Moreover, Berthoud argued that London was against the idea of a "Third Force", and believed that a working relationship with the US and Canada was necessary to resolve many of the OEEC's economic problems.⁶⁰³

The Swiss (and the Swedes) intervened in London to prevent the transfer of the OEEC's economic prerogatives to NATO. This was the case in late November 1950, when de Torrenté accused Roger Makins, Deputy Under-Secretary of State at the FO, of British attempts to withdraw the OEEC's competences in the distribution of raw materials. Makins energetically rejected such accusations, even though he believed that the OEEC, contrary to NATO, could not deal with certain problems that were related to raw materials.⁶⁰⁴ In the end, because of Berne's and Stockholm's

⁶⁰⁰ De Torrenté (London) to Petitpierre (FPD), 04.12.1949, dodis.ch/7881, SDD.

⁶⁰¹ Maurhofer, *Die schweizerische Europapolitik...*, op. cit., pp.112-113.

⁶⁰² Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, op. cit., pp.28-29.

⁶⁰³ De Torrenté (London) to Zehnder (FPD), 06.06.1950, SFA, E2200.40, 1000/1667, Bd.11.

⁶⁰⁴ De Torrenté (London) to Zehnder (FPD), 27.11.1950, SFA, E2200.40, 1000/1667, Bd.11.

efforts, combined with American doubts about the associability of the neutrals and the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) with NATO, the British project petered out.⁶⁰⁵

After these failed attempts to integrate parts of the OEEC into NATO, Britain again became a defender of the former organisation. It was not, however, British empathy for the neutrals which had caused this change of attitude. Once London had realised that it could not prevent the French plans for European integration, the OEEC became the means to defend the principle of intergovernmental cooperation. Therefore, Swedish and Swiss OEEC membership was a useful argument against American attempts to foster a closer cooperation between NATO and the European organisation.⁶⁰⁶ By spring 1952, Berne began to realise, albeit hesitantly, Whitehall's policy shift.⁶⁰⁷ Simultaneously, the British Minister in Berne warned London against further NATO attempts to undermine Swiss neutrality.

In December 1951, Frederick Millar, the UK Deputy on the North Atlantic Council, informed the FO and Scrivener about the American intention to discuss NATO assistance to the Swiss and Swedish rearmament programmes.⁶⁰⁸ An alarmed British Minister wrote to the FO that further attempts to bring the Swiss into a closer relationship with NATO could provoke the opposite reaction, and that it was advisable to comply with Berne's desire for informal contacts. Moreover, assistance to Switzerland's rearmament should only be forthcoming on a purely commercial basis.⁶⁰⁹ Fears of American pressure proved, however, to be unfounded. In spring 1952, Millar reported from NATO that even though the Americans had "approved a policy of action which it is hoped might lead Switzerland gradually to abandon its traditional neutrality" (NSC-119), they did not intend to pressure the Swiss.⁶¹⁰

Once again, Britain had become – out of self-interest – the defender of Swiss neutrality. Nonetheless, Petitpierre remained suspicious about British intentions, and especially about Eden's. In discussions with British OEEC representatives and Scrivener, he threatened that Switzerland would withdraw from the OEEC if there

⁶⁰⁵ Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, op. cit., p.29.

⁶⁰⁶ Maurhofer, *Die schweizerische Europapolitik...*, op. cit., p.129.

⁶⁰⁷ De Torrenté (London) to Zehnder (FPD), 06.03.1952, SFA, E2200.40, 1967/128, Bd.42; Zehnder (FPD) to de Torrenté (London), 13.03.1952; De Torrenté (London) to Zehnder (FPD), SFA, E2200.40, 1967/128, Bd.43.

⁶⁰⁸ Millar (NATO) to FO, 19.12.1951, TNA, FO 371/102301.

⁶⁰⁹ Scrivener (Berne) to Cheetham (FO), 08.01.1952, TNA, FO 371/102301.

⁶¹⁰ Millar (NATO) to Hood (FO), 04.04.1952; Hood (FO) to Scrivener (Berne), 18.04.1952, TNA, FO 371/102301.

was a collusion with NATO.⁶¹¹ In addition, the Swiss Foreign Minister opposed Eden's candidacy for President of the OEEC's Council of Ministers. Not only did he fear a negative impact for Swiss neutrality if the Council was to appoint at its head the Foreign Secretary of a great Western power, but he also believed that Eden was the wrong person – regardless of his function –, because he was too politicised.⁶¹²

While Berne was confused by Britain's OEEC policy, London was irritated by Switzerland's "forbidden", but nonetheless pro-western, arms exports. The ban on arms exports, which the Swiss Government had abolished in September 1945, had already in June 1946 been replaced with a general prohibition to export war material. Although this had been aimed at the internationally ostracised Spain, the ban had been of a general nature, because the Swiss had neither desired further problems with the international community, nor to offend Franco's Spain. Although this reason had rapidly lost its validity, the Federal Council had only reformed Swiss arms export policy on 28 March 1949. Despite the maintenance of a general ban, the Military Technical Service, and in important cases the Federal Council, could authorise the fabrication and export of war material.⁶¹³ Even before this relaxation of arms export policy, the Swiss had delivered weapons abroad. These exports of a minor scale, however, had only been to the benefit of Western countries, like in the case of Britain.⁶¹⁴ This pattern persisted notwithstanding the new regulation. While more important arms exports to the West could be authorised, the Swiss participation in the strategic embargo prevented any deliveries of strategic material beyond the Iron Curtain.⁶¹⁵

In late May 1950, there were rumours that the Swiss armaments industry and the Federal Military Department worked towards a less restrictive arms export policy. This prompted the FO to inform Scrivener about its position on Swiss weapons sales. On the one hand, it endorsed Berne's argument that exports were necessary to maintain an armaments industry, which was capable to equip the Swiss Army.⁶¹⁶ On the other hand, it was feared that "arms may go to undesirable destinations outside

⁶¹¹ Petitpierre (FPD) to de Torrenté (London), 05.06.1952, SFA, E2800, 1967/59, Bd.94.

⁶¹² Petitpierre (FPD) to de Torrenté (London), 29.05.1952, SFA, E2800, 1967/59, Bd.94.

⁶¹³ Dürst, Daniel, *Schweizerische Neutralität und Kriegsmaterialausfuhr*, Zürich: ADAG, 1983, pp.113-114.

⁶¹⁴ Various authorisations for the export of war material to Great Britain, SFA, E2001(E), 1967/113, Bd.391.

⁶¹⁵ *Supra*, ch.5.1.

⁶¹⁶ Pellaux, Jean-Marie, *L'affaire Pilatus: les milieux engagés et la Suisse officielle face aux exportations d'armes (1978-1985)*, Fribourg: Université de Fribourg, 2008, pp.30-32.

Europe, such as the Middle East and South East Asia, and – more important – to countries behind the Iron Curtain”. Although the FO acknowledged that Swiss arms exports did hitherto not really cause problems, it was worried about a relaxation of export restrictions and wanted to keep exports to the Middle East and Southeast Asia at a minimum. Moreover, it was feared “that persons so unscrupulous as Herr Bührle of Oerlikon’s” would not hesitate delivering weapons to the East. Consequently, the British Minister was asked to intervene against any relaxation of arms export restrictions.⁶¹⁷

On 6 June, Scrivener met with Zehnder, who assured him that the British had not to be worried about exports to Eastern Europe, because “[t]he Swiss Government were no more anxious than anyone else to arm Russia and her satellites; and no export licences for armaments to those destinations would be granted”. The British Minister was also promised that no weapons would be exported to the Far East, neither to Mao Zedong nor to Bao Dai. The Swiss official said, however, that the export of weapons to the Middle East, India and Pakistan would be relaxed. Thereupon, the British Minister concluded that the FO did not have to worry about Swiss arms exports to the East, and that arms sales “in reasonable amounts” to the Middle East, India and Pakistan could not be questioned, as Britain had been supplying these countries for some time. He nonetheless suggested that Berne and London should establish a confidential information exchange on their arms exports.⁶¹⁸

The FO was, however, still not entirely satisfied. It feared that if regulations were relaxed, the Swiss would have difficulties in identifying the real destination of their arms exports. According to Young from the FO, the Swiss had to be informed about this risk. Yet, he did not believe that an Anglo-Swiss information exchange scheme on arms exports was necessary,⁶¹⁹ and the Minister of Defence agreed with him.⁶²⁰ In Berne, Scrivener did not fear a sudden increase in the clandestine arms traffic to Eastern Europe. Therefore, and in the light of Zehnder’s categorical assurance that this would not be the case, he argued against a renewed approach, and

⁶¹⁷ Young (FO) to Scrivener (Berne), 24.05.1950, TNA, FO 371/89124.

⁶¹⁸ Scrivener (Berne) to Young (FO), 07.06.1950, TNA, FO 371/89124.

⁶¹⁹ Young (FO) to Scrivener (Berne), 03.07.1950; Young (FO) to Gresswell (MoD), 03.07.1950, TNA, FO 371/89124.

⁶²⁰ Gresswell (MoD) to Young (FO), 06.07.1950, TNA, FO 371/89124.

promised to observe Swiss arms exports, and to intervene if necessary.⁶²¹ Back in London, the FO could live with this solution.⁶²²

Already months before the Neguib-Nasser coup of July 1952, Britain was worried about Swiss arms exports to Egypt. On 28 December 1951, Scrivener intervened in Berne against the export of war material to Egypt. Zehnder informed him that the Federal authorities would not authorise new orders, but that they would allow the fulfilment of old ones.⁶²³ Just days before the coup, on 17 July 1952, the British Minister – in the light of continued Swiss arms exports to Egypt – intervened again. This time, Petitpierre himself told him that these deliveries were still part of the old orders.⁶²⁴ After the fall of King Farouk, the Federal authorities prohibited new arms exports to Egypt, and fixed quotas for orders, which had already been authorised. Although the Swiss Foreign Minister refused to admit that this policy was the result of a British intervention, in the light of the above, one can agree with Federal Councillor Philipp Etter, who stressed that this was the case.⁶²⁵

British intervention was not, however, always necessary. In the case of the recognition of China, the two countries' policies converged anyway. In December 1949, the British Legation's Tull informed Zehnder about the British intention to recognise the PRC, and the desire to have an "avalanche" of countries following suit. With the Federal Council's decision to recognise the new Chinese regime already taken, the Federal Political Department's representative replied that Switzerland would be among the countries to recognise the PRC in January 1950.⁶²⁶ Despite multiple interventions from the US, the Swiss Confederation – in line with the maxim of "universality" – was among the first countries to recognise communist China.⁶²⁷ Yet, Scrivener was mistaken to conclude that this was due to the British intervention of December 1949, for the Swiss decision had already been made at the time.⁶²⁸

In addition to common policies, Britain and Switzerland – although not with equal success – relied on one another to represent their interests. During the Korean War scare, the Swiss looked across the English Channel for their financial security.

⁶²¹ Scrivener (Berne) to Young (FO), 19.07.1950, TNA, FO 371/89124.

⁶²² Young (FO) to Scrivener (Berne), 08.08.1950, TNA, FO 371/89124.

⁶²³ Zehnder to Petitpierre (both FPD), 28.12.1951, SFA, E2802(-), 1967/78, Bd.8.

⁶²⁴ Entretien avec M. Scrivener, Ministre de Grande-Bretagne, Petitpierre (FPD), 17.07.1952, SFA, E2800, 1990/106, Bd.20.

⁶²⁵ Verhandlungsprotokoll der 56. Sitzung des Bundesrats, 10.10.1952, dodis.ch/9320, SDD.

⁶²⁶ Zehnder to Petitpierre (both FPD), 19.12.1949, SFA, E2802(-), 1967/78, Bd.8.

⁶²⁷ Hug, „Vom Neutralismus...“, *op. cit.*, p.83.

⁶²⁸ Switzerland Annual Review for 1949, Scrivener (Berne), 31.03.1950, BDFA, IV, F, Vol.25, p.441.

The Swiss National Bank intended to set up, in cooperation with the Bank of England, a special delegation in the UK in the event of war.⁶²⁹ Although Whitehall could not enter into any precise commitment, it intended “to facilitate the effective functioning of the Delegation to the maximum extent predictable”.⁶³⁰ Meanwhile, however, Britain was less accommodating to Berne’s request to guarantee its shipping supplies in time of war. London was neither willing to give individual guarantees, nor to defend the Swiss case in the Atlantic Council.⁶³¹ By contrast, the Swiss were more amenable to Whitehall’s requests. As the situation in Iran became increasingly alarming, Britain turned to Switzerland for representing its interests in Tehran. Berne readily complied, and became the UK’s protecting power in Mosaddegh’s Iran.⁶³²

Although both countries had sometimes a wishful perception of each other, their policies mostly converged and, if not, reciprocal diplomatic interventions were often sufficient to bring about the necessary adjustments.

6.2. *Continuous Economic Adjustments*

Despite Switzerland’s promises to purchase more war materiel from Britain, Anglo-Swiss economic relations remained problematic. This clearly came to the fore during the bilateral economic negotiations, which took place in London between 24 January and 3 February 1949. The Swiss delegation encountered resistant British negotiating partners, who had been instructed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Sir Stafford Cripps, who championed British austerity. Although the Swiss Delegate for Commercial Agreements, Schaffner, called on Cripps himself, the British position remained firm. The problem was that a balanced budget in trade and invisibles between Switzerland and the sterling area was impossible, and that Britain was responsible to cover the deficit through gold deliveries. Claiming the OEEC’s agreement to avoid intra-European gold transfers, London was only willing to pay in gold for its urgent needs. Moreover, the Chancellor of the Exchequer held the view that Switzerland, as the richest country in Europe, had to make sacrifices.

⁶²⁹ Beale (Bank of England) to Brittain (FO), 28.03.1951, TNA, FO 371/96023.

⁶³⁰ London to FO, 11.05.1951; FO to London, 24.10.1951, TNA, FO 371/96023.

⁶³¹ TNA, FO 371/89131;91888; Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, *op. cit.*, pp.47-54.

⁶³² Escher (Tehran) to Petitpierre (FPD), 06.10.1952; 09.03.1953; 27.08.1953, dodis.ch/9554/9584/9549, SDD.

Consequently, as the British foresaw gold payments for invisibles during the budget year 1949/50, they were unwilling to use gold to cover non-essentials and tourism. Meanwhile, it became increasingly difficult for Switzerland to export non-essentials to the rest of the sterling area, because London had instructed the sterling countries to purchase only high essentials. Schaffner complained that while “Britain had no understanding at all for Swiss problems”, it requested an important quantity of rare high essentials for its own needs.

Only important Swiss concessions could induce Britain to allow for a limited extent of tourism and export of non-essentials. Among the concessions, such as an “open door” policy for British goods, figured also increased imports from the sterling area. The foreseen purchase of a second Vampire series had a prominent place therein. British cooperation was, however, unsatisfactory for the Swiss delegation, which refused to make additional concessions. In the light of this deadlock, the negotiations were interrupted. Nonetheless, Schaffner warned Federal Councillor Rubattel, Head of the Federal Department of Public Economy, that the failure to reach an agreement would lead to a stop of British tourism and export of non-essentials to the sterling area.⁶³³

Finally, to safeguard the Swiss tourist and luxury industries, the Federal authorities gave in, and on 25 February 1949, the basic monetary agreement of 1946 was prolonged for another year. Switzerland promised not to claim the credit of 1946, and a SFr.60 million increase in imports from the sterling area. In exchange, Britain agreed to cover part of the balance of payments deficit in gold. The budget foresaw Swiss exports to the sterling area of SFr.380 million – of which SFr.180 million were for Britain itself –, and SFr.80 million were calculated for Anglo-Swiss tourism traffic.⁶³⁴ In the aim to increase the imports from the sterling area, the Trade Section approached various federal departments, among which figured most prominently the Federal Military Department.

After lengthy discussions, the Military Technical Service and the Trade Section agreed on additional arms purchases from Britain in the amount of SFr.15-20 million. Besides the second Vampire series, this sum also included artillery tractors from Vickers for SFr.10 million, of which a third would have to be paid during the

⁶³³ Wirtschaftsverhandlungen mit Grossbritannien, Schaffner (Trade Section) to Rubattel (FDPE), 07.02.1949, dodis.ch/3881, *SDD*.

⁶³⁴ Hobi, *op. cit.*, p.143.

ongoing budget year. Confronted with the Artillery Commission's indecision on this purchase, in mid-May 1949, the Trade Section urged Defence Minister Kobelt to use his influence to bring about a decision in favour of the tractor. It feared that if the Swiss would not make the promised additional imports, the British would reduce the allocated amount for non-essentials and invisibles.⁶³⁵ In August, however, it became clear that neither the Military Technical Service nor the Artillery Commission favoured the purchase of these tractors, which both considered inadequate.⁶³⁶

This prompted a personal intervention by Rubattel. Although in his letter to Kobelt he did not question the military reasons for this decision, he stressed the matter's commercial aspects: while there were no compensating imports in sight, the discussions with London to review the fulfilment of the agreement were imminent. Moreover, the British became increasingly nervous, because – due to decreasing Swiss imports from the sterling area – their gold payments were beyond budget. If in addition to this already strained situation, Switzerland's promise for additional imports could be questioned, Rubattel feared the worst – not only for the export of non-essentials, but also for the coming winter season. Therefore, he urged Kobelt to revise the decision on the artillery tractors.⁶³⁷ The Head of the Federal Military Department was not willing to question his subordinates' decision, but he asked the Chief of the General Staff to enquire about other potential military purchases in the UK.⁶³⁸ Yet, according to de Montmollin, the only potential order was a limited amount of tanks for test purposes, which could not be guaranteed.⁶³⁹ In his reply to Rubattel, Kobelt argued that despite the re-evaluation of the artillery tractor (which was a lie), the conclusion remained the same.⁶⁴⁰ The Federal Department of Public Economy continued, however, to advocate additional imports from Britain, and this would have an impact on Switzerland's interest in British tanks.

Meanwhile, the “additional imports” lost their urgency, as the devaluation of pound sterling shifted priorities. In September 1949, under the pressure of an exchange crisis, the pound was devalued by thirty percent, from SFr.17.35 to SFr.12.24 for one pound. The whole sterling area, except Pakistan, followed London's example. As the monetary agreement of 1946 did not contain an exchange rate

⁶³⁵ FDPE to Kobelt (FMD), 18.05.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 17971.

⁶³⁶ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to FMD, 16.08.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 17971.

⁶³⁷ Rubattel (FDPE) to Kobelt (FMD), 12.09.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 17971.

⁶³⁸ Kobelt to de Montmollin (both FMD), 23.09.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 17971.

⁶³⁹ De Montmollin to Kobelt (both FMD), 28.09.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 17971.

⁶⁴⁰ Kobelt (FMD) to Rubattel (FDPE), 04.10.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 17971.

security clause for the credit, Switzerland lost SFr.76 million. Furthermore, in only a few days, Swiss pound sterling assets shrank from 15 to 7.5 million.⁶⁴¹ Unsurprisingly, the financial loss Switzerland had endured was discussed between 24 and 27 October 1949, when a British economic delegation stayed in Berne. The Swiss request to cover the SFr.76 million was, however, rejected.

Confronted with this refusal, Rubattel argued in a letter to Nobs, Head of the Federal Finance Department, that Switzerland had to bear the consequences of the situation before the conclusion of the monetary agreement of 1946. In the aim to secure Britain's goodwill in the negotiations with the Americans about Nazi assets and the black list, the Federal authorities had agreed to an important credit without an exchange rate security clause.⁶⁴² The Federal Council justified the financial loss to the Federal Assembly by stating that without devaluation London would have had to restrict its imports from Switzerland and Anglo-Swiss tourism traffic.⁶⁴³ This was, however, pure whitewashing. For the devaluation reduced Swiss exports to the UK and diminished the number of British tourists staying in Switzerland.⁶⁴⁴ Later, Rubattel admitted to the Federal Assembly that devaluation had adversely affected the hotel industry.⁶⁴⁵ In contrast, the devaluation was to Britain's advantage, because not only did it reduce the credit, but it also arrested the flow of gold from the UK to Switzerland.⁶⁴⁶ Yet, this was not sufficient for the Treasury, which desired to stop the loss of gold completely.⁶⁴⁷

Accordingly, the economic negotiations in early 1950 to replace the expiring monetary agreement were difficult. Due to strong disagreements, the negotiations – which took place first in London (17-28 January) and then in Berne (13-21 February) – were interrupted twice. The Swiss asked for increased exports of non-essentials to the sterling area, an extension of the trade liberalisation in line with the OEEC, more money for tourism, an exchange rate guarantee for Swiss sterling accounts, and the reimbursement of the financial loss incurred through devaluation. In return, the Swiss delegation offered to continue the “open door” policy for British goods and to prolong

⁶⁴¹ Truninger, *op. cit.*, pp.49-50; Hobi, *op. cit.*, p.135.

⁶⁴² Rubattel (FDPE) to Nobs (FFD), 10.11.1949, dodis.ch/7861, *SDD*.

⁶⁴³ Truninger, *op. cit.*, p.51.

⁶⁴⁴ Hobi, *op. cit.*, p.138.

⁶⁴⁵ Swiss Economic Situation, Scrivener (Berne) to Younger (FO), 23.06.1950, *BDFA*, IV, F, Vol.25, pp.445-446.

⁶⁴⁶ Switzerland Annual Review for 1949, Scrivener (Berne), 31.03.1950, *BDFA*, IV, F, Vol.25, pp.439-440.

⁶⁴⁷ Walmsley to Shuckburgh (both FO), 13.12.1949, TNA, FO 371/79871.

the monetary agreement of 1946 for another year. The British negotiating partners, who wanted to avoid further gold losses, rejected these demands. It was only very slowly and through continuous consultations with their capitals that the delegations came to an agreement for the period between 1 March 1950 and 28 February 1951. In the trade sector, it foresaw Swiss exports for SFr.353 million to the sterling area, of which SFr.171.4 million were for the UK alone, and SFr.95 million were for Britain's needs of high essentials. In exchange, Switzerland continued the "open door" policy for British goods. With regard to British tourist traffic, the Swiss could secure an amount of SFr.70.1 million for the period between 1 May 1950 and 30 April 1951, but they did not get an increase in the quota per tourist, which remained at SFr.610. Financially, Britain promised to cover "invisibles", which exceeded the budget, with gold, and the 1946 monetary agreement was prolonged for yet another year. Despite only limited British concessions concerning gold payments, the Federal Department of Public Economy was satisfied with the solutions for the export of non-essentials and tourism, and the Federal Council gave its agreement in mid-March 1950.⁶⁴⁸

Contrary to expectations, the evolution of the balance of payments in 1950 rendered gold deliveries unnecessary. The amount of SFr.140 million, which Britain owed Switzerland in early April, shrank that much that in early November the Swiss owed Britain SFr.57 million. This phenomenon was due to massive pound buying, because of the conflict in Korea and the expected revaluation of the pound. This year was, however, an exception, and thereafter the balance of payments was again in Switzerland's favour.⁶⁴⁹ Aware that this situation was abnormal, and not yet convinced that Berne would join the EPU, the Board of Trade continued to argue in favour of the sale of war materiel to keep exports to Switzerland "at the highest possible level".⁶⁵⁰ The Treasury, although it was very interested in the Swiss proposal to place substantial orders for military equipment in the UK, saw the matter in a different light: "in view of the policy of rearmament it may not be as easy for us to accommodate Swiss orders of this kind as it was in the past", and "once Switzerland is in [the] EPU, whatever they spend on military equipments in the UK will not make the slightest difference to the old balance on the No. 1 Account".⁶⁵¹ Berne was aware

⁶⁴⁸ Wirtschaftsverhandlungen mit Grossbritannien, Bundesratsprotokoll, 13.03.1950, dodis.ch/7180, SDD.

⁶⁴⁹ Truninger, *op. cit.*, p.51; Hobi, *op. cit.*, p.136.

⁶⁵⁰ Paterson (BoT) to McCallum (MoS), 12.08.1950, TNA, FO 371/89133.

⁶⁵¹ Weston (Treasury) to Holliday (Berne), 28.08.1950, TNA, FO 371/89130.

of the latter argument, and thus desired to pay for war materiel before joining the EPU.⁶⁵² Meanwhile, as the former observation made clear, it was also questionable whether the Swiss would still get access to British weapons.

Consequently, with regard to its balance of payments problems with Switzerland, Britain had a strong interest in Berne joining the EPU. In 1949, the UK Delegation to the OEEC argued decidedly in favour of a solution, which would enable the Swiss to join. In August 1949, the Head of the Delegation, Edmund Hall-Patch, reported to the FO: “We marshalled all the political, economic and financial arguments we could to persuade ECA [Economic Cooperation Administration] that it was desirable to find some means by which Switzerland could be brought in as an effective member of the Intra-European Payments Scheme”.⁶⁵³ Finally, with the entry of both countries into the EPU, the bilateral economic relationship entered into a new phase. The Anglo-Swiss economic talks in November 1950 to review the agreement from March were the occasion to discuss the new situation.

After Switzerland had joined the EPU in October, on 1 November, Britain extended the OEEC’s liberalised import quotas to Swiss merchandise. Yet, London could still exclude non-essentials from the liberalisation scheme, as long as the overall quota was fulfilled. As the balance of payments was not an urgent issue anymore, the Swiss asked for an increase of the quota for their non-essentials. For protectionist reasons, however, the British refused. Due to its pledge to practice an “open door” policy for British goods in the ongoing agreement, Berne did not have any trade weapons at its disposal and had to accept this for the moment. Nonetheless, London informed the other sterling area countries that Switzerland could not anymore be discriminated as a hard currency country, and abolished the limit on tourism travel. The quota per tourist, however, remained the same. Finally, the EPU and the fact that Britain had paid back the credit left Switzerland without its traditional credit weapon to increase the export of non-essentials. The Federal Department of Public Economy concluded that the only remaining trade weapon was the quota for the import of non-liberalised British goods.⁶⁵⁴

In the run-up to the economic negotiations to settle Anglo-Swiss economic relations in the light of the upcoming expiration of the monetary agreement, the

⁶⁵² Tull (Berne) to FO, 01.09.1950, TNA, FO 371/89130.

⁶⁵³ Hall-Patch (UK OEEC Delegation) to Berthoud (FO), 22.08.1949, TNA, FO 371/77913.

⁶⁵⁴ Wirtschaftsverhandlungen mit Grossbritannien, Bundesratsprotokoll, 24.11.1950, dodis.ch/7843, SDD.

Federal Department of Public Economy warned the Federal Council in January 1951 that the Swiss position was difficult. Tourism was not an issue anymore, because the British had raised the quota per tourist to Fr.1220. Yet, it remained crucial to increase the export of non-essentials.⁶⁵⁵ The negotiations, which had started on 23 January, finally led to an “agreed minute” on 12 February, which provided only for the commercial relations, and did not regulate financial issues. As the Swiss were not willing to accept the British proposal for an agreement that included membership in the Transferable Account Area, the monetary agreement was again prolonged.⁶⁵⁶ The Swiss could at least increase the quota for non-liberalised goods from SFr.31.5 to SFr.65 million. But they were unable to secure British promises for strongly desired raw materials.⁶⁵⁷

In 1951, the trade liberalisation in the framework of the EPU and the Western rearmament effort led to a significant increase of Swiss exports to the sterling area. Simultaneously, Britain’s balance of payments with the other EPU and dollar countries became increasingly alarming. The loss of hard currency to the dollar area and the gold transfers to the EPU forced the UK and the sterling area to impose drastic cost-cutting measures, especially in trade and tourism. The quota per tourist decreased to SFr.305, and trade liberalisation dropped to 46 percent. Confronted with these British emergency measures for economic survival, Federal Councillor Rubattel had a grim outlook for the coming Anglo-Swiss economic negotiations in spring 1952.⁶⁵⁸ He was not mistaken. While Whitehall granted at least the same quotas for non-liberalised goods as in 1951, due to its precarious gold reserves, it was unwilling to make any concessions for tourism traffic, and maintained the reduction of the quota per tourist.⁶⁵⁹

The British restrictions led to a decrease of the pound surplus held by Switzerland. Therefore, London agreed to increase the percentage of liberalised goods. During the Anglo-Swiss talks from 10 to 19 December 1952, the Swiss were able to secure guarantees and concessions for their non-essentials, because they were willing to grant an “open door” policy for British goods. The monetary agreement was

⁶⁵⁵ Wirtschaftsverhandlungen, Bundesratsprotokoll, 19.01.1951, dodis.ch/7895, *SDD*.

⁶⁵⁶ Switzerland: Annual Review for 1951, Scrivener (Berne) to Eden (FO), 29.01.1952, *BDFA*, V, F, Vol.8, p.450. On Switzerland and the Transferable Account Area see Maurhofer, „Schweizerisch-britische Verständigung...“, *op. cit.*, p.481.

⁶⁵⁷ Hobi, *op. cit.*, p.146.

⁶⁵⁸ Rubattel (FDPE) to Federal Council, 24.04.1952, dodis.ch/8472, *SDD*.

⁶⁵⁹ Hobi, *op. cit.*, p.147.

again prolonged. This time, however, for as long as the EPU would compensate for credits in the Anglo-Swiss balance of payments.⁶⁶⁰ The agreement of 19 December, which was to last for six months, was extended for the remainder of the year in June 1953, when Britain decided to increase the liberalisation of Swiss imports to 58.5 percent.⁶⁶¹

In sum, between 1949 and 1953, while Britain tried to adapt to a changing world for its financial survival, Switzerland struggled to adapt Anglo-Swiss economic relations to its benefit.

6.3. *A Tamed British Lion*

On the issue of East-West trade, Berne looked instinctively to London, which was readily available to discuss about it. However, did Britain and Switzerland view the strategic embargo against the USSR in the same light, and what role did the British have in bringing the Swiss into compliance with CoCom? Otherwise, did Whitehall intervene on Berne's behalf and, if not, did it lack the power to do so?

On 22 December 1948, only one week after the American Minister in Berne, John Vincent, had brought up US embargo measures against the East, the Swiss Minister in London went to see the British Foreign Secretary. De Torrenté naively informed Bevin about the American approach, and observed that to curtail exports to the East would prejudice Switzerland's export trade more generally. He indirectly asked for help by stating that the Swiss Government was "in some difficulty regarding the attitude they should adopt in the matter". More directly, the Swiss Minister asked whether the US had made a similar approach to the British. Without giving any advice, Bevin replied that the American embargo measures were in the interest of Western security, and that while Whitehall was "not under any kind of pressure", he intended to discuss the matter with the OEEC countries and the US.⁶⁶²

⁶⁶⁰ Rubattel (FDPE) to Federal Council, 26.12.1952, dodis.ch/10219, *SDD*; Switzerland: Annual Review for 1952, Scrivener (Berne) to Eden (FO), 05.02.1953, TNA, FO 371/107331; Andr  s, *op. cit.*, p.64.

⁶⁶¹ Switzerland: Annual Review for 1953, Lamb (Berne) to Eden (FO), 03.02.1954, TNA, FO 371/112699; Hobi, *op. cit.*, p.147.

⁶⁶² Conversation between the Secretary of State and the Swiss Minister, Bevin (FO) to Hall-Patch (UK Delegation OEEC), 22.12.1948, *BDFA*, IV, F, Vol.15, p.114.

De Torrenté was unaware that Britain was supposed to lead the Western European response to the strategic embargo. Therefore, his approach did not result in Britain's support, but in the FO's interest to "pursue the matter [of East-West trade] further with Switzerland".⁶⁶³ Yet, as the British called at the OEEC-meeting of 17 January 1949 for a limited strategic embargo, the Swiss, together with the Swedes, vociferously opposed any restrictions on trade with Eastern Europe.⁶⁶⁴ Also the British Minister's individual approach later that month met Berne's refusal. Foreign Minister Petitpierre argued that Switzerland did not export any war material to the East, and he did not envisage participating in the strategic embargo.⁶⁶⁵

It was not until June that the British Minister again approached the Federal Political Department on the issue of East-West trade. While Snow asked for guarantees that the Vampires would not be re-exported, he also expressed London's (and Washington's) preoccupation that Switzerland was a transit platform for strategic goods.⁶⁶⁶ The Swiss willingly gave guarantees for the Vampires, but they intended to respond evasively for as long as possible to queries on transit trade.⁶⁶⁷ Officials in Berne were suspicious of the British, to whom they attributed the desire to prevent the Swiss from monopolising Eastern European markets, while they themselves were obliged by the US to curtail their Eastern trade.⁶⁶⁸ Accordingly, the reply to the British Legation was evasive. The note insinuated that transit trade of strategic goods to the East was beyond the control of the Swiss Government, and mentioned the agreement by which Washington was informed on the final destination of American goods.⁶⁶⁹ Yet, although Whitehall would have certainly desired a different response, by the end of 1949, Berne's refusal to collaborate more fully in strategic trade was only considered to be of "slight trouble".⁶⁷⁰

Moreover, in early 1950, encouraging signs were reaching London. On 9 January, the British Minister informed the FO that the Swiss had prevented the transit of aircraft engines to Czechoslovakia. Scrivener rejoiced that "for the first time [...]"

⁶⁶³ Rob to Berthoud (both FO), 15.01.1949, TNA, FO 371/77928.

⁶⁶⁴ Jackson, *op. cit.*, pp.31-32; Cain, *op. cit.*, p.22.

⁶⁶⁵ Entretien avec M. Snow, Petitpierre (FPD), 25.01.1949, SFA, E2800, 1990/106, Bd.20; Snow (Berne) to FO, 26.01.1949, TNA, FO 371/77928.

⁶⁶⁶ Entretien avec M. Snow, Petitpierre (FPD), 07.06.1949, SFA, E2001(E), 1967/113, Bd.13.

⁶⁶⁷ Cuttat to Petitpierre (both FPD), 14.06.1949, SFA, E2001(E), 1967/113, Bd.13.

⁶⁶⁸ Campiche to Cuttat (both FPD), 18.06.1949, SFA, E2001(E), 1967/113, Bd.13.

⁶⁶⁹ Cuttat (FPD) to Tull (Berne), 30.06.1949; Aide-mémoire, 28.06.1949, SFA, E2001(E), 1967/113, Bd.13.

⁶⁷⁰ Walmsley to Shuckburgh (both FO), 13.12.1949, TNA, FO 371/79871.

the federal law on the export of arms has been interpreted to cover quasi-military material in transit”.⁶⁷¹ Interestingly, the Swiss had acted out of self-interest, and not under Anglo-American pressure. Scrivener was informed by Cuttat, Counsellor at the Federal Political Department, that “it was more important for Switzerland to prevent the Satellite war potential being increased”, than to protect the small economic interests in transit trade.⁶⁷² In mid-March, after a renewed Swiss intervention – this time to prevent the transit of Czechoslovak munitions to French communists –, Cuttat informed the British Legation’s Tull that his government would continue to prevent the export of arms from Switzerland and the transit of warlike material through its territory.⁶⁷³ Simultaneously, Tull informed London that the Swiss were beginning to cooperate “within the limits of their special position”, but that there was still a “considerable leakage of strategic materials through Switzerland to Iron Curtain countries”, because of ill-disposed Swiss and American businessmen.⁶⁷⁴

Despite this leakage, Whitehall interpreted the news coming from Berne positively. The FO’s European Recovery Department observed that although it was impossible to achieve complete Swiss cooperation in the strategic embargo, they were doing what they could “within the limits imposed by their traditional neutrality”.⁶⁷⁵ London thus advised its Legation in Berne that no action was necessary at the moment, and decided to reduce the danger of transit trade itself by refusing to supply suspicious Swiss firms.⁶⁷⁶ Therefore, two months elapsed until the British Minister again approached the Federal Political Department in June on the transit and the re-exportation of strategic goods.⁶⁷⁷

With the outbreak of the Korean War, however, the British grew increasingly impatient with the Swiss, who continued to refuse to cooperate in the strategic embargo. Although in September the British Legation argued against more forceful measures to induce Berne to participate in the strategic embargo, it nonetheless called for “a frank exchange of views” with the Swiss on the issue of exports from or through Switzerland to the East.⁶⁷⁸ In October, Scrivener approached the Federal

⁶⁷¹ Scrivener (Berne) to FO, 9.01.1950, TNA, FO 371/89122.

⁶⁷² Scrivener (Berne) to McNeil (FO), 30. 01.1950, TNA, FO 371/89122.

⁶⁷³ Scrivener (Berne) to FO, 14.03.1950; Scrivener (Berne) to Bevin (FO), 14.03.1950, TNA, FO 371/86791.

⁶⁷⁴ Tull (Berne) to FO, 14.03.1950, TNA, 371/87216.

⁶⁷⁵ Minute, Aiers (FO), 20.03.1950, TNA, FO 371/87216.

⁶⁷⁶ FO to Berne, 21.04.1950, TNA, FO 371/87216.

⁶⁷⁷ Visite de M. Scrivener, Zehnder (FPD), 06.06.1950, SFA, E2001(E), 1967/113, Bd.13.

⁶⁷⁸ Tull (Berne) to Younger (FO), 09.09.1950, TNA, FO 371/87217.

Political Department with the request to cooperate with CoCom as a member, or at least to collaborate with it, and to apply the international lists of embargoed goods – which it had received from the Head of the Consultative Group, Hervé Alphand.⁶⁷⁹

Yet, Zehnder disliked the OEEC's involvement, and gave Scrivener to understand that the Swiss considered Alphand's demarche invalid. Moreover, Zehnder underlined that Switzerland could not afford to lose the raw materials which it received from Eastern Europe in return for its exports. Despite these remarks, the British Minister remained convinced that Zehnder "himself will really look for some means of meeting us".⁶⁸⁰ However, he was wrong, for according to the Swiss official, if the Americans and British desired to prevent the transit of strategic material through Switzerland, they would have to exert a better control on their own companies.⁶⁸¹ Consequently, the British demarche did not result in any concessions, and the discussions continued between the FO and the Swiss Legation in London.

In late November, the Swiss met Britain's demands on the issue of transit trade halfway, and agreed to inform Whitehall on the end use of strategic goods, which Britain exported to Switzerland. Meanwhile, the FO's half-heartedly expressed hope for Swiss compliance with the international lists proved unrealized.⁶⁸² According to de Torrenté, London was nonetheless satisfied with the modest measures on transit trade.⁶⁸³ Yet, the British were not really content, but they feared that further insistence to bring Switzerland's (and Sweden's) exports into line with the international lists would rather have the opposite effect, namely that they would "retire into their shells".⁶⁸⁴ Interestingly, the British had previously not been interested in a system that would inform them on the end use of their strategic exports to Switzerland, for they feared that a decline in trade and further gold losses would be a logical consequence thereof. However, as Scrivener observed, thanks to Swiss EPU-membership this was not an issue anymore.⁶⁸⁵

Despite fears that insisting on Swiss participation in the strategic embargo could have the opposite effect, the British, together with the French, participated in

⁶⁷⁹ Aide-mémoire, Berne, 17.10.1950, SFA, E2001(E), 1967/113, Bd.13.

⁶⁸⁰ Scrivener (Berne) to Broad (FO), 18.10.1950, TNA, FO 192/216.

⁶⁸¹ Zehnder (FPD) to Hotz (Trade Section), 21.10.1950, SFA, E2001(E), 1967/113, Bd.13.

⁶⁸² Umbricht to de Torrenté (both Berne), 24.11.1950, SFA, E2200.40, 1968/163, Bd.25; Minute, Slater (FO), 24.11.1950, TNA, FO 371/87217.

⁶⁸³ De Torrenté (London) to Zehnder (FPD), 27.11.1950, SFA, E2200.40, 1968/126, Bd.25.

⁶⁸⁴ Minute, Slater (FO), 28.11.1950, TNA, FO 371/87217.

⁶⁸⁵ Scrivener (Berne) to Bevin (FO), TNA, FO 192/216.

the American-led trilateral approach to the Federal Political Department on 8 January 1951 to comply with the international lists.⁶⁸⁶ Yet, London's position was not as firm as Washington's. While the latter did not have any sympathy for Switzerland's special position, the former did. Although the British desired Swiss cooperation, they had not yet envisaged economic threats or measures.⁶⁸⁷ In addition, the Swiss Minister in London did not fear the British, for they seemed to be unprepared and did not expect a rapid and satisfying response.⁶⁸⁸ Consequently, the measures, which the Federal Council adopted on 30 January against transit trade – such as the requirement of an import certificate for all strategic goods – were intended to calm the Americans. However, while these measures failed to achieve the desired effect in Washington,⁶⁸⁹ London seemed to be satisfied, at least on the issue of transit trade.⁶⁹⁰

Minister de Torrenté concluded from discussions with Assistant Under-Secretary of State Berthoud that there was an “important discrepancy between Great Britain and the United States in the pursuit of their objectives with regard to Switzerland”.⁶⁹¹ Therefore, in mid-March, the American Legation clearly expressed its dissatisfaction with the measures taken by the Federal Council against transit trade, and insisted that the export of Swiss products also had to conform with the international lists. Scrivener, by contrast, expressed his satisfaction on the transit of strategic goods, and only mentioned London's availability if Berne desired to discuss about its own strategic exports.⁶⁹² Thereafter, while the US continuously increased its diplomatic and economic pressure on the Swiss, Britain increasingly became a bystander.

In early June, in the run-up to the US-Swiss negotiations on East-West trade, London was only informed by the Swiss themselves that these negotiations were to take place. Nonetheless, the British desired to participate and argued that their presence would be beneficial, for they understood Switzerland's position better than the Americans. De Torrenté, however, advised Berne to limit the talks to a bilateral level. He argued that if the Federal Council decided to curtail trade with the East, it

⁶⁸⁶ Schaller, *op. cit.*, pp.24-26.

⁶⁸⁷ De Torrenté (London) to Zehnder (FPD), 15.01.1951, SFA, E2001(E), 1967/113, Bd.13.

⁶⁸⁸ De Torrenté (London) to Zehnder (FPD), 18.01.1951, SFA, E2001(E), 1967/113, Bd.13.

⁶⁸⁹ Cerutti, « La Suisse dans la Guerre froide... », *op. cit.*, p.327.

⁶⁹⁰ London to FPD, 23.02.1951, SFA, E2001(E), 1967/113, Bd.13.

⁶⁹¹ De Torrenté (London) to Zehnder (FPD), 16.03.1951, SFA, E2001(E), 1967/113, Bd.13.

⁶⁹² Zehnder to Petitpierre (both FPD) and Rubattel (FDPE) etc., 17.03.1951, SFA, E2001(E), 1967/113, Bd.13.

had to be shown to the world that this was forced upon Switzerland through American pressure; neither Britain nor France intended or had the means to put the same pressure on the Swiss; and the British would not be able to influence the Americans to moderate their position towards Switzerland on this issue.⁶⁹³ The Federal Council followed this advice, and de Torrenté obtained the FO's promise that they would not insist on participating in the negotiations.⁶⁹⁴ Consequently, the negotiations leading to the "Hotz-Linder-Agreement" of 23 July 1951 took place without British participation. Yet, as officials in Whitehall learned that the Swiss had agreed to participate in the strategic embargo, they were astonished how far Berne had been willing to meet Washington's demands.⁶⁹⁵

After this decisive episode, Britain remained of minor importance to Switzerland on the issue of East-West trade. Nonetheless, Berne observed with interest London's opposition to the consequences of the Battle Act, as this could be to its own advantage.⁶⁹⁶ Moreover, both the UK and Switzerland continued to export a limited amount of strategic material to the East, and were thus opposed to a further extension of the lists of embargoed goods.⁶⁹⁷ Accordingly, as Washington again approached Berne from late 1952 to stop its remaining trade with Eastern Europe, London had a more moderate position and only asked the Swiss to prevent the export of certain goods of major strategic importance.⁶⁹⁸ However, despite Whitehall's moderate attitude, de Torrenté observed that the Swiss could not expect efficient help from the British to soften the US position.⁶⁹⁹ Finally, in August 1953, the Swiss Legation in London concluded that Britain (and the other NATO states) left it to the Americans to come to a final agreement with Switzerland on the issue of East-West trade.⁷⁰⁰

Even though London and Berne shared a common interest in their trade with Eastern Europe, the British favoured the implementation of the strategic embargo for security reasons. The Swiss agreed with these concerns only insofar as they were

⁶⁹³ De Torrenté (London) to Trade Section (FDPE), 07.06.1951, SFA, E2001(E), 1967/113, Bd.14.

⁶⁹⁴ De Torrenté (London) to Hotz (Trade Section), 20.06.1951, SFA, E2001(E), 1967/113, Bd.14.

⁶⁹⁵ Bernath (London) to Trade Section (FDPE), 18.08.1951, SFA, E2001(E), 1967/113, Bd.15; Conversation avec Mr. Slater (FO), London, 30.08.1951, SFA, E2200.40, 1968/163, Bd.25.

⁶⁹⁶ Schaffner (Trade Section) to de Torrenté (London), 22.09.1951, SFA, E2200.40, 1968/163, Bd.25; Zehnder (FPD) to Swiss OEEC Delegation, 31.01.1952, SFA, E2001(E), 1969/121, Bd.4.

⁶⁹⁷ Schaffner (Trade Section) to London, 04.12.1952, SFA, E2200.40, 1968/164, Bd.17.

⁶⁹⁸ Note, London, 25.03.1953, SFA, E2200.40, 1968/164, Bd.16.

⁶⁹⁹ De Torrenté (London) to Schaffner (Trade Section), 31.03.1953, SFA, E2001(E), 1969/121, Bd.4.

⁷⁰⁰ Bernath (London) to Trade Section (FDPE), 08.08.1953, SFA, E2001(E), 1969/121, Bd.4.

related to such strategic goods as war material and obvious dual-use items. Although Whitehall intended first to bring Berne into compliance with the strategic embargo, it had a moderate position, was satisfied by minor Swiss measures on transit trade, and left later the initiative to Washington. Meanwhile, Britain did not intervene on Switzerland's behalf in its dealings with the US. Apparently, inasmuch as the British lacked the power to bring about Swiss cooperation in the strategic embargo, they were not sufficiently strong to be of any assistance to Switzerland. Yet it seems that London never considered using arms deliveries as a means to compensate for its lack of power, and to extract concessions from Berne by threatening to withhold the delivery of tanks and aircraft.

6.4. Swiss Defence Cooperation despite British Criticism

Mauro Mantovani has convincingly demonstrated that during the period under observation, Anglo-Swiss security relations intensified considerably.⁷⁰¹ I will nonetheless present and analyse the developments during these years, as they are relevant to the understanding of the arms transfers in the subsequent chapters. In doing so, I intend to be as brief as possible, and to reinterpret the original documents to unearth circumstances or causes, which could have favoured Swiss weapons purchases in the UK.

The two countries' military relations intensified after Field-Marshal Montgomery's criticism of the Swiss Army in his meetings with the Chief of the General Staff and the Defence Minister in early 1949. To give Montgomery a better understanding of Switzerland's military system and thus to put his criticism into perspective, de Montmollin suggested to the Field-Marshal – in Kobelt's presence – to send a delegation of British officers to study the Swiss Army.⁷⁰² Thereafter, however, the Defence Minister hesitated to extend an official invitation for such a delegation to the WO. With the intensifying Cold War, the Federal Council feared for the credibility of Swiss neutrality, and Montgomery was even informed in July 1949 that he could not spend his holiday in Switzerland between his inspections of the Western

⁷⁰¹ Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, *op. cit.*, pp.100-122; *Ibid.*, "Another "special relationship"...", *op. cit.*.

⁷⁰² Bracher (FMD) to Rieser (London), 21.04.1949; Kobelt to de Montmollin (both FMD), 18.08.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 23347, Bd.6; Bd.9; Snow (Berne) to Russell (FO), 12.09.1949, TNA, FO 371/79852.

Alps and the Rhine-Line.⁷⁰³ It was finally due to Bracher, who argued that the British were eager to learn from Swiss training methods for their recently created militia army, that the mission began to materialise in August.⁷⁰⁴ But this was not what Montgomery had in mind, for, according to the British Minister in Berne, he intended to use the officers' report "to return to the charge [...] and make a further effort to persuade the Swiss to change their training system".⁷⁰⁵

If this was what the Field-Marshal wanted, he could not be disappointed by the outcome of the mission, which was headed by Brigadier Robert Cottrell-Hill, Commander of the 147th Infantry Brigade. After having toured the Swiss Army from 9 September to 22 October 1949, the British officer's report was in line with Montgomery's earlier remarks. He argued that the Swiss Army should double the number of regular officers, modernise its tactics, revise the arms training programmes, and study the effect of modern air power and land operations to understand and practice air support for ground troops. The report concluded with a devastating evaluation: "The Swiss Army, if attacked in the near future by a modern European Power, would suffer such severe casualties as to render it quickly unoperational as a force. The gallantry with which the soldiers would undoubtedly fight, would only serve to increase the casualty rate".⁷⁰⁶ Although Cottrell-Hill voiced this criticism in a discussion with Kobelt, he did so in much more moderate terms.

Meanwhile, the Defence Minister seemed to be more interested in advice on equipment, for he asked Cottrell-Hill which type of tank the Swiss Army should buy. In his reply, the British officer favoured a tank with strong firepower to eliminate enemy tanks. Because of the many bridges in Switzerland, he argued against a heavy tank, and recommended the British Centurion or Comet medium tanks.⁷⁰⁷ Yet, when he was asked during his stay if the purchase of a large amount of such vehicles was necessary, he suggested buying initially a limited amount of four tanks, to enable the Swiss troops first to gain tactical and technical experience with this weapon.⁷⁰⁸ He certainly feared the difficulties of a large-scale introduction of tanks, because he

⁷⁰³ Bracher (FMD) to Montgomery, 19.07.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 23347, Bd.7.

⁷⁰⁴ Bracher to Kobelt (both FMD), 09.08.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 23347, Bd.9; Kobelt (FMD) to Shinwell (WO), 23.08.1949, TNA, FO 371/79852.

⁷⁰⁵ Snow (Berne) to Shuckburgh (FO), 15.10.1949, TNA, FO 371/79852.

⁷⁰⁶ Cottrell-Hill to Under-Secretary of State for War (WO), 31.10.1949, Imperial War Museum, London (hereafter IWM), Montgomery Papers, Inspection of Swiss Army, Part I, Tour of Swiss Army.

⁷⁰⁷ *Ibid.*; Bericht über den Aufenthalt und die Unterredung mit den beiden englischen Offizieren, Bracher (FMD), 04.11.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 23347, Bd.9.

⁷⁰⁸ Rieser (London) to Bracher (FMD), 04.11.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 23347, Bd.9.

observed in his report that the Swiss Army should first improve the handling of the weapons which it already possessed. Thus, Cottrell-Hill's promotion for British tanks was of a very limited nature. After he had left Switzerland, the Swiss General Staff received a toned down version of the report at the very end of 1949.⁷⁰⁹

In late January 1950, in the hope that this report had made the Swiss more open to changes, Montgomery went on the attack. In a meeting with de Montmollin, he argued that the Swiss Army was not able to fight in a European war in concert with the Western powers because it lacked strategic mobility and offensive armament; nor could it offer sufficient resistance to the armies of the Eastern bloc, for its instruction was insufficient, and the higher command (the National Defence Commission) lacked a clear leadership. The Chief of the Swiss General Staff tried – without success – to explain the particularities and advantages of the National Defence Commission, only admitted “a certain inadequacy” in the Swiss Army's training, and stressed that the main weakness was its armament. Therefore, he asked for the Field-Marshal's support in obtaining war materiel from the Western bloc. But to his disappointment, the answer he received was evasive and, as we will see, Montgomery never played a significant role in Anglo-Swiss arms transfers.⁷¹⁰ Finally, the Field-Marshal had to learn during the meeting that Cottrell-Hill's report had not yet reached the Defence Minister, and that the Swiss Army did not seem willing to make the changes it called for. He therefore “came to the conclusion that some action was necessary”.⁷¹¹

On the advice of the British Minister and the Military Attaché in Berne, he decided to call not only on Kobelt, but also on Petitpierre, who, according to Scrivener, was among the Federal Councillors “the most receptive to new ideas”.⁷¹² The Field-Marshal intended to base his discussions on a memorandum entitled “The Swiss Army. The true facts of the situation”, in which he took Cottrell-Hill's devastating evaluation of the Swiss Army as a starting point. Therein he enumerated the measures, which he considered essential to enable the Swiss Army “to defend successfully the neutrality of Switzerland”, and to receive the full value for the large

⁷⁰⁹ Auszug aus dem Protokoll der Montagkonferenz, FMD, 12.12.1949; “Shortened version of Cottrell-Report”, unnamed, 23.02.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 23347, Bd.9.

⁷¹⁰ Note confidentielle sur l'entretien du 28.1.1950 avec M. le Maréchal Montgomery, de Montmollin to Kobelt (both FMD), 01.02.1950, dodis.ch/7236, SDD.

⁷¹¹ Montgomery to CIGS (WO), 27.02.1950, IWM, Montgomery Papers, Inspection of Swiss Army, Report on the Swiss Army February 1950.

⁷¹² Scrivener (Berne) to Shuckburgh (FO), 07.02.1950, Parker (Berne) to D.M.I.(M.I.4) (WO), 07.02.1950, TNA, FO 371/89123.

sums of money spent on defence: the post of Chief of Training should be abolished and replaced by a Director of Military Training⁷¹³; the number of regular officers should be doubled; the Swiss Air Force “should be at least halved”, become a tactical air force, and trained to cooperate with the army in the land battle. Regarding the third measure, Montgomery argued that Switzerland spent too much on the air force – and not enough on the army –, which was wrongly set up as a fighter defence for the following reasons: the country was “too small for adequate radar warning and other methods of information regarding the movement of hostile aircraft”, and the Swiss Air Force would not take part in the battle for the control of the air, which would be won by the Western powers “long before Switzerland was forced to become a belligerent”.⁷¹⁴

As he met with the Swiss Foreign Minister on 15 February, he based the discussion on the memorandum, and the first measure he called for was the transformation of the Swiss Air Force. He even advised to get rid of the fighter aircraft, for they were too expensive and “a waste of money”. Montgomery emphasised that since Cottrell-Hill’s report, there had been no changes in line with these measures, which were necessary to enable the Swiss Army to defend the country and play its role in the Western European defence system as a neutral.⁷¹⁵ According to Scrivener, this “shook Petitpierre considerably”. Three days later, the Field-Marshal met with the Defence Minister, gave him the memorandum, and advised him to inform the Federal Council about it. Apparently, “Kobelt was also considerably taken aback”, because of the criticism itself and the possibility of being criticised by his colleagues for wasting public money.⁷¹⁶

Before another meeting with Montgomery, which was scheduled for 22 February, Kobelt finally read Cottrell-Hill’s report. He became fully aware of the extent and importance of the criticism, and decided not only to give the report to the National Defence Commission – which would have to examine the tactical doctrine and the instruction methods –, but also to the Federal Council. Yet, as he met again with the Field-Marshal, he defended his Chief of Instruction, Corps Commander

⁷¹³ DMT.

⁷¹⁴ The Swiss Army. The true facts of the Situation: February 1950, Montgomery, 18.02.1950, SFA, E5800(-), -/1, Bd.2.

⁷¹⁵ Résumé d’un entretien avec le Maréchal Montgomery le 15 février 1950 à Mürren, Petitpierre (FPD), dodis.ch/7235, SDD.

⁷¹⁶ Scrivener (Berne) to Strang (FO), 24.02.1950, TNA, FO 371/89123.

Frick, who was one of the main targets of Montgomery's criticism.⁷¹⁷ Nonetheless, Kobelt agreed to the sending of a Swiss officer to Britain, which was supposed to be trained as a Director of Military Training.⁷¹⁸ However, this seemed to be the only tangible result from this turbulent month. Scrivener had been right in predicting that Montgomery "will come up against a deeply rooted Swiss instinct to avoid any system which puts one individual in supreme control of anything".⁷¹⁹ In addition, the Swiss military leadership and the Swiss Air Force questioned neither their air doctrine nor their aircraft procurement policy and continued to buy modern jet aircraft in Britain.⁷²⁰

The sending of an officer to Britain for the study of training methods only came about very slowly, as Frick tried to prevent it from inside the National Defence Commission. Finally, on Kobelt's and the other corps commanders' insistence, Colonel Richard Frey, Commander of the 7th Division, was chosen to be sent to Britain.⁷²¹ But this did not imply that the Swiss would make structural changes in their army's training. In mid-April, Petitpierre voiced to Tull his scepticism about Montgomery's views, which "might not necessarily apply to an army which differed greatly in organisation from those which the Field Marshal had commanded".⁷²² Nonetheless, from April to August 1950, Frey received the training of a future Director of Military Training in Britain. On his return, he emphasised the importance and the accuracy of Cottrell-Hill's and Montgomery's observations. However, his suggestion to send Swiss officers regularly to Britain for training⁷²³ was vehemently opposed by Frick, and finally denied by Kobelt.⁷²⁴ The issue had become personal for the Chief of Instruction. As the Field-Marshal voiced his criticism to people outside the inner-circle of the Swiss military leadership during his winter vacation in Switzerland in early 1951,⁷²⁵ Frick had enough. He requested to approach the British Legation in Berne, if not NATO Supreme Commander Eisenhower, for an

⁷¹⁷ Bericht über den Ferienaufenthalt Feldmarschalls Montgomery in der Schweiz, Februar 1950, undated, SFA, E5800(-), -/1, Bd.2.

⁷¹⁸ Montgomery to CIGS (WO), 27.02.1950, IWM, Montgomery Papers, Inspection of Swiss Army, Report on the Swiss Army February 1950.

⁷¹⁹ Scrivener (Berne) to Shuckburgh (FO), 07.02.1950, TNA, FO 371/89123.

⁷²⁰ *Infra*, ch.7.

⁷²¹ Bracher (FMD) to Montgomery, 05.04.1950, IWM, Montgomery Papers, Inspection of Swiss Army, Training of a D.M.T. 1950; Parker (Berne) to D.M.I.(M.I.4) (WO), 15.04.1950, TNA, FO 371/89123.

⁷²² Tull (Berne) to Shuckburgh (FO), 19.04.1950, TNA, FO 371/89123.

⁷²³ Frey to Kobelt (FMD), 30.10.1950, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1851, Bd.55.

⁷²⁴ Auszug aus dem Protokoll der Montagkonferenz, FMD, 04.11.1950, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1851, Bd.55.

⁷²⁵ Kaech to Kobelt (FMD), 30.01.1951, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1851, Bd.13.

intervention to silence Montgomery.⁷²⁶ Although this request was rejected,⁷²⁷ the Chief of Instruction finally won his case, for there would be no significant change in the Swiss Army's training structure.

Back in Britain, Montgomery's intervention did not only encounter little success, but some of his observations were also disapproved. The FO's Western Department – referring to the Joint Planning Staff report of December 1948 and the CoS' comments on it of early 1949 – questioned Switzerland's strategic importance, and the idea that the Swiss Army was unfit for war. It was argued that the military opinion in Britain “did not share Lord Montgomery's apprehension about either the threat to Switzerland or the strength with which she could resist it”. Therefore, it was considered undesirable “to become involved in any long-term programme of building up the Swiss forces at the expense of our other partners in Western Europe”.⁷²⁸ Moreover, the same department feared that the Field-Marshal's comments on the Swiss Air Force could lead the Swiss to reduce their fighter aircraft purchases in the UK.⁷²⁹ A tangible but unintended result of Montgomery's intervention in early 1950 was, however, that it aroused the suspicion of the Soviet Minister in Berne, who enquired at the British Legation “whether Switzerland had concluded a secret treaty with the Western Union”.⁷³⁰

The visit of another high-profile British officer the same year did certainly not reduce Russian suspicions, but it relativized the Field-Marshal's comments on the Swiss Air Force. On Chief of the Air Staff Lord Tedder's own request to visit Switzerland once retired, the Swiss Military and Air Attaché in London arranged his visit in early 1950.⁷³¹ Although officially Tedder came as a tourist to Switzerland, Kobelt agreed that he could see the air force in action, and discuss defence matters with the military leadership.⁷³² Therefore, in February 1950, the Air Marshal inspected a major aerial exercise in the Alps, and met the Head of the Swiss Air Force. In direct contradiction to Montgomery, Tedder argued that the Swiss had to be ready for aerial combats at the beginning of hostilities, because it would take two to

⁷²⁶ Frick to Kobelt (both FMD), 07.02.1951, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1851, Bd.13.

⁷²⁷ Auszug aus dem Protokoll der Montagkonferenz, FMD, 13.02.1951, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1851, Bd.13.

⁷²⁸ Minute, Barnes (FO), 03.03.1950, TNA, FO 371/89123.

⁷²⁹ Minute, Walmsley (FO), 14.03.1950, TNA, FO 371/89123.

⁷³⁰ Scrivener (Berne) to Strang (FO), 24.02.1950, TNA, FO 371/89123.

⁷³¹ Rieser (London) to Bracher (FMD), 04.11.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 23347, Bd.9.

⁷³² Bracher (FMD) to Rieser (London), 06.12.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 23347, Bd.9; Bracher (FMD) to Rieser (London), 20.12.1949, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1851, Bd.13.

three months until the Western Allies would have gained air superiority. Understandably, the RAF officer emphasised the need of a strong air force in modern warfare.⁷³³ While the Swiss Air Force received through this statement a strong defence in Switzerland, the British Air Attaché in Berne reported to London about the good moral of its personnel, the flying discipline, the improvement of its flying exercises, and the beneficial effect of the Vampire purchases.⁷³⁴

In the meantime, even though Montgomery had not been successful in shaping Switzerland's armed forces to his liking, the Swiss seemed to be more amenable to position their army according to his tactics for the defence of Western Europe. In August 1949, the British Military Attaché in Berne, Lieutenant-Colonel Wilmot-Sitwell, considered a Soviet attack on Switzerland only likely if the Western Union defence would collapse, and if this would be the case, the Swiss Army would not be able to hold the plateau for more than two to three weeks.⁷³⁵ In 1951, his successor, Lieutenant-Colonel Parker, considered a Russian attack on Switzerland even more unlikely.⁷³⁶ These ideas were not only shared by the British Chief of Military Intelligence,⁷³⁷ but also by the CoS. Even with the unfolding of the Korean War, they maintained that a Russian attack on Switzerland was unlikely, because of its neutrality and its minor military-strategic importance to the Soviet Union.⁷³⁸ According to Hans Rudolf Fuhrer, they were right, for during the entire first Cold War, the Soviets did not intend to attack Switzerland. Yet, the Swiss firmly believed in the Soviet threat, and thus deployed their army to defend the country against an attack from the Red Army.⁷³⁹

The National Defence Commission was aware that the means at its disposal did not allow for a defence from the country's borders on. Moreover, de Montmollin argued that a defence in all directions lacked strategic sense, and recommended to mobilise the bulk of the army in the Berne-Lucerne-Hauenstein triangle. Meanwhile, the more optimistic Frick argued that the main defence battle had to be fought on the Linth-Limmat position. From the late 1940s on, the Swiss military planners reached a

⁷³³ Rihner (SAF) to Kobelt (FMD), 02.03.1950; Aktennotiz über die Besprechung mit Luftmarschall Tedder, Bracher (FMD), 07.03.1950, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1851, Bd.13.

⁷³⁴ Annual Report of the Swiss Air Force 1949-1950, Smith (Berne), 17.01.1950, TNA, FO 371/89134.

⁷³⁵ Wilmot-Sitwell (Berne) to D.M.I.(M.I.4) (WO), 20.08.1949, TNA, FO 371/79850.

⁷³⁶ Parker (Berne) to D.M.I.(M.I.4) (WO), 15.08.1951, TNA, FO 371/96029.

⁷³⁷ Notiz, Rieser (London), 13.11.1951, SFA, E5560(C), 1975/46, Bd.180.

⁷³⁸ Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, *op. cit.*, p.104

⁷³⁹ Fuhrer, Wild, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

compromise in the so-called “Bereitschaftsaufstellung Winkelried”. This layout on the plateau aimed at a defensive battle along the Hauenstein-Napf and Linth-Limmat positions, southwards and south-eastwards of Basle. Once this battle would be lost, the army would withdraw into the National Redoubt.⁷⁴⁰ Montgomery, however, intended to adapt the Swiss Army’s deployment in case of war to the defence line of the western powers.

In autumn 1949, between his inspection of the Western Alps and the Rhine line, the Field-Marshal briefly met with the Deputy Director of the Federal Military Administration. Montgomery emphasised to Bracher the importance that the Swiss Army would help strengthening the “barrier at the Rhine” by deploying its troops between Constance and Basle.⁷⁴¹ At roughly the same time, in a memorandum on the “eastern defensive line of the Western Allies”, he called on the Swiss Army to defend the Jura Mountains in addition to Switzerland’s part of the Rhine line.⁷⁴² Montgomery’s aim did not appear unrealistic. For, according to the British Military Attaché in Berne, Swiss defence plans allowed “for modification to suit the expected defence lines of [the] Western Union, should the Swiss feel certain of the security of their northern and southern flanks”. In addition, he argued that if Switzerland was attacked, the policy of neutrality “would not prevent collaboration with armies fighting the enemies of Switzerland”.⁷⁴³

Consequently, in late-January 1950, the Field-Marshal suggested to the Swiss Chief of the General Staff to deploy the Swiss Army to fill the existing gap between North-West and South, i.e. from the northern Swiss frontier with the Vorarlberg to the Rhine of Basle. Although de Montmollin gave no guarantees that the Swiss Army would comply with Montgomery’s request, he nonetheless replied that its deployment would depend on the situation of the belligerents at Switzerland’s borders, and that the defence would always be in the interest of the armies protecting Swiss frontiers.⁷⁴⁴ The idea of fighting in concert with other armies in the event of war was also publicly expressed by the Defence Minister. In mid-February, Kobelt said in a speech that

⁷⁴⁰ Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, *op. cit.*, p.92; *Ibid.*, “Another “special relationship”...”, *op. cit.*, p.132.

⁷⁴¹ Bericht über den kürzlichen Besuch und die Besprechungen mit Feldmarschall Montgomery, Bracher to Kobelt (both FMD), 08.09.1949, SFA, E5800(-), -/1, Bd.2.

⁷⁴² Some general notes on the eastern defensive line of the Western Allies, Montgomery, 14.09.1949, IWM, Montgomery Papers, Part II, LMD 321.

⁷⁴³ Annual Report – Swiss Army 1949, Parker (Berne), 25.01.1950, TNA, FO 371/89123.

⁷⁴⁴ Note confidentielle sur l’entretien du 28.1.1950 avec M. le Maréchal Montgomery, de Montmollin to Kobelt (both FMD), 01.02.1950, dodis.ch/7236, SDD.

although Switzerland should not count on outside help, it was very probable that the adversaries of its enemies would at the very least provide air support.⁷⁴⁵ Therefore, officials in the FO concluded that the military developments made the Swiss Defence Minister work against full neutrality, but they did not see any urgency for defence coordination with the Swiss and were happy to leave the issue to Montgomery.⁷⁴⁶

However, to uphold the credibility of its neutrality policy, the Federal Council restricted contacts between Swiss and Western military leaders.⁷⁴⁷ Therefore, Montgomery had no direct contact with the Swiss General Staff for almost two years. The link was maintained through Bracher, who became Director of the Federal Military Administration in 1951, and met with Montgomery in August 1950 and February 1951.⁷⁴⁸ Meanwhile, the increasing Cold War tensions also led the Swiss to develop their war plans. By early 1951, the studies on the implications of cooperation with an allied power were completed, and the National Defence Commission agreed that in the case of an attack from the Northeast, even though the traditional Limmat position had to be strong, the defence effort had to be concentrated on the Rhine.⁷⁴⁹

Shortly thereafter, London was informed by its Military Attaché in Berne that “as soon as Switzerland was attacked by Russia, a request would be made to Supreme Allied Headquarters, for ground and air assistance”. The informant was Bracher, who even brought up the possibility that the Swiss General Staff would subordinate itself to the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE).⁷⁵⁰ Although Scrivener observed in his accompanying letter to Lieutenant-Colonel Parker’s report that Bracher’s ideas were not common policy in the Federal Council, he rejoiced that if his views were put into practice, they would constitute “a literal revolution in Swiss military thought and policy”.⁷⁵¹ In Whitehall, the above information was considered this important that not only had it to be shown to Montgomery, but it had also not to be disclosed to the Americans, who were “always liable to jump the gun and spoil the

⁷⁴⁵ Parker (Berne) to D.M.I.(M.I.4) (WO), 21.02.1950, TNA, FO 371/89123.

⁷⁴⁶ Minute, Walmsley (FO), 01.03.1950, TNA, FO 371/89123.

⁷⁴⁷ Bracher to Kobelt (both FMD), 23.02.1951, dodis.ch/7120, *SDD*.

⁷⁴⁸ Besprechung mit Feldmarschall Montgomery anlässlich meiner persönlichen Begegnung vom 18.-20. August 1950 in Chamonix, Bracher (FMD), 25.08.1950; Bericht über die Gespräche mit Feldmarschall Montgomery, Bracher (FMD), 23.02.1951, SFA, E5800(-), -/1, Bd.2.

⁷⁴⁹ Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, *op. cit.*, p.105.

⁷⁵⁰ Parker (Berne) to D.M.I.(M.I.4) (WO), 18.04.1951, TNA, FO 371/96031.

⁷⁵¹ Scrivener (Berne) to Young (FO), 23.04.1951, TNA, FO 371/96031.

game”.⁷⁵² Yet, the aforementioned changes in Swiss military thought and policy remained hypothetical. Parker learned from a reconnaissance tour with Bracher in spring 1951, that Swiss defence lines did not correspond with the doctrine of defending the country from the border on. Although he acknowledged their lack of tanks and anti-tank guns, he stated his preference “to see the Swiss Army prepared to meet an enemy with as much force as possible on the frontier”.⁷⁵³

In August 1951, informed about the above, Montgomery – who was now NATO’s Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe – came himself to reconnoitre the Swiss frontier and defensive areas from Basle eastwards to Schaffhausen, and from there south-eastwards to Sargans, including the Linth-Limmat line. Upon completion of this tour, he intended to tell the Swiss “how, and where, the NATO forces on their flanks would like to ‘hook on’ to the Swiss defences”, and through this to ensure “that the ‘neutral bastion’ of Switzerland shall fit suitably into the grand tactical design of Western Europe”.⁷⁵⁴ Despite comments in the FO that there was “no likelihood whatever” that the Swiss would agree to coordinate their defensive plans with NATO,⁷⁵⁵ apparently, they did to a certain extent. In late January 1952, the Field-Marshal informed Scrivener that the Swiss had accepted his recommendations in principle, and that at the end of February, he would “settle the details [...] on the map with the Swiss Chief of Staff”.⁷⁵⁶

As neither a report on the Field-Marshal’s reconnaissance tour of August 1951, nor a note on his meeting with the Swiss Chief of Staff in early 1952 could be unearthed, I rely on the results of Mantovani’s thorough analysis – based on indices – of this “Montgomery-de Montmollin-Agreement”. Mantovani concludes that in early 1952, the Swiss agreed to deploy their troops for the defence of the Rhine up to Schaffhausen, and to connect their forces with those of NATO in this canton. In exchange, Montgomery, as the representative of the Atlantic Alliance, agreed to relieve Switzerland’s Southern front, by shifting the defence line eastwards from Trieste to the South Tyrol. This tactical agreement was only temporarily valid and of a

⁷⁵² Minute, Bullock (FO), 07.05.1951; Young (FO) to Under-Secretary of State for War (WO), 04.07.1951, TNA, FO 371/96031.

⁷⁵³ Parker (Berne) to D.M.I.(M.I.4) (WO), 01.06.1951, TNA, FO 371/96029. This appreciation was shared by the British Minister in Berne (Scrivener (Berne) to Morrison (FO), 11.07.1951, TNA, FO 371/96029).

⁷⁵⁴ Montgomery to Strang (FO), 31.07.1951, TNA, FO 371/96029.

⁷⁵⁵ Minute, Pares (FO), 24.08.1951, TNA, FO 371/96029.

⁷⁵⁶ Scrivener (Berne) to Strang (FO), 30.01.1952, TNA, FO 371/101647.

conditional nature.⁷⁵⁷ Nonetheless, in their own military interest, the Swiss agreed to plan their army's deployment at least momentarily in coordination with NATO. Mantovani argues that this did not undermine Switzerland's neutrality, for neutrality law only applies in wartime.⁷⁵⁸ Admittedly, the law of neutrality did not apply in this case. In my opinion, however, the agreement could have a negative impact on the credibility of neutrality. By aligning their defensive posture with NATO, the Swiss clearly indicated to the Western military planners they were on their side, and thus discredited their neutrality. More importantly, had the agreement been known to the Soviets, their belief that Switzerland was a "Western neutral" would have been considerably reinforced. Consequently, through this defence coordination in peacetime, Switzerland undermined its status as a permanent neutral.

While the Swiss military leadership began to undermine Switzerland's neutrality on the ground, it also did so in the air. In early 1951, Swiss Air Force Chief of Staff Etienne Primault gave the British Air Attaché, Wing Commander Spencer, an outline of his war plan: first, as soon as Soviet troops would cross the frontier, Switzerland would align itself with the Allies, and invite military and air missions, while sending similar missions to SHAPE; then, the Swiss Air Force would operate from its alpine airfields, until becoming incapable of supporting the army; finally, the surviving air force personnel would "be flown out of Switzerland to reform and re-equip with the Allied Air Force", under a "'Free' Swiss Air Force", of which the nucleus would already have been created earlier on in the hostilities. Delighted by Primault's plan, Spencer requested the AM to implement an exchange scheme between the Swiss Air Force and the RAF – which had already been brought up in discussions between the Air Attaché and Bracher in October 1950⁷⁵⁹ – to teach the Swiss Air Force "modern methods of control and operation".⁷⁶⁰

Yet back in London, the Air Attaché's proposal did not have an easy time. It was observed that while the RAF would not benefit "to any extent from the arrangement proposed", the Swiss Air Force officers would both be trained in Britain and by British officers visiting Swiss units.⁷⁶¹ Therefore, despite the fact that the Swiss said they were willing to fight on the side of NATO and were using British

⁷⁵⁷ Mantovani, "Another "special relationship"...", *op. cit.*, pp.137-138.

⁷⁵⁸ Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, *op. cit.*, p.113.

⁷⁵⁹ Bracher to Kobelt (both FMD), 18.10.1950, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1853, Bd.12.

⁷⁶⁰ Spencer (Berne) to AM, 14.02.1951, TNA, FO 371/96031.

⁷⁶¹ Crotch to D.D.A.F.L. (both AM), 11.04.1951, TNA, AIR 20/7144.

aircraft, it was argued that there was not much the RAF could learn from them.⁷⁶² Air Vice-Marshal Guest, however, thought that it was “short-sighted to discourage any moves the Swiss are inclined to make in moving away from strict neutrality”. Moreover, he stressed that in the light of the FO’s recent approval of an RAF mission to Spain, a similar visit to Switzerland would be much more profitable, “since it is in the interest of the Western Defence Plans to assist in the training of the Swiss forces so that they can hold up the Russian advance longer, and be more able to take their place on our side if the fight in SWITZERLAND appears hopeless”.⁷⁶³ In late June 1951, this view finally prevailed in the AM.⁷⁶⁴ Support from the FO for the exchange scheme was immediately forthcoming, because Foreign Secretary Herbert Morrison saw it as a means to influence Swiss military thinking towards more active collaboration with NATO.⁷⁶⁵

The exchange scheme was, however, far from being implemented. Although it had been approved by the Federal Military Department, the Federal Council was unwilling to give its blessing in fear for Swiss neutrality.⁷⁶⁶ The problem was not limited to the aforementioned scheme, but was related to military exchanges with Western powers more broadly. Kobelt argued from the military perspective that such exchanges were necessary to keep the army up-to-date. But from the political perspective, Petitpierre seemed to fear for the appearance of Swiss neutrality.⁷⁶⁷ Although the Federal Council could agree with the sending of Swiss officers for training to Britain, it was more reluctant to receive British officers on its own territory. What was feared most was the institutionalisation of exchanges. Yet, as Montgomery himself asked for exchange visits between Swiss and British officers in November 1951,⁷⁶⁸ Bracher rightly pointed out to Kobelt that Switzerland could not forever count on Britain’s goodwill to give the Swiss access to its military schools and training units, without extending an invitation in return.⁷⁶⁹ Even though in early 1952 the Defence Minister accepted on these grounds to invite a handful of British officers

⁷⁶² Weston to A.C.A.S.(Ops.) (both AM), 05.06.1951, TNA, AIR 20/7144.

⁷⁶³ Guest to D.Pol.(A.S.) (both AM), 19.06.1951, TNA, AIR 20/7144.

⁷⁶⁴ Weston to D.D.A.F.L. (both AM), 29.06.1951, TNA, AIR 20/7144.

⁷⁶⁵ FO to Crawley (AM), 04.07.1951, TNA, AIR 20/7144.

⁷⁶⁶ Annual Report on the Swiss Air Force 1951, Spencer (Berne), undated, TNA, FO 371/101648.

⁷⁶⁷ Kobelt (FMD) to Petitpierre (FPD), 17.03.1951, dodis.ch/7281, *SDD*.

⁷⁶⁸ Montgomery to Bracher (FMD), 06.11.1951, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1854, Bd.68.

⁷⁶⁹ Bracher to Kobelt (both FMD), 17.12.1951, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1854, Bd.68.

for alpine training to Switzerland,⁷⁷⁰ an institutionalised military exchange scheme was still a distant reality.

In early 1952, the British Air Attaché in Berne again emphasised to the AM the necessity of an exchange scheme, through which the RAF would teach the Swiss Air Force the modern technique of operating aircraft. Despite his positive evaluation of the Swiss pilots' morale and standard of flying, Spencer observed that they lacked the means to operate their aircraft efficiently, had not learned the lessons of the last war, and were over-confident.⁷⁷¹ In the meantime, Kobelt struggled to gain the approval of his colleagues for a Swiss Air Force-RAF exchange scheme. It was only by the end of the year that the Defence Minister seemed to have overcome the Federal Council's neutrality preoccupations, and the British Legation could report to London that six officers from the RAF's 2nd Tactical Air Force Germany would visit the Swiss Air Force from 10 to 21 February, and in the summer, this unit would be visited by Swiss officers.⁷⁷² According to Spencer, while the British officers would instruct the Swiss Air Force on the tactical role of aircraft, they would also have to pass on their teaching to the army commanders, who regarded the air force "solely as airborne artillery".⁷⁷³

However, as the Federal Councillors became aware of the exchange scheme's extent, they got cold feet and back-pedalled. This provoked a strong intervention by Bracher, who reminded Kobelt that it was unwise to offend the British through a negative reply, because Switzerland would "continue to be dependent on the cooperation of the English Air Ministry and Air Force" for the equipment of its air force with aircraft and engines. Therefore, he argued for the authorisation of the RAF-mission, albeit on a smaller scale and only for training purposes. Understandably, Primault, who had meanwhile been promoted to Head of the Swiss Air Force, also tried to save the exchange scheme by suggesting that the British visitors would not get insights into military organisation and alpine airfields.⁷⁷⁴ Kobelt agreed and submitted this scaled-down RAF-mission to Petitpierre for his political approval, while emphasising Switzerland's dependency on British aircraft and engines.⁷⁷⁵ Finally, this

⁷⁷⁰ Kobelt to de Montmollin (FMD), 17.01.1952, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1854, Bd.68.

⁷⁷¹ Annual Report on the Swiss Air Force 1951, Spencer (Berne), undated, TNA, FO 371/101648.

⁷⁷² Spencer to Scrivener (both Berne), 16.12.1952; Scrivener (Berne) to Eden (FO), 19.12.1952, TNA, FO 371/107348.

⁷⁷³ Report on the Swiss Air Force 1952, Spencer (Berne), 07.02.1953, TNA, FO 371/107349.

⁷⁷⁴ Bracher to Kobelt (both FMD), 12.01.1953; 20.01.1953, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1860, Bd.60.

⁷⁷⁵ Kobelt (FMD) to Petitpierre (FPD), 22.01.1953, SFA, E2001(E), 1970/217, Bd.4.

was also the argument on which the Foreign Minister based his decision to authorise the RAF delegation,⁷⁷⁶ which visited Swiss Air Force units from 10 to 21 April 1953. Afterwards, both sides agreed that it was a success, and acknowledged that while the Swiss Air Force had much to learn about modern methods of operation of aircraft, the RAF had the required knowledge. Therefore, Spencer and Scrivener strongly recommended the exchange scheme's continuation.⁷⁷⁷ Obviously, the motivations for the exchange scheme were mixed on both sides: Berne wanted to learn from the RAF and maintain a privileged access to British aircraft, and London wanted to bring the Swiss Air Force up to date to fight a common enemy and promote its aircraft to the Swiss.

In the meantime, what the Air Attaché had in mind was more than merely instructing Swiss pilots and promoting British aircraft. In October 1952, following up on the Swiss Air Force's plans to cooperate with NATO forces in the event of war, Spencer asked for London's support in coordinating such plans with the Swiss before the outbreak of hostilities.⁷⁷⁸ Yet, while the AM considered the issue in the realm of the FO,⁷⁷⁹ there, officials doubted about the success of such an undertaking, because the "revolution in Swiss military thought [...] has not in the slightest degree touched the Political Department". The British Legation was nonetheless instructed to return to the issue if conditions would change.⁷⁸⁰

In early 1953, the coordination of war plans in the air became increasingly realistic. Although Scrivener admitted to the FO that it was still premature to get the CoS involved, he emphasised that Primault, who now commanded the Swiss Air Force, had confirmed his plans from early 1951 for cooperation with Allied air forces in the event of a Soviet attack on Switzerland.⁷⁸¹ In addition, according to Spencer, the Swiss General Staff had accepted his suggestion to invite the Air Deputy of SACEUR, the British Air Chief Marshal Hugh Saunders. The Air Attaché saw in such a visit "the opportunity of correlating Swiss air defence plans with the overall allied air plan and of briefing the Air Force on what they should expect to encounter in the

⁷⁷⁶ Petitpierre (FPD) to Kobelt (FMD), 22.01.1953, SFA, E5001(E), 1000/1860, Bd.60.

⁷⁷⁷ RAF-SAF, Spencer (Berne), 30.04.1953; Scrivener (Berne) to Churchill, 12.05.1953, TNA, FO 371/107348; Bericht über den Besuch einer britischen RAF-Delegation 10.-21.04.1953, Lécher (SAF), SFA, E5560(C), 1975/46, Bd.170.

⁷⁷⁸ Spencer (Berne) to Bayne (AM), 28.10.1952, TNA, FO 371/101647.

⁷⁷⁹ O'Grady (AM) to McDermott (FO), 08.11.1952, TNA, FO 371/101647.

⁷⁸⁰ Cheetham (FO) to Scrivener (Berne), 02.12.1952, TNA, FO 371/101647.

⁷⁸¹ Scrivener (Berne) to Cheetham (FO), 27.01.1953, TNA, FO 371/107345.

event of Soviet aggression”.⁷⁸² Yet, as no source documenting this visit could be found, one must assume that it did not materialise, and that it was opposed on a political level. The FO was certainly right in pointing out “that any incipient revolution in Swiss military thought, away from the traditional concept of strict neutrality, has in no way affected the external policy of the country”. Consequently, it was decided to temporarily “shelve” the idea of coordinating war plans with the Swiss Air Force.⁷⁸³

Although Petitpierre set limits to Anglo-Swiss defence cooperation in the air, Primault was willing to undermine Swiss neutrality by disclosing the Swiss Air Force’s war plans, which he intended to coordinate with the RAF for the event of a Soviet attack. Mantovani has argued that as the Swiss became increasingly aware from the 1950s on that an advance by the Red Army would not immediately lead to the occupation of Switzerland, they became more interested in defence coordination in the air than on the ground. In this undertaking, the choice fell on Britain, because there was already a link through Montgomery, and the equipment with British aircraft provided a favourable background. Moreover, London favoured the exchanges in the aim to promote its aircraft sales.⁷⁸⁴ However, although aircraft purchases played an important role in Anglo-Swiss defence cooperation in the air, they ought to be further analysed. In addition, one can question whether the fact that a Soviet ground attack on Switzerland was unlikely caused the Swiss Air Force to look to the RAF, for a Russian ground invasion was the trigger to Swiss collaboration with NATO. It was rather through the new Head of the Swiss Air Force, Primault, that privileged relations and very limited defence coordination was established, similar to de Montmollin’s agreement with Montgomery. Consequently, the Anglo-Swiss defence relationship was rather caused by individuals than by entities, despite the National Defence Commission’s and Kobelt’s seemingly approval of this policy.

Nonetheless, from 1949 to 1953, the security relationship between Berne and London gained in “specialness”. The Swiss presented not only their army, but also disclosed their war plans to selected British officers. Meanwhile, there was not only a political limit to defence coordination, but the Swiss were also very reluctant to reform their army according to Montgomery’s recommendations.

⁷⁸² Report on the Swiss Air Force 1952, Spencer (Berne), 07.02.1953, TNA, FO 371/107349.

⁷⁸³ Murray (FO) to O’Grady (AM), 10.02.1953, TNA, FO 371/107345.

⁷⁸⁴ Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, *op. cit.*, pp.114, 117-118.

7. Engines and Venoms

7.1. *Dependence?*

In spring 1949, the Swiss decided to purchase another series of Vampires, which would be composed of licence-built airframes and finished engines. The British first examined whether they could deliver these engines in the face of American criticism, and then promised their delivery to the Swiss. However, this arrangement was made in peacetime. In early 1950, the AM met with de Havilland to plan “home” and “overseas” requirements for jet engines, and stressed the significance of meeting Swiss orders for Goblin engines, because of the “great importance in connection with [the] balance-of-payments vis-à-vis Switzerland”.⁷⁸⁵ Thus, the economic argument for arms sales to Switzerland had even become predominant within the defence establishment. However, would it be sufficient to justify engine shipments to neutral Switzerland, while Britain and its allies rearmed for the defence of Western Europe and fought on the Korean mainland?

The Korean War’s impact on the delivery of jet engines to Switzerland materialised in autumn 1950. In September, Churchill accused the Labour Government in the House of Commons of delivering aircraft to non-allied countries, while the RAF lacked modern equipment. Defence Minister Emanuel Shinwell reacted immediately and ruled that aircraft and engine exports to non-allied countries had to be stopped. Therefore, the delivery of 156 Goblin 35 engines to Switzerland – due to start in October – was to be “indefinitely delayed”. Goblin engines were not in short supply, but British officials reasoned that the productive capacity, which was used for them, could be employed to meet the increased demand for jet engines by Britain and NATO powers.⁷⁸⁶ Yet, Shinwell’s decision was not definitive, and exceptions to it had already been made – such as the delivery of aircraft to Venezuela and airframes to Sweden.⁷⁸⁷ However, would the Swiss case be strong enough for London to make an exception?

At least for the British Legation in Berne it was. On 20 September, Tull attempted – through a long and dramatic letter – “to draw [Whitehall’s] attention to

⁷⁸⁵ McCallum to AS (both AM), 09.01.1950, TNA, AVIA 55/128.

⁷⁸⁶ Geiger, *op. cit.*, p.16.

⁷⁸⁷ Minutes, Walmsley (FO), 15/18.09.1950; TNA, FO 371/89125.

the very damaging effects which a failure to fulfil this contract would have on our relations with Switzerland". He emphasised that the Swiss Government expected the delivery of the Goblins, and Kobelt – who did not even realise the existing danger of the contract being broken – had asked him to "remind London that [Switzerland was] not yet in the satellite camp". If the fulfilment of the contract would be indefinitely delayed, Britain would be strongly criticised both by the Swiss authorities and press. Especially, because – for economic and strategic reasons – London had been "only too willing" to sell aircraft and engines to Switzerland, and Berne had therefore put the equipment of its air force into British hands. Finally, Tull put forward the reasons against the MoD's decision to delay indefinitely the delivery of jet engines, which were needed to power the licence-built airframes: the Swiss would take it as a "personal affront" if the Swiss Air Force's efficiency would be damaged; economically, it could be detrimental to Britain's balance of payments with Switzerland; strategically, it was in the interest of the Western Union armed forces to have a strong Swiss Army, "capable of defending her neutrality, on their right flank"; and Berne could retaliate by denying access to essential items "such as machine tools, precision instruments and watch jewels".⁷⁸⁸

Only one day later, the *Gazette de Lausanne* gave a foretaste of a possible Swiss reaction if the Goblins were not delivered. In a front page article entitled "Our national defence put at risk? No more Vampires for Switzerland", the newspaper's editor, Pierre Béguin, considered that the British ruling against the export of war material to non-allied countries was summary and brutal, and dealt a rude blow to Switzerland's national security.⁷⁸⁹ In the light of this article and to stop such criticism before it gained momentum, Tull called on the FO to assure the Swiss that they would not be treated like a Soviet satellite, and that their armament contracts would be honoured as soon as the rearmament programme would allow.⁷⁹⁰ Also the British Air Attaché in Berne joined in and warned the AM that if these engines were not supplied, Britain's prestige would be damaged, and future aircraft sales to Switzerland would be endangered. Therefore, he suggested to supply at least a limited number of engines as

⁷⁸⁸ Tull (Berne) to Attlee, 20.09.1950, *BDFa*, IV, F, Vol.25, p.448-449.

⁷⁸⁹ Béguin, Pierre, « Notre défense nationale compromise ? Plus de « Vampires » pour la Suisse », *Gazette de Lausanne*, 21.09.1950, p.1.

⁷⁹⁰ Tull (Berne) to FO, 21.09.1950, TNA, FO 371/89125.

a sign of good faith, or – if this was impossible – to tell the Swiss the reasons for the delay, while giving them firm delivery dates at a later time.⁷⁹¹

In Whitehall, however, things were not that simple. Therefore, in the FO's Western Department, Walmsley began to make a list of pros and cons on the delivery of Goblins to the Swiss. The arguments against were that Switzerland was not considered strategically as useful as Sweden, and the Egyptians had been told that the restrictions on arms exports applied to all countries alike. But these arguments were contradicted and outnumbered: strategically, Switzerland's importance could increase in the coming years, and it was considered of more use than France, "which could not and perhaps would not even try seriously to resist"; with regard to the Egyptians, the Swiss did not want modern jet aircraft, tanks and radar, but obsolescent jet engines, and the British had already broken their own rule through the Venezuelan and Swedish exceptions; and finally, Britain would "suffer Swiss economic retaliation" and "forfeit future Swiss franc business". But despite these arguments in favour of the Swiss case, Walmsley concluded that an inter-departmental discussion at the Arms Working Party would be necessary to assess whether the Goblins were militarily useful for the UK and NATO.⁷⁹²

Yet, the listing above was already questioned from within the FO. The fiercest opponent to the delivery of engines to Switzerland was the African Department, which feared for Anglo-Egyptian relations. It was argued that the Egyptians would be even more upset than they already were, if they felt discriminated through an exception being made to Switzerland. In addition, it would make no sense if the Swiss – "who are after all professional neutrals" – would receive weapons in short supply, while the Egyptians had been told that such equipment would only go to Allies.⁷⁹³ Finally, whereas Berne had been promised the delivery of the engines by a "UK Trade Delegation", the Egyptians, another official observed, could invoke the "1936 Treaty of Alliance", which was "the sole legal basis for the maintenance of the Middle East Base in Egypt".⁷⁹⁴ Most probably, this argument was made in the awareness that one of the pillars of British military strategy was the Middle East.

Meanwhile, there were also sceptical voices within another department and even within the Western Department itself. According to the Economic Relations

⁷⁹¹ Spencer (Berne) to AM, 26.09.1950, TNA, FO 371/89125.

⁷⁹² Minute, Walmsley (FO), 22.09.1950, TNA, FO 371/89125.

⁷⁹³ Minute, Allen (FO), 28/22.09.1950, TNA, FO 371/89125/6.

⁷⁹⁴ Minute, Edmonds (FO), 05.10.1950, TNA, FO 371/89125.

Department,⁷⁹⁵ Britain had no obligation towards Switzerland to deliver these jet engines, because the contract between de Havilland and the Swiss Government had a “force majeure” clause, through which Whitehall could revoke its willingness to issue export licences for the engines. In addition, the economic reasons for the supply of aircraft to the Swiss did not anymore apply: through Switzerland’s upcoming accession to the EPU, the balance of payments problem would disappear, and there was no more need to maintain the defence production capacity through arms sales abroad, as the day had come for which this capacity had been intended.

Yet, this reasoning was considered of secondary importance, as the issue was whether British, NATO or Commonwealth air forces needed these engines, or the productive capacity for them.⁷⁹⁶ Evelyn Shuckburgh, the Head of the Western Department, agreed that this was the crux of the problem, for Britain would not only have to explain to countries such as Egypt that the engines were not needed for the common Western defence effort, but also to NATO Allies. He therefore concluded that the engines sales to Switzerland could not be authorised until it was assured that no NATO country needed them.⁷⁹⁷ Finally, in a meeting of all interested FO departments, it was agreed to submit the issue to the Arms Working Party,⁷⁹⁸ and that there would be no engine deliveries to Switzerland until a decision would have been reached.⁷⁹⁹

Meanwhile, the MoS emphasised to the MoD that “to postpone indefinitely” engine exports to non-priority countries could be dramatic for Switzerland, because “the licence granted [...] will be rendered negatory as any airframes produced will have no engines to go in them”.⁸⁰⁰ The Swiss became aware of the acuteness of this danger, as Whitehall informed them that no engines would be delivered if they were needed for Britain, the Commonwealth or NATO. But at the same time, it was emphasised that there was “no question of imposing an embargo on exports of war materials through Switzerland to the Soviet Union”.⁸⁰¹ This point was particularly stressed by the FO, for the Federal Political Department had enquired whether the

⁷⁹⁵ ERD.

⁷⁹⁶ Minute, Hilton-Young (FO), 26.09.1950, TNA, FO 371/89125.

⁷⁹⁷ Minute, Shuckburgh (FO), 28.09.1950, TNA, FO 371/89125.

⁷⁹⁸ Minute, Young (FO), 30.09.1950, TNA, FO 371/89126.

⁷⁹⁹ Pares (FO) to Scrivener (Berne), 10.10.1950, TNA, FO 371/89126.

⁸⁰⁰ Musgrave (MoS) to Wheeler (MoD), 26.09.1950, TNA, DEFE 10/201.

⁸⁰¹ Minute, Young (FO), 30.09.1950, TNA, FO 371/89125; Rothenbühler (London) to FPD, 30.09.1950, SFA, E2200.40, 1971/164, Bd.8.

problem of engine deliveries was related to the strategic embargo, and if it was a means to bring Berne into compliance with CoCom.⁸⁰² In addition, similar concerns were echoed in the Swiss press.⁸⁰³ Interestingly, although it was admitted in the FO that the engines would be “a convenient means of pressure” for Swiss compliance in the strategic embargo, there was indeed no relation between the engines and East-West trade whatsoever.⁸⁰⁴

Therefore, the Swiss Military Attaché in London remained optimistic that Whitehall would finally authorise the engines’ delivery. Nevertheless, as a precautionary measure, he was searching for alternative supply sources, and almost immediately Sweden came to his mind. Rieser observed that – contrary to the Swiss – the Swedes produced the jet engines for the Vampire under licence, while they purchased the finished airframes in Britain. Consequently, he argued that the Swedish Goblins were a realistic alternative to British engines, and even began to discuss the issue with his Swedish counterpart in London.⁸⁰⁵ It was probably on Rieser’s behalf that the *Gazette de Lausanne*’s London correspondent made almost simultaneously the same suggestion.⁸⁰⁶ However, although Scrivener considered this idea “ingenious”, he rightly questioned whether Sweden had sufficient production capacity to supply both the Swedish and the Swiss air forces with jet engines.⁸⁰⁷

Interestingly, although the Head of the Swiss Air Force stated that Swedish-Swiss cooperation was ideal – for Sweden produced the engine while Switzerland manufactured the airframe –,⁸⁰⁸ the idea of it suddenly disappeared. This was probably because Rieser himself began to send Berne encouraging reports about the probability of receiving the British engines. On 4 October, he had a discussion with a de Havilland representative, who informed him that his company had not received any instructions by the MoS not to fulfill its contract with Switzerland, and he did not believe that this would be the case on the following grounds: the engine type, which

⁸⁰² Tull (Berne) to FO, 27.09.1950, TNA, FO 192/216.

⁸⁰³ Béguin, Pierre, « Les difficultés de la défense nationale : Plus de « Vampires » pour la Suisse ? », *Gazette de Lausanne*, 27.09.1950, p.1; Tull (Berne) to FO, 27.09.1950, TNA, FO 371/89125.

⁸⁰⁴ Minute, Walmsley (FO), 28.09.1950; Young (FO) to Scrivener (Berne), 04.10.1950, TNA, FO 371/89125.

⁸⁰⁵ Internationale Situation – Schweden – Vampire-Lieferungen, Rieser (London), 20.09.1950, SFA, E2200.40, 1971/164, Bd.8; Rieser (London) to Daniel (FMD), 02.10.1950, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1853, Bd.12.

⁸⁰⁶ Clerc, Michel, « L’exportation des « matériaux stratégiques » : Les « Vampires » et la Suisse », *Gazette de Lausanne*, 05.10.1950, p.1.

⁸⁰⁷ Scrivener (Berne) to Young (FO), 07.10.1950, TNA, FO 371/89126.

⁸⁰⁸ Rihner (SAF) to von Wattenwyl (MTS), 29.09.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18966.

Switzerland wanted (Goblin 35), was not the one used by the RAF (Goblin II); the production stop of Goblin 35s would not significantly increase the production of Goblin IIs, for the raw material and parts for the former engine had already been ordered a while ago; financially, the Treasury would certainly be unwilling to cover the loss, which de Havilland would incur, while at the same time it would earn less hard currency from Switzerland; and finally, to increase its general production capacity, de Havilland also needed Swiss machine tools, and it would be contradictory to expect these while stopping the delivery of engines to Switzerland.⁸⁰⁹

Two days later, Rieser was also informed by the official responsible for aircraft and engine deliveries within the MoS that it was highly unlikely that the engines would not be delivered. The production of Gobblins for Switzerland did not necessarily interfere with the RAF's rearmament, and since Churchill's speech, the issue had decreased in significance and had become less politicised. It was, however, important that the Labour Government would not be forced to intervene again through negative reports in the press, which would be taken up by the Opposition. Consequently, Rieser advised the Federal authorities that the best they could do was to wait until a final decision could be reached.⁸¹⁰

In Switzerland, the Deputy Director of the Federal Military Administration, who had received similar information through the British Legation, agreed with the Military Attaché's conclusion and advised Kobelt not to intervene for the moment. However, together with the British Air Attaché, he had the ingenious idea of encouraging the AM to see Swiss aircraft and engine requests in a favourable light through the establishment of a Swiss Air Force-RAF exchange scheme.⁸¹¹ Thus, the suggestion of such a scheme originated and was initially seen as a means for Switzerland to influence the RAF to advocate the supply of the Swiss Air Force. It was only later that – through the Head of the Swiss Air Force's personal intervention – strategic reasons became predominant. Nonetheless, Primault built on an idea, which had been there before for different reasons. For the time being, the situation did not appear sufficiently alarming to take such drastic measures, and in the case of the engines, an exchange scheme would be implemented too late anyway. Finally, on the

⁸⁰⁹ Goblin-Triebwerke für unsere Vampire-Serie, Rieser (London), 04.10.1950, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1853, Bd.12.

⁸¹⁰ Goblin-Triebwerke für unsere Vampire-Serie II, Rieser (London), 07.10.1950, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1853, Bd.12; Rothenbühler (London) to Zehnder (FPD), 10.10.1950, SFA, E2001(E), 1970/217, Bd.4.

⁸¹¹ Bracher to Kobelt (both FMD), 18.10.1950, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1853, Bd.12.

basis of Rieser's and Bracher's reports, the Federal Military Department gave up the idea of a diplomatic intervention in London.⁸¹²

This was a wise decision, for had the Swiss done so, they could have interrupted a decision-making process, which pointed in their favour. The issue of jet engine deliveries to Switzerland was raised by the FO representative at the Arms Working Party meeting of 19 October. The working party observed that the matter was "of serious concern for the Swiss", who needed these engines for assembly in the airframes, which they manufactured under licence. Moreover, the Goblin 35 was not used by the RAF – which needed the Goblin II –, and the MoS argued that "the production of Goblin III's [35] under the Swiss contract would not prejudice deliveries under the Goblin II programme". Yet, according to a new ruling by the Defence Committee on the Minister of Defence's insistence, contentious cases like this one had to be decided on a ministerial level. As a result, the case was submitted to the Defence Committee.⁸¹³ The MoD's letter, which accompanied the Arms Working Party's report, not only backed the aforementioned observations, but also clearly recommended "that the contract to Switzerland should be allowed to stand".⁸¹⁴

Interestingly, at the Defence Committee's meeting of 25 October, the question whether the delivery of Goblins interfered with RAF requirements or not appeared to be only of secondary importance. It was argued that "there were strong political reasons for fulfilling the contract to the Swiss", because "[w]e had given an assurance that these engines would be supplied and if we now went back on this assurance it would look as if the improvement in our own currency positions had made us careless of contracts previously entered into"; and "although Switzerland was not a signatory of the North Atlantic Treaty, it was desirable not to push her into friendship with hostile powers". On these grounds, the Defence Committee authorised the fulfilment of the contract for 156 Goblins to Switzerland, subject to an assurance that the engines would not be re-exported.⁸¹⁵ The Federal authorities were immensely relieved when they were informed about this decision on 1 November, because despite the encouraging signs from London, they had seriously feared for their aircraft

⁸¹² Kobelt (FMD) to Zehnder (FPD), 20.10.1950, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1853, Bd.12.

⁸¹³ Minute, Hilton-Young (FO), 19.10.1950, TNA, FO 371/89126; JWPC(AWP)/M(50)8, Minutes, 19.10.1950, TNA, DEFE 10/200; Export of Arms and Equipment, Report by the AWP, Wheeler, 21.10.1950, TNA, PREM 8/1399.

⁸¹⁴ MoD to Defence Committee, 25.10.1950, TNA, PREM 8/1399.

⁸¹⁵ Export of Arms and Equipment, Defence Committee, Extract of Minutes, 25.10.1950, TNA, PREM 8/1399.

programme.⁸¹⁶ Therefore, they gave immediately the assurance that the engines were solely for the Swiss Air Force's use.⁸¹⁷

Although this episode ended without serious consequences for the Swiss, it had clearly shown them how dependent they were on British jet engine deliveries, and how precarious arms supplies were for a neutral during wartime. Whitehall, on the other hand, decided in favour of the Swiss request for mainly political reasons, because there was not a strong military-strategic incentive, and the economic reasons for arms sales to Switzerland had become less important. At no point did London intend to use the engines to extract political or military-strategic concessions from Berne, despite Swiss officials pointing to this direction. Whitehall seemed to be too focused on domestic politics, the relations with its Allies, and simply desired to maintain the existing cordial relationship with Switzerland.

7.2. *Towards Self-Reliance*

In 1949, the development of a Swiss jet aircraft – which had begun simultaneously with the already mentioned work on jet engines after the Second World War – was still at an early stage, and the prototypes were years away from their maiden flight.⁸¹⁸ Therefore, and with the aim of guaranteeing the continuous equipment of their air force, the Swiss again crossed the English Channel for the purchase of modern aircraft. At the time, there was still no power willing or able to compete with the British for selling jet aircraft and engines – or licences thereof – to Switzerland. Yet, the episode with the Goblin engines in autumn 1950 had shown the Swiss how dependent they were on Britain for the delivery of jet engines. The question thus arose whether they would be willing to purchase also the engine licence for another aircraft series. Meanwhile, did the British remain inclined to sell the Swiss manufacturing licences for their aircraft, or did their productive capacity forestall any arms transfers, making design transfer the only option anyway?

In autumn 1949, Swiss military engineers and pilots had for the first time the opportunity to see the DH-112 Venom at the Society of British Aircraft Constructors

⁸¹⁶ Scrivener (Berne) to Young (FO), 01.11.1950, TNA, FO 371/89126.

⁸¹⁷ Zehnder (FPD) to Scrivener (Berne), 02.11.1950, TNA, FO 371/89126.

⁸¹⁸ Grand, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

Flying Display and Exhibition in Farnborough and at de Havilland itself. This aircraft, which was an improved version of the Vampire, immediately appealed to them. The Venom did not only have the same basic flight characteristics as the Vampire – which were ideal for Switzerland’s short runways and particular topographic conditions –, but it was also more competitive thanks to better aerodynamics, and the more powerful Ghost engine.⁸¹⁹ Moreover, although the second Vampire series had only recently been approved by the Federal authorities, already in January 1950, the Head of the Swiss Air Force explained to the National Defence Commission that an additional aircraft series was necessary to maintain a sufficiently strong fleet.⁸²⁰

To have an aeroplane ready when the military and political authorities would be willing to acquire another aircraft series, the Military Technical Service asked de Havilland to show the Venom in Switzerland. This company was keen to meet this request, for it desired to continue its success story with the Swiss Air Force. In addition, the RAF’s orders for the Venom were relatively small, and thus Swiss orders would not only be to Britain’s financial benefit, but would also help to keep up the production potential.⁸²¹ However, the Venom was a recent product of the British aircraft industry – the MoS had only approved its development in 1948 –,⁸²² and the prototype was still undergoing trials. The AM argued that for the aircraft’s demonstration in Switzerland, additional security measures would be necessary to prevent technological dissemination.⁸²³ AM officials were reluctant to agree to the Swiss request, and ruled in spring that the Venom could not be demonstrated abroad. Admittedly, there were security concerns, but the main objection was that the demonstration would interfere with “essential prototype development work”.⁸²⁴

As the only Venom prototype was government-owned, de Havilland began to build one for itself, which it intended to use more freely for demonstrations abroad. This led the Military Technical Service to believe that the Venom could be shown in

⁸¹⁹ Reisebericht England 7.-14.09.1949, König (MTS), 23.09.1949; Reisebericht England 4.-11.09.1949, Branger (MTS), 26.09.1949; SFA, E27, -/9001, 15749, Bd.6. On the Ghost engine see Gunston, *op. cit.*, p.51.

⁸²⁰ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 25.01.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4062.

⁸²¹ Weston to S.6 (both AM), 01.03.1950, TNA, AIR 20/7144.

⁸²² Hayward, *op. cit.*, p.59.

⁸²³ Bailey (AM) to Gresswell (MoD), 22.02.1955, TNA, AIR 20/7144.

⁸²⁴ D.D.I.(Org.&S.) to S.6 (both AM), 09.03.1950; Weston to A.C.A.S. (both AM), 19.04.1950; A.C.A.S. to D.D.A.F.L. (both AM), 06.05.1950; Macfayden to A.C.A.S. (both AM), 10.07.1950, TNA, AIR 20/7144.

Switzerland in autumn.⁸²⁵ Simultaneously, the MoS also tried to meet this request. In July, it challenged the AM's decision by linking the Swiss requirement for a demonstration to one required by the Italians.⁸²⁶ But the efforts by de Havilland and the MoS were to no avail. Even though there were few security concerns, AM officials stressed the delay in the Venom's development work, and the fact that Italy was a NATO country and Switzerland was not. The MoS was accused of being more concerned with foreign sales than the Venom's development programme.⁸²⁷ In addition, as the impact of the Korean War became more tangible in August, one AM official observed that it was "doubtful whether Switzerland would qualify to get any Venoms in view of our own probable requirements, but Italy is in a different category".⁸²⁸ Finally, in September, the Swiss were told that their request had been denied, but in compensation they were offered the chance to send a delegation to see the Venom in Britain.⁸²⁹

These initial setbacks did not, however, deter the Swiss from planning their future aircraft procurement. On 20 June 1950, five days before the North Korean crossing of the 38th parallel, Rihner wrote a lengthy memorandum on the Swiss Air Force's future equipment. Taking a minimum fleet of 400 fighter aircraft as a starting point, he argued that 50 new aeroplanes a year were absolutely necessary, and that the delivery of another aircraft series immediately after the production of the second Vampire series was the condition *sine qua non* for this. This series would consist of 100 Venoms, of which the airframe would again be produced under licence and, surprisingly, the Ghost engine would be purchased in Britain.⁸³⁰ However, would this option be viable and defensible under the impact of the Korean War?

In early August 1950, after Swiss delegates from the Military Technical Service and the Swiss Air Force had been to Britain for the RAF Flying Display, and to discuss engine deliveries for the second Vampire series with de Havilland, their conclusions were already different. They emphasised the need to acquire also the licence for the Ghost engine. As they feared that the British Government could

⁸²⁵ Reisebericht England 2.-12.05.1950, König (MTS), 16.05.1950, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1851, Bd.65.

⁸²⁶ Macfayden to A.C.A.S. (both AM), 10.07.1950, TNA, AIR 20/7144.

⁸²⁷ Weston to A.C.A.S. (both AM), 10.07.1950; Macfayden to S.6 (both AM), 18.07.1950; Macfayden to A.C.A.S. (both AM), 21.07.1950, TNA, AIR 20/7144.

⁸²⁸ Weston to S.6 (both AM), 10.08.1950, TNA, AIR 20/7144.

⁸²⁹ Wattenwyl (MTS) to FMD, 20.09.1950, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1851, Bd.69.

⁸³⁰ Angaben über die Ausrüstung unserer Flugwaffe mit Flugzeugen, Waffen und Munition, Rihner (SAF), 20.06.1950, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1853, Bd.12.

commandeer the Goblin engines for Switzerland, they desired to become more self-reliant. Moreover, the production of the entire Venom under licence would form a basis for the development of Swiss jet aircraft, especially if a similar situation like in 1940 would arise – when Switzerland was cut off from foreign arms supplies.⁸³¹ With the rapidly deteriorating international situation, this reasoning became predominant in the Federal Military Department.

Although the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement's President Büchi favoured another Vampire series, he urged Defence Minister Kobelt to power these aircraft through engines – such as the Ghost or the Rolls-Royce Avon –, which would be produced under licence. This was considered necessary, because a British export stop of aircraft and engines appeared imminent, and the delayed Swiss engine development would be stimulated and accelerated through the manufacture of an advanced engine under licence.⁸³² In late August, while the Heads of the Swiss Air Force and the Military Technical Service strongly agreed with Büchi on the need to purchase an engine licence, they disagreed on the aircraft type, and knew which engine they wanted. They favoured the Venom, powered by the Ghost. Rihner did not even mention the possibility of finished engines anymore, and submitted to Kobelt the request to test the Venom, and to start immediately the negotiations for airframe and engine licences with London and de Havilland.⁸³³ However, before the Defence Minister would take a decision, the issue had first to be discussed within the commission, which was responsible for advising him on aircraft procurement.

The Head of the Swiss Air Force thus reiterated his request at the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement meeting of 28 September – in the midst of the Goblin crisis. Regarding the choice of aircraft type, he was supported by his own subalterns and the Military Technical Service. It was argued that – mainly because of their long landing and take-off distances – other British types under development, such as the Hawker-P.1081, the Vickers Supermarine 510 and Attacker were not suitable for Swiss runways. Although the American Grumman Panther could be appropriate, it was rightly pointed out that Washington would probably not be willing to grant Berne a licence for one of its most modern aircraft, and the distance of the

⁸³¹ Reisebericht England 2.-9.07.1950, Rüetschi (MTS), 05.08.1950, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1851, Bd.68.

⁸³² Büchi (KMF) to Kobelt (FMD), 10.08.1950, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1851, Bd.69.

⁸³³ Rihner (SAF) to Kobelt (FMD), 25.08.1950; Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to Kobelt (FMD), 30.08.1950, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1851, Bd.69.

Ocean would further delay the set-up of a licence production. By contrast, the Venom, as the Vampire's successor, was considered ideal for its flight characteristics and for licence production. In addition, in the light of the uncertainty that the engines for the second Vampire series would be delivered, it was urgent to produce in the foreseeable future an entire aircraft under licence. These views were not opposed by the representatives of the Swiss Association of the Aircraft Industry and the Federal Aircraft Factory, for all they wanted was a smooth transition from the Vampire to another aeroplane to keep their factories occupied and the Swiss aircraft industry alive. Yet, on Büchi's request, the Venom had first to be tested before it would definitely be chosen. Finally, the commission agreed to ask Kobelt to send a delegation to Britain for the evaluation of the Venom, and to commission 150 aeroplanes – of which the type would be determined in the next Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement meeting – entirely produced under licence.⁸³⁴

Despite the ongoing difficulties with the supply of Goblin engines, Kobelt preferred a cautious approach: he agreed to send a delegation to test the Venom in Britain, but he wanted to know its results before engaging in the political process of commissioning an entire aircraft series.⁸³⁵ The Federal Councillor's position remained unchanged in November, in spite of Büchi's insistence that time was of the essence.⁸³⁶ The reason was that the Swiss Air Force's supply situation appeared less dramatic since the British decision to honour the contract for the Goblin engines. But despite Kobelt's cautiousness, while one Swiss delegation went to Britain to evaluate the Venom, another delegation, which had initially been sent there for the Gobblins, took advantage of the opportunity to discuss the purchase of licences for the Venom and the Ghost.

In the meantime, however, the British had become aware to the dangers of technological dissemination. In early November, in the sky over Korea, British and American pilots encountered the first Soviet-built jet fighter, which outclassed their aircraft. Soon it was confirmed that the Mig-15 was powered by replicas of the Rolls-Royce Nene engines,⁸³⁷ which the British had exported to the Soviets in 1946. In Washington's eyes, this clearly illustrated the deadly consequences of Britain's aviation export policy, which privileged trade over security. London, on the other

⁸³⁴ Protokoll der 21. Sitzung der KMF, 28.09.1950, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1851, Bd.69.

⁸³⁵ Kobelt (FMD) to Büchi (KMF), 31.10.1950, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1851, Bd.69.

⁸³⁶ Büchi (KMF) to Kobelt (FMD), 01.11.1950, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1851, Bd.1.

⁸³⁷ On the Nene engine see Gunston, *op. cit.*, p.141-142.

hand, had to admit its blunder, at least internally.⁸³⁸ As a result, when the Swiss began to negotiate for licences for the Venom and the Ghost, their counterparts began to take an interest in security measures.

The negotiations were more “arduous” than the Military Technical Service delegates had expected. On behalf of the British Government, de Havilland continuously added new security clauses to the contracts, especially to the one for the engine. One paragraph, to which the Swiss would have to subscribe if they wanted the Ghost engine, would clearly restrain their liberty in the use of the licence: “Not to build, employ or sell engines of the same design (in principle or in detail) to the Ghost engines and not to build, employ or sell in any other engine components or parts of Ghost engines”. The wording for the airframe licence was very similar. As the Swiss intended to build on the manufacture of the Venom for the development of their own jet aircraft, they would have preferred more moderate terms. Another problem was that the British were unwilling to give any guarantees for the delivery of a limited amount of finished Ghosts, because of the bottleneck in engine production. At least one such engine was needed to set-up the licence production, and others were required to power the first airframes, which would be ready before the engines. Obviously, as one Swiss delegate observed, the access to modern British aviation technology had become more complicated since the negotiations for the Vampire licence.⁸³⁹

Moreover, Whitehall had not yet approved the licence contracts, which had been negotiated between the Military Technical Service and de Havilland. The problem was not related to the British desire to safeguard technological know-how, but to the Swiss desire to receive 20 complete engines, 50 unmatched engine sets, and technical assistance. As the Arms Working Party was engaged in a “fact-finding exercise [...] on the demands on UK resources made by commitments incurred under existing manufacturing licences”, the MoS was not allowed to enter any “new commitments in respect of manufacturing licences to non-priority customers”. Therefore, as it was unknown whether the envisaged exports could be supplied without detriment to British requirements, the contracts could not be approved for the moment.⁸⁴⁰ The situation began to look even more grim for Switzerland once it

⁸³⁸ Engel, *Cold War at 30,000 Feet...*, *op. cit.*, pp.117-123.

⁸³⁹ Reisebericht England 30.10.-15.11.1950, König (MTS), 17.11.1950, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1851, Bd.65.

⁸⁴⁰ Orchard (MoS) to Ward (de Havilland), Draft, November 1950; Minute, Pares (FO), 04.12.1950, TNA, FO 371/89126.

appeared that Britain would require the entire Ghost production capacity “up to and beyond” March 1953.

It was to Berne’s advantage that there were forces in London, which tried to find a way out of this dilemma. In mid-January 1951, the MoS asked for the Arms Working Party’s approval “in principle” for the manufacture under licence of the Venom and Ghost in Switzerland, and to tell the Swiss diplomatically that even though Britain could not assure the delivery of engines in the latter half of 1952, there was the possibility of beginning deliveries in early 1953. The reasons for this were that such a licensed production would be less of a drain on Britain’s physical resources than the purchase of finished aircraft, whereas “valuable foreign currency” would still be earned through royalties; the Swiss interest in British aviation products could be kept alive until it would again be possible to export more freely; it was feared the Swiss Air Force would turn for its equipment to the US and remain “American-minded” for later types; and finally, it was important to keep a foot “in the few Western European markets which are still prepared to pay (i.e. still have to pay) for their aircraft”.⁸⁴¹ The Arms Working Party was receptive to these arguments, and in its meeting of 23 January, it approved the proposal.⁸⁴² Two weeks later, the working party even added – on behalf of the Board of Trade – another reason for meeting Swiss requests to the largest extent possible: “We were relying on Switzerland for the supply of machinery and tools and we might find ourselves disappointed if we played fast and loose with the Swiss orders for aircraft and components”.⁸⁴³

While the British were re-evaluating their armaments policy, Swiss pilots had the opportunity to fly the Venom. The first mission to Britain in November had been a failure, for it had only been possible to test the two-seat Venom night-fighter. This aircraft was inappropriate for the short Swiss runways, because of its long take-off and landing distances.⁸⁴⁴ Yet, another mission in December brought the desired results. After having tested the single-seat Venom day-fighter, the delegation’s members unanimously made the request to purchase a series of this aeroplane. They observed that this Venom type was easy to handle for take-off and landing, of which

⁸⁴¹ MoS to MoD, 13.01.1951, TNA, DEFE 10/203.

⁸⁴² JWPC(AWP)/M(51)1, Minutes, 23.01.1951, TNA, DEFE 10/202.

⁸⁴³ JWPC(AWP)/M(51)2, Minutes, 07.02.1951, TNA, DEFE 10/202.

⁸⁴⁴ Reisebericht England 8.-14.11.1950, Primault (SAF), 28.11.1950, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1851, Bd.67.

the distances were shorter than for the night-fighter; was very manoeuvrable; had a great acceleration and climbed very fast. In sum, the Venom's performances were "all along the line" significantly better than the Vampire's.⁸⁴⁵

Despite this positive verdict, the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement meeting of 24 January 1951 – during which the aircraft type was supposed to be chosen – was more controversial than expected. The problem was whether Switzerland should risk committing itself to the Venom's manufacture under licence, while it remained unclear if the British would deliver the few finished Ghosts, which were necessary for the undertaking. The commission was unaware of the Arms Working Party's ongoing deliberations, and thus advanced a variety of strategies to induce the British to deliver these engines: to threaten London with the purchase of the French Dassault Ouragan aircraft, even though there was no real interest; to ask for the engines in exchange for Swiss machine tools; and to call on Montgomery to intervene on Switzerland's behalf. But these strategies were merely vague ideas, and were not further elaborated. Finally, the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement was willing to take a risk and decided unanimously to request the purchase of 150 Venoms, of which the airframe and the majority of the engines would be produced in Switzerland.⁸⁴⁶ Only a few days later, the Defence Minister and the National Defence Commission approved this request without any opposition from the corps commanders.⁸⁴⁷ Yet, did the Federal Council and the Federal Assembly share the defence establishment's enthusiasm for the Venom?

On 16 February, Kobelt submitted to his fellow Federal Councillors a draft bill for the purchase of 150 Venoms at a cost of SFr.175 million. For once the Finance Minister did not oppose a major arms purchase, but he nonetheless questioned whether a bill was necessary. The Federal Council had just submitted the bill for the military five-year plan to the Federal Assembly. The credit for the Venoms could perhaps be included therein, and another bill might be confusing and endanger the rearmament plan in Parliament.⁸⁴⁸ Therefore, the Federal Council decided to submit only the draft bill – together with a secret document containing further military and technical details – to the Military Commissions of the National and State Councils, in

⁸⁴⁵ Bericht Venom-Erprobung 8.-13.12.1950, Frei (SAF), 30.12.1950, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1851, Bd.67.

⁸⁴⁶ Protokoll der 22. Sitzung der KMF, 24.01.1951, SFA, E5155(-), 1971/202, Bd.68.

⁸⁴⁷ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to SAF, 26.01.1951, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18966; Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 02.02.1951, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4062.

⁸⁴⁸ Nobs (FFD) to Federal Council, 16.02.1951, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1856, Bd.7.

the hope that they would approve the Venom's acquisition without demanding a special bill.⁸⁴⁹ However, this hope was illusory, and on 2 March, the Federal Council thus approved the Venom bill on Kobelt's request.⁸⁵⁰

The bill passed the State Council's Military Commission smoothly, and only one of its members wanted to be reassured that also the private industry would benefit from it.⁸⁵¹ It was also unanimously approved by the National Council's Military Commission, of which some members – from the whole political spectrum – desired clarifications on the cost and the choice of the aeroplane, if the production of an aircraft in Switzerland could be detrimental to the country's booming economy, and most interestingly, why it was suddenly possible to produce jet engines under licence. De Montmollin and Rihner justified the cost of the engine's manufacture under licence and explained the choice of the Venom through its modernity; they flatly denied the impact of the production of an aircraft on Switzerland's economy; and von Wattenwyl argued that the problem of the fabrication of jet engines had been studied by various companies, and therefore the Swiss industry was well prepared for such an undertaking.⁸⁵² Although the bill was again discussed by the Federal Assembly's military commissions after a Swiss Air Force officer had criticized the Venom in the press, the commission's members remained steadfast and recommended the bill for approval to the Parliament.⁸⁵³ Finally, in late March and mid-April, the State Council and the National Council approved the purchase of 150 Venoms under licence.⁸⁵⁴ In a little more than a year, the Swiss had not only decided to purchase a large aircraft series, but also to produce the aeroplane – with the engine – in Switzerland.

Yet, for a successful and early implementation of the engine production, the Swiss needed at least one finished engine at the earliest possible date. Although they had been informed that no engines would become available before early 1953, they nonetheless approached the British to release one already in 1952. The request was

⁸⁴⁹ Auszug aus dem Protokoll des Bundesrats, 16.02.1951; Kobelt (FMD) to Military Commissions of the National and State Councils, 18.02.1951, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1856, Bd.7.

⁸⁵⁰ Kobelt (FMD) to Federal Council, 01.03.1951; Auszug aus dem Protokoll des Bundesrats, 02.03.1951; Botschaft des Bundesrates an die Bundesversammlung über die Beschaffung von Kampfflugzeugen, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1856, Bd.7.

⁸⁵¹ Protokoll der Sitzung der Militärkommission des Ständerates, 13.03.1951, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1856, Bd.7.

⁸⁵² Protokoll der Sitzung der Militärkommission des Nationalrates, 16.03.1951, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1856, Bd.7.

⁸⁵³ Protokoll der Sitzung der Militärkommission des Ständerates, 28.03.1951; Protokoll der Sitzung der Militärkommission des Nationalrates, 30.03.1951; 04.04.1951, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1856, Bd.7.

⁸⁵⁴ Bundesbeschluss über die Beschaffung von Kampfflugzeugen, 12.04.1951, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1856, Bd.7.

taken up by the FO, which submitted it to the Arms Working Party with the comment that it should be met on “political and strategic grounds”, without further explaining them.⁸⁵⁵ The working party discussed the request on 8 June 1951. According to the FO representative, the delivery of this engine was an opportunity for Britain to “gain some prestige” in Switzerland after the setbacks with the Goblins. The official from the MoS agreed, and although there would be no surplus production of these engines, he thought that one could be “squeezed out”. This solution was backed by the Chairman, who made the meanwhile recurrent argument that Britain was “looking to the Swiss for supplies of machine tools and precision instruments”. As a result, the delivery of one Ghost to Switzerland in 1952 was recommended to the Minister of Defence.⁸⁵⁶

Shinwell endorsed this reasoning and defended it in the Defence Committee. Moreover, aiming at a far-sighted armament policy, he argued that once the peak of the British defence programme would have been passed, foreign orders would be essential to maintain the aircraft industry’s war potential. He stressed that it was “particularly important not to close the door firmly on foreign customers”, because he feared “that overseas purchasers who have hitherto used British aircraft would turn over from UK to US types to the permanent detriment of our industry and war potential”. Consequently, while all aircraft supplies to countries not part of the Commonwealth or NATO remained suspended, Switzerland – together with Sweden, Burma, Iraq and Siam – received a special treatment.⁸⁵⁷ This policy was not challenged by the incoming Churchill Government, and the Arms Working Party informed the new Minister of Defence in December that “in view of our dependence on Switzerland for the supply of certain types of machine tools and other vital imports, it has been necessary in certain cases to allow Switzerland more favourable treatment than is given to most foreign countries not formally allied to us”.⁸⁵⁸

However, it was the delivery of the small series of Ghosts to Switzerland, which was questioned in late 1951, because the existing capacity for jet engine production remained insufficient despite the expansion in British jet fighter production.⁸⁵⁹ Berne was aware of this bottleneck and feared for the timely supply of

⁸⁵⁵ FO to MoD, 22.05.1951, TNA, DEFE 10/203.

⁸⁵⁶ JWPC(AWP)/M(51)7, Minutes, 08.06.1951, TNA, DEFE 10/202.

⁸⁵⁷ Shinwell (MoD) to Cabinet and Defence Committee, 28.06.1951, TNA, PREM 8/1399.

⁸⁵⁸ JWPC(AWP) to MoD, 07.12.1951, TNA, DEFE 10/203.

⁸⁵⁹ Geiger, *op. cit.*, p.135.

engines for the first Venom airframes.⁸⁶⁰ But meanwhile, it had become common policy in Britain that Switzerland represented a special case in arms exports and, contrary to the forecast by the MoS,⁸⁶¹ the MoD did not oppose the delivery. Therefore, the Arms Working Party concluded that the Swiss order for finished Ghosts in early 1953 could stand,⁸⁶² and the production of the first entire jet aircraft in Switzerland under licence was well under way in the early 1950s.

Under the impact of the Korean War scare, and in the fear to be cut off from foreign arms supplies, the Swiss decided to also build the Venom's engine under licence. The decision-making process in favour of the Ghost licence and the Venom itself was accelerated through the Goblin crisis, and the awareness that Britain was not in a position to deliver finished engines to a neutral country. Therefore, the feasibility of producing an engine in Switzerland was not even questioned anymore. Although Britain was more demanding in security measures after its blunder with the delivery of jet engines to the Soviets, it was nonetheless willing to grant the Swiss favourable treatment in its arms exports policy. The British still needed hard currency and feared American competition once the rearmament programme would be over. But the determinant factor was Britain's dependence on Swiss machine tools and precision instruments.

7.3. Business versus Security

The Swiss considered the Venom an interim solution until their own jet aircraft would become available in the second half of the 1950s. Moreover, the licence manufacture of a British aircraft and engine was not only seen as a further step towards a more self-reliant armaments policy, but also as the industrial and technical preparation for the production of an indigenous jet aeroplane. By early 1950, the Federal Military Department had retained two military aircraft projects: the N-20 and the P-16. Although both projects remained under the responsibility of the Military Technical Service, the former was directed by the state-owned Federal Aircraft Factory, and the

⁸⁶⁰ Protokoll der 23. Sitzung der KMF, 14.11.1951, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1854, Bd.82.

⁸⁶¹ MoS to MoD, 18.12.1951, TNA, DEFE 10/203.

⁸⁶² JWPC(AWP)/M(52)1, Minutes, 28.01.1952, TNA, DEFE 10/204.

second by the private Flug- und Fahrzeugwerke Altenrhein.⁸⁶³ The N-20 was to be powered by the so-called “Swiss Mamba” engine, which was based on the British Armstrong-Siddeley Mamba. In 1948, the Military Technical Service had bought the licence for this engine, and the MoS had favoured this transaction, because it “should serve to keep the Swiss committed to the use of British equipment and to interest them in the civil application of our prop-jets”.⁸⁶⁴

The P-16, which only appeared as a competitive project in early 1950, did not yet have an engine. The Mamba was not compatible with the P-16, and the Swiss engine – Sulzer’s D-45 – was neither sufficiently advanced nor competitive. In addition, as the P-16 received priority in the early 1950s, and the N-20 was finally abandoned, the need for a jet engine to power the Flug- und Fahrzeugwerke Altenrhein’s aircraft became acute. Therefore, the Swiss again approached the British for a jet engine, and the licence thereof. As the P-16 was only supposed to enter service in the latter half of the 1950s, it needed one of the most advanced jet engines the British aircraft industry could offer. Yet, would Whitehall be willing to sell state-of-the-art jet technology in the tense international climate of the Korean War and, especially, after the shock of the Nene-replica-powered Mig-15s? Meanwhile, would the Americans idly watch such an important technological transfer between its major Ally and neutral Switzerland taking place, or would they try to prevent it?

In 1950, the Swiss began their search for an engine to power the P-16. Initially, they focused on the Rolls-Royce Avon⁸⁶⁵ of the newest axial-flow engine generation, which was by far more powerful than any of the engines the Soviets had.⁸⁶⁶ Therefore, even though the MoS allowed Rolls-Royce to give the Swiss limited information on the engine, it was very questionable whether this technology would be sold to Switzerland.⁸⁶⁷ In early September 1950, a Military Technical Service engineer was informed by the MoS that the Swiss could not get the Avon, for the whole production was used for the British rearmament effort, Switzerland – together with Sweden – would only receive them after Western Union countries, and the engine was still on the secret list. However, a very small quantity of Armstrong-

⁸⁶³ Grand, *op. cit.*, p.30.

⁸⁶⁴ Steen (MoS) to Whittuck (AM), 12.05.1948, TNA, DEFE 10/196. On the Mamba see also TNA, DEFE 10/196; FO 371/73398; SFA, E27, -/9001, 15749, Bd.4; etc..

⁸⁶⁵ On the Avon engine see Gunston, *op. cit.*, p.143-145.

⁸⁶⁶ Engel, *Cold War at 30,000 Feet...*, *op. cit.*, p.140.

⁸⁶⁷ Bailey (MoS) to Walmsley (FO), 24.02.1950, TNA, FO 371/89133.

Siddeley Sapphire engines⁸⁶⁸ might become available the following year. Although this axial-flow engine was apparently even more powerful than the Avon, there was still room for manoeuvre, because its production was only about to start. Meanwhile, licences for both engines were out of question for the moment. According to the MoS, it would have even been difficult for the Swiss to gain access to this new engine technology without the impact of the Korean War.⁸⁶⁹

As there was apparently no other choice, the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement decided on 28 September to work towards the purchase of a limited amount of Sapphires,⁸⁷⁰ and in late October, the Military Attaché in London submitted to the MoS a request for this engine type.⁸⁷¹ Yet, by late January 1951, it remained unclear whether the British would be willing to sell some Sapphires, and it was improbable that they would agree to sell a licence. Nevertheless, the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement requested the Federal Military Department to authorise the purchase of three Sapphires, and to begin the negotiations for the licence.⁸⁷² The National Defence Commission was sympathetic to this request, but was not willing to go that far. On 2 February, the corps commanders agreed to the purchase of three Sapphires, but they thought that it was premature to start negotiations for the licence.⁸⁷³

It was only in spring that Berne's request for these engines began to be considered in Whitehall. In the AM, which handled the case, there were strong security concerns against the supply of these engines to Switzerland. According to one official, it was "not beyond the bounds of possibility for a 'defector' from the Swiss to fly the aircraft complete with Sapphire straight behind the Iron Curtain". He considered the request so unrealistic, that he wondered who had given the Swiss the idea that they could get this engine.⁸⁷⁴ Meanwhile, it was admitted that from a security point of view, Switzerland was not worse, but even better than other Western European states. Nonetheless, most of the latter countries were Britain's Allies, and therefore a certain security risk might have to be accepted in their case. Moreover,

⁸⁶⁸ On the Sapphire engine see Gunston, *op. cit.*, p.20.

⁸⁶⁹ Reisebericht England 3.-9.9.50, Greinacher (MTS), 06.11.1950, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1851, Bd.68.

⁸⁷⁰ Protokoll der 21. Sitzung der KMF, 28.09.1950, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1851, Bd.69.

⁸⁷¹ Reisebericht England 30.10.-15.11.1950, König (MTS), 17.11.1950, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1851, Bd.65.

⁸⁷² Protokoll der 22. Sitzung der KMF, 24.01.1951, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1854, Bd.82.

⁸⁷³ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 02.02.1951, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4062.

⁸⁷⁴ Macfayden to A.C.A.S. (both AM), 26.04.1951, TNA, AIR 20/7144.

continental European Allies had not yet received the latest axial-flow engine types. Switzerland, however, was neutral, and had “not clearly come out on our side”. Finally, another major problem was that the Americans, who manufactured the Sapphire under licence themselves, would dislike the delivery of this engine type to countries outside NATO.⁸⁷⁵ On these grounds, the Swiss request was officially denied in August 1951.⁸⁷⁶

Despite this negative reply, the Military Technical Service did not give up, and asked the Military Attaché in London to enquire again for Avons. Yet, why would this engine, which had been even more inaccessible than the Sapphire before, suddenly have become available? Von Wattenwyl was aware of this problem and expected that the request would be rejected. Nonetheless, he argued that there was a ray of hope, because – as the Avon was not produced under licence in the US – an objection from Washington was less likely.⁸⁷⁷ Unaware of these broader concerns, the Federal Military Department’s failure to obtain an engine for the P-16 aroused the suspicion of a National Councillor from the Canton of St. Gallen, where the Flug- und Fahrzeugwerke Altenrhein was established.

Calling directly on the Federal Political Department instead of the Federal Military Department, the conservative Theodor Eisenring held the Military Attaché in London responsible for the failure to procure an engine. He argued that Rieser did not sufficiently represent the Flug- und Fahrzeugwerke Altenrhein’s interests, for their aircraft was in direct competition with the N-20 from the state-run Federal Aircraft Factory, and therefore it would be better to let the Swiss Legation’s political personnel handle the issue.⁸⁷⁸ Following-up on Eisenring’s intervention, the Flug- und Fahrzeugwerke Altenrhein emphasised the need for modern axial-flow engines – which were only available in Britain – and suggested using the delivery of Swiss machine tools for the British rearmament effort as a *quid pro quo* for the supply of engines.⁸⁷⁹

In his defence, the Military Attaché stressed that the negative reply to the engine request was caused by military-strategic considerations. Britain could not deliver these engines to neutral Switzerland, while they were for the moment not even

⁸⁷⁵ Macfayden to D.C.A.S. (both AM), 18.05.1951, TNA, AIR 20/7144.

⁸⁷⁶ Rieser (London) to von Wattenwyl (MTS), 13.08.1951, SFA, E2001(E), 1970/217, Bd.4.

⁸⁷⁷ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to FMD, 23.08.1951, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1854, Bd.83.

⁸⁷⁸ Bindschedler to Zehnder (both FPD), 22.08.1951, SFA, E2001(E), 1970/217, Bd.4.

⁸⁷⁹ FFA to Zehnder (FPD), 05.09.1951, SFA, E2802(-), 1967/78, Bd.8.

delivered to NATO countries. Therefore, Rolls-Royce's and Armstrong-Siddeley's desire to sell engines to the Swiss did not make any difference. Rieser thus advised against a diplomatic intervention until the answer for the Avons request would have been received, and if negative, to wait until a new government would be in place.⁸⁸⁰ The Federal Political Department agreed and informed the Flug- und Fahrzeugwerke Altenrhein that a diplomatic intervention would be inappropriate at this stage.⁸⁸¹

As expected, in mid-November 1951, the AM rejected the Avon request. The official justification was that no engines could be made available before late 1952 without harming Britain's aircraft development programme. Rieser, however, emphasised again Whitehall's military-strategic considerations, and argued that the Labour Government had lacked the freedom of action to make an exception in the Swiss case, because it had been continuously accused by Churchill for selling aircraft abroad, which was needed at home. Paradoxically, as he had been informed by Air Marshal Sir John Boothman, Controller at the MoS, the Conservative Government would be more sympathetic to the Swiss request. Therefore, he recommended a diplomatic approach for axial-flow engines once the new government would be firmly established.⁸⁸²

Berne followed the Military Attaché's advice, and on 24 January 1952, the Swiss Minister in London officially approached the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the FO, Sir Anthony Nutting, with the request for three Sapphires. De Torrenté stressed that the engines were essential for Switzerland's fighter aircraft programme. Although Nutting reminded de Torrenté of the needs of British and NATO air forces, he promised to do all in his power to satisfy the Swiss request, not only for his genuine desire to help, but also for economic reasons.⁸⁸³ Yet, the FO's recommendation to the MoS in favour of the request was half-hearted, and only vaguely mentioned political grounds instead of economic ones.⁸⁸⁴

Nonetheless, on 13 February, the request was considered by the Arms Working Party, which decided to advise the Minister of Defence to supply six to eight Sapphires to Switzerland. It seemed to be sufficient for the working party that the FO favoured the delivery of engines to Switzerland, and that the MoS gave its assurance

⁸⁸⁰ Rieser to de Torrenté (both London), 24.09.1951, SFA, E2001(E), 1970/217, Bd.4.

⁸⁸¹ Zehnder (FPD) to FFA, 05.10.1951, SFA, E2802(-), 1967/78, Bd.8.

⁸⁸² Rieser (London) to von Wattenwyl (MTS), 12.11.1951, SFA, E2001(E), 1970/217, Bd.4.

⁸⁸³ Aide-mémoire and note, Torrenté (London) to Nutting (FO), 24.01.1952; De Torrenté (London) to Zehnder (FPD), 24.01.1952, SFA, E2001(E), 1970/217, Bd.4.

⁸⁸⁴ FO to MoS, 30.01.1952, TNA, DEFE 10/205.

that the Swiss order could be met without detriment to British requirements.⁸⁸⁵ Berne was at least partially aware of these positive developments, for Rieser was informed by the AM that there seemed to be no security obstacles to the request being met, and the MoS told him that a limited amount of Sapphires could be made available to Switzerland.⁸⁸⁶

However, contrary to the information given to the Swiss Military Attaché, there were genuine security concerns in Whitehall, which prevented the delivery of Sapphires to Switzerland. Also the new government feared that if the Soviets would get hold of an axial-flow engine, they would be able to catch up to Western technology through their reverse-engineering capabilities – like they had done with the Nene engine.⁸⁸⁷ As the Labour Government had not left a general policy on the export of axial-flow engines, the Conservative Government began to work on one, and this delayed a decision on the Swiss case. The delay became so important that almost four months after de Torrenté's diplomatic demarche, the MoS had to remind the MoD about the Swiss request, and insisted that there were "very good reasons why we should wish to meet this Swiss requirement and we certainly do not want retaliation where it would hurt us most".⁸⁸⁸ In the light of the Ghost engine case, one can reasonably assume that the MoS referred to economic reasons, and the British rearmament programme's need for Swiss machine tools and precision instruments.

In the light of Whitehall's indecision, and under pressure from the Flug- und Fahrzeugwerke Altenrhein and its political allies, the Federal authorities decided to intervene at a higher level. On 13 May 1952, the Swiss Minister met with the British Foreign Secretary to hand him over an aide-mémoire, which reiterated the request for Sapphires, while re-emphasising their necessity for Switzerland's jet aircraft development. In addition, de Torrenté expressed his astonishment that no decision had been reached, despite encouraging comments from the AM and the MoS to Rieser in February.⁸⁸⁹ In response, Eden referred to the ongoing difficulties in British jet engine exports, but he promised to intervene on Switzerland's behalf.⁸⁹⁰ For the moment, however, security concerns continued to prevail in London, and they were not just related to the Swiss case.

⁸⁸⁵ JWPC(AWP)/M(52)2, Minutes, 13.02.1952, TNA, DEFE 10/204.

⁸⁸⁶ Rieser (London) to von Wattenwyl (MTS), 09.02.1952, SFA, E2001(E), 1970/217, Bd.4.

⁸⁸⁷ Engel, *Cold War at 30,000 Feet...*, op. cit., pp.141-142.

⁸⁸⁸ Orchard (MoS) to Hosie (MoD), 08.05.1952, TNA, DEFE 7/2061.

⁸⁸⁹ Aide-mémoire, de Torrenté (London) to Eden (FO), 13.05.1952, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1859, Bd.8.

⁸⁹⁰ De Torrenté (London) to Zehnder (FPD), 16.05.1952, SFA, E2001(E), 1970/217, Bd.4.

Almost simultaneously to de Torrenté's diplomatic intervention, the Secretary of State for Air, William Sidney, decided not only to deny Switzerland's request for Sapphires, but also France's for Avons.⁸⁹¹ He followed the Deputy Chief of the Air Staff's advice that "we should do all we can to prevent continental countries gaining detailed knowledge about our latest axial-flow engine". It was feared that the Russians, who according to new intelligence information experienced difficulties in the development of axial-flow engines, would get access to British technology if the modern engines were on continental soil.⁸⁹²

This decision was questioned by the MoS representative in the Arms Working Party meeting of 13 May 1951. He feared that "the political and military implications of restricting licences and exports of axial-flow engines to NATO countries would be very serious", especially, because an earlier version of the Avon had already been supplied to neutral Sweden. With regard to the Swiss, he argued that they "were in a position to retaliate and had in fact threatened to transfer their orders elsewhere unless they were given an immediate answer". The possible Swiss retaliation was not further explained and most probably again referred to the supply of machine tools. Yet, he clearly voiced his concern that the Swiss might get access to Sapphires, which were produced under licence in the US. In making this claim, he was not aware of Washington's arms exports policy towards Switzerland. Even though the Swiss now qualified for reimbursable military assistance under the Mutual Defense Assistance Act, they did not have access to modern American military hardware.⁸⁹³ Nonetheless, the AM representative took these concerns seriously. Even though he observed that the objection on security grounds to the export of these engines only applied to the immediate future, he advocated deterring the Americans from exporting axial-flow engines by emphasising the security risks. The Chairman not only concurred with his colleagues' reasoning, but also emphasised that to ban the export of these engines would negatively affect the sale of civil aircraft. There he made an important point, for it was Whitehall's policy to earn money through the export of civil aircraft such as the de Havilland Comet, which was also powered by the Avon.⁸⁹⁴ Faced with the dilemma to choose between security, politics and commerce, the working party

⁸⁹¹ Note, Harley (MoD), 09.05.1952, TNA, DEFE 7/2061.

⁸⁹² Orme to Sidney (both AM), 12.05.1952, TNA, AIR 2/11375.

⁸⁹³ *Supra*, ch.5.1.

⁸⁹⁴ Engel, *Cold War at 30,000 Feet...*, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

decided to refer the question to the ministerial level,⁸⁹⁵ and Washington was informed about the dangers involved in the export of axial-flow engines to the European continent.⁸⁹⁶

On 22 May, the issue was discussed in a meeting chaired by Defence Minister Harold Alexander, in which participated the Secretary of State for Air, Minister of Supply Duncan Sandys, Deputy Chief of the Air Staff John Baker, and high-ranking officials of their respective ministries. Explaining the security risks involved in the delivery of axial-flow engines to France and Switzerland, Sidney was concerned that if the Russians would get hold of one of these engines, “it would enable them to overcome certain technical difficulties which were at present holding up the development of a high-thrust engine for bombers”. Therefore, he “was very anxious that the history of the Nene engines should not be repeated”. Meanwhile, as he believed that the Americans intended to offer the French Sapphire engines as “‘end-item’ assistance”, he emphasised that any security policy on these engines would have to be coordinated with Washington. Once again, it was an MoS representative, who disagreed.

Cyril Musgrave argued that by the time the Soviets would have caught up with the actual Avon type, Britain would already have improved this engine by four generations; he feared for the delivery of Swiss machine tools; the Comet was also powered by Avons, and Britain had thus to be “careful not to sacrifice the commercial advantage” it held in the field of civil aviation and turn it to the Americans; and finally, Washington could not sell engines of British design without London’s consent. Despite these arguments, Alexander was concerned by the security aspects, and noted that it would be “valuable” to delay the delivery of the engines. In the end, it was agreed that for the moment no advanced axial-flow engines would be exported, and to discuss the issue with the Americans. Paradoxically, in the same meeting it was decided to encourage aircraft and aero-engine exports in the future, for they “were very capable of earning hard currency”, helped to maintain the war potential, and were crucial to averting the “danger of losing orders to the Americans”.⁸⁹⁷

Yet, only two weeks after this meeting, Sidney gave in to Air Chief Marshal Baker’s request to deliver Avons and Sapphires to France and Switzerland, under the

⁸⁹⁵ JWPC(AWP)/M(52)6, Minutes, 13.05.1952, TNA, DEFE 10/204.

⁸⁹⁶ AM to British Joint Services Mission (BJSM) (Washington), 21.05.1952, TNA, DEFE 7/2061.

⁸⁹⁷ Overseas Orders for Aircraft, Minutes, MoD, 22.05.1952, TNA, DEFE 7/2061.

condition that both countries would be informed that this was in contradiction to British security, and therefore they would have to conform to certain security safeguards.⁸⁹⁸ How did this sudden policy-shift occur? The Secretary himself explained to the Minister of Defence that “in the light of the more liberal attitude to aircraft exports which we have decided to take, I agree that there is a case for giving these two customers a definite date”.⁸⁹⁹ By “case” he probably referred to the arguments advanced by the MoS. This is what at least partially appears from the explanation to Washington that the decision was based on NATO requirements and Britain’s economic needs, in spite of the fact that the USAF was against the delivery of these engines to France and Switzerland.⁹⁰⁰

The “real” reason was most probably economic, whereas the NATO argument was merely a justification to make the decision digestible for Washington. Moreover, in Switzerland’s case it did not apply. Despite NSC-119 and the intention to bring the Swiss into the Western defence effort, there is no evidence to support the claim that the US considered Switzerland a *de facto* member of the Atlantic Alliance. With regard to Britain, however, were there also strategic reasons for the AM’s policy shift? Why did the Deputy Chief of the Air Staff first voice security concerns to prevent the supply of these engines, and later himself recommend their delivery?

There seems to be no document to answer these questions. Yet, it is interesting to observe that it was during 1952 that the planning of the RAF-Swiss Air Force exchange scheme became concrete.⁹⁰¹ It is possible that this induced the Air Staff to re-evaluate the Swiss Air Force’s strategic importance, and therefore Baker finally favoured the release of Sapphires to Switzerland. Admittedly, this is a mere hypothesis, which lacks the necessary proof. Nevertheless, in June 1952, Whitehall decided to release some of its most advanced jet engines to neutral Switzerland towards the end of the year, at the same time as to France – one of its major NATO Allies.⁹⁰²

The British were aware that this decision might be misunderstood by allied and non-allied countries alike. Therefore, when the AM informed the Swiss about the Sapphires’ final release, they requested discretion on the issue. In the light of the high

⁸⁹⁸ James to Baker (both AM), 05.06.1952, TNA, AIR 2/11375.

⁸⁹⁹ Sidney (AM) to Alexander (MoD), 06.06.1952, TNA, DEFE 7/2061.

⁹⁰⁰ AM to BJSM (Washington), 11.06.1952, TNA, DEFE 7/2061.

⁹⁰¹ *Supra*, ch.6.4.

⁹⁰² JWPC(AWP)/M(52)9, Minutes, 18.06.1952, TNA, DEFE 10/204.

demand of these engines outside Britain, it was feared that if the sale of Sapphires to neutral Switzerland would be advertised too early in the press, it could cause a political stir in the UK and abroad.⁹⁰³ Moreover, Berne was informed that it would have to take security measures to deny the engine's technological know-how to the East.⁹⁰⁴ As a result, the Swiss decided to call the Sapphire henceforth TS-34 for the sake of secrecy,⁹⁰⁵ and the British established the necessary security safeguards, which ruled that the engines were only to be used for experimental and development work on Swiss-built military aircraft in recognised experimental establishments under the same security safeguards as in Britain.⁹⁰⁶ Thereupon, the Swiss could sign a contract with Armstrong-Siddeley for the delivery of three Sapphires at a cost of £120,000, and were informed by the latter company and Rolls-Royce that they would be willing to sell the licence for the Sapphire and Avon – subject to approval by the British Government.⁹⁰⁷

The probability that Whitehall would approve the granting of a licence to Switzerland was high. The issue of manufacturing licences for axial-flow engines was considered in a meeting chaired by the Chief of the Air Staff, which was attended by his deputy and assistants for policy and intelligence, as well as MoS officials. With regard to NATO countries, the participants saw the danger of US competition if Britain would delay the sale of licences, and therefore agreed to the opening of negotiations. They further specified that the same applied to countries like “Sweden, Switzerland and Argentina; and that applications from those countries were not to be rejected out of hand on security grounds”.⁹⁰⁸ Yet, how did it come about that neutral Switzerland again received a treatment similar to that of NATO Allies?

A paper by the Arms Export Policy Committee of autumn 1952, entitled “Guidance on Priorities for Export of Arms”, seems to give the answer to this question. In an evaluation system ranging from A to E – with A the highest –, Switzerland was ranked politically C; economically B; and strategically C in the air, and D on land. The explanation for this classification was that “[a]lthough Switzerland has a useful army and may build up a useful air force which would resist

⁹⁰³ Specker (London) to von Wattenwyl (MTS), 12.06.1952, SFA, E2001(E), 1970/217, Bd.4.

⁹⁰⁴ De Torrenté (London) to Kobelt (FMD), 25.06.1952, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1859, Bd.8.

⁹⁰⁵ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to FMD etc., 05.07.1952, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1859, Bd.8.

⁹⁰⁶ Baker (AM) to Boothman (MoS), 18.07.1952, TNA, AIR 2/11375.

⁹⁰⁷ Protokoll der 25. Sitzung der KMF, 02.12.1952, SFA, E5155(-), 1971/202, Bd.68; Kobelt (FMD) to MTS, 24.12.1952, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1859, Bd.8.

⁹⁰⁸ Note of meeting, AM, 25.07.1952, TNA, AIR 2/11375.

attack, she is not of the first importance strategically or politically, since she is off the main line of likely attack and is determined to remain neutral if possible. Economically, Switzerland is a highly desirable customer, particularly in the present circumstances, since such sales would earn hard currency. The Swiss moreover attach great importance to their arms supplies from the UK and, in the context of our difficult trade negotiations, sales there would be a useful lever. These economic considerations are however modified by the operations of the Europeans Payments Union".⁹⁰⁹ An earlier draft of this paper, which only referred to aircraft exports, gives some precisions on this classification. The only countries, which received an A from an economic perspective, were dollar countries. But it was emphasised, that the Swiss franc was considered "equivalent to gold", and that Switzerland was as a market "only less important than permanent dollar markets". Compared to the other traditional neutral Sweden, Switzerland was as important strategically, outweighed it economically, and was only from a political perspective less important (see Table 5).⁹¹⁰

Table 5

<i>Importance of Sweden and Switzerland in UK Arms Supplies from a Strategic, Economic and Political Perspective (Decreasing from A to E)</i>			
	Strategically	Economically	Politically
Sweden	C	C	B
Switzerland	C	B	C

Consequently, while the economic factor for arms exports to Switzerland remained predominant, political considerations were also taken into account, and the strategic aspect had gained in importance – at least in the air. This is not of minor importance, for the Swiss had achieved parity with the Swedes. Swedish airspace, located half-way along the direct air routes between the Soviet Union and the UK, was of major importance to NATO, and more specifically, to RAF planning.⁹¹¹ The

⁹⁰⁹ Guidance of Priorities for Export of Arms, Arms Export Policy Committee, 02.10.1952, TNA, DEFE 7/242.

⁹¹⁰ Note, Table, Appendices, AWP, 30.07.1952, TNA, DEFE 10/3.

⁹¹¹ Nilsson, Mikael, "Amber Nine: NATO's Secret Use of a Flight Path over Sweden and the Incorporation of Sweden in NATO's Infrastructure", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol.44, No.2, pp.287-307; Aunesluoma, *op. cit.*, p.104.

strategic upgrading of Switzerland's air force was an additional indication that – since Primault had disclosed Swiss war plans and an RAF-Swiss Air Force exchange scheme was in the making –⁹¹² there could actually have been defence coordination in the air between the British and Swiss air staffs.

Obviously, one could argue that such coordination did not seem necessary, or could have little or no impact on the strategic importance with regard to arms exports. For despite the “Montgomery-de Montmollin-Agreement” of early 1952, Whitehall did not seem to have a strategic interest in the equipment of Switzerland's land forces. Therefore, it can be questioned whether it had any impact on NATO planning, or if it was only valued by the British Field-Marshal and the Swiss Chief of the General Staff. Moreover, Switzerland had still no political or strategic priority in arms exports, which remained with NATO, the old Commonwealth, Iraq, Jordan and Burma, i.e. countries with which Britain had treaty obligations.⁹¹³

Nevertheless, the release of Avons and Sapphires to France and Switzerland was the first time that the supply of such axial-flow engines outside the UK (other than the US and the old Commonwealth countries) was approved. Yet, the MoS advocated also the export to other countries, for financial reasons and to maintain Britain's war potential after the rearmament programme would be over.⁹¹⁴ The MoD concurred with this reasoning, but it was also desirous to establish a coherent security policy for the export of axial-flow engines, if possible together with the Americans. In this undertaking, the Swiss and French cases were used – at least from the British side – as a precedent.⁹¹⁵ Interestingly, as the British Joint Services Mission⁹¹⁶ presented Washington the release of axial-flow engines and perhaps a licence thereof to France and Switzerland as a *fait accompli*, there were no complaints. But as the possibility to release the same engine type to Sweden and Yugoslavia was mentioned, the Americans voiced concerns. Nonetheless, they were willing to work towards a common security policy.⁹¹⁷

However, as London decided in December – again without consultation – to export axial-flow engines to Sweden and Yugoslavia,⁹¹⁸ Washington's concerns

⁹¹² *Supra*, ch.6.4.

⁹¹³ Hosie (MoD) to Arms Export Policy Committee, 04.12.1952, TNA, DEFE 7/242.

⁹¹⁴ Robbins (MoS) to Orme (AM), 27.08.1952, TNA, AIR 2/11375.

⁹¹⁵ Alexander (MoD) to Eden (FO), 07.11.1952, TNA, DEFE 7/2061.

⁹¹⁶ BJSM.

⁹¹⁷ Note, BJSM (Washington), 19.11.1952, TNA, AIR 2/11375.

⁹¹⁸ AM to BJSM (Washington), 06.12.1952, TNA, AIR 2/11375.

transformed into ire. The Americans regarded “Sweden to some extent and Yugoslavia in particular” as a greater security risk than Switzerland and France, and they had not forgotten that the British had once sold Nene engines to the Soviets.⁹¹⁹ As a result, Washington and London did not only disagree on the export destinations, but there was also a lack of mutual trust. In this climate, it is not surprising that the security safeguards, which the British proposed, were considered insufficient by the Americans. In addition, they feared that the British aircraft industry was establishing a lead on the aviation export market to the detriment of the US industry.⁹²⁰

Nonetheless, security concerns remained predominant in Washington. This was not the case in Whitehall, where such concerns were outweighed by business interests. Therefore, Britain was willing to sell its engines, “but would force buyers to secure the technology themselves”.⁹²¹ By May 1953, the MoD evaluated the buyers of British jet engines according to “the degree of risk that vital information concerning engines received by them would be lost to the Russians”: Switzerland, together with Venezuela and Belgium, constituted a “fair risk”; France and Yugoslavia were a “definite risk”; and Italy, Denmark, India, and Pakistan signified a “practical certainty of loss”. While France and Italy were infiltrated by communists, Switzerland was a “fair risk”, because of “the undoubted anti-Communism of the higher ranks of the Armed Forces, and the relatively small Communist political influence”.⁹²² Despite this “positive” evaluation, in early 1953, London required Switzerland to apply additional security safeguards.⁹²³ Finally, albeit grudgingly, the Swiss accepted these additional measures, which were rather intended to calm the Americans’ ire.⁹²⁴

The Swiss were aware that the engines, which they needed for their jet aircraft development, were only available in Britain. Thus, under pressure from the Flug- und Fahrzeugwerke Altenrhein and their political allies, and aware of its trump cards, Berne did not give up until it would receive the engines it wanted. In Whitehall, there

⁹¹⁹ BJSM (Washington) to AM, 11.12.1952, TNA, AIR 2/11375.

⁹²⁰ British Embassy (Washington) to DoS, 09.12.1952; British Proposal Regarding Export of Jet Aircraft Engines and Data, Report by the State and Air Force Members of the State-Defense Military Information Control Committee, 30.12.1952, NARA, RG 59, Entry 1545, Box 7.

⁹²¹ Orchard (MoS) to Heddy (FO), 03.02.1953, TNA, AIR 2/11375; Engel, *Cold War at 30,000 Feet...*, *op. cit.*, pp.150-152.

⁹²² Implications of the Export of Axial Flow Jet Aircraft Engines, Joint Intelligence Committee, 01.05.1953, TNA, AIR 2/18566; Alexander (MoD) to Cabinet, 21.05.1953, TNA, AIR 8/2358.

⁹²³ Cheetham (FO) to Scrivener (Berne), 10.01.1953, TNA, FO 371/107350; Scrivener (Berne) to FPD, 20.01.1953, SFA, E2001(E), 1970/217, Bd.4.

⁹²⁴ FPD to Berne, 19.03.1953; Kobelt (FMD) to Petitpierre, 12.03.1953; Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to FMD, 12.02.1953, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1859, Bd.8; Scrivener (Berne) to Eden (FO), 25.03.1953, TNA, FO 371/107350.

were real security concerns against the supply of these advanced engines to the European continent. Yet, the business interests finally outweighed these concerns, at least in the Swiss case. The incentive for the delivery of these engines was mainly economic. But Switzerland's strategic importance had increased significantly, and it was finally – together with France – the first continental European country to receive axial-flow engines. In addition, it is probable that Switzerland was almost treated like a NATO country or Sweden, because there was some defence coordination between the RAF and the Swiss Air Force. Meanwhile, despite the USAF's opposition to the delivery of Sapphires to Switzerland, Washington did not intervene and was more disturbed by the delivery of similar engines to the other traditional European neutral. Apparently, since NSC-119, the US had developed a much more benevolent approach towards Switzerland.

8. Centurion I

8.1. The First British “No”

The introduction of tanks into the Swiss Army was a contentious issue during the post-war period. In addition to the question whether tanks were necessary at all, and if they were, what type ought to be secured, there were continuous budget constraints, which further complicated the introduction of such an expensive weapon. Nevertheless, from the late 1940s on, the military leadership held the view that the acquisition of tanks was unavoidable if defensive action was to be successful. Furthermore, first through the increasing international tensions of the late 1940s, and then through the Korean War, the Federal Assembly took a more generous attitude on military spending.⁹²⁵ Thus, the equipment of the Swiss Army with tanks became increasingly likely.

Yet, a tank force would have to be built up from scratch. The Swiss Army had only 150 G-13 tank destroyers, which had been bought between 1946 and 1947 for little money as Jagdpanzer 38(t) Hetzer from the Czech Skoda factories. The Hetzer, which had originally been developed for the German Wehrmacht, did not replace a modern tank, mainly because it lacked a turret.⁹²⁶ Therefore, by early 1949, the Swiss began their search for tanks in earnest. But they had little idea on the type of tanks needed, did not have a supplier, and there had been no tank development work similar to that of military aircraft: in the late 1930s, the Swiss had produced 12 Czech tanks under licence, and the development of tanks, which had begun during the Second World War, was immediately abandoned after the war.⁹²⁷ Almost instinctively, they turned to the British, who not only supplied the Swiss Air Force with military aircraft and engines, but also advised the General Staff on defence issues. Would Britain, however, be willing to supply tanks to neutral Switzerland, while its own armed forces and Allies were rearming after the signing of NAT, and especially, in the wake of the Korean War? And did Berne turn to London for reasons other than the armament link and British defence advising?

⁹²⁵ *Supra*, ch.5.2.

⁹²⁶ Braun, *op. cit.*, p.244.

⁹²⁷ Die Frage der Fabrikation von Panzerwagen in der Schweiz, MTS, 02.05.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1. On Swiss tank development and acquisition in general see Vautravers, *op. cit.*, pp.120-135.

In autumn 1946, a Swiss delegation visited British troops in Udine to study tanks. On their return, the delegation's members advocated the purchase of the Comet, which was a World War II medium tank.⁹²⁸ As the Swiss military leadership had not yet decided on the question of tanks, this request did not lead to any decision. It was only almost three years later, in May 1949, that the Swiss looked again to the UK for tanks.⁹²⁹ Interestingly, however, military considerations were not the main incentive at that time. In spring 1949, the Federal Department of Public Economy's Trade Section and the Military Technical Service agreed to increase the arms purchases from Britain to re-equilibrate the Anglo-Swiss balance of payments. But almost immediately it appeared that this would be difficult, because the foreseen purchase of Vickers artillery tractors was opposed by the Army. Nonetheless, pressured by the Head of the Federal Department of Public Economy to buy additional weapons in Britain, the Federal Military Department began to see an ideal opportunity to acquire tanks.⁹³⁰

The Head of the Light Troops, Divisionary-Colonel Pierre de Muralt, jumped on the occasion, for the tanks would probably be introduced into his troops. Arguing that it was unquestionable, that tanks were needed as soon as possible, and that for the sake of Anglo-Swiss commercial relations it was desirable to purchase war material in Britain for an amount of SFr.65 million, he requested that a mission be sent to Britain to study the availability of suitable tanks. According to de Muralt, the tanks needed to have effective firepower, the greatest possible mobility, a turret, and should not be heavier than 25 tons and wider than 2.65 metres to suit Switzerland's bridges and streets.⁹³¹ Although the Chief of Instruction disagreed on the weight of the tanks, he supported de Muralt's request, reminded Kobelt that he himself had emphasised the need for tanks, and that the Federal Military Department had to take advantage of the Trade Section's desire for additional arms purchases in Britain.⁹³² Yet, on the Head of the Military Technical Service's advice, the Defence Minister decided that before a mission would be sent, the Military Attaché would have to enquire about the

⁹²⁸ Bericht über die Studienreise nach Udine-Triest, Kuenzy (FMD), 23.10.1946, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.4.

⁹²⁹ Kuenzy (FMD) to Rieser (London), 11.05.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.4.

⁹³⁰ *Supra*, ch.6.2.

⁹³¹ Muralt to Frick (both FMD), 17.06.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1.

⁹³² Frick to Kobelt (both FMD), 04.08.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1.

availability of tanks in the UK. Moreover, it would first have to be determined which type of tank suited the Swiss Army's needs.⁹³³

It was indeed necessary to reach an agreement on the type of tanks, for Kobelt's subordinates were not the only ones to disagree; the advice coming from foreign experts was also contradictory. In autumn 1949, Cottrell-Hill recommended a medium tank with strong firepower, such as the British Comet or Centurion.⁹³⁴ Although the Centurion had been developed towards the end of the war, it was only produced from 1946 on. It was a cruiser tank with good armour protection and a 76.2mm gun, which was replaced by a 83.4mm gun in the Mark 3 version of the late 1940s.⁹³⁵ The Centurion and the Comet had also been recommended to the Deputy Director of the Federal Military Administration while he was at the Royal Armoured Corps⁹³⁶ School Bovington during the summer. Moreover, Montgomery had promised Bracher that he would intervene to make sure that Swiss tank requests would receive the same treatment as those by Western Union states.⁹³⁷

By contrast, the French General Jean de Lattre de Tassigny recommended to de Muralt light tanks between 12 and 19 tons with a 75mm gun and relatively thin armour, which would be compensated through the tank's high mobility.⁹³⁸ It certainly was no coincidence that the type of tank advocated by de Lattre corresponded exactly to the French AMX-13, which was under development since 1946.⁹³⁹ In the light of these varying opinions, Kobelt ordered de Muralt to set up an *ad hoc* commission, which would have to decide on the tank type suitable for the Swiss Army, procurement possibilities abroad, and the sending of a mission to study potentially suitable tanks. Finally, they would have to suggest a limited number of tanks for testing purposes.⁹⁴⁰

On 29 September, de Muralt opened the commission's first meeting by observing that although the ideal tank would be between 20 and 22 tons, no such tank

⁹³³ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to FMD, 30.08.1949; Kobelt to Frick (both FMD), SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1.

⁹³⁴ *Supra*, ch.6.4.

⁹³⁵ Peden, *Arms, Economics...*, *op. cit.*, p.244; Ogorkiewicz, R.M., *Design and Development of Fighting Vehicles*, London: Macdonald, 1968, pp.42-43; See also Dunstan, Simon, *Modern Combat Vehicles: 2. Centurion*, London: Ian Allan, 1980.

⁹³⁶ RAC.

⁹³⁷ Auszug aus Reisebericht England 13.06.-03.07.1949, Bracher (FMD), 09.08.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.4.

⁹³⁸ Note sur une entrevue avec le Général de Lattre de Tassigny le 23.07.1949, de Muralt (FMD), 22.08.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1.

⁹³⁹ Ogorkiewicz, *op. cit.*, p.52.

⁹⁴⁰ Kobelt to de Muralt (both FMD), 17.09.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1.

existed for the moment, and therefore he suggested the purchase of a Comet-like tank. Yet, for the commission's other high-ranking members – such as the Head of the Operational Section and the Commander of the 9th Division – a heavier tank was not a second-best choice. They favoured a medium or heavy tank for its stronger armour and usually more powerful gun. Thus, the commission's members agreed that a tank between 30 and 35 tons, with a 75mm gun and strong armour would be appropriate. But where would the Swiss get such a tank for testing purposes? The Head of the Material Section observed that according to information from the Military Attachés, France and Canada did not have tanks ready; Britain could perhaps deliver Comets and Centurions; and the US were not willing to deliver tanks to Switzerland. The Military Attaché in Washington had only been supposed to inquire about the availability of tanks in the US,⁹⁴¹ but in July, he had approached the State Department for the purchase of 100 M4As, which were World War II medium tanks.⁹⁴² Although the Division of Western European Affairs had favoured the request,⁹⁴³ it was rejected by the Department of Defense, which observed that Switzerland did not fall under the Mutual Defense Assistance Act.⁹⁴⁴ Consequently, as suitable tanks were apparently only available in the UK, the commission concluded to request the purchase of 4 Comets and 4 Centurions for testing purposes without sending a mission abroad.⁹⁴⁵

Meanwhile, however, because of London's devaluation of the pound in September, the Trade Section's priorities had temporarily shifted and it was not pressuring the Federal Military Department anymore to make additional arms purchases in Britain.⁹⁴⁶ Moreover, the Federal Assembly and its commissions were very reluctant to allocate money for the purchase of tanks during their discussions of the military budget for 1950.⁹⁴⁷ Therefore, the request was reduced to 1 Comet and 4 Centurions.⁹⁴⁸ But this was still too costly for the Defence Minister, and in the National Defence Commission meeting of 7 November he stated that such an

⁹⁴¹ Kuenzy (FMD) to Waibel (Washington), 15.06.1949; 18.11.1949, SFA, E27, -9001, 18505, Bd.4.

⁹⁴² Washington to DoS, 06.07.1949, NARA, RG 59, CDF 1945-49, 854.20-25.

⁹⁴³ MacArthur (WE) to Margrave (Munitions Division (MD)), 21.07.1949, NARA, RG 59, CDF 1945-49, 854.20-25.

⁹⁴⁴ Mitchell (Office of International Programs) to Elliott (MD), 09.11.1949, NARA, RG 59, CDF 1945-49, 854.20-25.

⁹⁴⁵ Procès-verbal de la Commission ad hoc des chars de combat, 29.09.1949, SFA, E27, -9001, 18505, Bd.1.

⁹⁴⁶ *Supra*, ch.6.2.

⁹⁴⁷ Bracher (FMD) to Rieser (London), 20.12.1949, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1851, Bd.13.

⁹⁴⁸ De Montmollin to de Muralt (both FMD), 19.10.1949; de Muralt to de Montmollin (both FMD), 22.10.1949, SFA, E27, -9001, 18505, Bd.1.

acquisition would only be conceivable in early 1950, when the military budget would have passed. In addition, the corps commanders had not yet made up their mind on the tank question, and were thus happy to defer the issue to a later date.⁹⁴⁹ Yet, according to what the Swiss Military Attaché had learned from discussions in London, even a request for a limited number of tanks would have faced difficulties.

The WO had informed Rieser that Britain actually needed every single tank it produced for its own army. Furthermore, due to a lack of steel and skilled workers, the production capacity was limited to the extent that the UK defence industry would not be able to deliver neither Comets nor Centurions to Switzerland before 1954. Apparently, this decision had not been motivated by political considerations, for the British had not even mentioned deliveries to Western Union or NATO Allies. Despite this negative reply, Rieser was still hopeful, for he had been told by an WO official that Switzerland could send a mission for the study of tanks to Britain, and an MoS official had noted that a diplomatic approach at the highest level might bring about a positive reply. Therefore, Rieser argued first for sending a tank mission to Britain, and then – if the Comet or Centurion would suit the Swiss Army's needs – to approach directly the Foreign Secretary.⁹⁵⁰ Although Kobelt initially agreed to send a tank mission to the UK, de Montmollin was able to reverse his decision. The Chief of the General Staff first desired to clarify the tank issue within the Federal Military Department.⁹⁵¹

Consequently, in late December 1949, Bracher instructed Rieser to continue his enquiries about the availability of tanks in Britain, but without entering into any commitments. The Federal Military Administration Deputy Director emphasised that notwithstanding the recently passed military budget, which left very little money for tanks, the Trade Section remained interested in arms purchases from the UK.⁹⁵² Yet, in early 1950, Rieser urged Berne more than ever to send a mission. He argued that through the build-up of the armed forces of the Western Union and the Atlantic Alliance, the longer Switzerland would wait to act, the more difficult it would become to obtain tanks. In addition, the WO had indicated that if Britain would deliver Comets or Centurions to Switzerland, France and other Allies would certainly protest.

⁹⁴⁹ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 07.11.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4062.

⁹⁵⁰ Rieser (London) to von Wattenwyl (MTS), 17.11.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1.

⁹⁵¹ Kobelt to de Montmollin (both FMD) etc., 15.12.1949; de Montmollin to Kobelt (both FMD), 22.12.1949; Kobelt to de Montmollin (both FMD) etc., 27.12.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1.

⁹⁵² Bracher (FMD) to Rieser (London), 20.12.1949, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1851, Bd.13.

At the moment they were waiting themselves for the delivery of tanks, as the whole production capacity was still reserved for the British Army.⁹⁵³

In late January 1950, the National Defence Commission finally turned to the tank issue, and used as a basis for discussion a memorandum by the Head of the Light Troops. In this paper, de Muralt first stated that the tanks would be used as anti-tank weapons, as a support weapon for the infantry, and to reinforce the Light Troops in the form of rapidly deployable “combat teams”. Then, he only vaguely observed that the tank should have a 75mm gun, good armour without being too heavy, and – as approximately 720 tanks were needed – be moderately priced. Finally, he called for tank missions to Britain, where a limited amount of tanks for testing purposes would have to be purchased; to France, although the only tank there was apparently too light; and to Sweden, where a tank of the ideal weight of 20 to 23 tons might be available.⁹⁵⁴

The National Defence Commission’s views, however, did not only differ significantly from de Muralt’s, but some corps commanders were also sceptical about the tank weapon itself. In general, tanks were seen as infantry support weapons, which were supposed to have a powerful gun and great mobility to fire on enemy tanks from a large distance. Meanwhile, there was disagreement whether the mobility ought to be privileged at the armour’s expense. Moreover, some questioned whether the expensive tanks would guarantee an adequate defence, and if this was not the case, whether anti-tank weapons would have to take precedence. Others wondered whether the introduction of tanks would be feasible within a militia army. Thus, the tank issue remained unclear within the Swiss defence establishment. Nonetheless, the National Defence Commission agreed to the continuation of the studies on the introduction of tanks as a support weapon for the infantry and the Light Troops, and to tank missions abroad.⁹⁵⁵

Consequently, a Swiss mission – headed by de Muralt and von Wattenwyl – went to Britain from 6 to 17 March to study the tanks used by the British Army, learn about tank warfare, and discuss about the possibility to purchase tanks for the Swiss Army. During their stay, the delegates had the opportunity to visit Vickers-Armstrongs in Newcastle, where the Centurion was mainly built; the Royal Armoured

⁹⁵³ Rieser (London) to von Wattenwyl (MTS), 11.01.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1.

⁹⁵⁴ Introduction de chars blindés dans l’armée suisse, de Muralt (FMD), 09.01.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1.

⁹⁵⁵ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 25.01.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4062.

Corps School in Bovington, where they could see Centurions and Comets in action, were initiated how to drive and shoot with these tanks, and discussed the employment of tanks with various British specialists. The mission culminated in a meeting with high-ranking representatives from the WO to discuss the possibility to buy Comets and Centurions. The Director of the Royal Armoured Corps, Major-General N.W. Duncan, who chaired the meeting, agreed in principle to the delivery of these tanks to Switzerland. With regard to the 30 tanks the Swiss mission asked for, 4 Centurions could be made available in 1950 and the remaining 26 would be delivered in 1951, while the delivery of the older Comet would take longer, for its production was being phased out.⁹⁵⁶

On their return, both de Muralt and von Wattenwyl argued for the purchase of 30 Centurions. The Head of the Light Troops observed that the British concurred with the Swiss that they needed tanks to support the infantry and to reinforce the Light Troops. Regarding the choice of the tank, he stressed that the Centurion had a canon, which could penetrate all armour (“including Russian armour”); strong armour; a powerful engine; and a good manoeuvrability. According to de Muralt, the Centurion was in all these aspects superior to the outdated Comet. Thus, he agreed with the British tank specialists that the much higher price for the Centurion (SFr.625,000, compared to SFr.276,563 for the Comet) was justified. Nevertheless, he questioned whether this tank was, due to its weight of 50 tons and large size, suitable for Switzerland’s routes and bridges. But since the Americans were unwilling to sell tanks, the French only had a prototype and the Swedes were still at the stage of drawings, he thought that it would be advisable to buy 30 Centurions – a quantity, which would allow equipping a homogenous armoured unit. In addition, de Muralt stressed the urgency to reach a decision, for other foreign missions were interested in the tank and the production capacity was limited. Yet, he was positive about the possibility to get these tanks, for Major-General Duncan had told him that Britain was not only interested in selling the Centurion to Switzerland from an economic perspective, but also for strategic reasons, because it “was interested to see the Swiss Army with the best possible equipment to fulfil its task”.⁹⁵⁷

Where did this sudden strategic interest come from? In the light of Montgomery’s promise to Bracher that he would intervene on Switzerland’s behalf,

⁹⁵⁶ Protokoll der Konferenz im WO, 17.03.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 17987, Bd.13.

⁹⁵⁷ Rapport de la mission d’Angleterre, de Muralt (FMD), 11.04.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 17987, Bd.13.

and his military talks with the Swiss during the same period, one could assume that the Field-Marshal had pointed out to the WO the strategic need for equipping the Swiss Army appropriately. Admittedly, this is a mere assumption. Meanwhile, the Head of the Military Technical Service added to de Muralt's advocacy that the Centurion was the only existing tank with a "stabiliser", which facilitated precise shooting while in movement. Finally, he observed that the purchase of tanks in Britain was beneficial from a commercial perspective, especially in view of the decrease in Swiss arms purchases from Britain after the completion of the delivery of the first Vampire series.⁹⁵⁸

This avalanche of arguments convinced the National Defence Commission, which recommended to Kobelt the purchase of 4 Centurions in 1950 for testing purposes, with the option to buy the remaining 26 tanks in 1951.⁹⁵⁹ The Defence Minister concurred with his main advisory body, and in agreement with the Federal Finance Department, the SFr.3 million for these tanks were to be included in the supplementary military budget.⁹⁶⁰ While the Federal Military Department was condemned to inaction until the Federal Assembly would have approved this budget, two interesting suggestions on the supply of tanks were made. In late May, de Muralt, who had ruled out Russian tanks in October 1949 "for obvious reasons",⁹⁶¹ suggested to de Montmollin to approach the Soviet Government for tanks, because the supply of tanks from Britain, and especially from the US, appeared uncertain. Although he expected a negative reply, he emphasised that through the purchase of Russian tanks Switzerland would underline its independence from both blocs.⁹⁶²

In February 1948, von Wattenwyl had taken a similar step by approaching the Swiss Legation in Moscow to inquire about modern radars, which the British and Americans had been unwilling to deliver at the time.⁹⁶³ This never happened, for the Swiss Minister in Moscow and Foreign Minister Petitpierre had rejected the idea on the grounds that the Russians did not have modern radar equipment themselves, and

⁹⁵⁸ Beiträge zum Reisebericht England 06.-18.03.1950, von Wattenwyl (MTS), 06.03.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 17987, Bd.13.

⁹⁵⁹ Protokollauszug der Sitzung der LVK, 19.04.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1; de Montmollin to Kobelt (both FMD), 25.04.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 17987, Bd.13.

⁹⁶⁰ De Montmollin to Kobelt (both FMD), 09.05.1950; FFD to FMD, 11.05.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1.

⁹⁶¹ De Muralt to Kobelt (both FMD), 13.10.1949, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1.

⁹⁶² De Muralt to de Montmollin (both FMD), 30.05.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1.

⁹⁶³ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to Flückiger (Moscow), 25.02.1948, SFA, E2001(E), 1969/121, Bd.2.

more importantly, that they would link such deliveries to a service in return.⁹⁶⁴ This time, the outcome was not different, but even more pronounced.

De Montmollin took the matter to Defence Minister Kobelt, but argued firmly against it. As he saw the USSR as the sole potential enemy in case of war, he questioned the supply of spare parts. Moreover, he feared the psychological consequences of such a dramatic change in Switzerland's armament policy. Not only that the population might be disoriented, but the communist party (*Partei der Arbeit*) would see itself confirmed. Finally, he did not want to endanger the economic and military contacts with the West.⁹⁶⁵ Kobelt agreed with de Montmollin, and referred to Petitpierre, as the question was considered to be of a political nature.⁹⁶⁶ The Foreign Minister was clearly against arms imports from the Soviet Union. He still wanted to prevent Russian requests for war material, but first and foremost, he did not want to endanger the relations with the US.⁹⁶⁷ Thereafter, there was no more question of approaching the Soviets for weapons.

Almost simultaneously, another suggestion on tank supplies was made. National Councillor August Schirmer advocated that the Swiss rail and engine industry, which suffered from a lack of orders, could manufacture tanks under licence that were at least as good in quality as those produced in British factories. Referring to the second Vampire series, he thus asked Kobelt – with whom he was on familiar terms – to consider the issue.⁹⁶⁸ Coincidentally or not, on the Defence Minister's request, the Military Technical Service had just finished a report on the feasibility of tank production in Switzerland. From the outset, the report observed that because of time constraints and a lack of funding the autonomous development of a tank was unadvisable. Therefore, the only remaining way to produce tanks within Switzerland was under licence, whereas some parts – such as the armour-plate – would still have to be purchased abroad. According to the Military Technical Service, the advantages of a licence production were the autonomous supply of spare parts; the independence from abroad, as long as the armour-plates would already have been delivered; and that it would provide jobs in times of economic crisis. The disadvantages, however, included higher costs; longer delivery times, due to the need to set up a production

⁹⁶⁴ Flückiger (Moscow) to Petitpierre (FPD), 07.04.1948; De Rahm (FPD) to Moscow, 23.04.1948, SFA, E2001(E), 1969/121, Bd.2.

⁹⁶⁵ De Montmollin to Kobelt (both FMD), 09.06.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1.

⁹⁶⁶ Kobelt (FMD) to Petitpierre (FPD), 12.06.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1.

⁹⁶⁷ Petitpierre (FPD) to Kobelt (FMD), 23.06.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1.

⁹⁶⁸ Schirmer to Kobelt (FMD), 26.05.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1.

plant; and the loss of arms purchases, which favoured the Swiss export industry. The paper concluded that a licence production would be desirable if more than 50 tanks were to be produced.⁹⁶⁹ Consequently, Kobelt replied to Schirmer that the question was being studied, and that a licence production was feasible. Yet, he emphasised that the purchase of finished tanks could be beneficial to the Swiss tourism industry by providing the British with hard currency.⁹⁷⁰

For the moment, the Defence Minister favoured buying finished Centurions in Britain. Thus, as soon as the supplementary budget had been passed by the Federal Assembly in June 1950, the Swiss Minister in London submitted a request for 4 tanks in 1950 and 26 more in 1951 to Sir William Strang, Permanent Under-Secretary of the FO.⁹⁷¹ However, would Whitehall agree to deliver tanks to neutral Switzerland, especially, since the Korean War was raging? At least for the FO's Western Department the Swiss case was strong, for, according to the WO, the tanks were available, and especially – referring to a CoS paper on strategic priorities in the export of arms –, Switzerland was “amongst those countries with which we have no military treaty, but whose armed forces would be likely to make a useful contribution in war, and to which exports of arms are economically important to us. She comes immediately after the Commonwealth, Atlantic Treaty countries, and Egypt, Jordan, etc., with the extra priority due to her hard currency”.⁹⁷²

This was, however, pre-Korean War thinking, and the FO's Economic Relations Department seemed to grasp the impact of the conflict. Britain's defence and arms export policy was being revised, and deliberations on the export of arms to neutral countries would probably come last. In addition, the Defence Committee considered it most urgent to build up British Armed Forces, and with regard to NATO, it was noted that it would be “very rash at this moment to permit the export of thirty of our newest and best tanks to a neutral country”. Therefore, the Economic Relations Department clearly argued against the delivery of Centurions to Switzerland.⁹⁷³

⁹⁶⁹ Die Frage der Fabrikation von Panzerwagen in der Schweiz, MTS, 02.05.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1.

⁹⁷⁰ Kobelt (FMD) to Schirmer, 31.05.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1.

⁹⁷¹ Kobelt (FMD) to Petitpierre (FPD), 24.06.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1; Note, de Torrenté (London) to Strang (FO), 12.07.1950, TNA, FO 371/89128.

⁹⁷² Minute, Jackling (FO), 18.07.1950, TNA, FO 371/89128.

⁹⁷³ Minute, Hilton-Young, 27.07.1950, TNA, FO 371/89128.

Nonetheless, the request was not dismissed out of hand, and this provided the British Legation in Berne with the time to advocate the Swiss case. The Military Attaché urged the WO to intervene on Switzerland's behalf, for the "Swiss military are most anxious to conclude the transaction for the four tanks as soon as possible".⁹⁷⁴ The Chancery added that it was obviously desirable for the Western Union to assist the Swiss rearmament, and that the purchase of 30 Centurions would "make a big difference to our balance of payments problems".⁹⁷⁵

In time of war, however, Switzerland's strategic position was not sufficiently strong, and strategic considerations outweighed economic benefits. On 1 August, the Swiss National Day, the Arms Working Party ruled against the delivery of Centurions to Switzerland.⁹⁷⁶ This decision was not taken light-heartedly, for the MoD was aware that the WO had "promised" 30 Centurions to the Swiss. But with the foreseen increases in British defence expenditures, it was unlikely that any Centurions, apart from a small number in 1950, could be provided to overseas customers. Moreover, if tanks were available, they would first have to be supplied to Australia and Egypt, countries with which there were supply contracts. Yet, as the British rearmament programme was only in its early planning phase, there remained the tiny possibility that more tanks would become available, and Whitehall was thus reluctant to deny definitely the Swiss request.⁹⁷⁷

Nonetheless, the Swiss Legation was semi-officially informed about these developments, and it learned that in addition to the above mentioned difficulties, the Americans pressured the British to deliver weapons to NATO Allies. Therefore, the US would certainly strongly object to lucrative arms transfers to Switzerland, especially as London was expecting financial support for its armament programme from Washington.⁹⁷⁸ As it became apparent that Britain would not deliver the Centurions, the Head of the Military Technical Service angrily urged the Federal Political Department to make Swiss arms exports dependent on arms and raw material deliveries in return.⁹⁷⁹ It seems, however, that this demand did not lead to any changes of course.

⁹⁷⁴ Parker (Berne) to DMI (MoD), 15.08.1950, TNA, FO 371/89128.

⁹⁷⁵ Tull (Berne) to FO, 21.08.1950, TNA, FO 371/89128.

⁹⁷⁶ JWPC(AWP)/M(50)7, Minutes, 09.08.1950, TNA, DEFE 10/200.

⁹⁷⁷ Export of Arms and Equipment, AWP, 24.08.1950, TNA, DEFE 10/201.

⁹⁷⁸ Rothenbühler (London) to FPD, 24.08.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1.

⁹⁷⁹ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to FPD, 28.08.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 17971.

Initially, those in the Federal Military Department, who favoured the equipment of the Swiss Army with tanks, took the opportunity that the Trade Section urged them to purchase more weapons in the UK to approach London for tanks. But as the military leadership was undecided on the introduction of tanks and the tank type to be ordered, and the Federal Assembly was reluctant to grant the necessary money, the request for Centurions was only officially submitted to Whitehall when the international situation had completely changed through the Korean War. The British, who had first seemed willing to meet the Swiss demand for strategic and financial reasons – probably to a certain extent through Montgomery’s intervention –, were unable to allocate a part of their Centurion production to Switzerland, because their own and allied armed forces had priority. It was thus the first time that the British said “no” to a Swiss request for heavy weaponry after the Second World War.

8.2. Centurions Made in Switzerland?

Switzerland joined into the Korean War scare, and was thus eager to rearm itself at least as much as the European NATO countries, and especially, to equip its army with tanks. It appeared, however, that it was very difficult for a neutral country to be supplied with scarce weapons in times of crisis or war. Moreover, the Swiss could not fall back on their own tank development, which was almost non-existent. Nonetheless, even though London seemed unable to deliver finished tanks, Berne had not yet exhausted all procurement possibilities. It had been ruled out that Moscow would be approached for tanks, but other Western countries might be willing to deliver tanks to Switzerland. In addition, a Military Technical Service study had shown that the manufacture of tanks under licence was feasible, as long as some parts would be delivered from abroad.

Shortly before London would signal its inability to deliver Centurions, the Head of the Light Troops already began to diversify Switzerland’s tank procurement strategy. On 24 August 1950, he argued to the Federal Military Department’s leadership to order tanks wherever possible. In addition to 30 Centurions, he called for the purchase of Swedish and French tanks. A tank mission to Sweden had shown that the Lansen tank – which was still only on the drawing board and would have to be equipped with a Swiss gun, engine and radio – would suit Switzerland’s conditions.

The Landsverk Company, which was developing this tank, had made the firm offer to deliver 30 Lansens in 24 months. Simultaneously, the French Military Attaché in Berne had offered, in agreement with the French General Staff, to deliver 50 AMX-13 tanks from early 1952 on. By contrast, procurement possibilities in the US had even worsened with the Korean War. Yet, as the US desired to purchase Swiss Oerlikon-Bührle air-to-surface missiles, the Military Attaché was trying to use them as a bargaining chip for the delivery of American tanks to Switzerland.⁹⁸⁰ Finally, de Muralt emphasized that the battles of the Korean War so far had shown that “one could not anymore fight a war without tanks”.⁹⁸¹

The Defence Minister agreed that it was “undisputed” that Switzerland needed a tank force. For the first time, money was not an issue anymore, but he feared for the Army’s equipment with tanks from abroad more generally. Therefore, he privileged the production of tanks under licence. Simultaneously, he was interested in the purchase of the AMX-13 for the equipment of the Light Troops.⁹⁸² Thus, Kobelt instructed his subordinates to further clarify the question of tank production under licence, the advisability to purchase the French light tank, and to continue to search for other procurement possibilities.⁹⁸³ Yet, once the Defence Minister had been informed in late August that Britain would not deliver Centurions, he decided to intervene personally and summoned the British Minister. According to Scrivener, the Federal Councillor “begged [him] to do what [he] could to get the unfavourable decision reversed”, and also asked him to explore whether London would be willing to allow Switzerland to produce the Centurion under licence.⁹⁸⁴

In early September, although the Head of the Military Technical Service was in Britain for the Society of British Aircraft Constructors Flying Display and Exhibition, he arranged a meeting with representatives from the FO, the WO and the MoS to discuss the technical aspects of a possible Centurion licence. Von Wattenwyl informed his British counterparts that Switzerland intended to produce 550 tanks under licence over a period of five years, but that it could only do so, if Britain would be willing to deliver the necessary armour-plates, which could not be produced in Switzerland. The British were, however, sceptical. The MoS representative pointed

⁹⁸⁰ See also various documents in SFA, E 27, -/9001, 17971.

⁹⁸¹ De Muralt to de Montmollin (both FMD), 24.08.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1.

⁹⁸² Kobelt to de Montmollin (both FMD), 28.08.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1.

⁹⁸³ De Montmollin to de Muralt (both FMD), 29.08.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1.

⁹⁸⁴ Scrivener (Berne) to Young (FO), 31.08.1950, TNA, FO 371/89128.

out that a licence production of the Centurion would be lengthy, technically complicated and very costly. In addition, the WO representative observed that there were security concerns in the production of British designed tanks on the European continent. Von Wattenwyl replied to these concerns that the Swiss Government was prepared to pay the high cost for the manufacture of tanks, because it was of major importance to the country's national defence, and that Switzerland would conform to the requested security measures. Notwithstanding these arguments, the British were unwilling to make any promises, because it had first to be decided whether London was willing in principle to grant Berne a licence.⁹⁸⁵

Although von Wattenwyl was optimistic that this decision would be in Switzerland's favour, he was aware that a successful licence production would depend on the delivery of armour-plates, the production of which formed actually the bottleneck in British tank manufacture. He thus recommended continuing to study tank procurement possibilities in other countries than Britain.⁹⁸⁶ De Muralt added to this scepticism that even if the British would grant the licence, it would take two years until the first Centurion would be produced. He therefore argued for the purchase of the Swedish Lansen, and to produce this tank later under licence. Moreover, as the French were now willing to deliver even 200 AMX-13s, and the first tanks would already be delivered in 1951, he strongly advocated to enter into negotiations with Paris.⁹⁸⁷ The Federal Military Department was not yet willing to go that far, but the Head of the Light Troops was allowed to instruct the Military Technical Service to enquire about the feasibility to equip the Swedish Lansen with a Swiss gun, engine and radio, and to obtain more information about the French AMX-13.⁹⁸⁸

The problem was that the issue of tank procurement remained contentious within the Federal Military Department, and especially de Muralt's approach to buy almost any tank available was questioned. Head of the Organisation Section in the General Staff Colonel Alfred Ernst – one of the major proponents of a static instead of a mobile defence – observed that the Centurion was the only tank, which suited Swiss conditions. He argued that if it would be impossible to obtain this tank, the money

⁹⁸⁵ Note on meeting in the FO, Western Department (FO), 08.09.1950, TNA, FO 371/89128; Besprechung im FO, Rieser (London), 08.09.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 15749, Bd.6.

⁹⁸⁶ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to FMD, 19.09.1950, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1851, Bd.68.

⁹⁸⁷ De Muralt to de Montmollin (both FMD), 15.09.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1.

⁹⁸⁸ De Muralt to von Wattenwyl (MTS), 04.10.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1.

should not be spent on tanks such as the Lansen.⁹⁸⁹ Ernst was supported by his superior Divisionary-Colonel Jakob Annasohn, Second-in-Command of the Front Staff.⁹⁹⁰

In early October, the British strategist Captain Basil Liddell-Hart added to the confusion in an interview with the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation. Although he considered tanks necessary for the Swiss Army, he argued against the Centurion and advocated for a light and highly mobile tank with a powerful gun, which he admitted was non-existent for the moment.⁹⁹¹ Only a few weeks later, the German World War II tank General Heinz Guderian argued in a discussion with de Muralt for a well armoured heavy tank with a powerful gun. In view of his initial preferences and the tanks available, the Head of the Light Troops evidently preferred Liddell-Hart's to Guderian's advice.⁹⁹²

Simultaneously, however, Liddell-Hart also encouraged the Swiss to look to Britain for their arms purchases. On 18 October, he informed the Swiss Military Attaché in London about what he had learnt on arms supplies to Switzerland in meetings with Whitehall officials. He observed that while the Americans opposed weapon deliveries to Sweden as a means to bring them into closer cooperation with the West, they would not intervene against British arms supplies to Switzerland.⁹⁹³ The Head of the Military Technical Service was aware that this did not imply that the Swiss would get finished Centurion tanks, for in late September they had officially been informed that their request had been rejected.⁹⁹⁴ But he concluded from Liddell-Hart's comments that the Swiss demand for a licence had a good chance of success.⁹⁹⁵

Whitehall began to consider the Swiss application for a Centurion licence from mid-September on. The MoS observed that "*prima facie*", it had "no objection in principle to the proposal". However, before it would examine if there were any practical limitations, such as the supply of armour-plates, it first wanted the FO and the WO to determine whether there were any security objections.⁹⁹⁶ The FO did not

⁹⁸⁹ Ernst to Annasohn (both FMD), 18.09.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1.

⁹⁹⁰ Annasohn to de Montmollin (both FMD), 27.09.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1.

⁹⁹¹ Swiss Broadcasting Corporation, Interview with B.H. Liddell-Hart, 04.10.1950, Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London (hereafter LHCMA), LIDDELL: 12/1950/16-18 1950 Oct 4; Interview Liddell Hart, Haller, 04.10.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1.

⁹⁹² De Muralt to de Montmollin (both FMD), 25.10.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1.

⁹⁹³ Besprechung mit Capt. Liddell-Hart, Rieser (London), 19.10.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1.

⁹⁹⁴ Younger (FO) to Rothenbühler (London), 29.09.1950, SFA, E2001(E), 1972/33, Bd.4.

⁹⁹⁵ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to FMD etc., 27.10.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1.

⁹⁹⁶ Doggett (MoS) to Bellamy (WO), 15.09.1950, TNA, FO 371/89128.

have any. Moreover, it emphasised the need to meet the request for economic and strategic reasons, and feared that the Swiss might turn to the Americans for the supply of tanks.⁹⁹⁷ The WO, however, had security concerns. It recommended that the Swiss should not be allowed to manufacture the gun, the ammunition and the stabiliser, and that these parts would have to be supplied in the case of a licence production.⁹⁹⁸

On 10 October, the security aspects of the licence were discussed in a meeting of the Exchange of Military Information Sub-Committee⁹⁹⁹ – composed by the Admiralty, the WO, the AM and the MoS –, in which the FO took part. Meanwhile, the security concerns had increased. The WO observed that the know-how for making the Centurion's hull was a valuable military secret, and it was feared that it could pass into Soviet hands through the invasion of Switzerland or a leak from the Swiss factory, where the hulls would be made. As this argument proved to be decisive, the question of the gun, the ammunition and the stabiliser was not even seriously discussed. The security objections thus outweighed the commercial advantages from royalties and the possible strategic advantages of building up an effective Swiss Army. Therefore, the Committee decided against the granting of a licence to Switzerland, especially, because no NATO country had for the moment received a licence to manufacture the Centurion.¹⁰⁰⁰

This reasoning was strongly questioned within the FO. The security objections regarding the hull were rejected by observing that, according to British military planning, there was no expectation of Switzerland being overrun by the Soviets; the licence production would not start before the end of 1952, and by then the Russians would certainly have caught up in welding know-how; and the risk of leaks was very small, because the Swiss offered sufficient security guarantees. Accordingly, one official emphasised that the advantage of having a "Russian-proof Switzerland" on the flank of NATO at no cost outweighed the small security risks involved.¹⁰⁰¹ Another official added that the Swiss would not even have to know the welding processes for the hull, if Britain would supply them – as they had asked for in the first place – with armour-plate. Even if it would not be possible to supply armour-plate for 550 Centurions, he argued for the delivery of a smaller amount, especially because the

⁹⁹⁷ Young (FO) to Doggett (MoS), 22.09.1950, TNA, FO 371/89128.

⁹⁹⁸ Bellamy (WO) to Doggett (MoS), 29.09.1950, TNA, FO 371/89128.

⁹⁹⁹ EMIS.

¹⁰⁰⁰ EMIS(50) 29th Meeting, 10.10.1950, TNA, DEFE 10/53; Minute, Walmsley (FO), 10.10.1950; Forward (MoD) to Young (FO), 18.10.1950, TNA, FO 371/89128.

¹⁰⁰¹ Minute, Pares (FO), 12.10.1950, TNA, FO 371/89128.

Swiss were ready to set up a licence production for only 50 tanks. Finally, if there were security objections to the gun, he wondered whether the Swiss could not supply a gun of their own.¹⁰⁰² Consequently, the FO believed it had a strong case to challenge the findings of the Exchange of Military Information Sub-Committee, and even informed the Swiss Legation that the granting of a licence was no more a question of security, but depended on the availability of armour-plates.¹⁰⁰³

Yet, the production of the Centurion under licence in Switzerland did not only depend on armour-plate supplies. Although the MoS regretted that it was not possible to accommodate the Swiss, because it was “looking to Switzerland for certain essential machine tools” for Britain’s rearmament programme, it did not intend to contest the decision reached by the Exchange of Military Information Sub-Committee. In addition to security concerns, all engineers and designers were absorbed by Britain’s own tank production, and it was thus impossible to assist the Swiss in setting up their own Centurion manufacture. Nonetheless, it was suggested to make the negative reply more digestible by mentioning the possibility that finished Centurions would become available at a later date, when Britain’s immediate needs would be satisfied.¹⁰⁰⁴

This suggestion was immediately taken up by the Western Department, which favoured a Swiss order for Centurions at a later date on the grounds that it would be a valuable export business; it would take up foreseeable excess production capacities; and finally, if the Swiss really were prepared to order 550 Centurions, this could justify the opening of a new production line, which would speed up Britain’s re-equipment and help to meet the needs of countries such as Egypt.¹⁰⁰⁵ The WO concurred with this thinking and observed that “[a] day may come when the WO will be glad to have foreign orders to support tank production, the output of which is beyond our own resources”.¹⁰⁰⁶

Yet, within the FO, the Economic Relations Department shattered the idea of supplying the Swiss with Centurions at a later date. Due to the dramatic international situation, the economic argument was considered “taboo”. Moreover, as Switzerland was now in the EPU, it was argued that “the hard currency argument” did no longer

¹⁰⁰² Minute, Bullock (FO), 23.10.1950, TNA, FO 371/89128.

¹⁰⁰³ Note, Rothenbühler (London), 24.10.1950, SFA, E2200.40, 1971/164, Bd.8.

¹⁰⁰⁴ Doggett (MoS) to Forward (MoD), 06.11.1950, TNA, FO 371/89128.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Minute, Bullock (FO), 13.11.1950, TNA, FO 371/89128.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Gosschen (WO) to Forward (MoD), 15.11.1950, TNA, FO 371/89128.

exist. The essence of the matter was, however, that the Armoured Fighting Vehicles Task Force of the North Atlantic Military Production and Supply Board had specified that the European members of NATO should have 8,000 more Centurions by 1954, even though Britain's annual production rate was of 500. In the light of this gap, the Economic Relations Department emphasised that the proposal to supply Switzerland with Centurions was "a non-starter", and that the FO should not confront the other departments "to arm a neutral in the present grievous defencelessness of ourselves and our allies". Also the feasibility of the licence solution was rejected, as it was prophesized that "if ever in the future the British arms industry can spare armour-plate or technicians, it will be because the international situation has so eased that the Swiss themselves will not want to build all these tanks".¹⁰⁰⁷

Notwithstanding this prophecy, the Western Department fell back on the licence.¹⁰⁰⁸ But before challenging the security objections, it approached the MoS to enquire whether it was possible to supply the Swiss with armour-plate for 50 Centurions, and to provide them with technical assistance in 1953.¹⁰⁰⁹ This very modest demand illustrates well that the Western Department was trying really hard to find a way to accommodate Berne. Yet, as the decision-making process in Whitehall was dragging on, in early December, the Swiss Minister called on the Parliamentary Under-Secretary at the FO, Ernest Davies. De Torrenté emphasised that his government was anxious to receive a decision in principle on the licence at the earliest opportunity. To facilitate the decision-making process, he informed Davies on the material and technical assistance Switzerland needed, such as a few tanks as models, armour-plates, blueprints etc.¹⁰¹⁰ Finally, to strengthen his case, the Swiss Minister stressed the valuable contribution Switzerland was making to the defence of Western Europe, and that it was arming itself at least as much as NATO members without asking for financial aid. Moreover, the Swiss Army had the strength of half-a-million men, and the equipment with Centurions "would enhance its value in the sphere of Western Defence".¹⁰¹¹

Thus, the Federal Military Department remained determined to produce the British tank under licence. By early November 1950, even the Head of the Light

¹⁰⁰⁷ Minute, Hilton-Young (FO), 16.11.1950, TNA, FO 371/89128.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Minutes, Bullock (FO), 17.11.1950, TNA, FO 371/89128.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Young (FO) to Doggett (MoS), 23.11.1950, TNA, FO 371/89128.

¹⁰¹⁰ De Torrenté (London) to Davies (FO), 05.12.1950, TNA, FO 371/89128.

¹⁰¹¹ Davies to Western Department (both FO), 05.12.1950, TNA, FO 371/89128.

Troops accepted the view that if the British would be willing to grant a licence, the opportunity would have to be seized. But he feared that the Centurion was technically too complicated to be reproduced in Switzerland, a country which was inexperienced in tank production.¹⁰¹² The Head of the Military Technical Service rejected such doubts by stating that the Swiss industry – with which he had begun to prepare a possible licence production – could produce even the tank’s most complicated parts, such as the stabiliser, at least as good as the British industry.¹⁰¹³ Nevertheless, as it remained uncertain whether London would grant the licence, both de Muralt and von Wattenwyl pursued other potential tank procurement possibilities.

The results were mixed. The purchase of the Swedish Lansen became increasingly unrealistic, for Landsverk worked only very little on this tank and there still was no prototype. Although in France the AMX-13 was apparently much more advanced, the French would not be able to receive a Swiss tank mission before January 1951. However, there finally was a ray of hope in the US.¹⁰¹⁴ With the State Department’s blessing,¹⁰¹⁵ the Swiss were trying to get tanks on the US market on a commercial basis, and by mid-November they had scored an initial success. Kaiser-Frazer, a large steel and car industry corporation, was willing to produce 200 or more M46 Patton tanks, which were of approximately the same size as the Centurion, but had a 90mm gun and a more powerful engine. Evidently, the crux of the matter was that Washington would have to grant an export licence for these tanks.¹⁰¹⁶ As the Federal Military Department was ever more anxious to equip the Swiss Army with tanks, in late December 1950, the Swiss Legation requested Washington’s permission to purchase approximately 500 tanks produced by Kaiser-Frazer.¹⁰¹⁷

This corporation lobbied Secretary of Defense George Marshall and the Munitions Division to authorise this arms transfer. The argument was that this order would give the US a “new source of tank production” at no cost.¹⁰¹⁸ Meanwhile, the Swiss Minister supported the request by stressing that Switzerland was a “firm and

¹⁰¹² De Muralt to Kobelt (both FMD), 09.11.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.4.

¹⁰¹³ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to Kobelt (FMD), 14.11.1950, SFA, E5155(-), 1968/12, 194, Bd.47.

¹⁰¹⁴ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to de Muralt (FMD), 21.11.1954, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1.

¹⁰¹⁵ *Supra*, 5.1.

¹⁰¹⁶ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to FMD, 21.11.1950; De Muralt to Kobelt (both FMD), 29.11.1950, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.1.

¹⁰¹⁷ Washington to DoS, 22.12.1950, NARA, RG 59, CDF 1950-54, 745.5.

¹⁰¹⁸ Bedford (Kaiser-Frazer) to Marshall (DoD), 28.12.1950; Kaiser (Kaiser-Frazer), 08.01.1951, NARA, RG 59, CDF 1950-54, 745.5.

dependable military factor”, which “covered the right flank of the French Army”.¹⁰¹⁹ This argument was not only echoed in the State Department’s Office of European and Regional Affairs,¹⁰²⁰ but also by NATO Supreme Commander to be Dwight Eisenhower. He supported the sale of tanks to Switzerland generally, “because of the influence that a well-armed and defense-minded Switzerland could have on the military situation in Europe”.¹⁰²¹ Yet, it was highly questionable whether this lobbying would prove to be successful, for Washington’s priority was the rearmament of its Allies. Therefore, the Federal Military Department was still hoping for a Centurion licence, which would also have the benefit of making Swiss tank procurement more self-reliant.

By early 1951, however, the situation appeared increasingly grim. On 4 January, the Western Department informed the Swiss Legation in London that Berne should not base its hopes on the Centurion licence. With the increasing pace of Britain’s rearmament programme, resources were even scarcer than before. It would thus be difficult to supply Switzerland with a few tanks as models and armour-plates.¹⁰²² As a result, the Swiss Minister foresaw that London would make no commitment for material support in its final reply.¹⁰²³ It seemed as if he was right, for in its reply to the FO in late January, the MoS emphasised that even though it did not object to the granting of a licence to Switzerland, it could not promise any technical or material assistance. In addition, it pointed out that the WO’s security objections stood still in the way of a licence.¹⁰²⁴

On the FO’s request, the Exchange of Military Information Sub-Committee reconsidered the security issue in its meeting of 30 January. Advocating the granting of a licence, the Western Department observed that the Swiss “were for the first time looking to [Britain] and Western Europe for help in defence”. However, the WO still had security objections. They were no longer based on the secret of the welding process and its possible leakage to Russia, “but on the danger of the Russians

¹⁰¹⁹ Memorandum of Conversation, Swiss desire to purchase US tanks, Perkins (EUR), 23.12.1950, NARA, RG 59, CDF 1950-54, 745.5. In late January 1951, the Swiss Military Attaché, Colonel de Bremond, argued on similar lines (NARA, RG 59, CDF 1950-54, 745.5).

¹⁰²⁰ Knight (Office of European and Regional Affairs (RA)) to Scott (WE), Elliott (MD), 29.12.1950, NARA, RG 59, CDF 1950-54, 745.5.

¹⁰²¹ Eisenhower to Harriman, 29.12.1950, Galambos, Louis (ed.), *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower: Columbia University: XI*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984, p.1506.

¹⁰²² Rothenbühler to de Torrenté (both London), 04.01.1951, SFA, E2200.40, 1971/164, Bd.8.

¹⁰²³ De Torrenté (London) to Zehnder (FPD), 06.01.1951, SFA, E2001(E), 1972/33, Bd.4.

¹⁰²⁴ Doggett (MoS) to Young (FO), 23.01.1951, TNA, FO 371/96030.

capturing a complete production line if they invaded Switzerland”. Thereupon, the Western Department pointed out that the Swiss were planning to destroy their defence production facilities if they were overrun. This argument was sufficient for the Sub-Committee to withdraw its security objections, and subject to a final consultation with the WO, the FO was allowed to offer a Centurion licence to Switzerland while emphasising that no technical and material assistance would be forthcoming. Interestingly, the Exchange of Military Information Sub-Committee was convinced that even without such assistance, the Swiss were sufficiently determined and competent “to make a success” of the licence.¹⁰²⁵

Consequently, once the WO had officially withdrawn its security objections,¹⁰²⁶ in early March, the FO informed the Swiss Legation that the British Government was willing to grant a licence, but “that it was impossible at the present time to undertake to give technical assistance or any substantial assistance in the matter of materials”. Moreover, the licence would not include the gun and the ammunition.¹⁰²⁷ In the end, de Torrenté’s prediction was accurate, and as the Swiss needed at least the armour-plate for a successful licence production, this decision was almost equivalent to a negative reply. Almost two years after the Federal Military Department had begun its quest for tanks, and with an apparently very dangerous international situation, Swiss tank procurement looked grim. The Head of the Light Troops summed-up the situation by explaining to the National Defence Commission, that “everything” depended on Washington’s reply. If this reply would be negative, the only remaining possibility would be to buy the mobile, but badly armoured French AMX-13.¹⁰²⁸

After the British refusal to deliver Centurions, a panic-stricken Federal Military Department tried all possible ways to equip the Swiss Army with tanks. The preferred option was to build the Centurion in Switzerland, and in the aim to obtain the licence for this, Berne clearly informed London that it wanted to arm itself for the defence of the West. Nonetheless, other potential suppliers were also approached, and while the Swedish solution appeared increasingly unrealistic, the French tank seemed to be inadequately armoured. Yet, there was still some hope, if Washington would

¹⁰²⁵ EMIS(51) 4th Meeting, 30.01.1951, TNA, DEFE 10/54; Minute, Bullock (FO), 30.01.1951, TNA, FO 371/96030.

¹⁰²⁶ Young (FO) to Doggett (MoS), 08.02.1951, TNA, FO 371/96030.

¹⁰²⁷ Young (FO) to Bernath (London), 05.03.1951, SFA, E2200.40, 1971/164, Bd.8.

¹⁰²⁸ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 19.02.1951, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4062.

only consent to grant an export licence for the tanks, which Kaiser-Frazer intended to produce for Switzerland. In lobbying the Truman Administration, the Swiss again clearly stated on whose side they would fight if they were attacked. While Berne was waiting for news from Washington, London's reply regarding the licence, albeit not negative, made the production of the Centurion in Switzerland difficult. Although officials in Whitehall had made – despite security concerns – an extra effort to accommodate the Swiss for strategic and financial reasons, the latter were obviously not sufficiently strong to override the priority of NATO and British forces, which did not have enough tanks. Neutral Switzerland was only of secondary strategic importance, the “hard currency” argument did not really count in times of crisis or war and had weakened through Swiss participation in the EPU, and the supply of machine tools appeared not to be sufficiently endangered or important.

8.3. Project Ross

By March 1951, the Swiss had only received the offer for a Centurion licence without material and technical assistance. However, since the French tank was considered unsuitable for Swiss conditions, and since it was uncertain whether the US would grant the export licence for the Pattons, it remained unclear whether the Federal Military Department would nonetheless evaluate if the Centurion's production would be feasible under disadvantageous conditions, i.e. without British engineers and armour-plates. In the light of the precarious international situation, Swiss military planners remained determined to equip their army with tanks. Therefore, if other countries would not propose anything better than the meagre British offer, the Swiss might be compelled to fall back on the Centurion licence. Yet, what were the odds that the British position would change, and a new tank supply window would open for Switzerland, which desired to equip its army as soon as possible with tanks, and thus preferred finished Centurions to a licence for them?

In mid-March, the British Legation's Commercial Counsellor met with the Head of the Light Troops, who gave him an outline about the state of Swiss tank procurement. From the outset de Muralt expressed his preference for ready-made tanks to licence-built tanks. Thus, he explained the ongoing attempts to obtain American tanks, and provocatively observed that the Soviets had made an offer for

tanks, which could be considered, for Switzerland was on neither side of the East-West conflict. The Centurion licence, however, was useless without the armour-plates. In addition, even if the armour-plates could be obtained elsewhere, the licence-manufacture of the British tank would be too time-consuming. Therefore, although the Centurion was the most appropriate tank for Swiss requirements, de Muralt preferred “any other type, ready-made and available now”.¹⁰²⁹ One can assume that the Head of the Light Troops’ comment about a Soviet offer was not based on reality, but was rather intended to provoke a reaction, which would eventually lead to a more positive British supply position. Although de Muralt himself was open to the possibility of Soviet tanks – as his earlier suggestion to approach Moscow for such weapons demonstrates – he was aware that his political leaders clearly refused this option.

But notwithstanding his comment on the Soviet offer, at least within the British Legation, his intervention provoked the intended result. Only a few days later, the Military Attaché wrote a dramatic report to the MoD. Parker stressed that the provision of tanks was “the most urgent gap to be filled in Swiss military equipment before its Army can be considered as fit for battle”, and that the Swiss considered the Centurion the right tank for their army. He observed that the failure to obtain this tank was “a bitter pill”, which had caused resentment in Berne. Moreover, he dismissed the apparent British concession of granting a licence in principle as a “white elephant”, because it was “hedged with difficulties”. According to Parker, there was the general impression “that the Swiss had been led up the garden path”. Therefore, he recommended to supply Switzerland with some tanks outright, or to promise to do so in the future. If this would not be possible, he urged London to advise Berne on the difficulties a licence production implied.¹⁰³⁰ The British Minister forwarded this report and a note on de Muralt’s observations to the FO. Although in doing so he observed that he did not believe that the Swiss would try to get tanks from the Soviets, he called for an interdepartmental re-examination of the whole question.¹⁰³¹

According to the FO, however, the Swiss did not “have much cause for complaint”. In the light of Britain’s own defence needs, they could already consider themselves lucky that they had been offered a licence at all. With regard to the renewed suggestion to deliver tanks at a later date, it was argued that by the time the

¹⁰²⁹ Record of Conversation, Holliday (Berne), 15.03.1951, TNA, FO 371/96030.

¹⁰³⁰ Parker (Berne) to DMI (MoD), 21.03.1951, TNA, FO 371/96030.

¹⁰³¹ Scrivener (Berne) to Young (FO), 21.03.1951, TNA, FO 371/96030.

supply position would eventually change, “the Swiss may not want any tanks at all!”¹⁰³² Nonetheless, the FO half-heartedly asked the MoD to release one Centurion and a limited number of guns to help Switzerland in setting up a licence production.¹⁰³³ But as expected, this request was flatly rejected, for no tank could be spared without detriment to the WO programme, if tanks would nevertheless become available, the Swiss would only be considered after NATO demands would have been met, and even then they would have to compete with other foreign claimants.¹⁰³⁴ Thus, for the moment, London’s position on tank supplies to Switzerland was unshakable.

Meanwhile, Swiss hopes for American tanks were shattered too. All the lobbying and the Swiss Military Attaché’s efforts to obtain tanks as a *quid pro quo* for the delivery of Oerlikon-Bührle air-to-surface missiles proved to no avail.¹⁰³⁵ Although the State Department’s Office of International Security Affairs had taken up the argument that Switzerland was an asset for NATO defence in Western Europe,¹⁰³⁶ the undertaking to procure Patton tanks from Kaiser-Frazer failed in early April 1951. The Department of Defense feared that this would “interfere with the production of tanks” for the US and its Allies.¹⁰³⁷ A well-informed Kaiser-Frazer Corporation had already written the Federal Military Department in mid-March that this would be the probable outcome,¹⁰³⁸ and on 11 April, the State Department officially informed the Swiss that their request had been denied, for it would interfere with the rearmament programme for the US and its Allies.¹⁰³⁹

As a result, von Wattenwyl observed in mid-April that while through the Federal Assembly’s principal approval of the rearmament programme SFr.400 million for the purchase of 550 tanks had become available, it was unclear where and how this money could be spent. The remaining possibilities were very limited: to attempt

¹⁰³² Young (FO) to Scrivener (Berne), 10.04.1951, TNA, FO 371/96030.

¹⁰³³ Young (FO) to Gresswell (MoD), 10.04.1951, TNA, FO 371/96030.

¹⁰³⁴ Gresswell (MoD) to Young (FO), 13.04.1951, TNA, FO 371/96030.

¹⁰³⁵ *Supra*, ch.8.2.

¹⁰³⁶ Ohly (Office of International Security Affairs (S/ISA)) to Burns (DoD), 12.01.1951, NARA, RG 59, CDF 1950-54, 745.5.

¹⁰³⁷ Burns (DoD) to Ohly (S/ISA), 02.04.1951, NARA, RG 59, Entry 1473, Box 40; The opinion that the Swiss purchase of tanks from Kaiser-Frazer “would have a detrimental impact” on the armour programme for production and medium tanks, stem from the Department of Defense’s Office of Military Assistance (OMA) (Olmsted to Nash (both OMA, Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), 10.02.1951; Scott (OMA, OSD) to Munitions Board (MB), 14.02.1951, NARA, RG 330, Entry 18, General and Project Decimal File, Apr. 1949-May 1953, Box 77).

¹⁰³⁸ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to de Muralt (FMD), 20.03.1951, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.4.

¹⁰³⁹ De Bremond (Washington) to FMD, 11.04.1951, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.4.

the difficult production of the Centurion under licence; to purchase the AMX-13, which – as a mission to France had shown – was at least definitely available; or to work on a Swiss tank, for which initial studies had already been made. As the French tank was badly armoured, the Military Technical Service chose the difficult path, and decided to continue to study the feasibility of the Centurion production, and to work on the development of a Swiss tank for the distant future.¹⁰⁴⁰

In spring, a group of representatives from Swiss companies such as Brown Boveri, Escher-Wyss and Georg Fischer, visited the tank factories of Vickers-Armstrongs to study the feasibility of producing the Centurion in Switzerland. They received the general impression that the Swiss industry had the ability for this, provided that the necessary raw material and armour-plates were available. This assessment was not fundamentally new; it only confirmed previous estimations. In the meantime, however, the mission led to an intriguing offer by Vickers-Armstrongs. The company's representative, Commander Ross, suggested a project to the industrial delegation and the Swiss Legation: while the Swiss industry would produce scarce tank parts for the British armaments industry, Britain would deliver finished tanks as a service in return. The Chairman of Vickers-Armstrongs, Sir Robert Micklem, thought that "Project Ross" was in favour of the company, Switzerland, and Britain, and was thus willing to submit it to the MoS. But Rieser and de Torrenté were aware of the impact this project could have on Swiss neutrality, for it implied that Switzerland would be directly involved in the rearmament effort of a leading NATO country. Therefore, they referred back to Berne, before they would give their consent to Vickers-Armstrongs approaching Whitehall.¹⁰⁴¹

"Project Ross" did not have the slightest chance of success in Berne. Although it was acknowledged within the Federal Military Department that it would largely resolve the tank supply problem, the Defence Minister feared that Switzerland would compromise its neutrality if it became an integral part of the Atlantic Alliance's rearmament programme at the height of the Korean War.¹⁰⁴² The Swiss Military Attaché in London was thus instructed to inform Vickers-Armstrongs that Berne had decided against "Project Ross", and to ask for further documentation in relation to the

¹⁰⁴⁰ Sitzungsprotokoll, MTS, 11.04.1951, SFA, E5155(-), 1968/12, Bd.53.

¹⁰⁴¹ Rieser (London) to von Wattenwyl (MTS), 09.04.1951; 13.04.1951, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1856, Bde.8-9; De Torrenté (London) to Zehnder (FPD), 13.04.1951, SFA, E27. -/9001, 18505, Bd.4.

¹⁰⁴² Kobelt (FMD) to Petitpierre (FPD), 09.05.1951, SFA, E2001(E), 1972/33, Bd.4.

licence production.¹⁰⁴³ The Military Technical Service remained interested in a Centurion licence, and continued to plan its possible manufacture in Switzerland.

On their return, the representatives from the Swiss industry presented a detailed production plan for 460 tanks between 1953 and 1956, provided that the armour-plate would be available.¹⁰⁴⁴ Moreover, von Wattenwyl observed in a discussion with Commander Ross, with whom he met in Switzerland in June, that despite all the looming difficulties of a licence production, the choice for the Centurion had also important advantages: Switzerland had already made excellent experiences in its technical cooperation with Britain in the field of aircraft, and the relationship of confidence between his service and the British authorities and industry would greatly enhance such an undertaking. Yet, the Head of the Military Technical Service was not blind to the fact that the issue of armour-plates had still not been resolved.¹⁰⁴⁵

Consequently, despite all the difficulties a licence production of the Centurion without British assistance involved, this option was not ruled out and remained privileged. Only, however, because there were no suitable finished tanks, for which plenty of money was now available. Although it alerted the British Legation, de Mural's scheme of invoking other supply possibilities, even Soviet ones, left Whitehall unimpressed. The willingness to grant a licence to Switzerland had been a favour, and like Washington, London gave priority to the rearmament of its own and NATO armed forces. Thus, for the first time, the British and American armament policies towards Switzerland converged. But the Swiss approached the UK and the US differently. They were prepared to deliver air-to-surface missiles to the Americans as a *quid pro quo* for tanks, whereas they were not willing to deliver scarce tank parts to Britain for Centurions in return. Berne seemed more willing to compromise its neutrality for the American superpower, than for the British great power. In spite of the fact that, as von Wattenwyl observed, there was an intimate Anglo-Swiss armament relationship.

¹⁰⁴³ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to Rieser (London), 23.04.1951, SFA, E5155(-), 1968/12, Bd.53.

¹⁰⁴⁴ Sitzungsprotokoll, MTS, 18.04.1951, SFA, E5155(-), 1968/12, Bd.53.

¹⁰⁴⁵ Aktennotiz Besuch von Commander Ross, von Wattenwyl (MTS), 15.06.1951, SFA, E5155(-), 1968/12, Bd.53.

8.4. Role Reversal

By early summer 1951, the Swiss Army's equipment with tanks remained uncertain. Moreover, the failure to procure medium tanks from abroad stimulated disagreements on the tank type and its use within the Federal Military Department, especially as the National Defence Commission had still not determined clear guiding principles for the use of this weapon. This development also led the Federal Assembly to question again whether it was necessary to allocate such large sums of money for weapons, which were even disputed in military circles.¹⁰⁴⁶ But the Swiss Army continued its quest for tanks nonetheless. In this undertaking, would Switzerland finally opt for the production of the British Centurion under licence, or the unsuitable but available French AMX-13?

Meanwhile, however, the international situation, and therefore also the arms market, might change. From 8 July 1951 on, the Korean War continued as a "stalemate": both parties had abandoned the aim of unifying Korea by force, the movements of their armies were much more restrained, and despite ongoing fighting they began to negotiate.¹⁰⁴⁷ The international situation was still precarious, but not as dramatic as before. It was therefore possible that the pressure on the British rearmament programme would decrease, and tanks would become available for Switzerland. Especially, because the rearmament effort had a devastating impact on Britain's financial health,¹⁰⁴⁸ and Swiss money might again be most welcome. In addition, with the stabilisation of the military situation in Korea and a new evaluation of Switzerland through NSC-119, perhaps even the US would be willing to spare some tanks for the Swiss. Consequently, one can ask whether after July 1951 the arms market evolved from a seller's into a buyer's market to Switzerland's advantage, but to Britain's disadvantage.

On 14 July 1951, the Swiss Defence Minister met with his department's main protagonists of the question of tanks. There were no real changes in the supply situation, but Kobelt made a virtue out of necessity. He "emphatically" argued for the purchase of the French AMX-13 on the grounds that even a heavier and thus better armed tank would not offer sufficient protection against the new and more efficient

¹⁰⁴⁶ Braun, *op. cit.*, pp.262-266.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Millett, Allan R., *The Korean War*, Washington, DC: Potomac Books, 2007, p.56.

¹⁰⁴⁸ *Supra*, ch.5.3.

anti-tank weapons, and its lower price allowed buying a larger quantity. The financial reason certainly had some importance, but one can assume that Kobelt's main motivation was that the AMX-13 was the only available tank. The armour-plate for the Centurion's production under licence was still beyond reach, and even if it was, it would take three years until the delivery of the first tank. Meanwhile, American tanks would only become available once the needs of the US and NATO armies would have been met. Despite this situation and the decision to continue the negotiations with the French for the purchase of the AMX-13, the negotiations with the British, and the enquiries in the US, were to be continued.¹⁰⁴⁹

At least for the moment, Washington's position remained unchanged. In July, the JCS were still unwilling to give Switzerland priority status in arms exports, because they expected the Swiss to remain neutral in case of war.¹⁰⁵⁰ Yet, as Minister Bruggmann argued to the State Department, the Swiss had no intention to join NATO, for "they did not wholly trust the will of all the members to defend their countries".¹⁰⁵¹ Through such rhetoric, the Swiss Minister tried to convince the Americans that Switzerland was a strategic asset despite its neutrality, and thus deserved to be supplied with tanks. This reasoning appealed to the State Department, but it was more difficult to convince the American defence establishment. Therefore, first de Muralt, and then Bruggmann, suggested submitting the Swiss case for tanks to Eisenhower in Paris, in the hope that he would convince the JCS about Switzerland's importance for the defence of Western Europe. However, such an intervention did not materialise, because the Federal Political Department feared that if it would become known that Berne called directly on SACEUR, the credibility of neutrality would be significantly undermined.¹⁰⁵² While this would weaken Switzerland's ability to stay out of a future conflict, Foreign Minister Petitpierre also feared that Eisenhower might only be willing to help in exchange for Swiss military secrets.¹⁰⁵³ This attitude stood in stark contrast to the intimate relationship between the Swiss General Staff and Montgomery, who was Eisenhower's deputy in NATO. Consequently, the lobbying

¹⁰⁴⁹ Orientierung über den gegenwärtigen Stand der Panzerfrage, Ernst (FMD), 16.07.1951, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.4.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, op. cit., p.133.

¹⁰⁵¹ Tanks for Switzerland and other pending Swiss-US matters, Bonbright (EUR), 16.08.1951, NARA, RG 59, CDF 1950-54, 745.5.

¹⁰⁵² De Muralt to de Montmollin (both FMD), 26.02.1951, SFA, E27, -/9001, 18505, Bd.4; Etter (FPD) to Bruggmann (Washington), 08.08.1951, dodis.ch/8297, SDD.

¹⁰⁵³ Note, Petitpierre (FPD), 31.10.1951, dodis.ch/8295, SDD.

on Switzerland's behalf was left to the Swiss Minister in Washington and the State Department.¹⁰⁵⁴ This would, however, only pay dividends later through Truman's approval of NSC-119, and Switzerland's following qualification for reimbursable military aid under the Mutual Defense Assistance Act.¹⁰⁵⁵

By late August 1951, American tanks remained beyond reach. Meanwhile, the British supply position had not improved, as finished Centurions and material support for its licence production remained unavailable. Therefore, the Military Technical Service, together with the Head of the Light Troops, decided to abandon the Centurion option, take a wait and see approach in the American case, and to submit the request to the National Defence Commission for buying 100-200 AMX-13s.¹⁰⁵⁶ A few days later, this solution was also endorsed by the Chief of the General Staff,¹⁰⁵⁷ and on 30 August, the National Defence Commission gave its consent to test the French tank in Switzerland in view of an eventual purchase.¹⁰⁵⁸ After these tests, in early October, the National Defence Commission reluctantly approved the purchase of 200 AMX-13s as an interim solution, until better armoured tanks would finally become available.¹⁰⁵⁹ But did the Swiss military establishment take this decision too hastily?

Only three months later, on 9 January 1952, the State Department informed the Swiss Minister in Washington that Switzerland had been declared eligible for reimbursable military aid under the Mutual Defense Assistance Act. Yet, this upgrading did not automatically give Switzerland access to modern tanks. Two major obstacles remained: Swiss requests were subject to "prevailing shortages" and "possible higher priority demands" from US Armed Forces and Allies;¹⁰⁶⁰ and the Federal Government would have to give formal assurances through a bilateral agreement with Washington that the weapons would not be used in an act of aggression or re-exported, it would take appropriate security measures to protect the

¹⁰⁵⁴ Memorandum for Mr. Frank C. Nash, Subject: Swiss Requests for Procurement Assistance, Olmsted (OMA, OSD), 05.09.1951, NARA, RG 330, Entry 18, General and Project Decimal File, Apr. 1949-May 1953, Box 77.

¹⁰⁵⁵ *Supra*, ch.5.1.

¹⁰⁵⁶ Besprechung zur Beschaffungsfrage von Panzerkampfwagen, MTS, 23.08.1951, SFA, E5155(-), 1968/12, Bd.53.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Besprechung im Bureau des Generalstabschefs, von Wattenwyl (MTS), 27.08.1951, SFA, E5155(-), 1968/12, Bd.53.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 30.08.1951, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4062.

¹⁰⁵⁹ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 06.10.1951, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4062.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Advising Swiss Government of Its Eligibility under MDA, Vance (WE), 09.01.1952, NARA, RG 59, CDF 1950-54, 745.5.

know-how of the arms it would receive, and would accept the required payment modalities.¹⁰⁶¹ These assurances were the prerequisite for Washington to grant military assistance to a country under Section 408(e) of the Mutual Defense Assistance Act.¹⁰⁶²

The first obstacle was significant, for the Swiss were only entitled to “noncompetitive items such as M4 tanks, M3 howitzers, and soft commodities in fairly easy supply”,¹⁰⁶³ and the more modern and competitive M46, M47 or M48 tanks “would not be available for Switzerland for some time to come”.¹⁰⁶⁴ According to Eisenhower’s political advisor and Chief of Staff, with whom the Federal Political Department’s Secretary-General had dinner in Paris, this was due to the priority of the armed forces, which were fighting in Korea, and a limited amount of tanks for Switzerland would become available by March 1953.¹⁰⁶⁵ Yet, were these prospects sufficient for overcoming the second obstacle?

Zehnder explained to the American Legation in Berne that Switzerland could not enter into a formal agreement on military aid as if it were a US Ally, for this would undermine its neutrality.¹⁰⁶⁶ Therefore, the Federal Political Department instructed its Minister in Washington to work out a solution, which would avoid such an agreement. By March, the State Department was willing to compromise and declared that it would accept a note, in which the Swiss Government would give assurances that purchased weapons would not be re-exported, and it would take appropriate security measures to protect American military know-how. Once Washington would have received this note, Berne would finally be able to send a mission for the study of war material to the US.¹⁰⁶⁷ In mid-April, Bruggmann thus called on the State Department and the Department of Defense and informed them that Switzerland desired to send a military mission to the US, and that therefore the

¹⁰⁶¹ Aide-Mémoire, Bonbright (EUR), 09.01.1952, dodis.ch/8310, *SDD*.

¹⁰⁶² United States, “Mutual Defense Assistance Act of 1949”, *The American Journal of International Law*, Vol.44, No.1, 1950, Supplement: Official Documents, pp.36-37.

¹⁰⁶³ Ward (Policy Division, OSD) to Olmsted (OMA, OSD), 10.01.1952, NARA, RG 330, Entry 21A, Country Files (CAIN), 1950-1955, Box 6.

¹⁰⁶⁴ Olmsted (OMA, OSD) to Ruffner (ISA, OSD), 18.01.1952, NARA, RG 330, Entry 21A, Country Files (CAIN), 1950-1955, Box 6.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Zehnder to Petitpierre (both FPD), 18.02.1952, dodis.ch/7237, *SDD*.

¹⁰⁶⁶ Minneman (Berne) to DoS, 05.03.1952, NARA, RG 59, CDF 1950-54, 454.1181-1184.

¹⁰⁶⁷ FPD to Federal Council, 13.03.1952, dodis.ch/8296, *SDD*.

note to complete the eligibility for reimbursable military aid would be given shortly.¹⁰⁶⁸

But meanwhile, the Swiss had the ingenious idea to link the two obstacles. In late May, Bruggmann informed the State Department that Switzerland would only be willing to give the note with assurances, if the upcoming mission would also be allowed to study modern war material, such as the M47 tank.¹⁰⁶⁹ Interestingly, Washington agreed to this deal,¹⁰⁷⁰ and on 13 June, the Swiss Minister delivered the note containing the assurances, which completed Switzerland's eligibility for reimbursable military aid.¹⁰⁷¹ The reason why the Americans succumbed to this blackmailing was that they were eager to receive a military mission to foster closer security relations with neutral Switzerland in line with NSC-119.¹⁰⁷² Moreover, their readiness to show modern weaponry did not imply that they were willing to sell it immediately. The Department of Defense emphasised to the State Department that the weapons, which the Swiss desired to study, were long-lead items, and "[p]resent criteria for priority supply of such items would not permit delivery to Switzerland for at least thirty months".¹⁰⁷³

Therefore, it could nonetheless be appealing to the Swiss that Britain's tank supply position began to shift by mid-June, as it became clear that more Centurions were produced than needed. The Foreign Secretary suggested that the surplus tanks would have to be sold abroad and he pointed out to the MoD that orders from Switzerland should be particularly considered.¹⁰⁷⁴ Through the rearmament programme, the tank production capacity had increased beyond domestic demand, especially, as the Churchill Government was trying to reduce defence spending in the light of the financial difficulties. Thus, tanks became available for export, and unsurprisingly, the hard currency country Switzerland was again a desired customer.¹⁰⁷⁵ However, the British authorities were apparently uncomfortable to

¹⁰⁶⁸ Visit of Swiss Technical Military Mission, DoS, 17.04.1951, NARA, RG 59, CDF 1950-54, 745.5.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Swiss Military Mission to United States, DoS, 27.05.1952, NARA, RG 59, CDF 1950-54, 745.5.

¹⁰⁷⁰ DoS to Brugmann (Washington), 10.06.1952, NARA, RG 59, CDF 1950-54, 745.5.

¹⁰⁷¹ Swiss Assurances Under Section 408(e) MDAA, DoS, 13.06.1952, NARA, RG 59, CDF 1950-54, 745.5.

¹⁰⁷² Various documents in NARA, RG 59, CDF 1950-54, 745.5; RG 330, Entry 18, General and Project Decimal File, Apr. 1949-May 1953, Box 77. See also Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, *op. cit.*, p.140.

¹⁰⁷³ DoD to DoS, 11.06.1952, NARA, RG 59, CDF 1950-54, 745.5.

¹⁰⁷⁴ JWPC(AWP)/M(52)9, Minutes, 18.06.1952, TNA, DEFE 10/204.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Geiger, *op. cit.*, p.136; *Supra*, ch.5.2.

approach the Swiss – to whom they had refused tanks – directly, and used Captain Liddell-Hart as an agent.

In early July, high-ranking MoS officials emphasised to Liddell-Hart “the national importance of selling [tanks to Switzerland] for hard currency”. Thereupon, the British strategist offered his services.¹⁰⁷⁶ In mid-July, he informed the Swiss Military Attaché in London, Lieutenant-Colonel Gygli, that if an order for Centurions would be placed quickly, the delivery would start in two years at a price of £50,000 per tank.¹⁰⁷⁷ Back in Berne, this sudden offer aroused suspicion. It was feared that the British intended to sell the older Centurion type, which would then be replaced in their army with the newer type. Nevertheless, the Federal Military Department decided to enquire in London whether it was possible to have two Centurions – if possible of the most recent type – on loan for tests in Switzerland. This was, however, less for the reason that the Centurion was still a serious option, but rather because the Swiss intended to use the potential purchase of British tanks as a lever in their upcoming negotiations with the Americans.¹⁰⁷⁸ In late July, this request was submitted through the channel of Liddell-Hart. Thereafter, Whitehall took over, and the Captain’s services were no longer requested.¹⁰⁷⁹ In addition, his cordial relationship with the Swiss military authorities was soon replaced by animosity, because they were unwilling to pay him as much for his services as he asked for.¹⁰⁸⁰

The British Minister in Berne urged London – again for military, political and financial reasons – to give a positive reply to the Swiss request, and especially, to do so before a Swiss military mission would leave to the US.¹⁰⁸¹ Indeed, Whitehall acted swiftly, and in early August, Gygli met with representatives of the WO, the MoS and Vickers-Armstrongs for a preliminary discussion on the Swiss request.¹⁰⁸² There was no doubt that the British were willing to give two Centurions on loan to Switzerland. Prime Minister Churchill himself took a personal interest in the matter, and Minister of Supply Sandys informed him “that we are doing everything we can to sell some

¹⁰⁷⁶ Liddell-Hart to Ginnett, 20.12.1952, LHCMA, LIDDELL: LH2G/63/1-39 1952 Dec 20-1954 Apr 5.

¹⁰⁷⁷ Gygli (London) to von Wattenwyl (MTS), 14.07.1952, SFA, E5155(-), 1971/202, Bd.77.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to Gygli (London), 16.07.1952, SFA, E5155(-), 1971/202, Bd.77.

¹⁰⁷⁹ Gygli (London) to Liddell-Hart, 28.07.1952; 08.08.1952, LHCMA, LIDDELL: LH2G/165/1-22 1950 Oct-1952 Dec 10.

¹⁰⁸⁰ Various documents in LHCMA, LIDDELL: LH2G/63/1-39 1952 Dec 20-1954 Apr 5; LH2G/165/1-22 1950 Oct-1952 Dec 10; SFA, E5155(-), 1971/202, Bd.77; E5001(F), 1000/1862, Bd.7.

¹⁰⁸¹ Scrivener (Berne) to FO, 09.08.1952, TNA, PREM 11/638.

¹⁰⁸² Protokoll über eine Sitzung im WO, 07.08.1952, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1856, Bde.8-9.

Centurions to the Swiss”. Despite their forthcoming mission to the US, he was hopeful that Switzerland would place an order for Centurions.¹⁰⁸³ Therefore, on 15 August, the WO informed Gygli that two Centurions would be made available for tests in Switzerland.¹⁰⁸⁴

Meanwhile, London tried to influence Berne to place a substantial Centurion order already before the tank would have been tested. On 20 August, the British Legation pointed out to the Swiss Government that 200 Centurions could be delivered between 1953 and 1955 if an order was placed before the end of September, and that this would positively affect the Anglo-Swiss balance of payments.¹⁰⁸⁵ This was, however, far too early for the Swiss. For it was only by late August, that the National Defence Commission decided how the tank weapon would be incorporated in the army, and vaguely stated on future tank procurements.

The corps commanders agreed to the principle that tank units with a limited amount of infantry troops would have to be set up, and they believed that a tank with a high-performance gun, a powerful engine and good armour would have to be purchased after the AMX-13. But they left unanswered the question whether this “profile” corresponded more to American or British tanks.¹⁰⁸⁶ Therefore, the Federal Military Department informed the Trade Section, which had been brought on the scene through the British Legation’s lobbying, that there would be no decision on the Centurion until the completion of the mission to the US.¹⁰⁸⁷

Yet, the Swiss military leadership appeared to prefer American tanks. As Frank Nash – Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs and the driving force behind the upcoming Swiss mission to the US – visited Switzerland in late July, Kobelt did not only inform him about Swiss defences, but also bluntly stated his preference for the M47 to the Centurion.¹⁰⁸⁸ The British Legation, which kept a close eye on the visit, feared that the tank issue would be discussed. Scrivener therefore rejoiced as Nash’s trip to Switzerland was leaked – apparently from American sources – to the press, and this greatly upset the Federal

¹⁰⁸³ Sandys (MoS) to Churchill, 14.08.1952, TNA, PREM 11/638.

¹⁰⁸⁴ Gygli (London) to von Wattenwyl (MTS), 16.08.1952, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1856, Bde.8-9.

¹⁰⁸⁵ Aide-Mémoire, Berne, 20.08.1952, SFA, E2200.40, 1971/164, Bd.8.

¹⁰⁸⁶ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 27.08.1952, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4063.

¹⁰⁸⁷ Bracher (FMD) to Halm (Trade Section), 29.08.1952, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1856, Bde.8-9.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Mr. Nash-General Olmsted Visit to Switzerland, DoS, 23.07.1952, NARA, RG 59, CDF 1950-54, 745.5.

Government.¹⁰⁸⁹ As in September also the Swiss mission to the US appeared in the press, again through a leakage by the Americans, the British Minister even concluded that “it may be that all this commotion will make the Swiss more disposed to buy Centurions, about which we have all kept our mouths completely closed”.¹⁰⁹⁰ This conclusion was, however, too hasty. Admittedly, the Federal Council was strongly irritated by the American indiscretions, which could lead to believe that Switzerland was undermining its neutrality for closer military relations with the US.¹⁰⁹¹ But while this probably was a reason why the Swiss mission did not enter into strategic talks with the Americans, for which their hosts were prepared, their interest in US made tanks remained undiminished.

During its stay in the US from 31 August to 6 October, the military mission received access to all weapons in the category “restricted”, and could see and study weapons, in which it had a genuine interest for a later purchase, up to the category “confidential”.¹⁰⁹² This interest was particularly strong for the M47 and M48 medium tanks. Already before the end of the mission, the Swiss Legation in Washington submitted to the State Department a request for two M48s, and if these would not be available, for two M47s for testing purposes.¹⁰⁹³ The preference for the newer M48 was not only due to its higher performances, but also because the production of the M47 was apparently about to be phased out.¹⁰⁹⁴ Yet, the M48 was beyond reach, for its production had just begun, and the equipment of the US Army with this tank was only about to start. Nevertheless, the State Department and the Department of Defense were willing to sell two M47s for two reasons: to strengthen Swiss defences in line with NSC-119, and a large Swiss tank order would allow to maintain production facilities.¹⁰⁹⁵ On 21 October, the State Department informed the Swiss that they could purchase two M47s for test purposes.¹⁰⁹⁶

¹⁰⁸⁹ Scrivener (Berne) to Cheetham (FO), 20.08.1952, TNA, FO 371/101638.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Scrivener (Berne) to Cheetham (FO), 10.09.1952, TNA, FO 371/101638.

¹⁰⁹¹ 57^e séance du 9 septembre 1952, Federal Council, 09.09.1952, dodis.ch/10157, *SDD*.

¹⁰⁹² Various documents in NARA, RG 330, Entry 18, General and Project Decimal File, Apr. 1949-May 1953, Box 77; See also Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, *op. cit.*, pp.140-141.

¹⁰⁹³ Washington to DoS, 24.09.1952, NARA, RG 330, Entry 21, Country Files 1949-1955, Box 82.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Swiss Technical Mission, OMA (OSD), 24.09.1952, NARA, RG 330, Entry 18, General and Project Decimal File, Apr. 1949-May 1953, Box 77.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Olmsted to Nash (both OMA, OSD), 26.09.1952; Olmsted to Stewart (both OMA, OSD), 26.09.1952; 01.10.1952, NARA, RG 330, Entry 18, General and Project Decimal File, Apr. 1949-May 1953, Box 77.

¹⁰⁹⁶ DoS to Washington, 21.10.1952, NARA, RG 330, Entry 21A, Country Files (CAIN), 1950-1955, Box 6.

As a result, by autumn 1952, Switzerland's tank procurement prospects appeared more encouraging than ever: two Centurions had already arrived and were being tested, and two M47s would be delivered by the turn of the year. Simultaneously, the French – who were determined to take back their pre-war place in the international arms market – offered to lend a prototype of their newer and heavier tank, the AMX-50, for comparative tests. Yet, the Swiss were not particularly interested in this tank, for not only was its mass production a distant reality, but they feared that another competitor for their tank order risked to “annoy the US and England”.¹⁰⁹⁷

The “stabilisation” of the international situation had reduced the pressure on the arms market, and thus by late 1952, the Swiss had the choice among different tanks. At the same time, however, as a third world war appeared less imminent, the Federal Assembly more than ever questioned the necessity of tanks. Therefore, in December, the Defence Minister decided to set up a Commission for Tank Procurement,¹⁰⁹⁸ which, through determining a clear path for future tank acquisitions, would have to send out a clear message to Swiss politicians to overcome their disagreements in Parliament.¹⁰⁹⁹ This implied that before a choice between the Centurion and the M47 could be made, both tanks would have to go through lengthy and thorough tests in Switzerland.¹¹⁰⁰

The British Minister in Berne was disheartened by these prospects, especially because he was hoping for the sale of Centurions to make up for aircraft and engine exports – which would probably cease by the end of 1954 – in the Anglo-Swiss balance of payments. In addition to these financial considerations, the British Legation maintained that an adequate equipment of the Swiss Army was also necessary for strategic reasons. Yet, Scrivener was aware of the domestic constraints, which the Federal Military Department faced in its choice for a tank model. He thus observed in despair that he could not see “anything which we can do to influence the decision in our favour”.¹¹⁰¹ Moreover, by February 1953, the picture looked increasingly grim. The British Military Attaché reported to London that there was a

¹⁰⁹⁷ Protokoll der Konferenz über Panzerfragen, MTS, 31.10.1952; Konferenz betreffend Panzerwagen, FMD, 05.11.1952, SFA, E5155(-), 1971/202, Bd.61.

¹⁰⁹⁸ CTP.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 13.12.1952, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4063.

¹¹⁰⁰ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 22.01.1953, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4063.

¹¹⁰¹ Scrivener (Berne) to Cheetham (FO), 08.01.1953, TNA, FO 371/107350; MacDermot (Berne) to Robey (FO), 26.01.1953, TNA, FO 371/107344.

growing opposition to military expenditure in the Federal Assembly, because there was not only a general feeling that the threat of a major war had receded, but also a certain hostility towards Defence Minister Kobelt. Commenting on this report, Scrivener observed that if there would be a significant reduction in the Swiss military budget, there could be no tank order at all.¹¹⁰²

Yet, the British were not willing to give up. Already in late January, the WO suggested to inform the Swiss that instead of buying “perfectly useless light French tanks” and “fritter the francs”, they should invest in a few Centurions. Although the FO gentlemanly observed that this would be a “foul”, it nevertheless decided to influence Berne in favour of the Centurion.¹¹⁰³ Thus Whitehall, in conjunction with Vickers-Armstrongs, went on the offensive. On 13 February, the British Minister argued to the Swiss Foreign Minister in favour of a Centurion order, for the tests with the tank had brought positive results.¹¹⁰⁴ The same day, the representative of Vickers-Armstrongs emphasised to the Head of the Military Technical Service that it was urgent for Switzerland to place an order, because London’s offer to deliver tanks was not indefinite and the Centurions would be delivered to other countries.¹¹⁰⁵ Only three days later, the MoS informed the Swiss Legation that “if [...] your Government wishes to buy Centurions it is very much in your interests that you should let us know your requirements before final allocations are made so that your demands can be considered with others”.¹¹⁰⁶ In addition, the British were again supported by the Swiss Trade Section, which not only favoured this arms transfer for Anglo-Swiss bilateral economic relations, but also to reduce the Swiss creditor position in the multilateral EPU.¹¹⁰⁷

This tremendous lobbying effort proved to no avail. The Defence Minister and the Chief of the General Staff informed the British Minister and Vickers-Armstrongs that it was impossible to promise an eventual Centurion order, for the Commission for Tank Procurement would not only have to make a choice on the tank model, but

¹¹⁰² Switzerland – Review of Military Affairs for 1952, Hutchins (Berne); Scrivener (Berne) to Eden (FO), 03.02.1953, TNA, FO 371/107347.

¹¹⁰³ Minute, Maby (FO), 29.01.1953, TNA, FO 371/107346.

¹¹⁰⁴ Entretien avec M. Scrivener, Ministre de Grande-Bretagne, Petitpierre (FPD), 13.02.1953, SFA, E2800, 1990/106, Bd.20; Petitpierre (FPD) to Kobelt (FMD), 13.02.1953, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1862, Bd.7.

¹¹⁰⁵ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to FMD, 13.02.1953, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1862, Bd.7.

¹¹⁰⁶ Jackson (MoS) to Umbricht (London), 16.02.1953, SFA, E2200.40, 1971/164, Bd.8.

¹¹⁰⁷ Schaffner (Trade Section) to London, 02.03.1953; Schaffner (Trade Section) to Bracher (FMD), 02.03.1953, SFA, E2200.40, 1971/164, Bd.8.

would also have to rule whether the introduction of heavier tanks was advisable or not.¹¹⁰⁸ By late June, the prospects for a Centurion order had again worsened. Scrivener observed that with peace looming in Korea, the completion of Switzerland's rearmament programme was more than ever questioned by the Federal Assembly and the Swiss population. This could imply that new armament credits would be refused, and this would deprive Britain "of a most useful contract – for Centurions – which in the absence of these complications we would have had great hopes of securing".¹¹⁰⁹ Consequently, at the time of the armistice in Korea, the Swiss Army was only about to be equipped with a limited amount of light tanks, and the British were desperately seeking to convert their Centurion overproduction into an export hit.

In autumn 1952, as neither American nor British tanks were in sight, and the Centurion's licence production was unrealistic, the Swiss military leadership made a virtue out of a necessity and decided to purchase the French light tank. Yet, only a few months later, Switzerland became eligible for reimbursable American military aid under the Mutual Defense Assistance Act. Berne subtly exploited Washington's desire for closer security relations by linking its assurances, which were required under the Mutual Defense Assistance Act, to the type of military hardware it was interested in, and gained access to modern tanks. The desire for American weapons was, however, never strong enough to further compromise neutrality and enter into closer security relations with the United States. The British, with whom the Swiss already had a close security relationship, nevertheless jealously observed the Americano-Swiss rapprochement, for by mid-1952, they desired to sell their surplus Centurions to the Swiss for financial reasons. But while the lessening of international tensions transformed the arms market into a buyer's market, rearmament appeared also less urgent and the Federal Assembly was reluctant to pay for expensive weaponry. Consequently, when the arms fell silent in Korea, the roles were reversed: the Swiss were not anymore begging the British for tanks, but the latter were begging the former to buy them.

¹¹⁰⁸ De Montmollin to Kobelt (both FMD), 20.02.1953; Kobelt (FMD) to Petitpierre (FPD), 23.02.1953, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1862, Bd.7.

¹¹⁰⁹ Scrivener (Berne) to Churchill, 23.06.1953, TNA, FO 371/107345.

Intermediate Conclusion II

Towards the late 1940s, and especially with the outbreak of the Korean War, the international situation changed dramatically. From a Western perspective, communism was on the advance, and an attack by the Eastern bloc on Western Europe, leading to a third world war, was not to be excluded. As a result, the US and its Allies fought in Korea and rearmed, while NATO was put on war footing. Yet, after mid-1951, as the Korean War turned into a stalemate, and it seemed unlikely that the Red Army would overrun Western Europe, the international situation appeared less grim. During this period, the relationship between Switzerland, the “Western neutral” country, and Great Britain, which “was clinging to grandeur”, remained a close one.

In the political domain, there were misperceptions but also common interests. Even though London questioned the sustainability of neutrality in the Cold War, it respected Switzerland’s neutrality. This respect was, however, due to the fact that Swiss neutrality was western-oriented. The British even tried to strengthen Berne’s westwards outlook through diplomatic means, whereas they “ostentatiously” appeared to respect its neutrality no matter what. The Swiss were not aware of these ulterior motives, and continued to believe that no other great power had as much understanding for their neutrality as Britain. Despite the Federal authorities’ reliance on London for the understanding of their neutrality, they became increasingly aware of Britain’s diminishing role, and began to approach Washington. Nevertheless, Berne and London cooperated for most of the time in their efforts to forestall further European integration. This “teamwork” was only punctually overshadowed by Whitehall’s Atlantic approach towards the OEEC, which aroused Swiss suspicion, and Switzerland’s arms exports to the Middle East, which irritated the British. If in most cases polite diplomatic interventions adjusted certain policy divergences, their approach towards global issues, such as the recognition of communist China, converged spontaneously. Generally, there was mutual trust, and Berne and London relied on each other to represent their interests if necessary.

In the economic field, there were important disagreements, and thus the relationship was more complicated than before. In 1949, only Switzerland’s promise to increase imports could induce Britain to allocate small quotas for tourism and “less essentials”. Therefore, the Trade Section urged the Federal Military Department to

make additional arms purchases in the UK. These became, however, less urgent, as London devalued the pound in late 1949. This measure was to Britain's advantage, for it reduced its Swiss credit and the loss of gold. Switzerland, by contrast, incurred an important financial loss, because it held large sterling accounts. This was the price for London's political support in Washington in 1946. Although in 1950 the balance of payments favoured – due to the Korean War – the UK for once, the British knew that this was only temporary and lobbied in Paris and Berne for Switzerland's participation in the EPU. The Swiss finally joined, which relieved Britain from a usually negative balance of payments with Switzerland. Nevertheless, through the rearmament effort and an important increase of imports into the sterling area, Britain's balance of payments with the EPU as a whole became alarming. Thus, towards the end of the Korean War, London was again financially pressured, and had to cut back tourism and the trade liberalisation for Swiss products.

In the realm of economic warfare, there was mutual suspicion, but not real friction. As both Britain and Switzerland were trade nations, they showed a certain resistance towards Washington's idea of a strategic embargo. Yet, London's approach was more security-oriented. Thus, it tried to obtain the support from OEEC countries for a limited strategic embargo, which would be adapted to its trade interests. The Swiss largely resisted, and were first only willing – in their own security interest – to prevent the export and transit of war material or dubious dual-use items to the East. These minor measures were acceptable to the British, and they did not intervene more forcefully to bring about Switzerland's compliance with CoCom. London's benevolent approach towards Berne on economic warfare was not, however, only due to its generally pragmatic diplomacy. More probably, Whitehall lacked the necessary power to coerce the Federal Government into compliance. The Swiss were aware of this, and therefore did not try to rely on the British, of whom they knew that they had a more moderate position on economic warfare than the Americans, in their negotiations with Washington.

On a security level, the relationship became “special”. Britain's military prestige in Berne remained undiminished. Therefore, Montgomery and some “elected” British officers received the opportunity to “inspect” Swiss defences. But to the Swiss military leadership's disillusionment, their evaluation of the Swiss Army was disastrous. Some Swiss officers were grateful for advice, but the more conservative officers and the political leadership proved finally to be immune to

British criticism. Although Montgomery grew increasingly frustrated with the National Defence Commission and Kobelt, London questioned Switzerland's strategic importance, and the Federal Council temporarily prohibited contacts between the Swiss General Staff and Western military leaders, the Anglo-Swiss defence relationship became nonetheless "special". On the ground, in early 1952, Montgomery and de Montmollin secretly agreed on the Swiss Army's deployment in coordination with NATO forces in case of a Soviet attack. In the air, almost simultaneously, the new Chief of the Air Staff, Primault, disclosed Swiss war plans to the British. Moreover, in conjunction with the British Air Attaché, he worked towards an exchange scheme between the RAF and the Swiss Air Force, and probably tried to coordinate the war planning of the two air forces. As a result, despite the Federal Council's continuous fear to undermine the credibility and respectability of Swiss neutrality, it nonetheless allowed the military leadership to entertain close relations with the British, which culminated in secret defence schemes. Although the Soviets seemed to be unaware of the secret defence coordination, the frequent military contacts between Britain and Switzerland aroused their suspicion. The Federal Government was to a certain extent willing to take this risk, because, in addition to military advice, it hoped to improve its access to weapons through closer defence relations. The British did not take advantage of this opportunity to promote their weapons, and gave contradictory advice: Montgomery was strongly against additional fighter aircraft purchases, Air Marshal Tedder favoured a fighter air force, and Cottrell-Hill only recommended the purchase of a small amount of British tanks.

The analysis of the Anglo-Swiss armaments relationship between 1949 and 1953 has shown, however, that the security relationship was mainly "special" for the Swiss. Switzerland was neither of major strategic nor of political importance to Britain. *Moreover, the economic relations between the two countries became less interdependent, and could only to a certain extent compensate for the lack of a real strategic partnership.* This did not mean that London did not care about its relations with Berne. In late 1950, London decided in favour of the fulfilment of the Goblin engines contract for mainly political reasons: to maintain its prestige and the cordial relationship, and out of fear that the Swiss could be pushed into a rapprochement with "hostile powers". Yet, as soon as arms deliveries to Switzerland were to the detriment of British and NATO rearmament efforts, or Britain could be accused by its armed services and Allies of diverting scarce war materiel to a neutral, the case was

different. The British refused to deliver Centurions at the height of the Korean War, because Switzerland was neither politically nor strategically of major importance to Britain and its Allies. Similar considerations played a role in the initial refusal to supply Switzerland with axial-flow engines. Such refusals were a bitter pill for the Swiss, for London was the only major power willing to deliver modern weaponry. But despite its difficult supply position, Switzerland was not prepared to enter into a closer relationship with Britain for the sake of weaponry. Interestingly, the Swiss were more reluctant to compromise their neutrality for British than for American weapons. They were prepared to supply the US with air-to-surface missiles in exchange for military hardware, but they were not willing to become part of the British rearmament programme for the desired Centurions.

Even though Switzerland had no priority in British arms supplies, it nevertheless received some of the weapons it asked for. London's acceptance to deliver military hardware or licences thereof could also to a certain extent be strategically motivated. Despite fears of technological dissemination after the "Nene-blunder", the Swiss got access to axial-flow engines at the same time as France, which was nothing less than one of Britain's major NATO Allies. The probable reason for the British decision was that Switzerland's strategic importance in the air had increased significantly, and reached parity with Sweden's. This development in turn favours the hypothesis that the planning of the RAF-Swiss Air Force exchange scheme was followed by secret defence coordination between the British and Swiss Air Staffs. Especially, because the idea of the exchange scheme did not only originate as a means to convince the British to deliver the Goblins, but was also finally authorised by the Federal Council in the aim to encourage Whitehall to treat Swiss aircraft and engine requests favourably. Yet, the impact of military relations and defence coordination ought not to be overestimated. Despite the "Montgomery-de Montmollin Agreement" and the Field-Marshal's half-hearted promise to lobby for Swiss tank requests in London, finished Centurions remained inaccessible for the Swiss Army. The FO's desire to have a "Russian-proof Switzerland" was not echoed in the corridors of Whitehall.

Despite the primacy of politics and strategy, financial and economic considerations remained nevertheless important, especially during the early and late stages of the period under consideration. In 1949, the Federal Military Department took advantage of the Trade Section's insistence to make additional arms purchases in

Britain, and thus approached London for tanks. In addition, Kobelt favoured finished tanks to a licence, for the supply of hard currency to Britain would be a boon to Switzerland's tourist industry. Initially, also Whitehall had strong economic incentives, and was eager to earn Swiss francs. But through the devaluation of the pound, Swiss participation in the EPU, and especially the outbreak of the Korean War, the weight of the financial argument diminished significantly. The economic benefits of arms deliveries to Switzerland were thus outweighed by strategic considerations, and one FO official went so far as to qualify economic arguments as "taboo". Nonetheless, the decision to release licences, particularly for the Venom and the jet engines, was to a large extent based on economic grounds: the earning of hard currency through royalties; to keep the Swiss interested in British aeronautical products; the fear of US competition; and most importantly, the need for Swiss machine tools. Finally, from summer 1952 on, the economic argument regained prominence in Whitehall, and also the Swiss Trade Section lobbied again for arms purchases in Britain.

Consequently, the cordial political relationship the two countries enjoyed was important enough for the British to avoid upsetting the Swiss by not honouring the Goblins contract, but not sufficiently strong to deliver scarce war material during wartime. Anglo-Swiss economic relations remained important – with the exception of the bloodiest phase of the Korean War – and they were strengthened through and favoured arms purchases. At the same time, the defence relationship became somehow "special". This allowed British policymakers to justify the release of military technology to Switzerland during wartime. On the other hand, the Swiss military leadership was not only willing to enter into defence coordination with the British for strategic purposes, but also to improve the access to weapons. Interestingly, despite Berne's hints into this direction, London never tried to use the supply of weapons or military technology as a means to extract political or strategic concessions – such as the participation in the strategic embargo – from the Swiss.

As it follows from the above, Switzerland desired to purchase weapons for security reasons, and economic incentives were of secondary importance. The British, by contrast, sold weapons to the Swiss on predominantly economic grounds, even though they relied on strategic arguments for certain arms sales. *The refusal to deliver weapons was, however, based on strategic and political considerations.* On closer examination, Britain's and Switzerland's motivations for arms transfers and the

international arms markets varied between 1949 and 1953, and can be divided into three phases: From 1949 to the outbreak of the Korean War, although military-strategic considerations – such as the equipment of its own and allied armed forces – gained in importance in Britain's arms exports policy, the "pursuit of wealth" remained predominant. Meanwhile, Switzerland was mainly trying to purchase weapons in quest for its security, in spite of the economic incentive to re-balance the Anglo-Swiss balance-of-payments. At the height of the Korean War, Berne's economic motivations receded, leaving the ground completely to security considerations. London, on the other hand, was "pursuing victory", and was thus unable to meet all requests for weapons from neutral Switzerland. Only once the international tensions abated, Whitehall returned to the pre-Korean War pattern, and offered Berne tanks for hard currency. Yet, the Swiss feared less for their security at that time, and were reluctant to spend large sums for heavy weaponry. During the first of these three phases, there was a seller's market for weapons, for Britain was the only major power, which was willing to give commercial access to its military innovations. Once the North Koreans had crossed the 38th parallel, however, the market became almost non-existent, for only non-competitive items like the light French tank, or British licences were available. But once peace was looming on the Korean Peninsula, and the US shifted to a less restrictive arms exports policy, the arms market slowly transformed into a buyer's market.

Meanwhile, the heightening of international tensions and the resulting contraction of the arms market had a paradoxical impact on technology transfers. They were favoured by Switzerland's fear to be cut off from weapons supplies, but slowed down by Britain's fear of technological dissemination. In the aim to equip their air force as autonomously as possible, the Swiss decided to build the entire Venom, including the jet engine, under licence. Suddenly, whether the industry was capable of producing jet engines was not an issue anymore. Moreover, the Federal Military Department seriously considered the Centurion's production under licence, despite important technical and material constraints. The British, by contrast, began to fear that their innovations could fall into the wrong hands. After the appearance of a Mig-15, which was powered by Nene-replicas, Whitehall feared that the Soviets would catch up if military technology was sold to continental European countries. Nevertheless, business interests and a feeling of technological superiority outweighed security considerations, and the British were finally even prepared to sell their axial-

flow technology. In addition, at the height of the Korean War, Britain could or wanted to sell neutral Switzerland only licences and not finished weapons. On the other hand, licences were sometimes the only means for the Swiss to arm themselves. Technology transfers in the form of design transfers, as a result, were important between 1949 and 1953.

During these turbulent years, London could still see the benefits of neutrality, at least in the Swiss case. *Yet, this neutrality had to be western-oriented, did not receive a privileged place in British strategic thinking, and did not entitle Switzerland to arms supplies.* Berne, in turn, was willing to undermine its neutrality to gain access to modern weapons. Whitehall continued to approach neutrality pragmatically. The British were prepared to meet Swiss requests to a certain extent to keep their neutrality “western-oriented”, and could see the strategic interest of a neutral and well-armed Switzerland. During wartime, however, these considerations were outweighed by the immediate defence need to equip the British and allied armies. London understood, in addition, that the delivery of scarce war material to a neutral could attract the ire of Allies, especially the US. Consequently, Berne became fully aware that weapons procurement was extremely difficult for a neutral during wartime.

As Switzerland desired to rearm, it continued to undermine its neutrality for weapons. To improve the access to military hardware, the Swiss did not only present their armed forces to London and Washington as an extension of NATO, but they were also willing to enter into closer defence relations with the British, and to get access to American weapons under the Mutual Defense Assistance Act. Moreover, Berne ruled the Soviet Union out as an alternative supply possibility for tanks, because it did not want to endanger Anglo-American goodwill. Although these efforts did not immediately lead to tank supplies, Switzerland nevertheless received Sapphires, as well as Centurion, Venom and Ghost licences, and tanks for testing purposes. Interestingly, however, while Washington aimed at bringing Berne into closer defence collaboration through military aid, London never tried to wean Switzerland from its neutrality through the threat of withholding military technology.

It was not only due to their understanding of neutrality that the British abstained from using weapons as a tool to influence Switzerland, but also because they lacked the necessary power to do so. The Swiss were aware of Britain’s diminishing role, and in some cases they exploited London’s impotence to their advantage. Whitehall was unable to use its military technology as a tool to wean

Switzerland from neutrality. The reasons therefore were manifold: in peacetime, Britain needed hard currency to sustain a weak economic basis, and arms exports to maintain its war potential; in wartime, it did not have room for manoeuvre, for it was dependent on the goodwill of its Allies, especially the US, and suffered domestic constraints. With regard to Switzerland more particularly, it desired to maintain the status quo, i.e. the cordial relationship, and needed Swiss machine tools for its rearmament programme. Besides a lack of power, British policy-makers were aware that they already had a close security relationship with Berne, and they continued to prefer a neutral Switzerland, and did not want to tarnish their image as defenders of Swiss neutrality.

The Federal authorities were aware that Britain's role in the world was diminishing, and dealt with this situation in various ways. The UK's economic weakness put a curb on exports to the sterling area, but it also strongly favoured Swiss access to British weapons. Most probably, it was for this reason that the Swiss were not willing to compromise overtly their neutrality to get British tanks during the Korean War. By contrast, they bowed to Washington to receive American tanks. Paradoxically, it was also due to the disparity between American and British power that Switzerland preferred Britain to the US as its main Western security partner: it was less compromising for a neutral country to entertain security relations with the second, than with the leading Western power. Admittedly, this was not the only reason. In addition to historically close relations with Britain, the Americans appeared to be untrustworthy, as the continuous leaks of military contacts with the US showed.

PART III
MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE
1953-1958

PART III

MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE 1953-1958

9. A World in Tension

Stalin's death on 5 March 1953 was followed by the Cold War's "first détente", which lasted roughly until 1955. After two years of negotiations, the Korean armistice was finally signed in July 1953. East and West met and discussed at conferences in Berlin and Geneva in 1954, and again in Geneva in 1955. Finally, in 1955, the victorious powers of the Second World War signed the Austrian State Treaty, granting the Austrians independence under the status of neutrality.¹¹¹⁰ Yet, this détente was artificial, for both superpowers remained in a bellicose spirit. They lacked mutual trust, and many contentious issues, particularly Germany, were not settled.

Initially, Stalin's heirs – Malenkov, Khrushchev, Beria, and Molotov – agreed that Malenkov would be their leader, and that they needed to relax tensions with the West to redress the Soviet Union's economic situation, to gain trust and legitimacy and to humanise communism. But simultaneously, they continued to believe in the hostility of the capitalist West. In Washington, President Eisenhower – who had taken office in January 1953 – saw in Stalin's death an opportunity to recapture the offensive in the Cold War, but he was also interested in relaxing tensions. He nevertheless remained suspicious of Moscow's overtures and made his commitment to peace dependent on Soviet acts, which would prove their good intentions.

Yet, the Kremlin leadership did the opposite by cracking down the uprising in East Germany and arresting and executing Beria, one of the main reformers. Although Eisenhower and Dulles were tempted by these two events to go on the offensive, the President encouraged his Secretary of State to keep an eye on possibilities for conciliation. The German question stood, however, in the way of an understanding between East and West. Washington believed that it was essential for Europe's military and economic security to integrate West Germany, and if possible the whole of Germany, into the Western bloc. But for Moscow, which feared German power, a unified Germany linked to NATO was unacceptable. Therefore, it tried to divide the

¹¹¹⁰ Soutou, *La guerre de cinquante ans...*, op. cit., p.265.

Western powers by calling for German unity outside of security alliances.¹¹¹¹ Neither of the two sides was willing to give way. As a result, both worked towards the integration of their part of Germany into their respective security organisations. Georges-Henri Soutou thus concluded that between 1953 and 1955 the division of Germany and hence Europe was consolidated.¹¹¹²

In the meantime, both superpowers began to rely more heavily on nuclear weapons. The Eisenhower Administration, aware of its nuclear superiority, devised the strategy of “massive retaliation”, which aimed at deterring communist aggression in Europe and Asia by threatening Moscow with a devastating nuclear attack. Washington believed that this strategy would be less costly, avoid unpopular wars like Korea, and even allow for waging “a more militant campaign against communist or other anti-American forces around the planet”.¹¹¹³ In Europe, a corollary of this policy was the nuclearization of NATO strategy and forces. In December 1954, the Atlantic Council approved the MC-48 strategy, which placed a heavy emphasis on nuclear weapons for the defence of Europe. The goal was both strategic and tactical: to deter the Soviet Union from attacking through the threat of “massive retaliation”, and in case of war, to prevent Western Europe from being overrun through the use of smaller, so-called tactical nuclear weapons on the battlefield. As a result, Washington equipped its continental European Allies with nuclear weapons.¹¹¹⁴

Yet, Nikita Khrushchev – who after Beria’s arrest began to establish himself as the Soviet leader – did not throw in the towel, and “decided to trump American nuclear superiority with Soviet nuclear brinkmanship”. In August 1953, the Soviets tested their first hydrogen bomb, and after initial fears of the devastating impact of such a weapon, Khrushchev realised that the mutual fear of a thermonuclear war could prevent a conflict between the US and the USSR. At the Twentieth Party Congress in February 1956, he renounced Stalin’s doctrine of the inevitability of war and argued that peaceful coexistence was possible, because Soviet thermonuclear power prevented the hostile Western imperialists from attacking. Initially, Khrushchev tried to create the appearance of a nuclear stalemate by indicating to the West that he would be prepared to use nuclear weapons in case of war. However, to mask nuclear inferiority, he made exaggerated claims on the Soviet Union’s capacities

¹¹¹¹ Leffler, *For the Soul of Mankind...*, *op. cit.*, pp.88-150.

¹¹¹² Soutou, *La guerre de cinquante ans...*, *op. cit.*, p.266.

¹¹¹³ Campbell, Logevall, *op. cit.*, pp.145-147.

¹¹¹⁴ Trachtenberg, *op. cit.*, pp.146-200.

and threatened to use these terrible weapons to achieve his goals. The Soviet leader did so during the Suez crisis of 1956, and unaware of the American pressure on the British and French, came to believe that they withdrew because of his nuclear threats.¹¹¹⁵

Even though Khrushchev's nuclear brinkmanship was not directly responsible for the withdrawal of the Anglo-French expeditionary forces, it nonetheless influenced the US to abandon its Allies to the benefit of the Moscow-sponsored and anti-western Nasser. Eisenhower mainly feared for America's role in the Middle East and oil supplies, but he also wanted to avoid a direct confrontation with the USSR that could lead to a thermonuclear war. He confirmed his cautious approach and fear of nuclear escalation when he decided not to intervene on behalf of the Hungarians, whose uprising was brutally cracked down by the Red Army in 1956. Another consequence of Khrushchev's nuclear threats was that by 1957 Eisenhower came to believe that limited nuclear or conventional wars were impossible, and he pushed through a strategy, which solely envisaged "all-or-nothing nuclear war". Proponents of limited nuclear war – such as Henry Kissinger – criticised this strategy. Their arguments were thankfully taken up by Democrats, who tried to regain the political initiative. The criticism of the Eisenhower Administration's nuclear policy grew out of proportion following the Soviet Union's test of its unmanned Sputnik satellite in October 1957, which provoked fears in the American public that the Russians were ahead in the arms race.¹¹¹⁶

In reality, Khrushchev only disposed of an inferior nuclear arsenal, but he saw his strategy confirmed by American fears and cautiousness, and decided to continue to "gamble". In November 1958, he went on the offensive and called on the Western powers to withdraw from Berlin. According to Vladislav Zubok, he confronted the Western powers with the choice between thermonuclear war and the dismantlement of anti-Soviet ramparts.¹¹¹⁷ This time, however, Eisenhower stood his ground. The ensuing Berlin crisis left its imprint on East-West relations and lasted until 1962, when the surge of Cold War tensions culminated in the Cuban missiles crisis.¹¹¹⁸

¹¹¹⁵ Zubok, *A Failed Empire...*, *op. cit.*, pp.124-132.

¹¹¹⁶ Campbell, Logevall, *op. cit.*, pp.163-174.

¹¹¹⁷ Zubok, *A Failed Empire...*, *op. cit.*, pp.133-134.

¹¹¹⁸ Soutou, *La guerre de cinquante ans...*, *op. cit.*, p.266.

9.1. Switzerland: The Recognised Neutral

After Stalin's death, the Federal authorities spoke only timidly about détente. Petitpierre observed that the failure of Stalin's Cold War – which aimed at the destruction of the capitalist world – had come closer, whereas the downside was that the frontiers had become blurred. The Foreign Minister considered the danger of war not acute, but voiced his belief that the East-West conflict would continue as a political struggle between the great powers and as an ideological battle within every country.¹¹¹⁹ Yet, the struggles he predicted were – at least on the international level – to the advantage of Switzerland and its status as a neutral.

From 1953 on, the Soviet position towards neutrality changed significantly. This was not only due to Stalin's disappearance, but also to other important factors: thermonuclear weapons made war between the US and the USSR in Europe increasingly unlikely, the Kremlin's desire for détente, and the fear that neutrals would increasingly look to Washington for their security. Therefore, and to prevent the further expansion of NATO, Khrushchev and his colleagues aimed at a neutral "buffer" between the two military-political blocs. This strategy was implemented in the Austrian State Treaty of 1955. Khrushchev "insisted that Austria should be 'like Switzerland', bourgeois but non-aligned".¹¹²⁰ He also believed that a neutral Austria could serve as a model for Germany, for the neutralisation of the FRG. Simultaneously, Moscow declared its respect for the Hague Conventions and declarations, which had been ratified by Imperial Russia. But while the Kremlin advocated neutrality in Western Europe, it would not tolerate neutralisation in its own sphere of influence, for the Soviets only subscribed to the promotion of neutrality if it was in their own strategic interest.¹¹²¹ Nevertheless, Khrushchev – emboldened by the neutralisation of Austria – continued to advocate neutralism in Western Europe, and

¹¹¹⁹ Neval, *op. cit.*, p.397.

¹¹²⁰ Zubok, Vladislav, "The Soviet Attitude towards the European Neutrals during the Cold War", in Gehler, Michael; Steininger, Rolf (eds.), *Die Neutralen und die europäische Integration 1945-1995*, Wien etc.: Böhlau, 2000, pp.34-35. See also Fuhrer, Wild, *op. cit.*, pp.131-132. For the Austrian State Treaty and Austrian neutrality see also Bischof, Günter, *Austria in the First Cold War, 1945-1955*, Basingstoke etc.: Macmillan, 1999, pp.130-149; Gehler, Michael, "From Non-alignment to Neutrality: Austria's Transformation during the First East-West Détente, 1953-1958", *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol.7, No.4, 2005, pp.104-136.

¹¹²¹ Allison, *op. cit.*, pp.9-17. See also Békés, Csaba, "The 1956 Hungarian Revolution and the Declaration of Neutrality", *Cold War History*, Vol.6, No.4, 2006, pp.477-500.

in 1958, conceived the idea of a free city of West Berlin.¹¹²² Consequently, the Eastern bloc's criticism for Switzerland's western-oriented neutrality became not only less pronounced, but was also alternated by compliments, which characterised Swiss neutrality as a policy of peace.¹¹²³

Yet, how did Washington – which had come to accept Swiss and Swedish neutrality in the early 1950s – react to Moscow's neutrality offensive? According to Gaddis, Eisenhower and his Secretary of State disagreed over neutrality. Dulles announced in 1955 that in the ideological Cold War struggle, there was no room for neutrality, which he considered an obsolete, immoral and short-sighted conception. Eisenhower, however, held the more tolerant view that this policy only implied a reluctance to join military alliances, and “not indifference to issues of right and wrong”.¹¹²⁴ But according to Simon Moores, this disagreement was only in appearance, for while Eisenhower spoke about neutrality, the target of Dulles' criticism was neutralism. The problem was that the Secretary of State used these two terms interchangeably. On neutrality, he shared the President's viewpoint and observed that Switzerland's neutrality was not antiquated.¹¹²⁵ Washington disregarded neutralism as an attitude or psychological tendency leading to a reluctance to be associated with the US, which could be exploited by the Soviets. Neutrality, by contrast, could mean “a moral, spiritual and, possibly, a political commitment to [the American] side, but not necessarily a military commitment”.¹¹²⁶

Therefore, while the JCS feared the neutralisation of Austria, Eisenhower had no objection as long as Austria would achieve a status similar to that of Switzerland. What the US actually feared was not neutrality *per se*, but – as Jussi Hanhimäki has argued – that this policy could be appealing for NATO nations and make “neutrality a potential springboard towards Western disintegration, and a vehicle for the USSR's effort to drive wedges between members of the alliance”. Yet, these fears never became acute. Not only did the Soviets discredit their position on neutrality by cracking down the Hungarian uprising, but also existing neutrals – like Switzerland –

¹¹²² Zubok, “The Soviet Attitude...”, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-37.

¹¹²³ Fuhrer, Wild, *op. cit.*, pp.250, 259.

¹¹²⁴ Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment...*, *op. cit.*, pp.151-152.

¹¹²⁵ Moores, *op. cit.*, pp.43-45.

¹¹²⁶ Ruddy, Michael, “European Integration, the Neutrals, and U.S. Security Interests: From the Marshall Plan to the Rome Treaties”, in Gehler, Michael; Steininger, Rolf (eds.), *Die Neutralen und die europäische Integration 1945-1995*, Wien etc.: Böhlau, 2000, pp.14-15.

continued to identify themselves with the West, and entertained flourishing relations with West Germany, but no relations with East Germany.¹¹²⁷

Obviously, this clear choice for one of the two Germanies ran contrary to Petitpierre's foreign policy maxim of "universality". Moreover, in 1956, Switzerland condemned the Soviet intervention in Hungary as an aggression, and thus broke with its traditional neutrality policy not to take an official position on conflicts abroad.¹¹²⁸ It could therefore not escape Moscow's perception that Swiss neutrality remained western-oriented after the Korean War. Yet, during the 1950s, Berne increasingly tried to complement its neutrality policy through the maxim of "availability". Inasmuch as Switzerland continued to act as a protecting power, it was ready to host international organisations and conferences. In line with this policy, the Swiss were proud to host the two East-West conferences of 1954 and 1955, and Geneva became again a centre of international relations. Among the factors, which accounted for this development, were Switzerland's neutrality, political stability, and lack of a colonial past. In addition, the Federal Government desired to act as a facilitator and mediator in international conflicts. At the height of the Suez crisis, on 6 November 1956, the Federal Council appealed to the US, France, Britain, the Soviet Union and India to hold a summit in Switzerland. To Berne's great frustration, the initiative failed. The great powers resolved the crisis themselves, and the Swiss had no impact on the peaceful settlement of the conflict. Thereafter, Switzerland became reluctant to offer its good offices and to act as a mediator.¹¹²⁹

Meanwhile, during the 1950s, Berne was trying to remain within the limits of the neutrality policy defined by Bindschedler, especially in relation to the European integration process. In his neutrality concept of 1954, the Swiss lawyer theoretically set the limit and argued that a neutral state was not allowed to enter a customs or economic union with other states, for this would reduce its political independence.¹¹³⁰ The Swiss thus stayed away from the European Economic Community (EEC), which came into existence between 1955 and 1957. This revival of European integration nonetheless worried Berne, which feared that the Six could take discriminatory

¹¹²⁷ Hanhimäki, "The First Line of Defence...", *op. cit.*, pp.390-397.

¹¹²⁸ Ooyen, *op. cit.*, pp.87-88.

¹¹²⁹ Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, *op. cit.*, pp.208-217; Fischer, Thomas, "From Good Offices to an Active Policy of Peace: Switzerland's Contribution to International Conflict Resolution", in Gabriel, Jürg Martin; Fischer, Thomas (eds.), *Swiss Foreign Policy, 1945-2002*, Basingstoke etc.: Macmillan, 2003, pp.81-85.

¹¹³⁰ *Supra*, Introduction., ch.3.

economic measures. As a result, it endorsed the British idea of a European Free Trade Area (FTA), in which all OEEC countries would participate. Although initially the Six took part in the deliberations towards the establishment of an FTA, in late 1958, the project failed because of the veto of France, which feared the impact of free trade on its economy. Thereafter, the non-Six – Britain, Austria, Denmark, Norway, Portugal, Sweden and Switzerland – decided to work towards the establishment of a smaller organisation, leading to the creation of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) in early 1960 as an alternative to and a lever in negotiations with the EEC.¹¹³¹

In the meantime, Berne changed its position towards the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) for two reasons: as an international forum for the discussion of trade problems, the GATT had not only gained in importance, but it also constituted an obstacle to the coming common European market; and Washington's protectionist measures against the Swiss watch industry in the first half of the 1950s – the so-called "watch war" –, had shown that the only solution to the increasing tensions in the commercial relations with the US would be to join the GATT. To enter into negotiations, the Federal Government drafted a new customs tariff, which was similar to the tariffs practiced by the members of the organisation. At the GATT-meeting of 17 November 1956, this draft was accepted as a basis for negotiations, and on 24 March 1958, Switzerland joined the General Agreement as a provisional member.¹¹³² Consequently, the Swiss were able to consolidate their participation in the Western economic sphere, without taking part in the political European integration process. Meanwhile, would Switzerland's defence policy also remain western-oriented, or would the Soviet policy of "peaceful coexistence" change Berne's security outlook?

In 1953, the military establishment remained concerned about the international situation. The Chief of the General Staff observed that the situation in Europe was similarly abnormal as in 1951, for the Western rearmament effort had not been sufficient to catch up with the USSR's conventional military power.¹¹³³ On the population, however, the Cold War's "first détente" had an impact, and reduced the fears that war was imminent. Therefore, the Federal Assembly was reluctant or

¹¹³¹ Du Bois, *op. cit.*, pp.27-46.

¹¹³² Dirlewanger, et. al., *op. cit.*, pp. 115-134, 164-165; Maurhofer, *Die schweizerische Europapolitik...*, *op. cit.*, pp.202-207; Longchamp, Olivier, « Organisation mondiale du commerce (OMC) », in *HLS*, <http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/f/F13811.php> (accessed 27.10.2008).

¹¹³³ Neval, *op. cit.*, p.398.

unwilling to grant the credits, which the Federal Military Department believed were necessary to enable the Army to meet the perceived threats. Yet, in 1956, the Soviet reaction to the Hungarian uprising came to the help of the Swiss military planners. The Red Army's brutality reawakened anticommunism within the population, and the strengthening of the Army was again popular. The Federal Assembly thus authorised on 21 December 1956 an emergency programme, which foresaw arms purchases for SFr.179 million. This programme was followed by the "Rearmament Programme 57", which provided another SFr.606 million for weapons. Simultaneously, the regular military budget was inflated, and the claims for substantial economies disappeared altogether. Meanwhile, the Hungarian crisis also led to organisational measures to prepare the Army for a possible Soviet invasion of Western Europe. These measures were upheld for an entire year. The political and military leadership continued to view the USSR as the sole potential enemy, and even the Kremlin's policy shift towards neutrality did not change this perception.¹¹³⁴ By contrast, the neutralisation of Austria even increased Berne's fears of the Red Army.

The Austrian State Treaty was welcomed by many social-democrats as an expression of détente, but the bourgeois diplomatic and military establishment feared the military and moral vacuum, which the neutralisation of Austria left behind. Petitpierre, who was aware of Vienna's inability to establish a strong national defence for some time, repeatedly discredited its neutrality status by insisting that "real neutrality" was supposed to be "armed" and "pro-western".¹¹³⁵ The Foreign Minister even observed that from a military point of view, the neutralisation of Austria had brought the frontier of the Western world to Switzerland's borders.¹¹³⁶ The military leadership shared Petitpierre's fears of a defenceless neighbour to the East, and "one of the highest ranking officers of the Swiss Army" observed that "as far as the Swiss army was concerned they now had the Russians at Lake Constance".¹¹³⁷ Therefore, Switzerland's political and military leaders called for increased defence efforts, especially because they questioned the value of their own army.¹¹³⁸

In the mid-1950s, through the introduction of tactical nuclear weapons into European armed forces, the Swiss Army's recently established doctrine and

¹¹³⁴ Braun, *op. cit.*, pp.306-329.

¹¹³⁵ Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, *op. cit.*, p.173.

¹¹³⁶ Neval, *op. cit.*, p.399.

¹¹³⁷ Jackson (Berne) to Hancock (FO), 01.06.1955, TNA, FO 371/118088.

¹¹³⁸ Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, *op. cit.*, pp.174-175.

organisational structure – Troops Order 51 – was questioned. This plunged the Federal Military Department in another crisis, only a few years after having learned the lessons from the Second World War. 1955 was thus the beginning of a new phase of the dispute between the supporters of a traditional, static, and localised defence, and the proponents of an offensive and mobile doctrine. While the former conception was largely infantry-based, the latter required additional tanks and a modernisation of the aerial defence. Consequently, the dispute could not only have an impact on the army's organisation, but also on its armament.

Yet, the chances for a major doctrinal reform had increased through the succession in early 1955 of Defence Minister Kobelt by the French-speaking Paul Chaudet, who was a member of the Free Democratic Party. Chaudet had not been involved in the elaboration of Troops Order 51, and was thus open to de Montmollin's calls for mobility, firepower and small units. With this doctrine, which required additional tank units, the Chief of the General Staff intended to defend the Midland from the border on. In June 1955, the National Defence Commission backed de Montmollin's conception of an active defence, in which also the air force would have to be reinforced. However, the drafts for a new doctrine had a difficult stand in Berne, for the Federal Council criticised the cost of its implementation, and inside the Federal Military Department, as well as in the public, the proponents of a static defence confronted the supporters of a mobile defence. Nevertheless, the National Defence Commission – where the defenders of a mobile defence were in the majority – adhered to the mobile doctrine despite years of opposition, and presented in late December 1958 a report on the new defence doctrine to the Federal Council. Although the report called for less aircraft and tried to tone down the doctrine's offensive nature, the Federal Government remained reluctant to give its approval. It was only in early 1961, that the new doctrine officially came into existence as *Truppenordnung 61* (Troops Order 61).¹¹³⁹

Meanwhile, in 1957, the Swiss military leadership began to tackle the problems of aerial defence in the atomic age, and the ensuing debates were predominantly linked to arms purchases. The elaboration of a new doctrine encountered important obstacles. It was questioned whether the air force could not be completely substituted with ground based air defence, for the air bases could be

¹¹³⁹ Braun, *op. cit.*, pp.300, 356-548.

annihilated by nuclear weapons, and the small Swiss air space made the use of ever faster aircraft difficult. Moreover, as the mobile defence doctrine required additional aeroplanes to cover tank counter-attacks, the air force was a privileged target for the proponents of a static defence. While ground support remained the Swiss Air Force's principal task until 1958, it was only in summer 1958 that the Federal Military Department endorsed Primault's doctrine: ground support through offensive counter air operations alongside all fighter tasks, such as the interception and protection of the neutral air space. This conception required a polyvalent fighter aircraft.¹¹⁴⁰

Thus, on a doctrinal level, the Federal authorities reacted slowly and hesitantly to the nuclearization of Europe. But on a strategic level, they took measures at a very early stage. In November 1945, on the Federal Military Department's initiative, the Federal Council set up a commission for the study of atomic energy to develop a nuclear weapon. The commission was headed by Professor Paul Scherrer – the leading Swiss expert in nuclear physics – and composed by representatives of various government departments and research institutions. However, as long as Switzerland was not in possession of uranium – i.e. until the mid-1950s – the commission's work was limited to feasibility studies. From 1954 on, the hopes of the military authorities were based on the "Diorit" research reactor, which was mainly sponsored by the Swiss private sector and promised to produce sufficient weapons-grade plutonium for an atomic bomb by the early 1960s. Yet, the Federal Military Department's hopes for self-sufficient uranium procurement were shattered as the "Diorit" lost its importance to the American research reactor "Saphir", which Washington had been willing to deliver for civil nuclear research in the aim to conquer a new and promising market. The domestic creation of a nuclear capacity was further complicated by a lack of funding for military research, and the failure of uranium prospects within Switzerland.

The Swiss Army did not become nuclearized during the 1950s, because it did not get the international cooperation, which would have been necessary to compensate for the domestic constraints. Although the Federal Council authorised the Federal Military Department in late 1958 to enquire abroad for the procurement of nuclear weapons, it had to respect Switzerland's neutrality policy, on which it had to consult the Federal Political Department. However, Petitpierre – and the majority of the Federal Council – were not willing to support the military establishment's quest for

¹¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp.636-684.

nuclear weapons. All in all, until the signing of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1969, the Federal Council maintained the nuclear option without energetically promoting it. Meanwhile, both the US and Britain, which from a political perspective were the only potential suppliers, refused to grant the Swiss access to nuclear weapons technology or fissile material. Only once, as will be seen in chapter 10.3, the British made a minor exception. In addition, after Berne's announcement in July 1958 that it did not rule out the nuclear option, Washington publicly used Switzerland as an example of the dangers of nuclear proliferation. Nevertheless, this reaction was very modest in comparison to Moscow's, which threatened to drop nuclear bombs on the Swiss at the opening of hostilities. The Americans, by contrast, continued to cooperate with Switzerland in the civil nuclear field.¹¹⁴¹

In sum, despite Switzerland's quest for military self-reliance – even in the nuclear domain – in line with its policy of armed neutrality, it remained a “Western neutral”, and was “recognised” and accepted as such by the two superpowers.

9.2. Great Britain: The Fading Power

The Cold War's first détente gave Whitehall some respite and provided it with the opportunity to readjust its foreign policy to shrinking means. Yet, Churchill and Eden were resolved to maintain Britain's great power role in world affairs, and thus only willing to make limited adjustments. In addition, they tried to use the more favourable international setting to regain the diplomatic initiative, and to resolve contentious East-West issues, which could be damaging to a weakened Britain.

After Korea, the Churchill Government had no intention to follow the US into another Asian adventure in Indochina, where the French were in an ever more

¹¹⁴¹ Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, *op. cit.*, pp.160-172; On the nuclear question see also Braun, *op. cit.*, pp.745-824; Joye-Cagnard, Frédéric, *La construction de la politique de la science en Suisse. Enjeux scientifiques, stratégiques et politiques (1944-1974)*, Thèse, Université de Genève, 2007, *passim*; Metzler, Dominik, *Die Optionen einer Nuklearbewaffnung für die Schweizer Armee 1945-1969*, Lizentiatsarbeit, Universität Basel, 1996; Hug, Peter, „Atomtechnologieentwicklung in der Schweiz zwischen militärischen Interessen und privatwirtschaftlicher Skepsis“, in Heintz, Bettina; Nievergelt, Bernhard (eds.), *Wissenschafts- und Technikforschung in der Schweiz. Sondierungen einer neuen Disziplin*, Zürich: Seismo, 1998, pp.225-242; Hug, Peter, « La genèse de la technologie nucléaire en Suisse », *Relations internationales*, No.68, 1991, pp.325-344; Metzler, Dominik, „Die Option einer Nuklearbewaffnung für die Schweizer Armee, 1945-1969“, *Studien und Quellen*, Nr.23, 1997, pp.121-169; Joye-Cagnard, Frédéric; Strasser, Bruno J., « La Suisse et le plan Atomes pour la Paix, 1945-1957 », *Traverse*, No.2, 2009, pp.37-53. On the Soviet reaction see also Fuhrer, Wild, *op. cit.*, p.257.

desperate position. Therefore, the British readily participated in the April 1954 Geneva Conference, where Eden argued for a negotiated settlement based on partition. The British preferred this option, for they considered Vietnam – unlike the Americans – of little importance in world politics. In the end, the Foreign Secretary was successful, and the Geneva accords on Indochina included the partition of Vietnam. This conference strengthened Churchill in his belief that détente was possible with Moscow itself. In the summer of 1954, the ageing Prime Minister put out his feelers for a meeting with Malenkov. But the summit did not materialise, because of Moscow's deep mistrust of Churchill and the Kremlin's internal rivalries. London and Washington were greatly relieved by the failure of this hastily personal diplomacy. Churchill's cabinet, and Eisenhower especially, believed that such a meeting was ill-advised as the time was not ripe and would bear little or negative results. The East-West summit Churchill had hoped for materialised only one year later. However, the meeting between the US, the Soviet Union, France and Britain took place without him, as he had been replaced by his Foreign Secretary in April 1955.¹¹⁴²

Simultaneous to these contacts between East and West, Eden – initially as Foreign Secretary – tried to adjust Britain's commitments to its diminishing resources. Instead of withdrawal, which he feared could be disastrous for British prestige and credibility, he opted for burden-sharing. He intended to reduce defence commitments in the Middle East and Southeast Asia by establishing – if possible with American participation – international defence organisations in these regions.¹¹⁴³ In the wake of the Geneva Conference on Indochina, he began the negotiations on a Southeast Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO); which was established in September 1954 and was made up of Britain, the US, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, the Philippines and Pakistan. Less than a year later, in April 1955, Britain joined an Iraqi-Turkish defence arrangement, and thus laid the foundation for what was to be the Baghdad Pact.¹¹⁴⁴ Although these organisations were intended to reduce Britain's global military

¹¹⁴² Greenwood, *Britain and...*, *op. cit.*, pp.121-123, 131-133; Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled...*, *op. cit.*, pp.184-185; Larres, *op. cit.*, pp.318-355.

¹¹⁴³ Adamthwaite, Anthony, "Overstretched and Overstrung: Eden, the Foreign Office and the Making of Policy", Di Nolfo, Ennio (ed.), *Power in Europe? II, Great Britain, France, Germany and Italy and the Origins of the EEC, 1952-1957*, Berlin etc.: de Gruyter, 1992, pp.27-28.

¹¹⁴⁴ Greenwood, *Britain and...*, *op. cit.*, pp.115-116, 125; Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled...*, *op. cit.*, p.192.

commitments, paradoxically, they also extended Britain's formal responsibilities.¹¹⁴⁵ Nevertheless, through these apparent diplomatic successes, Eden was strengthened in his belief that Britain was still an influent and global player.

Yet, in the Middle East, Britain learned the limits of its power the hard way. The Egyptian leader and Arab nationalist, Colonel Nasser, disliked the British influence in the region. In July 1956, he announced the nationalisation of the Suez Canal Company in response to the withdrawal of Anglo-American funds for the construction of the Aswan High Dam. Fearing for British influence and economic interests in the region, in October, Eden decided to invade Egypt in partnership with the French and the Israelis. As mentioned above, however, Britain was not backed but brought back into line by Washington. This episode had shown to the whole world the limits to British power and its weak economic basis, and was thus a devastating blow to national self-esteem and international prestige. Moreover, in relation to the US, Britain lost its position as an active and innovative junior partner, and – according to Sean Greenwood – became rather a “subservient accomplice”.¹¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, despite these consequences, Britain remained influent east of Suez, and soon restored its relations with the US.¹¹⁴⁷

Although the political breach between London and Washington over Suez was serious, the common perception of the Soviet threat – reinvigorated by the contemporaneous Soviet invasion of Hungary – provided a favourable background for the restoration of close relations.¹¹⁴⁸ Moreover, besides the maintenance of an independent nuclear deterrent and the development of British Commonwealth leadership, the re-creation of the Anglo-American alliance was one of Harold Macmillan's means to mask Britain's decline and maintain its great power role. When he succeeded to Eden in 1957, he held the belief – like his predecessors – that Britain's role could be restored through adjusting measures.¹¹⁴⁹ Also Eisenhower was prepared to make a gesture. Between 1957 and 1958 he offered Macmillan the

¹¹⁴⁵ Sanders, *op. cit.*, p.227.

¹¹⁴⁶ Greenwood, *Britain and...*, *op. cit.*, pp.137-140.

¹¹⁴⁷ Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled...*, *op. cit.*, pp.203-206. For the long-term consequences of the Suez debacle see Dockrill, *Britain's Retreat ...*, *op. cit.*; For Anglo-American relations and the Suez crisis see Ashton, Nigel, Eisenhower, *Macmillan and the Problem of Nasser: Anglo-American Relations and Arab Nationalism, 1955-1959*, Basingstoke etc.: Macmillan, 1996.

¹¹⁴⁸ Sanders, *op. cit.*, p.171.

¹¹⁴⁹ Ashton, Nigel J., “‘A Rear Guard Action’: Harold Macmillan and the Making of British Foreign Policy, 1957-63”, in Otte, T.G. (ed.), *The Makers of British Foreign Policy: From Pitt to Thatcher*, Basingstoke etc.: Palgrave, 2002, pp.238-239. On Macmillan's Premiership see Lamb, Richard, *The Macmillan Years 1957-1963: The Emerging Truth*, London: John Murray, 1995.

renewed sharing of nuclear information and American nuclear missiles. Britain was Washington's only ally to receive such privileges. Nonetheless, this could not mask the fact that the British became ever more dependent on the Americans and that Macmillan's aim for real interdependence was illusory.¹¹⁵⁰

Despite the trouble in the Empire and Atlantic circles, London remained reluctant to turn more fully towards Europe. Initially, it saw its policy of benevolence and non-involvement confirmed, for European integration appeared to be manageable. Although in April 1954 Eden promised a British division to a European Army in a Treaty of Association, London's limited support largely contributed to the EDC's defeat in the French Assembly. This failure of European integration provided the Foreign Secretary with the opportunity to promote inter-governmental cooperation, and to put forward his own scheme for the integration of West Germany into the Western defence effort. His proposal to integrate the FRG and Italy first into the non-supranational Brussels Pact – which would become the Western European Union – and later into NATO, was finally accepted by the demoralised Six and the US.¹¹⁵¹ By the end of 1954, it seemed as if London had secured a Western Europe to its own liking. This assumption was, however, erroneous.

In line with the ECSC, the Six desired to emancipate themselves from intergovernmental economic cooperation through the OEEC, which Britain held in check with the help of countries like neutral Switzerland and Sweden. The British were convinced that without their support, the European customs union, which the Six began to plan at the Messina Conference in 1955, was bound to fail. Yet, despite the belief that participation in a common Western European market was not in Britain's interest, London nevertheless feared the possible exclusion from such a market. Thus, once the Messina initiative began to take form, the British tried to sabotage it. But instead of achieving their aim, they lost their "European credibility among the Six and considerably burdened any future policy initiatives".¹¹⁵² Therefore, the British counterproposal of an FTA, which was only slowly devised, aroused quick suspicion of the Six. Through this initiative, London did not try to reconfigure its role within Europe, but intended to maintain its great power role by maintaining its access to the Western European market, while avoiding political integration. The FTA was not,

¹¹⁵⁰ Greenwood, *Britain and...*, *op. cit.*, pp.141-142, 147-149.

¹¹⁵¹ Young, *Britain and...*, *op. cit.*, pp.38-39.

¹¹⁵² Kaiser, *Using Europe...*, pp.22-60.

however, economically appealing to the Six, and it was feared that it could destroy the EEC. Consequently, as mentioned earlier, the FTA collapsed and Britain fell back on the EFTA.¹¹⁵³

Despite a growing awareness during the 1950s that the British economy was not expanding at the same pace as those of the Six, and an apparent danger that Britain might lose her share in world trade, the participation in European integration was not considered the right option. Britain continued to view its economic interests within the Commonwealth and the sterling area –¹¹⁵⁴ the apparent area of growth. Yet, by 1960, it became obvious that this strategy had left the British outside the real growth area, i.e. the EEC. In addition, by the 1950s, the economies of the Six had recovered and began to compete with British manufactures. Germany especially was a strong competitor: in 1950, the UK was responsible for 25.5 percent of the total value of world manufacturing exports, and the FRG for only 7.3 percent; in 1960, by contrast, their respective shares were 16.5 percent and 19.3 percent.¹¹⁵⁵ Moreover, as it appears from table 6,¹¹⁵⁶ the UK also lost ground in trade compared to other Western European countries, and in relation to its GDP, which grew slowly in international terms. During the same period, while world exports increased by 75 percent, British exports grew only by 12 percent.¹¹⁵⁷ These developments ran contrary to Whitehall's policy, which intended to maintain and develop export markets.¹¹⁵⁸

Table 6

<i>Comparative UK Balance of Trade in Manufactures as a Percentage of GDP</i>			
	<i>1952 / 1956 / 1960</i>		
	1952	1956	1960
United Kingdom	9.1	8.1	6.5
France	3.9	2.8	4.7
Italy	1.5	1.7	1.9
FRG	7.5	9.1	8.4

¹¹⁵³ Young, *Britain and...*, *op. cit.*, pp.40-60; Kaiser, *Using Europe...*, pp.61-100.

¹¹⁵⁴ Peden, George C., "Economic Aspects of British Perceptions of Power", in Di Nolfo, Ennio (ed.), *Power in Europe? II, Great Britain, France, Germany and Italy and the Origins of the EEC, 1952-1957*, Berlin etc.: de Gruyter, 1992, p.139.

¹¹⁵⁵ Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled...*, *op. cit.*, pp.207-208.

¹¹⁵⁶ Alford, *op. cit.*, p.226.

¹¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p.227.

¹¹⁵⁸ Peden, "Economic Aspects...", *op. cit.*, p.145.

In addition to the industry, the changing world economy also affected the position of sterling. This former top currency declined to the status of a neutral currency, and became one among several in international use. Yet, London was determined to maintain sterling's international position, and the measures to keep it attractive as a neutral currency – such as high interest rates despite their deflationary effects on the domestic industry – became an increasingly heavy burden. Moreover, sterling was vulnerable abroad because of convertibility, which was the price for credibility as a major international currency. Through convertibility, the insufficient reserves were under additional pressure, and the large debts became a source of instability, as they could be moved around in times of crisis. As a result, while trade was declining, invisible earnings were ever less able to play their balancing role, resulting in serious balance of payments deficits – especially in 1955. By the late 1950s, and particularly after Suez, Whitehall began to realise the extent of Britain's economic difficulties, and the high cost of trying to maintain its world role.¹¹⁵⁹

The British leaders of the 1950s were aware of the excessive defence expenditure and its negative impact on the economy, but they believed that the maintenance of Britain's great power status and global influence was worth the sacrifice.¹¹⁶⁰ After the Korean War, Britain continued to spend a higher proportion of its national income on defence than any other European country, with the exception of France at the height of the Algerian War (see Table 7).¹¹⁶¹ Besides the cost of the military commitments themselves, the maintenance of military personnel abroad represented also a direct charge on the UK's balance of payments.¹¹⁶²

Table 7

<i>Defence Expenditure of Leading European NATO Countries as Percentage of GNP at Factor Cost</i>				
	France	UK	FRG	Total Europe
1954	8.5	9.9	4.7	7.1
1956	8.8	8.8	4.2	6.6
1958	7.8	7.8	3.4	5.7

¹¹⁵⁹ Reynolds, *Britannia Overruled...*, *op. cit.*, pp.208-210.

¹¹⁶⁰ Dockrill, Michael, "The Changing Shape of Britain's Defence during the 1950s", in Smith, Joseph (ed.), *The Origins of NATO*, Exeter: Exeter University Press, 1990, pp.50-54.

¹¹⁶¹ Peden, *Arms, Economics...*, p.306.

¹¹⁶² *Ibid.*, p.304.

From 1953 to 1956, there were no fundamental changes in strategy, which would have allowed for cutbacks in defence expenditure. This inaction was to a certain extent caused by conflicting counsels, intense rivalry between the three services, and the MoD's limited power over the latter.¹¹⁶³ But the main reason was Whitehall's insistence to remain a great power by retaining existing overseas commitments and by building up a nuclear and thermonuclear capacity.¹¹⁶⁴ In addition, withdrawal from the Middle East and Southeast Asia became impossible through the participation in the Baghdad Pact and SEATO, and Eden's solution to integrate the FRG into the Western defence effort was accompanied by additional commitments in Europe. To dispel French fears of a rearmed West Germany, Eden had pledged that Britain would retain four divisions and a tactical air force on the continent for an indefinite period.

In 1955, the Eden Government actively tried to reduce the cost of defence but failed. Another Prime Minister and especially the Suez crisis were necessary to bring about change. The Suez debacle had not only shown the limits to British power, but the preparations for the invasion had also revealed a lack of capacity in conventional warfare. The Cabinet doubted whether the large amounts of money had been well spent. Illustrative of this, in January 1957, Macmillan appointed Duncan Sandys as Minister of Defence, with the instructions to restructure the armed forces, and to base the future defence of Britain on the nuclear deterrent to save money. Three months later, Sandys presented the future British defence policy in the White Paper *Defence: Outline of Future Policy*. As instructed by the Prime Minister, the strategy would rely on the nuclear deterrent and conventional forces would only be used together with allied forces to defend British colonies, or for limited operations in overseas emergencies. The content of the White Paper was not fundamentally new and was somehow the culmination of strategic thinking in Britain since the early 1950s. But the forthcoming test of a British hydrogen bomb in May 1957 gave the new strategy more credibility.¹¹⁶⁵ The White Paper also announced the end of conscription, reducing the size of Britain's armed forces by 300,000, and a heavier reliance on professional contingents. However, while the Minister of Defence did not reduce

¹¹⁶³ Johnson, Franklyn A., *Defence by Ministry: The British Ministry of Defence 1944-1974*, London: Duckworth, 1980, *passim*.

¹¹⁶⁴ Dockrill, "The Changing Shape...", *op. cit.*, p.55.

¹¹⁶⁵ On the hydrogen bomb in relation to Britain's global strategy see Peden, *Arms, Economics...*, pp.316-331.

British commitments in the world, smaller contingents were used in Europe as well as in other parts of the world.¹¹⁶⁶

As a corollary of the heavy reliance on the nuclear deterrent and economic considerations, Sandys reduced weapons programmes and R&D spending. In the case of the RAF, this led to the cancellation of two fighter projects: the Saunders-Roe 177 and the Hawker Siddeley P11-21. For the nuclear deterrent, the resources were limited to a single programme, the Blue Streak IRBM. The cuts were so drastic that Macmillan and Sandys were willing to give up some fields of research and to become partially dependent on the US.¹¹⁶⁷ Yet, the restructuring of R&D was not only caused by financial considerations, but also indicative of British futurism. The new development policy was justified by the idea that “British genius would jump a generation of technology”, and thus “leapfrog” the Americans. This policy failed, however, and Britain had to acquire American technology instead.¹¹⁶⁸ More directly, the White Paper had a significant effect on the British aircraft industry, because 70 percent of its work depended on military contracts. Even though this did not immediately lead to the closure of numerous companies, it was the first step towards a smaller and more concentrated aeronautical industry.¹¹⁶⁹ Meanwhile, in the public armaments industry, within a few years after 1957, one-third of the remaining wartime ordnance factories were closed down.¹¹⁷⁰

Consequently, after the Korean War, Britain’s power was fading. The relative economic decline did not allow to remain a great power of the first rank. Thus, the defence policy and armaments industry had to be restructured, and an apparently erroneous European and economic policy seemed to aggravate the situation.

¹¹⁶⁶ Dockrill, *British Defence...*, *op. cit.*, pp.51-69; Greenwood, *Britain and...*, *op. cit.*, pp.145-146.

¹¹⁶⁷ Rees, Wyn, “The 1957 Sandy’s White Paper: New Priorities in British Defence Policy?”, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.12, No.2, 1989, pp.220-221.

¹¹⁶⁸ Edgerton, *Warfare State...*, *op. cit.*, pp.232-233.

¹¹⁶⁹ Hayward, *op. cit.*, p.68; Nahum, *op. cit.*, p.258.

¹¹⁷⁰ Edgerton, *Warfare State...*, *op. cit.*, p.233.

10. Anglo-Swiss Relations 1953-1958

10.1. Cordial Opportunism

After the Korean War, the diplomatic relations between Britain and Switzerland remained cordial, but had somehow lost in intensity. Towards the end of his premiership, in December 1954, Churchill expressed to the Swiss Minister in London his great sympathy for Switzerland, Foreign Minister Petitpierre, and wartime General Guisan.¹¹⁷¹ Although one could take this for Churchill's usual skilful diplomatic chit-chat, there seemed to be no major policy divergences between the British and the Swiss and there was reciprocal respect and perhaps even esteem. A few months later, this attitude was confirmed by the Foreign Secretary to the new Swiss Minister in London on his first courtesy call. In early 1955, Eden informed Armin Däniker that he was satisfied with "the excellent relations between the two countries". In his report, the Swiss Minister observed that there really were no controversies to overshadow the good relationship.¹¹⁷² The mutual satisfaction with the cordial Anglo-Swiss relationship was also the general tenor in reports by the British Minister in Berne, Sir Lionel Lamb.¹¹⁷³

Meanwhile, it seems that Switzerland's "western-oriented" neutrality was considered to be a given, for neutrality was politically no longer a significant issue in Anglo-Swiss relations. It only reappeared briefly with the neutralisation of Austria. In late April 1955, the British Chargé d'affaires in Berne, G.H.S. Jackson, reacted to the Soviet neutrality offensive. Although he observed that the Swiss received the sudden compliments by the Soviet media towards their neutrality "with what is little short of hilarity", and that "there is no doubt that Swiss neutrality is orientated towards the West", he was nonetheless worried for the future. Jackson argued that if the USSR would succeed to create "a second cordon sanitaire of 'neutral' states" northwards from Austria, this could lead to increased diplomatic pressure on Switzerland to abandon its western orientation. He feared that in such a situation Berne could eventually succumb to Soviet pressure and be compelled to compensate for its western links "by a show of comparable resistance to the attractions of the West". In

¹¹⁷¹ De Torrenté (London) to Petitpierre (FPD), 09.12.1954, SFA, E2800, 1967/59, Bd.94.

¹¹⁷² Däniker (London) to Petitpierre (FPD), 15.02.1955, SFA, E2300, 1000/716, Bd.49.

¹¹⁷³ Lamb (Berne) to Eden (FO), 04.04.1955, TNA, FO 371/118080; Lamb (Berne) to Lloyd (FO), 07.09.1956, TNA, FO 371/124381.

sum, Jackson was afraid of a neutralised Switzerland, which would relinquish its defence links with Britain. He recommended – if Soviet diplomatic pressure would increase – a skilful and tactful western diplomacy towards the Swiss that would not expose them to Soviet reproaches.¹¹⁷⁴ Yet it seems that the British Chargé d'affaires dramatised the situation, he overlooked the fact that Switzerland firmly belonged to the western camp, especially through its dependency on western and, more importantly, British weapons. The fact that this report did not provoke any tangible reaction within the FO indicates that, at least in Whitehall, Berne's western credentials were taken for granted and were thus not questioned.

Already before the neutralisation of Austria, Whitehall followed a cautious and pragmatic policy that avoided discrediting Swiss neutrality overtly. Prior to its integration into the Western defence system, the FRG began to rearm, and also tried to purchase weapons from the Swiss armaments industry. In September 1953, the Federal Council was confronted with a request from Hispano-Suiza to authorise the export of anti-aircraft guns for patrol boats of the West German border control. Previously, the Tripartite Military Security Board had granted Hispano-Suiza an export licence for these weapons, and the Allied High Commission had approved the arms transfer. Therefore, the British were interested in the Federal Council's decision on the case, and the UK High Commission in West Germany regretted when this decision was finally negative.¹¹⁷⁵ It was feared that Bonn could get the impression that the Swiss refusal to grant an export licence was at the instigation of the Western Allies.¹¹⁷⁶ Obviously, this was not the case.

The Federal Councillors had refused to grant an export licence, for they wanted to avoid bad publicity. The request by Hispano-Suiza had been made public in the Swiss press, and had even been linked to German rearmament plans, which were supposedly financed by former Nazis. Thus, according to the British Embassy, the Federal Government forbade the export of these anti-aircraft guns to West Germany, because it feared the USSR's reproaches for being unneutral by supporting the FRG's rearmament efforts.¹¹⁷⁷ The FO understood immediately the Swiss desire to maintain the appearance of being neutral. The British authorities in Germany, who had asked

¹¹⁷⁴ Jackson (Berne) to Warner (FO), 27.04.1955, TNA, FO 371/118088.

¹¹⁷⁵ MacDermot (Berne) to FO, 12.09.1953; 19.09.1953; Kirkpatrick (UK High Commission) to FO, 19.09.1953, TNA, FO 371/104042.

¹¹⁷⁶ Ward (Wahnerheide) to FO, 23.09.1953, TNA, FO 371/104042.

¹¹⁷⁷ MacDermot (Berne) to FO, 23.09.1953, TNA, FO 371/104042.

for a diplomatic intervention in favour of the export of these guns, were informed that “it will not look at all well if the three Western Powers now seek to bring pressure to bear on the Swiss Government to reverse their former decision to refuse an export licence”.¹¹⁷⁸ British policymakers were aware that to pressure Berne in cases like this one, would only endanger Switzerland’s western-oriented neutrality and arms exports. They proved to be right. To prove Switzerland’s neutrality, Berne first exploited its refusal to grant an export licence for weapons to West Germany in its dealings with the Soviets.¹¹⁷⁹ But once the arms deal disappeared from the newspaper headlines, the FRG became an important customer for the Swiss armaments industry.¹¹⁸⁰ More generally, Switzerland’s arms exports remained in line with British interests. Though in late 1955 the British became worried about Swiss arms exports to the Middle East, they were reassured by the Federal Government that no more export licences for countries like Egypt would be granted.¹¹⁸¹

Despite Switzerland’s readiness to accommodate to British interests in this region, Whitehall did not take up the Federal Council’s offer for a peace summit to resolve the Suez crisis in early November 1956. This was not related to a lack of esteem for Switzerland or to the offer itself. The problem was that the Federal Council’s initiative was almost simultaneous to the UN intervention for a peaceful settlement of the conflict,¹¹⁸² and came only after the Americans had already exerted pressure on the British to withdraw from Egypt. In addition, some of the other powers involved, especially the French, disliked the form of the Swiss offer.¹¹⁸³ The British had no intention to offend the Swiss, and even tried to reassure them that their diplomatic intervention was not completely useless.¹¹⁸⁴ This was necessary, for Petitpierre seemed to be embarrassed about the clumsy diplomatic initiative, which he tried to justify to Lamb.¹¹⁸⁵ Consequently, Eden positively acknowledged the Federal Council’s peace initiative in a public speech on 9 November in London and in his

¹¹⁷⁸ Hancock (FO) to Johnston (Wahnerheide), 02.10.1953, TNA, FO 371/104042.

¹¹⁷⁹ Lindt (New York) an Petitpierre (EPD), 04.12.1953, dodis.ch/9022, DDS.

¹¹⁸⁰ Petitpierre (FPD) to Federal Council, 06.03.1954, dodis.ch/8938, DDS.

¹¹⁸¹ Lamb (Berne) to Johnston (FO), 11.10.1955; Galsworthy (FO) to Tupman (MoD), 28.10.1955, TNA, FO 371/118091; Däniker (London) to Petitpierre (FPD), 20.01.1956, SFA, E2300, 1000/716, Bd.50.

¹¹⁸² Reilly to Kirkpatrick (both FO), 07.11.1956, TNA, FO 371/124395.

¹¹⁸³ *Supra*, ch.9. See also Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, *op. cit.*, pp.210-212.

¹¹⁸⁴ Lamb (Berne) to FO, 06.11.1956, TNA, FO 371/121790; Lamb (Berne) to FO, 06.11.1956; FO to Berne, 07.11.1956; Douglas-Hamilton to Lloyd (FO), 09.11.1956, TNA, FO 371/124395.

¹¹⁸⁵ Entretien avec Sir Lionel Lamb, Ambassadeur de Grande-Bretagne, Petitpierre (FPD), 08.11.1956, dodis.ch/13215, DDS.

official reply to the Swiss Government some days later.¹¹⁸⁶ The British Minister added to the reply “that this Swiss initiative may well in some indefinable manner have already contributed towards some relaxation of tension”.¹¹⁸⁷ Finally, although the British did not seize Berne’s offer, they were nonetheless happy to rely on the good offices of neutral Switzerland, which took over their interests in Egypt and Syria in the wake of the Suez crisis.¹¹⁸⁸

In the meantime, Berne’s neutrality and London’s great power aspirations provided their policymakers with the incentive to continue and intensify Anglo-Swiss cooperation in reaction to the Messina initiative. Britain and Switzerland worked together to find an alternative solution to the EEC. From mid-1956 on, the Swiss looked to the British to turn around the political European integration process. They did not only support the idea of an FTA, but also pushed London to defend this solution more vehemently within the OEEC. Once the British had decided to do so, they were disappointed that the Swiss were reluctant to take a more pronounced position on the issue. In mid-1957, however, Britain and Switzerland tried to coordinate their positions for the FTA negotiations in Paris. Their positions seemed almost identical: both countries were globally oriented in trade, and needed therefore a liberal European trading regime. They only held different views on agriculture, competition policy and the EPU. Nevertheless, Anglo-Swiss coordination was not further intensified at this stage. Britain tried to avoid the appearance of bloc-building against the Six, and preferred to use established and more discreet forums for policy coordination – such as the Anglo-Scandinavian UNISCAN.¹¹⁸⁹

By early 1958, as the French opposition to the FTA became increasingly pronounced, the Swiss Trade Section tried to goad Britain into agitation against France. It was believed that the British had the necessary political and diplomatic means to thwart the French intentions and could intervene in Paris, the other five EEC-countries, or even the US and Canada, by highlighting how the French plans could lead to the economic split of Western Europe. Switzerland would support the

¹¹⁸⁶ FO to Berne, 14.11.1956, TNA, PREM 11/1136.

¹¹⁸⁷ Lamb (Berne) to Kirkpatrick (FO), 14.11.1956, TNA, FO 371/124395.

¹¹⁸⁸ Lamb (Berne) to FO, 03.11.1956, TNA, FO 371/121429; Lamb (Berne) to Lloyd (FO), 27.03.1957, TNA, FO 371/130603; Däniker (London) to Petitpierre (FPD), 15.03.1957, SFA, E2300, 1000/716, Bd.51; Entretien avec Sir Lionel Lamb, Ambassadeur de Grande-Bretagne, Petitpierre (FPD), 22.05.1957, dodis.ch/13220, DDS.

¹¹⁸⁹ Maurhofer, *Die schweizerische Europapolitik...*, op. cit., pp.184-185; 219-220, 249-254.

British demarches if necessary.¹¹⁹⁰ Yet the Swiss overestimated British power and – as mentioned earlier – the negotiations for a FTA failed because of the French veto. Thereafter, the Swiss became more active and in early December 1958, they organised a meeting between the non-Six to establish a common front. This was a first step towards the later establishment of the EFTA,¹¹⁹¹ in which Switzerland and the UK, together with Sweden, played the leading roles.¹¹⁹²

Until the mid-1950s, Anglo-Swiss political relations were very cordial, of low intensity, and neutrality was hardly an issue. From 1956 on, they became more dynamic. The Swiss peace offer during the Suez crisis was part of the equation, but this development was mainly because of Britain's and Switzerland's opportunistic cooperation against the integration process of the Six.

10.2. *Modus Vivendi*

In the years following the armistice in Korea, the economic relations between Britain and Switzerland became less fluctuating, and the two countries reached a *modus vivendi*. This can be attributed to two factors: the bilateral balance of payments problems had largely disappeared through the EPU; and the end of the Korean War led to more economic stability in Britain, where the general balance of payments situation had improved accordingly. In November 1953, the British increased the liberalisation for Swiss imports – for the second time in a year – from 58.5 to 75 percent, and thus reached the minimal quota which was prescribed by the OEEC. In the meantime, the quota per tourist was increased from £40 to £50.¹¹⁹³

London's renewed, albeit limited liberalisation of imports facilitated the Anglo-Swiss economic negotiations in Berne, which began on 19 January 1954 and ended nine days later with the signing of an agreement. In the bilaterally regulated and thus not liberalised trade, both countries agreed to maintain their previous export and import quotas, and the Swiss negotiators even obtained from their British counterparts a limited increase of their exports. However, this was not sufficient for Switzerland to maintain its “open door” policy for British goods. Nevertheless, according to Federal

¹¹⁹⁰ Visite Maudling, Trade Section (FDPE), 31.01.1958, SFA, E2800, 1967/60, Bd.7.

¹¹⁹¹ Maurhofer, *Die schweizerische Europapolitik...*, op. cit., pp.287-353.

¹¹⁹² Truninger, op. cit., p.178.

¹¹⁹³ Andrès, op. cit., p.64.

Councillor Rubattel, the Head of the Federal Department of Public Economy, the new agreement was a solution, which was “acceptable” to both countries.¹¹⁹⁴ The same year, there was also good news for the Swiss tourist industry, for in November 1954, the quota per tourist was increased from £50 to £100.¹¹⁹⁵

The following years, bilateral economic negotiations between Berne and London lost in importance, for the British were only willing to discuss further trade liberalisation on a multilateral basis within the OEEC. Nonetheless, delegations of both countries continued to meet every year between 1955 and 1958 to discuss the import and export quotas for non-liberalised goods. The Swiss delegates achieved limited victories, for in some cases the British were willing to increase their import quotas for particular non-essential goods. Meanwhile, the importance of these quotas decreased as both Berne and London further liberalised their imports in line with the OEEC. By January 1959, liberalisation reached 95 percent in Britain and 91.4 percent in Switzerland.¹¹⁹⁶ In the wake of these developments, Anglo-Swiss trade expanded, reaching its highest level since 1920, with British exports to Switzerland worth SFr.450 million, and Swiss exports to the UK valued at SFr.366 million.¹¹⁹⁷

Yet, Anglo-Swiss trade negotiations during these years were not free from conflicts. The problems arose over Whitehall’s measures to protect industries considered essential for the maintenance of the British war potential, such as the watch, electro-mechanical and chemical industries. Britain was only willing to grant limited import quotas for products from these sectors, which in turn were responsible for a large part of Switzerland’s exports. In the 1954 trade negotiations, the Swiss were particularly irritated by the UK’s inability to meet Swiss requirements for an increase in the quota of watch imports.¹¹⁹⁸ The frustration was amplified by the fact that Switzerland had helped to rebuild the British watch industry after the war by delivering machines and tools.¹¹⁹⁹ However, Berne’s insistence to increase the quota for its watch exports to the UK encountered only limited success.¹²⁰⁰ Despite these

¹¹⁹⁴ Wirtschaftsverhandlungen mit Grossbritannien, Rubattel (FDPE) to Federal Council, 01.02.1954, dodis.ch/10223, DDS; Wraight, John, *The Swiss and the British*, Salisbury: Michael Russel, 1987, p.334.

¹¹⁹⁵ Hobi, *op. cit.*, p.148.

¹¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.147-149.

¹¹⁹⁷ Wraight, *op. cit.*, p.338.

¹¹⁹⁸ Lamb (Berne) to Eden (FO), 04.04.1955, TNA, FO 371/118080.

¹¹⁹⁹ Andrès, *op. cit.*, p.65-66.

¹²⁰⁰ Hobi, *op. cit.*, p.148.

skirmishes over some goods, Anglo-Swiss economic relations returned to a more stable pattern during the 1950s.

This *modus vivendi* did not imply that Anglo-Swiss arms transfers became economically insignificant. Although they had lost their impact on the bilateral balance of payments, they could influence Britain's debtor and Switzerland's creditor position within the EPU. In November 1953, the Federal Finance Administration enquired with the Trade Section and the Federal Political Department about the possibility to pay for Centurion tanks through the EPU. The aim was to obtain from the British an increase of their import quota for non-liberalised Swiss goods in return for reducing their debt towards the payments union, and simultaneously to reduce Switzerland's creditor position.¹²⁰¹ Thereupon, the Federal Political Department approached the Military Technical Service to ask whether the negotiations for the purchase of Centurion tanks were sufficiently advanced to consider their payment through the EPU. Zehnder emphasised Switzerland's important creditor position within this organisation and that it was essential to make as many payments as possible through it.¹²⁰² However, time was not ripe, and von Wattenwyl replied that the choice between the Centurion and the Patton had not yet been made.¹²⁰³ Nevertheless, the argument to reduce Switzerland's creditor position within the EPU could be useful at a later date for the advocates of British weaponry, and would have an impact on Anglo-Swiss arms transfers.

During the 1950s, Anglo-Swiss economic relations "normalised". The burning issue of the bilateral balance of payments had disappeared, and trade negotiations diminished increasingly in importance through the multilateral liberalisation of trade. However, both Britain and Switzerland were linked to a multilateral payments system – the EPU –, in which their position could be altered through bilateral arms transfers.

10.3. *Silent Security Partnership*

The intensification of Anglo-Swiss military relations during the Korean War had laid the foundation for a silent security partnership between Britain and Switzerland.

¹²⁰¹ FFA to Hotz (Trade Section), Zehnder (FPD), etc., 03.11.1953, SFA, E2001(E), 1972/33, Bd.4.

¹²⁰² Zehnder (FPD) to von Wattenwyl (MTS), 13.11.1953, SFA, E2001(E), 1972/33, Bd.4.

¹²⁰³ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to FPD, 21.11.1953, SFA, E2001(E), 1972/33, Bd.4.

Although the relationship lost in intensity towards the late 1950s, it remained somehow “special” – at least for Berne. Montgomery was still the privileged NATO contact for the Swiss General Staff, and the contact between the armed forces of the two countries was also maintained.

In July 1953, in return for the visit to Switzerland earlier in the year, the RAF’s 2nd Allied Tactical Air Force invited a Swiss Air Force delegation to its base in West Germany. On the Head of the Swiss Air Force’s insistence, Defence Minister Kobelt reluctantly gave his blessing to accept the invitation.¹²⁰⁴ Although this was in reality an exchange visit, the word “exchange” had to be avoided, for the Swiss feared that a regularised arrangement for liaison with a foreign power could compromise their neutrality. According to the British Air Attaché, the delegation was impressed by the British tactical thinking and the independent but cooperative relationship between the RAF and the Army. This did not surprise Wing Commander Scott, who observed that “tactical thought in Switzerland is pre-1939 and the Air Force is a subordinate formation of an Army which still has a cavalry”. Therefore, he believed that the value of the tour was not only to gain the goodwill of the Swiss Air Force, but also to steer the thinking of its officers towards “lines of thought which will help them to be more efficient as a fighting force and hence less of a liability should we ever be associated with them in a conflict”. To continue this process, the Air Attaché argued decidedly for the continuation and intensification of the exchange scheme.¹²⁰⁵

Meanwhile, the visit also led to unofficial exchanges between servicemen. Apparently, the British learned that there was “a small body of thought” in the Swiss Armed Forces, which favoured adherence to NATO. The Swiss Air Force delegates observed that from a purely military perspective this was an attractive option, if only Switzerland had more reliable neighbours to its flanks than France and Italy.¹²⁰⁶ Montgomery, who had been updated on these informal discussions, defused this information: “Any idea that the Swiss will abandon neutrality, and join NATO, is pure moonshine. And in my view it would be wrong if they did: for them, and for us”.¹²⁰⁷ The British Ambassador shared this view, albeit in more moderate terms. Moreover,

¹²⁰⁴ Kobelt to Chief of Training (both FMD), 28.08.1953, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1860, Bd.58.

¹²⁰⁵ Scott to Scrivener (both Berne), 19.10.1953, TNA, FO 371/107345.

¹²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰⁷ Montgomery to Hood (FO), 16.11.1953, TNA, FO 371/107345.

despite his support for the exchange scheme, he warned London that any attempt to successfully influence Swiss military thinking would have to be unobtrusive.¹²⁰⁸

The FO followed the Ambassador's advice. It recommended the continuation of these exchange visits to the AM, but simultaneously emphasised that the initiative should not come from the British side. London was aware of "the extreme sensitivity of the Swiss about their neutrality", and thus feared that the Federal Council could ban the exchange visits altogether.¹²⁰⁹ Therefore, the AM instructed the Air Attaché in Berne to discreetly encourage the existing contacts between the Swiss Air Force and the RAF, and to continue the mutual visits on the same line as before, but not to expect "that any startling impact on Swiss military thinking can be made".¹²¹⁰ Yet, even on these lines it was difficult to continue the exchange scheme. In early 1954, Scott observed that the Swiss had become "exceedingly careful", and that it would be difficult to prepare the ground for future visits. Nevertheless, he thought that it was worth the effort, for the Swiss Air Force was willing to learn and had to be liberated from its subservience to the Army and its leaders, whose thinking on air power he evaluated as archaic.¹²¹¹

The new British Ambassador to Berne, Sir Lionel Lamb, was seemingly unaware of the instructions, which the Air Attaché had received the previous year. He wanted to go beyond the exchange scheme to improve the Swiss Air Force's situation, and therefore called on London.¹²¹² Yet, the AM's view had not changed, and was not challenged by the FO. The latter had been informed by Montgomery that nothing could be done to help the Swiss Air Force to improve its position, and if there was an attempt to do so, the Swiss would regard it as interference with their neutrality.¹²¹³ As a result, the British Embassy tried on its own to keep the exchange scheme alive. In 1954, the departing Swiss Defence Minister was not, however, inclined to risk attacks from "diehard neutralists" by continuing the mutual visits. Nonetheless, Scott believed that he had an important ally in the Head of the Swiss Air Force, who was willing to keep him informed on defence plans, which apparently showed an evolution

¹²⁰⁸ Scrivener (Berne) to Eden (FO), 21.10.1953, TNA, FO 371/107345.

¹²⁰⁹ Muirhead (FO) to Hudson (AM), 04.12.1953, TNA, FO 371/107348.

¹²¹⁰ Bayne (AM) to Scott (Berne), 10.12.1953, TNA, FO 371/112715.

¹²¹¹ Scott to Lamb (both Berne), 17.02.1954, TNA, FO 371/112715.

¹²¹² Lamb (Berne) to Eden (FO), 24.02.1954, TNA, FO 371/112715.

¹²¹³ Minute, Lake (FO), 03.03.1954; Lake (FO) to Hogan (AM), 08.03.1954; Ridgway (AM) to Lake (FO), 16.03.1954, TNA, FO 371/112715.

towards a more modern understanding of air power.¹²¹⁴ Lamb added to this that the UK should “consolidate the Swiss Air Force link with the RAF in equipment, methods, and strategic concepts”.¹²¹⁵

Yet, the relations were not consolidated and the Air Attaché’s efforts in 1955 proved to be unsuccessful. Despite his optimism for mutual visits in 1956, the exchange between the Swiss Air Force and the RAF never became a scheme, and remained a one-time experience.¹²¹⁶ Whether the mutual visits would have benefitted Swiss tactical thinking or not is unknown. However, by 1958, Scott’s successor continued to complain that the Swiss Air Force’s tactical role “remain[ed] the same, i.e. a long range mobile gun and pair of eyes for the Army”. Nevertheless, joined by his American counterpart, he continued trying to align the Swiss Air Force with the strategic and tactical thinking of NATO.¹²¹⁷ In the absence of an air force exchange scheme, the British missed an opportunity to influence Swiss thinking on air power, as well as the promotion of their aeronautical products. The Military Attaché, by contrast, was more successful than the Air Attaché in setting up an exchange scheme, which he intended to use to promote the Centurion.

In June 1953, a member of the Swiss Officers Society approached the British Military Attaché in Berne with the request to organise a visit of Swiss Officers Society members to the British Army of the Rhine¹²¹⁸ in Germany to see “British armour in action”. Hutchins considered such a visit “an ideal opportunity to obtain a great deal of advertisement for these weapons [the Centurion] at very little cost”. With the WO’s blessing, in July 1953, a total of 153 Swiss officers attended exercises of the British Army of the Rhine. According to the Military Attaché, they were strongly impressed by what they saw. Afterwards, the President of the Swiss Officers Society, Colonel Züblin, asked Hutchins for additional visits, a return visit by British officers to Swiss exercises, and to delegate a speaker for a lecture to the society’s members on the role of armour in modern war. The Military Attaché saw in Züblin a powerful advocate to convince Kobelt in favour of the Centurion¹²¹⁹ and thus favoured such visits for mainly commercial reasons. Ambassador Scrivener, by contrast, also

¹²¹⁴ Scott to Lamb (both Berne), 31.12.1954, TNA, FO 371/118096.

¹²¹⁵ Lamb (Berne) to Eden (FO), 12.01.1955, TNA, FO 371/118096.

¹²¹⁶ Annual Despatch on the Swiss Air Force and on Swiss Aviation for 1955, Scott (Berne), 31.12.1955, TNA, FO 371/124398.

¹²¹⁷ Annual Despatch by H.M. Air Attaché Berne for 1957, 23.01.1958, TNA, FO 371/137203.

¹²¹⁸ BAOR.

¹²¹⁹ Hutchins (Berne) to MI4 (WO), 05.11.1953, TNA, FO 371/112714.

cherished the hope “that these contacts will have a generally beneficial effect on Swiss military thinking”.¹²²⁰

In September, Hutchins suggested regular exchanges between British and Swiss officers to de Montmollin.¹²²¹ Although the Federal Military Department was interested in the proposal, it feared for the political implications and thus consulted the Federal Political Department.¹²²² Petitpierre gave his blessing, but on the conditions that only officers up to the rank of captain would participate, and that any publicity was to be avoided.¹²²³ Thereupon, the Swiss Officers Society could extend an invitation for British officers to Hutchins and ask him for a lecturer on armoured warfare. The British Military Attaché was “astounded” that his proposal had received the Federal Council’s blessing. As he forwarded the invitation to the WO, he observed that Switzerland was “stretching neutrality to its utmost”.¹²²⁴ The WO favoured the exchange scheme, and looked immediately for a suitable lecturer. Its intentions towards the Swiss Army were threefold: to foster the increasingly close liaison, to help raising the standard of training in tank warfare, and to promote the Centurion.¹²²⁵ This view was shared by the FO, even though it feared that the Swiss were “overstepping their neutrality” through the exchange scheme.¹²²⁶ It thus seemed as if the British were more preoccupied about the impact of the mutual visits on Switzerland’s neutrality than the Swiss themselves.

Nevertheless, Kobelt tried to give the exchange scheme a low profile and after various precautionary measures the visit of British officers to Switzerland only materialised in summer 1954.¹²²⁷ According to the British Embassy in Berne, this return visit was a great success, and furthered the rapprochement between the armies of the two countries. It was not, however, sufficient to tilt the balance in favour of the Centurion. Both the Ambassador and the Military Attaché bemoaned that the Swiss had again postponed the decision on future tank purchases. But even though the promotion of the Centurion was the impetus, it was not the sole British reason for the mutual visits – which were continued throughout our period of observation. The aim

¹²²⁰ Scrivener (Berne) to Eden (FO), 12.11.1953, TNA, FO 371/107347.

¹²²¹ De Montmollin to Kobelt (both FMD), 15.09.1953, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1860, Bd.60.

¹²²² Meyer (FMD) to FPD, 18.09.1953, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1860, Bd.60.

¹²²³ Petitpierre (FPD) to FMD, 25.09.1953, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1860, Bd.60.

¹²²⁴ Hutchins (Berne) to WO, 24.11.1953, TNA, FO 371/112714.

¹²²⁵ DMT (WO) to Headquarters (BAOR), 22.12.1953; 01.01.1954, TNA, FO 371/112714.

¹²²⁶ Minute, Lake (FO), 06.01.1954, TNA, FO 371/112714.

¹²²⁷ Kobelt to de Montmollin (both FMD), 22.06.1954, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1863, Bd.67.

to influence the Swiss Army was real, for the outdated strategic and tactical thinking of its officers and their lack of experience was considered problematic.¹²²⁸

This critique was mirrored in the British Embassy's reports on the manoeuvres of the Swiss Armed Forces in autumn 1953. The "Combined Firing Exercises" by the Army and the Swiss Air Force in late September received a damaging assessment. The Military Attaché observed: "For the first time I have witnessed a completely ill-organised, ill-executed and mismanaged demonstration put on by the Swiss army". The Air Attaché added to this that "The air aspect of the manoeuvres was pitiful. If this is a fair example of Swiss military thinking (which I doubt) Heaven help them if they run against a high quality Air Force".¹²²⁹ The comments on another manoeuvre in mid-October, this time by the Third Army Corps, were no better. Hutchins concluded from them that "the Swiss ma[d]e excellent soldiers [...] but [...] they are let down by the ineptitude and lack of experience of their senior commanders".¹²³⁰ His report on the Swiss Army for 1953, although he saw improvements in comparison to the previous year, came to a similar conclusion. Nevertheless, he looked forward to the forthcoming retirement of many senior officers – such as Chief of Training Frick – and their replacement by younger officers.¹²³¹

Montgomery got wind of these reports through the FO. Although he was delighted about the retirement of Frick, of whom he had been "trying to get rid [...] for five years", he was "disturbed about the Swiss Manoeuvres".¹²³² Yet, once he had read the reports, he was reassured and came to rather different conclusions than the Service Attachés in Berne. Not without self-flattery he observed that thanks to him the Swiss Army was now at least deployed in relation to the disposition of NATO, "to fight in concert with other Powers in a general European war". Moreover, he argued that there had been a lot of improvement since he took the Swiss "in hand 6 years ago", and exclaimed that the "present Attaches in Berne did not know what the Swiss were like in 1947!" Nonetheless, he admitted that there was still much to be done and

¹²²⁸ Switzerland – Review of Military Affairs for 1954, Hutchins (Berne); Lamb (Berne) to Eden (FO), 18.01.1955, TNA, FO 371/118095; Switzerland – Review of Military Affairs for 1958, Martin (Berne), TNA, FO 371/145577.

¹²²⁹ Scrivener (Berne) to Cheetham (FO), 30.09.1953, TNA, FO 371/107345.

¹²³⁰ Scrivener (Berne) to Cheetham (FO), 12.11.1953, TNA, FO 371/107345.

¹²³¹ Switzerland – Review of Military Affairs for 1953, Hutchins (Berne), TNA, FO 371/112714.

¹²³² Montgomery to Hood (FO), 19.10.1953, TNA, FO 371/107345.

promised to continue his efforts to bring Switzerland into line with the Western powers.¹²³³

So he did. On holiday in Gstaad in early February 1954, he met with the Chief of the Swiss General Staff. Through a lengthy monologue about Western defence and Switzerland's role therein, he tried to influence his counterpart to maintain the deployment of the Swiss Army in line with NATO. He observed that Switzerland played an important role in the new deployment, and – as a cornerstone – had to cover its eastern and northern frontiers. With regard to tactical nuclear weapons, the Field-Marshal promised that they would only be used against Soviet forces on Swiss territory with the agreement of the Federal Government. Finally, he stated that if Switzerland would become involved in a war against the USSR, and would join the Western powers, its army would be under NATO's Central European Command, and the Alliance's High Command would be responsible for its air force.¹²³⁴

This information was certainly helpful for the Swiss General Staff to elaborate war plans. But unlike in 1952, this time the planning did not seem to go any further, and de Montmollin did not promise to deploy the Swiss Army to Montgomery's liking. He felt obliged to remind the Field-Marshal that the Swiss – in line with the status and policy of neutrality – “were firmly decided to defend the integrity of [their] national territory, whoever the aggressor might be”. Moreover, he added that the subordination of the Swiss Armed Forces to an Alliance in case of war could only be planned at that moment according to the circumstances.¹²³⁵ Despite these caveats, de Montmollin was updated about Switzerland's position in NATO's war planning, and could adapt Swiss defences accordingly.

Though the Field-Marshal returned to the Swiss Alps in early 1955,¹²³⁶ it seems that he did not meet the Chief of the Swiss General Staff – at least there is no proof thereof. But he kept an eye on Switzerland's strategic situation in relation to Austria's neutralisation. Contrary to “one of the highest ranking officers of the Swiss army”, who already saw “the Russians at Lake Constance”,¹²³⁷ Montgomery was not concerned by Austrian neutrality: “If the Russians should invade Austria and should move westward towards the Valley of the Inn and on to Switzerland, they will merely

¹²³³ Montgomery to Hood (FO), 09.12.1953, TNA, FO 371/107345.

¹²³⁴ Notiz über die Besprechung mit Feldmarschall Montgomery am 5.2.54, Burkhardt (FMD), 11.02.1954, SFA, E5560(C), 1975/46, Bd.389.

¹²³⁵ De Montmollin to Kobelt (both FMD), 15.02.1954, SFA, E5800(-), -/1, Bd.2.

¹²³⁶ Annual Report for 1955 by Military Attaché, Warren (Berne), 12.01.1956, TNA, FO 371/124397.

¹²³⁷ Jackson (Berne) to Hancock (FO), 01.06.1955, TNA, FO 371/118088.

place themselves in an awkward situation: especially if there is a good concentration of German troops in Bavaria, and we are strong in the Italian Alps".¹²³⁸ He went so far as to believe that Austrian neutrality strengthened the strategic position of the West and Switzerland, and promised Bracher that he would take up the issue with him and de Montmollin in early 1956.¹²³⁹

Yet, by the time Montgomery came to Switzerland, the neutralisation of Austria seemed to have lost in importance and was thus not on the agenda. The Field-Marshal's explanations focused on Marshal Tito's decidedness to follow the policy of armed neutrality, and the nuclearization of the European battlefield. With regard to Switzerland, Montgomery observed that in the event of war 500 aircraft would be sufficient for the Swiss Air Force, which could rely at all time on NATO air support. He ruled out the provision of armoured troops and artillery, but mentioned the possibility of "support with nuclear weapons".¹²⁴⁰ Even though there is no source, which documents de Montmollin's reaction to these remarks, the Swiss counted on NATO's help in the case of a Soviet attack. During the same holidays, on 10 February 1956, the Field-Marshal met with the new Swiss Defence Minister. Montgomery argued that in a global war, which would unavoidably lead to an extensive nuclear war, it would be impossible for small nations to remain neutral. Apparently, Chaudet agreed and said that "the Swiss Government had come to the same conclusion. If war should ever break out in Europe, Switzerland would join the Western Alliance".¹²⁴¹

Montgomery considered this statement by the Swiss Defence Minister of sufficient importance to send his Prime Minister a memorandum about it.¹²⁴² Eden read it "with much interest" and found it "encouraging". Yet, neither he nor his Foreign Secretary – who received a copy of the memorandum – followed up on the Swiss declaration to join NATO in the event of war.¹²⁴³ It was rather the Field-Marshal himself, who believed that Chaudet's declarations and his limited defence coordination with de Montmollin were of major importance and similar to the secret defence talks between the Swiss and French General Staffs in 1939/40. Therefore, he

¹²³⁸ Quoted from Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, op. cit., pp.174-175.

¹²³⁹ *Ibid.*, p.175.

¹²⁴⁰ Notiz über den Besuch von Feldmarschall Lord Montgomery of Alamein, FMD, 27.01.1956, SFA, E5560(C), 1975/46, Bd.170.

¹²⁴¹ Memorandum on Conversations in Yugoslavia and Switzerland by Field Marshal Montgomery, 10.02.1956, TNA, PREM 11/1224.

¹²⁴² Millard to Eden, 15.02.1956, TNA, PREM 11/1224.

¹²⁴³ PREM 11/1224; Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, op. cit., p.175.

tried to help the Swiss Government in its attempt to prevent the Western Allies from publishing the documents on the Franco-Swiss military agreement, which had been found by the Wehrmacht in La Charité-sur-Loire in 1940.¹²⁴⁴ Montgomery argued to Eden that the publication of these documents “might harden Swiss public opinion against any talks we might wish to hold with the Swiss in the future”. In addition, he emphasised that during the last six years he had “personally managed to get the Swiss Army re-deployed on mobilisation to fit in with our own defensive posture”, and that “the publication of the notes might undo all the good that has been done”.¹²⁴⁵ The Prime Minister, however, gently refused to intervene against the publication of these documents.¹²⁴⁶ It thus seems that Whitehall, contrary to the British Embassy in Berne,¹²⁴⁷ did not share Montgomery’s belief that “his” secret military talks with the Swiss were of major importance.

Despite London’s lack of enthusiasm, in early 1957, like almost every winter since the end of the Second World War, the Field Marshal returned to Switzerland. On 28 January, he met with the Defence Minister. After a general assessment of the military situation in Europe, Montgomery observed that the “European bastion” had to be held by NATO in conjunction with the neutrals, of which he mentioned Yugoslavia and Switzerland. He reaffirmed that the Atlantic Alliance saw these states in a favourable light, and was willing to help them. This time, however, he was more precise about what he expected from the Swiss Army: to defend Switzerland’s territory, not through an all around defence, but by deploying in accordance with NATO forces between Bodan at Lake Constance and the region of Reschenscheideck in South Tirol. To enable the army to fulfil this task, Montgomery recommended to strengthen the infantry, and to purchase tanks and anti-tank weapons instead of anti-aircraft guns. The air force was of secondary importance and only to be used for ground support. Finally, he observed that Switzerland would need nuclear weapons in a few years.¹²⁴⁸

¹²⁴⁴ On the Swiss efforts to prevent the publication of these documents see Zala, Sacha, *Gebändigte Geschichte: Amtliche Historiographie und ihr Malaise mit der Geschichte der Neutralität, 1945-1961*, Bern: Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv, 1998, pp.73-97.

¹²⁴⁵ Montgomery to Eden, 09.05.1956, TNA, PREM 11/1383.

¹²⁴⁶ Eden to Montgomery, 03.07.1956, TNA, PREM 11/1383.

¹²⁴⁷ Annual Report for 1957 by Military Attaché, Warren (Berne), 15.01.1958, TNA, FO 371/137201.

¹²⁴⁸ Notes sur la visite du Maréchal Montgomery au chef du département militaire fédéral le 28 janvier 1957, Kaech (FMD), 29.01.1957, SFA, E5560(C), 1975/46, Bd.389.

Chaudet's reaction to Montgomery's plans for the Swiss Army, and whether he agreed with them, is – due to a lack of sources – not known. But nonetheless, the meeting between the Defence Minister and the Field-Marshal is revealing. Firstly, since the rearmament of Germany, it was no longer expected from the Swiss to hold the Rhine-line together with the Western Allies, but rather to concentrate their defence effort on the region between the South Tyrol and Lake Constance. Secondly, and more importantly, since the "Montgomery-de Montmollin-Agreement" of 1952, the secret talks on the Swiss Army's deployment in accordance with NATO had reached a new level. Previously, Montgomery had to limit the talks about deployment and tactics to the General Staff, but now he could speak overtly about it to the Defence Minister.

This reveals that the Swiss Government accepted the British Field-Marshal as its link to the Atlantic Alliance and listened to his tactical and military advice. Although this defence consulting became thereafter increasingly restricted to the general development of warfare and the military-strategic situation in Europe,¹²⁴⁹ it was appreciated by Chaudet, and even continued on a more informal basis after Montgomery's retirement from NATO in 1958.¹²⁵⁰ In addition, in early 1959, the Swiss Defence Minister reassured the Field-Marshal that in the event of an invasion of Switzerland from the East, the Swiss would ask for help from the West.¹²⁵¹ Yet, the relationship with Montgomery was particular, and no other high-ranking British officer received a similar treatment.

In March 1954, during a visit to Britain for the Venom's production under licence, the Military Technical Service invited Air Chief Marshal Sir John Baker, MoS Controller of Aircraft, to Switzerland.¹²⁵² Baker's visit was strongly endorsed by the British Ambassador in Berne and the FO, who saw therein an ideal opportunity to promote British aircraft after the Swiss had encountered some problems with their Venoms and the de Havilland Comet – the prestige object of Britain's aircraft industry

¹²⁴⁹ Bracher to Chaudet (both FMD), 14.08.1957, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/101, Bd.22; Notice concernant la visite du 26 février 1958 du Maréchal Montgomery au Chef du département militaire fédéral, Kaech (FMD), SFA, E5001(F), 1970/7, Bd.5.

¹²⁵⁰ Aktennotiz über die Konferenz vom 24. November 1958, Kaech (FMD), 29.11.1958, SFA, E5001(F), 1970/4, Bd.25; Aktennotiz über die Konferenz vom 1. Dezember 1958, Kaech (FMD), 12.12.1958, SFA, E5560(C), 1975/46, Bd.5.

¹²⁵¹ Montagu-Pollock (Berne) to Hancock (FO), 30.01.1959, TNA, FO 371/145575.

¹²⁵² Reisebericht England 18.III.-1.IV.1954, König (STM), 18.03.1954, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1863, Bd.74; Bayne (AM) to Cheetham (FO), 08.04.1954, TNA, FO 371/112716.

– had crashed on its inaugural flight in January.¹²⁵³ Yet, the problem was that the Military Technical Service had acted precipitously, and had first to ask the Defence Minister for the authorisation of this visit.¹²⁵⁴ Although his Chief of the General Staff favoured the visit, in mid-May, Kobelt decided against it, for he feared that too frequent visits by high-ranking British officers would compromise Switzerland's neutrality.¹²⁵⁵ But the Military Technical Service did not give up, and emphasised to Kobelt that it was important to invite Baker for maintaining good relations with the MoS in view of future aircraft purchases.¹²⁵⁶ Thereupon, and in consultation with de Montmollin, the Defence Minister finally agreed to Baker's visit of Swiss aircraft production sites and airfields in late spring.¹²⁵⁷

Similarly, the purchase of Centurions in 1955¹²⁵⁸ also led to an increase of visits by British military personnel to Switzerland. In September of the same year, a delegation of British officers came to instruct the Swiss Army in the use of these tanks, and on the Head of the Light Troops' insistence, more such instruction courses took place in 1956.¹²⁵⁹ The British were very interested in providing this "after-sales service", for they saw an opportunity to foster closer military relations with the Swiss and keep them interested in additional tank purchases.¹²⁶⁰ Lamb was thus absolutely right to point out to London that "the close liaison with the armed forces of the two countries, already established by the use of the Vampire and Venom aircraft by the Swiss Air Force, was further promoted through the acquisition of the Centurion tanks".¹²⁶¹ Consequently, Anglo-Swiss military contacts were not only favoured in view of, but also through arms transfers.

This should not mask the fact that the security relations were also strategically motivated, like in the case of the meeting between the British and Swiss Directors of

¹²⁵³ Lamb (Berne) to Cheetham (FO), 21.04.1954; Cheetham (FO) to Bayne (AM), 28.04.1954, TNA, FO 371/112716.

¹²⁵⁴ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to FMD, 10.04.1954, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1863, Bd.75.

¹²⁵⁵ De Montmollin to Kobelt (both FMD), 21.04.1954; Kobelt (FMD) to von Wattenwyl (MTS), 11.05.1954, SFA, E5560(C), 1975/46, Bd.170.

¹²⁵⁶ Kradolfer (MTS) to Kobelt (FMD), 13.05.1954, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1863, Bd.75.

¹²⁵⁷ Bracher to de Montmollin (both FMD), 20.05.1954; Bracher (FMD) to MTS, 25.05.1954, SFA, E5560(C), 1975/46, Bd.170.

¹²⁵⁸ *Infra*, ch.11.

¹²⁵⁹ Rapport sur la visite de la mission d'étude britannique du 11 au 29.9.55, Morier/de Muralt (FMD), 03.10.1955; Rapport sur la visite de la 2me mission britannique du 21 au 29.3.56, de Muralt (FMD), 17.04.1956, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1866, Bd.64.

¹²⁶⁰ Warren (Berne) to DMT (WO), 28.09.1955; Lamb (Berne) to Harrison (FO), 03.10.1955; Harrison (FO) to Lamb (FO), 15.10.1955, TNA, FO 371/118091.

¹²⁶¹ Annual Report for Switzerland for the year 1955, Lamb (Berne), 07.09.1956, TNA, FO 371/124381.

Military Intelligence in 1954.¹²⁶² The content of these secret talks is unknown, but the encounter itself demonstrates the high level of confidence between the two countries. The Swiss were willing to share “vitally secret information”. For example, in late 1954, they disclosed their defence radar network to the British Air Attaché, whereas they “deliberately” withheld the same information from all “other foreign Attaches, including the Americans”. Lamb saw therein a proof for Berne’s confidence in British discretion and security reliability and urged London not to divulge these secrets to any country: “It would thus be disastrous if we were to do anything now likely to undermine this confidence”.¹²⁶³ The FO strongly endorsed this view and recommended to the AM not to divulge this information to NATO, which would have to plan its radar system “on the supposition that Switzerland will be neutral and the Swiss system will be used by the Swiss alone”.¹²⁶⁴

The British seemed not only to be trustworthy in this case, but also in relation to Montgomery’s secret talks with the Swiss General Staff and Defence Minister, on which NATO Allies were only vaguely informed. At least until the mid-1950s, the British were practically Switzerland’s sole NATO contact on defence-related issues, for Berne doubted whether it could trust the Americans. London reciprocated this trust to a certain extent. Britain was the only power willing to help Switzerland in its quest for an atomic weapon. In 1953, London agreed to deliver ten tons of uranium, even though it knew that the Swiss intended to use it for military research. There certainly were economic incentives, but it seems that there was also sufficient confidence in addition to “grounds of defence and general policy”.¹²⁶⁵ The mutual trust in Anglo-Swiss defence relations was strong, and even the recurrent violation of Switzerland’s neutral airspace by British military aircraft and Berne’s complaints about it could not shake it.¹²⁶⁶

Consequently, the military relations between Britain and Switzerland remained close and intense after the Korean War. Officers and information were exchanged, and Montgomery continued to advise the Federal Military Department. Nevertheless,

¹²⁶² Lamb (Berne) to FO, 22.04.1954; DMI4 (WO) to Military Attaché (Berne), 23.04.1954, TNA, FO 371/112714.

¹²⁶³ Lamb (Berne) to Kirkpatrick (FO), 15.12.1954, TNA, FO 371/109421.

¹²⁶⁴ Hancock (FO) to Bates (AM), 19.01.1955, TNA, FO 371/109421.

¹²⁶⁵ Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, *op. cit.*, pp.118-120, 162-163, 170, Braun, *op. cit.*, pp.759-763.

¹²⁶⁶ Various documents in SFA, E2001(E), 1979/28, Bd.11.

this security relationship was, with the exception of the Field-Marshal and the Embassy personnel in Berne, more important to the Swiss than to the British.

11. Centurion II

11.1. Centurion versus Patton

At the height of the Korean War, the Swiss desperately tried to obtain Centurions from the British, who were unable to comply because they needed the tanks for their own and allied armed forces. Yet, once peace loomed over Korea, and especially after the signing of the armistice, the purchase of costly tanks became less appealing to the Swiss population and Parliament. Moreover, the federal military authorities, who still desired to equip their army with medium tanks, had also gained access to American war materiel. Meanwhile, however, Britain had again become eager to sell weapons to Switzerland. With the improvement of the international situation, the British armaments industry, on war footing throughout the Korean War, produced more tanks than were needed. London thus tried to sell these tanks abroad, if possible to hard currency countries like Switzerland in order to compensate for the financial cost of the rearmament programme.

In Switzerland, where the British Centurion and the American Patton M-47 were being tested, the Military Technical Service was aware of Britain's financial motivations, which could also benefit the Swiss. In July 1953, it was observed that, in return for an export business in the amount of SFr.150 to 200 million, London might be willing to increase the currency allowance for Anglo-Swiss tourism traffic. The US, by contrast, had no financial motivations and would therefore not be willing to grant an economic service in return. In the light of these economic benefits, the Military Technical Service argued in favour of the Centurion, whose gun and lower price were preferred to the Patton.¹²⁶⁷ In Berne, however, this reasoning was limited to some leading figures in the Military Technical Service.

In the Commission for Tank Procurement meeting of 7 July, it was observed that tanks were a necessity and foreign armoured vehicles would have to be purchased until a Swiss tank would be ready. But all the commission's members – including de Montmollin, de Muralt, the National Councillors and even the representative of the Military Technical Service – favoured the Patton, particularly for its manoeuvrability. Yet, they did not prefer the version then being tested in Switzerland – the M-47 –, but

¹²⁶⁷ Vergleichende Beurteilung der Panzerwagen Centurion III, Patton M-47 & T-48, MTS, 04.07.1953, SFA, E5155(-), 1971/202, Bd.61.

the newest version – the M-48.¹²⁶⁸ It was questionable, however, whether the Americans would be willing to sell their most advanced tank to the Swiss.

In reaction to the meeting's outcome, the Head of the Military Technical Service defended the Centurion's qualities, and observed that Washington was at present not willing to sell the M-48. In addition, von Wattenwyl stressed that the Americans would like to see Switzerland buying the Centurion to strengthen Britain's finances.¹²⁶⁹ Indeed, the US had no intention of selling the M-48 – which was for the moment not even delivered to Allies – to the Swiss, who were informed that they could only have the M-47.¹²⁷⁰ In line with von Wattenwyl's observations, the Swiss Military Attaché in Washington emphasised that the American decision was also influenced by the desire to help the British in their financial distress by helping them to secure the Centurion business with Switzerland.¹²⁷¹

With the M-48 unavailable, the Centurion re-entered the competition against the M-47. The Commission for Tank Procurement tried again to choose between these two tanks in its meeting of 27 August. Yet, no decision was reached. Although von Wattenwyl defended his viewpoint that the Centurion was slightly superior because of its firepower, the commission questioned the test results put forward by the Military Technical Service. Moreover, some of its military members defended the Patton's gun, and insisted on its better manoeuvrability. Confronted with this deadlock, the Chief of the General Staff invited the commission's members to defend their standpoint by submitting a memorandum.¹²⁷² Thereupon, the Head of the Military Technical Service repeated his previous arguments in favour of the Centurion. His adversaries continued to defend the Patton, even the M-47 model, as a basis for the later introduction of the M-48.¹²⁷³ However, this procedure was not helpful in finding

¹²⁶⁸ Protokoll der 7. Sitzung der Panzerbeschaffungskommission, 07.07.1953, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1860, Bd.79.

¹²⁶⁹ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to de Montmollin (FMD), 08.08.1953, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1860, Bd.79.

¹²⁷⁰ Stewart (OMA, OSD) to Special Assistant to the Secretary for Mutual Security Affairs (MSA) (DoS), 07.07.1953, NARA, RG 330, Entry 21, Country Files 1949-1955, Box 82; DoS to Washington, 10.07.1953, NARA, RG 330, Entry 21A, Country Files (CAIN), 1950-1955, Box 6.

¹²⁷¹ Keller (FMD) to CTP, 12.08.1953, SFA, E5155(-), 1971/202, Bd.93.

¹²⁷² Protokoll der 8. Sitzung der Panzerbeschaffungskommission, 27.08.1953, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1860, Bd.80.

¹²⁷³ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to de Montmollin (FMD), 31.08.1953; Hess to de Montmollin (both FMD), 04.09.1953, SFA, E5155(-), 1971/202, Bd.93.

a consensus, and in the following Commission for Tank Procurement meeting the positions remained unchanged.¹²⁷⁴

The politicians in the commission disagreed amongst themselves. In light of the varying opinions among their military colleagues, by late September, they had come to believe that the tanks had not sufficiently been evaluated. Therefore, they requested more tests with six Centurions and four Pattons, which made additional tank purchases necessary.¹²⁷⁵ This idea was, however, vehemently opposed by the military members, who feared that such tests would again postpone the army's equipment with medium tanks. For once they agreed and argued that the previous tests were not only sufficient to take a decision, but had also shown that the Centurion and the Patton were of similar value.¹²⁷⁶ The Chief of the General Staff shared this view, but he tried to find a compromise with the National Councillors. Although he insisted that the previous tests were sufficient to take a decision, and that it would be complicated, time-consuming and unnecessarily expensive to get additional tanks, he nevertheless mentioned the possibility of additional tests with two tanks of each type.¹²⁷⁷

Yet, the politicians upheld their request and argued that only further tests with additional tanks could determine whether the Centurion or the Patton suited the army's tactical needs and could be employed on Swiss terrain.¹²⁷⁸ In order to overcome this stalemate before completing the final report on the tank question to the Defence Minister, de Montmollin scheduled another Commission for Tank Procurement meeting. But as the meeting took place on 24 November, there was yet another request by a third party. The Swiss Officers Society, which had visited British armoured units in Germany during the summer,¹²⁷⁹ suggested the purchase of 100 Centurions and 15 Pattons, to test them in cooperation with the infantry, and then to decide on the purchase of another series of 100 tanks. Apparently, the British attempt to win over the Swiss Officers Society to influence the decision-making process on the tank question in Switzerland succeeded. In addition to the requests by the National

¹²⁷⁴ Protokoll der Sitzung Panzerbeschaffungskommission, 14.09.1953, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1860, Bd.80.

¹²⁷⁵ Bühler, Eisenring, Jaquet, Steiner to de Montmollin (FMD), 24.09.1953, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1860, Bd.80.

¹²⁷⁶ Protokoll der Sitzung der Panzerbeschaffungskommission, 01.10.1953, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1860, Bd.80.

¹²⁷⁷ De Montmollin (FMD) to Bühler, Eisenring, Jaquet and Steiner, 05.10.1953, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1860, Bd.80.

¹²⁷⁸ Bühler, Eisenring, Jaquet, Steiner to de Montmollin (FMD), 15.10.1953, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1860, Bd.80.

¹²⁷⁹ *Supra*, ch.10.3.

Councillors and the Swiss Officers Society, there was also the option to purchase 200 Centurions, which was suggested by von Wattenwyl and his service. As none of the three parties was willing to give in,¹²⁸⁰ the final report to Kobelt listed all three requests as steps towards the equipment of the Swiss Army with 380 medium tanks, the only point on which all members of the commission agreed.¹²⁸¹

At the same time as these debates, Switzerland's financial interest in buying Centurions came again to the fore. On the Federal Finance Administration's behalf, the Federal Political Department asked the Military Technical Service whether the Centurion deal was nearing completion, and if the British tanks could be paid through the EPU to reduce Switzerland's creditor position.¹²⁸² Although von Wattenwyl had to reply that no decision had been taken so far,¹²⁸³ his economic argument in favour of the Centurion was considerably strengthened. This would play an important role in the National Defence Commission meeting of 9 January 1954.

In this meeting, the question of future tank purchases was the main item on the agenda. De Montmollin opened the discussion by emphasising the urgency of equipping the army with medium tanks. Von Wattenwyl added that further tests to decide between the Patton M-47 and the Centurion were not necessary, and that the apparently superior M-48 was not obtainable. Moreover, he emphasised the financial advantage of buying British tanks. The Head of the Light Troops, however, disagreed with this reasoning, and requested additional tests and renewed attempts to get at least a few M-48s for test purposes. De Muralt was rather isolated, for the corps commanders wanted "to take advantage of the situation of military détente and purchase tanks as long as they were available". But Kobelt reminded the Commission that at the moment a tank bill would probably have little chance of success in Parliament. Therefore, the National Defence Commission agreed on the compromise to prepare a provisional bill for 100 Centurions, to continue the tests on a limited basis, and to enquire about the M-48's availability. Although de Montmollin himself had suggested the purchase of 100 Centurions, he criticised the commission's purely economic criteria behind their preference for the British tank. Thereupon, he was

¹²⁸⁰ Protokoll der Sitzung der Panzerbeschaffungskommission, 24.11.1953, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1860, Bd.80.

¹²⁸¹ Panzerbeschaffungskommission Bericht an den Chef des Eidg. Militärdepartementes, 01.12.1953, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1860, Bd.80.

¹²⁸² Zehnder (FPD) to von Wattenwyl (MTS), 13.11.1953, SFA, E2001(E), 1972/33, Bd.4.

¹²⁸³ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to Zehnder (FPD), 21.11.1953, SFA, E2001(E), 1972/33, Bd.4.

reassured by the Defence Minister that the choice of the tank type was not yet definitive.¹²⁸⁴

London was informed by its Ambassador in Berne about the financial incentive Switzerland could have in purchasing British war materiel, and that “hence the moment would be opportune to press [the Swiss] again to buy Centurion tanks”.¹²⁸⁵ Therefore, on the FO’s behalf, the MoS advised Vickers-Armstrongs to approach the Swiss again with a new offer.¹²⁸⁶ But this was not necessary, because before the British company could do so, it was approached by the Swiss themselves. In view of the high probability of additional tests, in December 1953, von Wattenwyl asked Vickers-Armstrongs again for two Centurions on loan, and enquired about the possibility to purchase five to ten tanks, in case the tests would be more demanding.¹²⁸⁷ Again, the British authorities were quick in authorising a loan of two Centurions, but Commander Ross of Vickers-Armstrongs observed that it was questionable whether they would be as agreeable in the case of the sale of five to ten Centurions without the promise of a larger Swiss purchase. Kobelt thus authorised von Wattenwyl to inform the British that the military authorities were in favour of the Centurion, but that the decision remained uncertain because of the political authorities.¹²⁸⁸

The Arms Working Party had already discussed this issue in its meeting of 22 December 1953. The FO, the MoS and the Treasury favoured the sale of ten Centurions to Switzerland, but the WO was against it.¹²⁸⁹ According to the WO, such a small order was of little financial interest, there was no “real evidence” that it would result in a larger order and it would not substantially assist the maintenance of the tank production programme. Moreover, it was feared that this order could prejudice other larger orders, and that the Swiss were only interested to buy these tanks to gain technological know-how for their own tank development. The MoS, the Treasury and especially the FO, however, strongly supported the sale of ten tanks. Even though this order was relatively small, it was considered desirable in itself. But more importantly, it was feared that the refusal to supply these tanks might prejudice a larger Swiss

¹²⁸⁴ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 09.01.1954, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4063.

¹²⁸⁵ Scrivener (Berne) to FO, 06.11.1953, TNA, FO 371/107346.

¹²⁸⁶ O’Donnell (MoS) to Muirhead (FO), 11.11.1953, TNA, FO 371/107346.

¹²⁸⁷ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to Vickers-Armstrongs, 23.12.1953, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1862, Bd.7.

¹²⁸⁸ Aktennotiz Fragen der Beschaffung von Centurion-Panzern, von Wattenwyl (MTS), 23.12.1953, SFA, E5155(-), 1971/202, Bd.77.

¹²⁸⁹ JWPC(AWP)/M(53)31, Minutes, 22.12.1953, TNA, DEFE 10/206.

order, “which we badly need to maintain our threatened Centurion production programme”.¹²⁹⁰

Although in its meeting of 12 January 1954 the Arms Export Policy Committee could understand the WO’s reservations to a certain extent, it followed the reasoning of the other ministries and agreed that – subject to the approval of the Minister of Defence – the Swiss order for ten Centurions should be accepted.¹²⁹¹ The Committee’s chairman thus approached the Minister of Defence with the request to authorise the sale. He emphasised that this smaller order was the key to a larger one, which would help to maintain the tank production capacity and to earn a valuable foreign currency.¹²⁹² These arguments were convincingly enough for Defence Minister Harold Alexander, who used them again when he suggested the tank sale to the Prime Minister.¹²⁹³ On these grounds, Churchill gave his approval to a yet non-existent Swiss order for ten Centurions.¹²⁹⁴

Although the Swiss Defence Minister approved the enquiries by the Military Technical Service, he was against an actual order of ten tanks. He believed that additional tests could be carried out with two Centurions, and feared that a slightly larger purchase would be opposed by the Federal Council and the Parliament.¹²⁹⁵ Despite von Wattenwyl’s warning that a negative reply to the offer of ten Centurions could lead the British to question the seriousness of Switzerland’s interest in a larger tank purchase, Kobelt did not come back on his decision.¹²⁹⁶ Therefore, and in the light of a political climate in Switzerland, which was unfavourable for larger arms purchases, Vickers-Armstrongs was informed in late March that no order would be placed at least until June – when the issue would probably be brought before Parliament.¹²⁹⁷

Whereas the British Military Attaché admitted that it was for domestic political reasons that a tank order had not yet materialised, he observed that – according to rumours – American machinations could have prevented a clear choice

¹²⁹⁰ Brief for Meeting of Arms Export Policy Committee, Leavett (FO), 11.01.1954, TNA, FO 371/112713.

¹²⁹¹ Arms Export Policy Committee, Minutes, 12.01.1954, TNA, DEFE 10/158.

¹²⁹² Wheeler to Alexander (both MoD), 14.01.1954, TNA, DEFE 13/35.

¹²⁹³ Alexander (MoD) to Churchill, 19.01.1954, TNA, PREM 11/638.

¹²⁹⁴ Smallwood to Wheeler (MoD), 21.01.1954, TNA, DEFE 13/35.

¹²⁹⁵ De Montmollin (FMD) to von Wattenwyl (MTS), 26.01.1954, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1863, Bd.86.

¹²⁹⁶ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to Kobelt (FMD), 09.02.1954; Kobelt (FMD) to von Wattenwyl (MTS), 16.02.1954, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1863, Bd.86.

¹²⁹⁷ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to Vickers-Armstrongs, 30.03.1954, TNA, FO 371/112713.

in favour of the Centurion. According to Hutchins, Major Hess, who had worked for the Military Technical Service on the tank issue until his recent dismissal, was also an agent for a number of American firms and had “suppressed a number of reports which were favourable to the Centurion”. Yet, it is unlikely that the Americans had tried to influence the Swiss in favour of the Patton. There are no other sources pointing in this direction. Washington even hoped, for Britain’s financial health, that they would secure the Swiss tank order. Despite these suspicions, the British Military Attaché remained confident that Berne would eventually decide to buy Centurions, especially because the Federal Department of Public Economy strongly favoured the purchase of goods in Britain to balance Switzerland’s position vis-à-vis the EPU.¹²⁹⁸ The British Ambassador shared this optimism for precisely the same reason. The Federal Military Department had “found a new and powerful ally in their struggle with the Finance Department in the person of this year’s President of the Federal Council, Monsieur Rubattel”. Consequently, he advised London to be patient and not to embarrass the Swiss authorities “by pressing them for more categoric assurances of intent in advance”.¹²⁹⁹

Yet, it became ever more urgent for Britain to secure a large Swiss tank order to maintain its war potential. According to a memorandum by the MoS to the MoD, Berne’s order was necessary to maintain the four existing tank factories in production.¹³⁰⁰ Nevertheless, the British Ambassador continued to advise London not to press the Swiss on this issue. Moreover, in late March 1954, Kobelt reassured Lamb that he still intended to strengthen Switzerland’s defences with tanks, but that he was waiting for the politically opportune moment to do so.¹³⁰¹ Back in London, the Ambassador’s pragmatic but optimistic approach was not only shared by the MoS and the FO, but also by Vickers-Armstrongs.¹³⁰² The news from Berne, that the Federal Department of Public Economy continued to advocate arms imports from Britain, was certainly helpful in maintaining this positive attitude.¹³⁰³

At least with regard to the choice of the tank type, the British assessment was right. To overcome the political obstacles and to equip the Swiss Army with medium

¹²⁹⁸ Switzerland – Review of Military Affairs for 1953, Hutchins (Berne), TNA, FO 371/112714.

¹²⁹⁹ Lamb (Berne) to Cheetham (FO), 08.02.1954, TNA, FO 371/112713.

¹³⁰⁰ D(54)9 – Tank Production, MoD, 08.02.1954, TNA, DEFE 13/35.

¹³⁰¹ Lamb (Berne) to Cheetham (London), 31.03.1954, TNA, FO 371/112713.

¹³⁰² Extract from JWPC(AWP)/M(54)8, Minutes, 27.04.1954; Boombes (MoS) to Leavett (FO), 13.05.1954, TNA, FO 371/112713.

¹³⁰³ Lamb (Berne) to Selby (FO), 25.05.1954, TNA, FO 371/112713.

tanks, the Federal Military Department used the financial argument, which only applied to the Centurion. Therefore, while the M-48 remained unavailable for Switzerland,¹³⁰⁴ the purchase of the M-47 was ruled out and the Centurion became the only option which had a chance of success in Parliament. Kobelt and his aides consciously used the financial argument to convince the political establishment about the advisability of purchasing the Centurion.¹³⁰⁵ As in late April the Defence Minister recommended an order of between 100 and 150 Centurions to the National and the State Councils' Military Commissions, the choice for the British tank was clearly justified by the beneficial impact an important arms deal with Britain would have on Switzerland's position within the EPU, and not by military reasons.¹³⁰⁶ This strategy was successful, because even the National Council's Military Commission, which was more reluctant than the State Council's, agreed to the purchase of 100 Centurions on a consultative basis. Although this compromise was somehow forced upon the military establishment, it was endorsed by the National Defence Commission in early June.¹³⁰⁷

The choice between the Centurion and the Patton, which apparently were two tanks of similar value, was not made on military, but on economic grounds. The Swiss decided for the Centurion, because their trade position could be improved by reducing their creditor position within the EPU through arms purchases in the UK. The British were aware of Switzerland's economic incentive, and therefore remained optimistically calm in the light of Swiss indecision, despite the urgent need for hard currency and the fear of a diminishing war potential. Although London could rejoice that the British Centurion had won against its American competitor, it remained to be seen whether the arms deal would materialise, because the entire Federal Assembly had yet to approve it.

¹³⁰⁴ Davis (Foreign Aid Division, DoD) to de Bremond (Washington), 30.06.1954; Stewart (OMA, OSD) to (Foreign Aid Division, DoD), 04.05.1954, NARA, RG 330, Entry 21, Country Files 1949-1955, Box 82.

¹³⁰⁵ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to Bühler, 03.04.1954, SFA, E5155(-), 1971/202, Bd.77.

¹³⁰⁶ Kobelt (FMD) to Military Commissions of the Federal Assembly, 22.04.1954, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1860, Bd.79.

¹³⁰⁷ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 02.06.1954, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4063.

11.2. *The Enemy Within*

In early summer 1954, it looked as if the purchase of 100 Centurions was well under way. The National Defence Commission had accepted the compromise, which Kobelt had reached with the National Council's Military Commission. Nevertheless, there were still many political hurdles ahead, as for the moment not even the Federal Council had given its approval, and the Federal Assembly would probably be the biggest stumbling block. Whereas these political obstacles were foreseeable, the military leadership was suddenly confronted with an "enemy from within", because members of the Swiss Army openly criticised the Centurion purchase.

In mid-June 1954, the Defence Minister submitted to his fellow Federal Councillors a Centurion draft bill for approval.¹³⁰⁸ The Federal Finance Department, however, complained that it had been informed too late, and had thus not been able to comment on the issue. Therefore, the Federal Council decided in its meeting of 19 June to postpone the discussion on the draft bill until after the parliamentary summer session.¹³⁰⁹ In spite of this initial setback, the British Embassy – which was kept up to date by the Federal Military Department – rejoiced "that the Federal Council intend[ed] definitely to plump for Centurions".¹³¹⁰ Nevertheless, it was aware that for "constitutional and financial reasons there [were] many factors likely to affect and perhaps jeopardise a decision on the purchase of these tanks".¹³¹¹

Shortly after the Federal Council's meeting, Finance Minister Hans Streuli criticised Kobelt for his draft bill. He emphasised that only SFr.48 million remained from the rearmament programme's tank credit of SFr.455 million, and thus a new credit would be necessary. The crux of the matter was, however, that these 100 Centurions were the first step towards the large scale equipment of the Swiss Army with medium tanks, and their purchase would thus be decisive. According to the Finance Minister, the Federal Military Department did not sufficiently inform the Federal Council and the Parliament about the bill's financial ramifications.¹³¹² The Federal Finance Department's report to the Federal Council of late September was on the same lines, but Streuli stressed even more that most of the tank credit had been

¹³⁰⁸ Kobelt (FMD) to Federal Council, 17.06.1954, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1863, Bd.86.

¹³⁰⁹ Auszug aus dem Protokoll des Bundesrats, 19.06.1954, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1863, Bd.86.

¹³¹⁰ Jackson (Berne) to Selby (FO), 20.07.1954, TNA, FO 371/112713.

¹³¹¹ Jackson (Berne) to Selby (FO), 28.07.1954, TNA, FO 371/112713.

¹³¹² Streuli (FFD) to Kobelt (FMD), 21.06.1954, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1863, Bd.86.

erroneously spent on military infrastructure and on the rearmament programme's additional costs. Yet, he admitted that there was a need to strengthen Swiss defences with tanks. Therefore and despite his sharp criticism, he did not oppose the Centurion bill.¹³¹³

Kobelt nevertheless tried to justify why the tank credit had been spent on other things, and argued that the military five-year plan had left room for miscalculations, because it had been a programme and had not consisted of detailed projects.¹³¹⁴ In addition, the bill was also revised to address the financial ramifications of a first Centurion series. Apparently, the Federal Council was satisfied with this meagre justification and limited measure, and approved the bill on 29 October.¹³¹⁵ The need for tanks was based on military grounds, but the Federal Government explicitly stated that the Centurion was preferred to the Patton because of its lower price, and the beneficial effects it could have on Switzerland's position within the EPU.¹³¹⁶ Obviously, this explanation was also a means to justify the high cost of this arms purchase, for which an additional credit was necessary.

Yet, would this economic argument be sufficient to quell the Centurion's opponents? On 10 November, the British Ambassador predicted that the bill would be opposed from various sides: the parliamentary opposition, composed by the Labour Party and the Ring of Independents; a group within the Swiss Army, who believed that firepower and mobility was a better tank defence than tanks; and the tax-payer, who preferred "to postpone the evil day of payment for national defence". Despite the number of opponents, Lamb remained confident that the Centurion deal would materialise.¹³¹⁷ Initially, this optimism was justified. In mid-November, despite three opposing votes, the bill passed the State Council's Military Commission without major problems. One conservative State Councillor even appropriated himself the economic argument, and observed that the Swiss had an interest in buying tanks in Britain, but not from the US, with whom Switzerland was fighting the "watch war".¹³¹⁸

¹³¹³ Streuli (FFD) to Federal Council, 25.09.1954, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1863, Bd.86.

¹³¹⁴ Kobelt (FMD) to Federal Council, 30.09.1954, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1863, Bd.86.

¹³¹⁵ Auszug aus dem Protokoll des Bundesrats, 29.10.1954, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1863, Bd.86.

¹³¹⁶ Botschaft des Bundesrates an die Bundesversammlung betreffend Vermehrung der Panzerabwehrwaffen und Beschaffung von Panzern, 29.10.1954, SFA, E2001(E), 1972/33, Bd.4.

¹³¹⁷ Lamb (Berne) to Eden (FO), 10.11.1954, TNA, FO 371/109419.

¹³¹⁸ Protokoll der Sitzung der Militärkommission des Ständerates, 11.11.1954, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1863, Bd.6.

Meanwhile, not everyone approved the idea of paying the Centurions through the EPU to ease Switzerland's creditor position. The Swiss representative to the OEEC, Gérard Bauer, reminded Berne that in the case of the French AMX-13 tanks, it had been decided not to pay them through the EPU. Therefore, he argued that if the Centurions were to be paid through this payment system, the French could accuse the Swiss of privileging the British.¹³¹⁹ For the moment, however, such concerns were ignored by the Trade Section. On 16 November, Schaffner informed von Wattenwyl that on the Bank of England's request, imports from Britain, including arms imports, had usually been paid through the EPU. Accordingly, he asked the Head of the Military Technical Service to insert a clause into the Centurion contract, stipulating that the payment would take place through the Payments Union.¹³²⁰ Von Wattenwyl was very grateful for the Trade Section's support, and he observed that especially the information on the payment situation with Britain would be very helpful for the negotiations with the parliamentary commissions.¹³²¹

The Defence Minister was aware of the difficulties which lay ahead. He feared the Labour Party's opposition, and was disappointed by many French-speaking politicians, who opposed additional arms purchases. Therefore, and in the light of much criticism in the press, he requested that his corps commanders stand up for the tank bill.¹³²² Meanwhile, he received the support from the British Embassy in Berne. The Military Attaché supplied the Federal Military Department with information to refute allegations by the press that the Centurion was obsolete,¹³²³ and the Ambassador called on London with the request to speed up the delivery dates. Lamb, who was aware that the Swiss had recently begun to develop their own tank, argued that if the tanks could only be delivered within two years, there was "a popular fallacy in Switzerland that within very little more time a comparable Swiss tank could be developed".¹³²⁴ Although the MoS believed that this request was overzealous, it was nevertheless ready to intervene with Vickers-Armstrongs if the delivery dates would become a problem.¹³²⁵

¹³¹⁹ Bauer (Swiss OEEC Delegation) to Zehnder (FPD), 16.11.1954, dodis.ch/10208, *SDD*.

¹³²⁰ Schaffner (Trade Section) to von Wattenwyl (MTS), 16.11.1954, SFA, E2001(E), 1972/33, Bd.4.

¹³²¹ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to Schaffner (Trade Section), 18.11.1954, SFA, E5155(-), 1971/202, Bd.61.

¹³²² Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 18.11.1954, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4063.

¹³²³ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to FMD, 18.11.1954; Hutchins (Berne) to von Wattenwyl (MTS), 25.11.1954, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1863, Bd.86; Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to FMD, 26.11.1954, SFA, E5155(-), 1971/202, Bd.77.

¹³²⁴ Lamb (Berne) to Harrison (FO), 23.11.1954, TNA, FO 371/109419.

¹³²⁵ Doggett (MoS) to Leavett (FO), 04.12.1954, TNA, FO 371/109419.

Yet, it was unclear whether Kobelt's sorrows were justified, for also the National Council's Military Commission approved the Centurion bill in its meeting in late November. Indeed, there were some critical voices, which questioned the advisability of purchasing medium tanks before there was a clear doctrine which took the nuclearization of the European battlefield into account, and whether the Centurion was up to date. But with a few exceptions there was a general agreement that these tanks were necessary to strengthen Swiss defences, and to show to the rest of the world that Switzerland was willing to defend itself. As a result, the commission recommended the bill for approval.¹³²⁶ However, the State and the National Councils' Military Commissions were not necessarily representative for the entire Federal Assembly, which was supposed to decide upon the bill in December. Therefore, and especially because of the criticism from within the Swiss Army, the Centurion purchase remained endangered.

One of the main exponents of the tank weapon in Switzerland, the Head of the Light Troops, had publicly intimated that he disagreed with the choice for the British Centurion, and preferred the American Patton. Unsurprisingly, the Defence Minister, the Chief of the General Staff, and the other members of the National Defence Commission were strongly irritated by de Muralt, and feared that his behaviour could prejudice the bill.¹³²⁷ But he was not the only critic from within. Also another high-ranking officer, and especially Major Eddy Bauer, History Professor at the University of Neuchâtel and Lecturer for War Studies at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETH Zurich), overtly expressed their disagreement with the choice for the British against the American tank.¹³²⁸ This criticism from within was certainly not helpful in quelling the Centurion-bashing, which continued unabated in the press.¹³²⁹

These attacks from all sides created a political climate, which was profoundly hostile to the British tank. Obviously, these developments had also an impact on the Federal Assembly. The first chamber to discuss the bill was the State Council. Although it did not reject the tank purchase, it attached such strings to it, that equipping the Swiss Army with the Centurion was no longer realistic. In light of these

¹³²⁶ Protokoll der Sitzung der Militärkommission des Nationalrates, 29.11.1954, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1863, Bd.86.

¹³²⁷ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 02.12.1954, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4063.

¹³²⁸ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 04.12.1954, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4063.

¹³²⁹ „Schrottabladeplatz“, *National-Zeitung*, 09.12.1954.

developments, the National Council's Military Commission met again before the bill would be discussed by the entire lower chamber. Despite the Centurion's difficulties in the State Council, in a mid-December meeting, the commission decided against a motion by one of its members, who desired to postpone the discussion of the bill in the National Council.¹³³⁰ Nevertheless, as it appeared that the State Council refused to reverse its decision, and the bill's destiny in the National Council looked increasingly grim, after two more meetings the commission decided to postpone the debate on the bill. The Federal Council would first have to amend the bill with additional technical and financial information, and then to resubmit it. Even the Finance Minister's appeal in favour of the Centurion could not change the National Councillors' minds.¹³³¹

In late 1954, the British Ambassador thus had to report to London that the decision on the acquisition of medium tanks had been postponed until the March session of the Chambers, because "political impulses prevailed over military considerations".¹³³² The British Embassy, which had been working hard on the Centurion deal over the last years, grew increasingly frustrated, and sharply criticised the Swiss: "This conflict between common-sense appraisal and political emotion in a matter of such vital importance is, we feel, a remarkable feature of the Swiss picture today".¹³³³ Although this frustration seemed to be justified, nothing was lost yet, and Britain could still secure a most valuable tank order.

The new Defence Minister, Paul Chaudet, acted swiftly. Immediately after taking office, he began to work on the tank bill, and on 9 February 1955 he submitted an amended version to the Federal Council.¹³³⁴ To succeed this time, the Federal Councillors acted more decisively. In their meeting of 18 February, they accepted the new bill, which contained additional specifications on the choice of the Centurion, and the financial implications its purchase would have.¹³³⁵ Nevertheless, the British Embassy, which had lost its optimism remained sceptical and observed that it

¹³³⁰ Protokoll der Sitzung der Militärkommission des Nationalrates, 14.12.1954, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1863, Bd.86.

¹³³¹ Protokollnotizen der Sitzungen der Militärkommission des Nationalrates, 22.12.1954, 23.12.1954, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1863, Bd.86.

¹³³² Lamb (Berne) to Eden (FO), 29.12.1954, TNA, FO 371/118091.

¹³³³ Berne to FO, 04.01.1955, TNA, FO 371/118091.

¹³³⁴ Chaudet (FMD) to Federal Council, 09.02.1955, SFA, E2800, 1967/59, Bd.36.

¹³³⁵ Auszug aus dem Protokoll des Bundesrates, 18.02.1955; Bericht des Bundesrates an die Bundesversammlung betreffend Vermehrung der Panzerabwehrwaffen und Beschaffung von Panzern sowie über die Mehrkosten des Rüstungsprogramms, 18.02.1955, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1863, Bd.87.

remained to be seen “whether in the second round the Federal Assembly [would] decide to approve the recommendation of the Swiss Government”.¹³³⁶

Indeed, there was reason for concern. According to rumours, Vickers-Armstrongs had asked to be paid for the tanks in convertible Swiss francs, not through the EPU. The British Ambassador feared that if this was the case, the Federal Military Department would lose the important economic argument in favour of the Centurion in its dealings with the Federal Assembly.¹³³⁷ Yet, these rumours seemed to be unfounded, because Vickers-Armstrongs had apparently not asked to be paid in Swiss francs, and the Treasury, the Bank of England, and the Arms Working Party continued to favour a payment through the EPU.¹³³⁸ Nonetheless, whether the tanks were to be paid through the Payments Union or not, was a contentious issue, but the problem came from within the Federal Government.

In line with the criticism of his OEEC Delegate Bauer, Foreign Minister Petitpierre argued against the payment of the Centurions through the EPU, and emphasised that he had always opposed the payment of weapons through this organisation. Petitpierre feared that by using the Payments Union for weapons purchases, Switzerland risked discrediting its neutrality.¹³³⁹ Despite these concerns, the Trade Section continued to defend the payment through the EPU, and was thus a very welcomed support for the Federal Military Department. Although Schaffner observed that the British attitude in the recent economic negotiations on watch import quotas had been “disappointing”, and thus from a trade policy perspective they should not be privileged in tank purchases, he stated that the EPU-argument still applied as much as before. In addition, he noted that over the last years British weapons had always been paid through the Payments Union, and questioned whether there was a direct link between Switzerland’s neutrality and the method of payment for weapons.¹³⁴⁰ Despite continuous complaints by the Federal Political Department that this practice endangered Switzerland’s neutrality status by putting financial above

¹³³⁶ Berne to FO, 23.02.1955, TNA, FO 371/118091.

¹³³⁷ Lamb (Berne) to FO, 26.02.1955, TNA, FO 371/118091.

¹³³⁸ JWPC(AWP)/M(55)5, Minutes, 01.03.1955, TNA, DEFE 10/211; FO to Berne, 02.03.1955, TNA, FO 371/118091.

¹³³⁹ Petitpierre (FPD) to Kobelt (FMD), 07.12.1954, dodis.ch/10205, SDD.

¹³⁴⁰ Schaffner (Trade Section) to FMA, 17.02.1955, SFA, E5001(F), 1970/6, Bd.8.

foreign policy interests, those in favour of using the Centurion to balance the creditor position within the EPU could impose their will.¹³⁴¹

Consequently, the major argument in favour of the Centurion – besides the military one – remained. As it appeared by early 1955 that the Cold War was not yet over, the domestic political climate had become less hostile to large arms purchases. The attacks by the press on the British tank had abated, and the Federal Military Department had finally been able – through an important lobbying campaign – to convince the National and the State Councillors about the military necessity to equip the Swiss Army with medium tanks. Therefore, in mid-March, the National and the State Councils' Military Commissions endorsed the Centurion bill without a single opposing vote,¹³⁴² and in late March, it was approved by the Federal Assembly.¹³⁴³ To ease its creditor position within the EPU, Switzerland paid almost instantly for the tanks. Contrary to Petitpierre's fears, the use of this payment method did not arouse the suspicion of other countries, and thus did not discredit Swiss neutrality.¹³⁴⁴ Nevertheless, the Foreign Minister continued to oppose the payment of weapons through the EPU. But on the insistence of his colleagues from the Federal Department of Public Economy and the Federal Finance Department, Federal Councillors Holenstein and Streuli, he finally agreed to exceptions being made in the case of Britain.¹³⁴⁵

Consequently, after more than half a decade, the Swiss military establishment had finally succeeded in equipping the army with a first series of 100 medium tanks. Initially, the British had not been in a position to deliver the desired Centurions. But once the international situation had become less alarming, and London was again eager to sell weapons for mainly financial reasons, the Swiss population had lost its taste for rearmament. Moreover, after Switzerland's qualification for American military aid, the Centurion had to compete with the Patton. Yet, after choosing the British tank, the Federal Military Department had to convince a reluctant Federal Council and quell the opposition within the Federal Assembly. Although the tank bill

¹³⁴¹ Zehnder (FPD) to Schaffner (Trade Section), 24.02.1955; Homberger (Swiss Trade and Industry Association) to Schaffner (Trade Section), 21.03.1955, SFA, E2001(E), 1972/33, Bd.4.

¹³⁴² Protokoll der Sitzung der Militärkommission des Nationalrates, 10.03.1955, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1863, Bd.87; Protokoll der Sitzung der Militärkommission des Nationalrates, 17.03.1955, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1866, Bd.4.

¹³⁴³ Bundesbeschluss betreffend Vermehrung der Panzerabwehrwaffen und Beschaffung von Panzern sowie über die Mehrkosten des Rüstungsprogramms, 25.03.1955, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1863, Bd.87.

¹³⁴⁴ Streuli (FFD) to Petitpierre (FPD), 06.12.1956, SFA, E2001(E), 1976/17, Bd.103.

¹³⁴⁵ See various documents in SFA, E2001(E), 1976/17, Bd.103; E5001(F), 1968/100Bd.97.

was eventually accepted, the tank purchase had hung in the balance for quite a while. Finally, even though the tank purchase itself was militarily motivated, the Centurion was chosen for primarily economic reasons.

11.3. The Rieser Affair

The purchase of 100 Centurions was only the first step towards equipping the Swiss Army with tanks. Therefore, as soon as these tanks had been delivered, the military leadership sought to increase the armoured units by an additional tank series. The choice of the tank model was no longer an issue, for the first series had determined the course for the purchase of more Centurions. In addition, after the neutralization of Austria and, particularly after the Red Army had brutally repressed the Hungarian Uprising, the Swiss regained their taste for rearmament. There was a consensus on the need to strengthen Switzerland's defences through additional tank purchases. Meanwhile in Britain, the desire to earn money and to maintain the war potential through arms sales remained unbroken. But this ideal context for arms transfers was nonetheless troubled, for a "scandal" in relation to the first Centurion series suddenly erupted in Switzerland.

In the National Defence Commission meeting of 21 November 1956, the Chief of the General Staff suggested the purchase of another series of 100 Centurions. In the light of the precarious international situation, he emphasised that there was a particular need to strengthen the Swiss Army with additional tanks. All the corps commanders agreed with this reasoning, and approved another Centurion series.¹³⁴⁶ The consensus in Berne on the need for additional tanks was so strong that only a little more than two weeks later, the Federal Council approved an armaments bill, containing 100 Centurions. This time, there was no need to justify the purchase on economic grounds. The Federal Government limited itself to military reasons, and mainly argued that tanks were necessary to support the infantry in its defensive battle.¹³⁴⁷ Even the Federal Assembly did not cause any trouble. On 21 December, the State and National Councils simultaneously granted – among other armament credits

¹³⁴⁶ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 21.11.1956, SFA, E9500.52(-), 1984/122, Bd.8.

¹³⁴⁷ Botschaft des Bundesrates an die Bundesversammlung betreffend ein Sofortprogramm zur Beschaffung von Kriegsmaterial, 07.12.1956, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/101, Bd.128.

– SFr.105 million for tank purchases.¹³⁴⁸ In Britain, the prospect of another Swiss Centurion order was appreciated, especially in view of maintaining the production capacity.¹³⁴⁹

Yet, what had begun as a smooth arms acquisition process was suddenly overshadowed by the discovery of irregularities in the first Centurion deal. In late 1956, the Federal Finance Inspection¹³⁵⁰ found out that the representative of Vickers-Armstrongs in Switzerland was none other than Hubert Rieser, the brother of the former Swiss Military Attaché in London, Hans Rieser. This discovery provoked an investigation, which in turn found that Hans Rieser had suggested his brother as representative to Vickers-Armstrongs in 1949, when he had been responsible for the initial negotiations on the British tank. The main contentious issue was, however, that the commission of approximately SFr.500,000 for the first Centurion series went to the Rieser Building Firm. Hans Rieser owned one third of the firm's capital. Therefore, the Federal Finance Inspection concluded that Rieser had abused his position as Military Attaché to enrich himself and his family.¹³⁵¹ This whole affair also threw an unfavourable light on the Military Technical Service. According to the Finance Inspection agency, von Wattenwyl and his subalterns had certainly been aware of what was going on.¹³⁵²

Finance Minister Streuli, who was the first among the Federal Councillors to be informed about the "Rieser affair", immediately called for an enquiry of Hans Rieser, who then held the position of Military Attaché in Washington.¹³⁵³ On the Federal Prosecutor's advice, Minister of Justice Markus Feldmann supported this request.¹³⁵⁴ Thereupon, on 14 December 1956, the Federal Council decided to open a judicial enquiry against Hans Rieser.¹³⁵⁵ By mid-January 1957 the Federal Prosecutor concluded that there was not enough evidence to continue the judicial enquiry.¹³⁵⁶ Thus, a few days later, the Federal Council decided to open a disciplinary enquiry

¹³⁴⁸ Bundesbeschluss betreffend ein Sofortprogramm zur Beschaffung von Kriegsmaterial, 21.12.1956, *Bundesblatt*, Bd.2, Ht.52, 28.12.1956, pp.1026-1027.

¹³⁴⁹ AWP/M(56)42, Minutes, 04.09.1956, TNA, DEFE 10/212.

¹³⁵⁰ FFI.

¹³⁵¹ Jeker (FFI) to Streuli (FFD), 08.11.1956, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1869, Bd.5.

¹³⁵² Jeker (FFI) to Dubois (Federal Prosecutor's Office (FPO)), 03.12.1956, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1869, Bd.5.

¹³⁵³ Streuli (FFD) to Chaudet (FMD), 14.11.1956, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1869, Bd.5.

¹³⁵⁴ Dubois (FPO) to Feldmann (Federal Department of Justice and Police (FDJP)), 11.12.1956; Feldmann (FDJP) to Chaudet (FMD), 12.12.1956, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1869, Bd.5.

¹³⁵⁵ Auszug aus dem Protokoll des Bundesrates, 14.12.1956, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1869, Bd.5.

¹³⁵⁶ Schlussbericht über das gerichtspolizeiliche Ermittlungsverfahren gemäss Art. 100 ff. BStP in Sachen Rieser Johann Gottlieb, FPO, 14.01.1957, SFA, E2800, 1967/59, Bd.30.

against Rieser. In addition, he was temporarily relieved of his position in Washington and his pay was withheld.¹³⁵⁷ Later, based on the Federal Prosecutor's conclusion that Rieser had violated the civil service law, the Federal Council finally dismissed him without any pension benefits.¹³⁵⁸ Thus, Rieser's protestations of innocence remained unheard, and his hopes to return to the position of Military Attaché in Washington were definitely shattered.¹³⁵⁹

In Switzerland, the "Rieser affair" provoked a public outcry. Although the Federal authorities were strongly irritated by Rieser's behaviour themselves, it would appear that the severe punishment was largely intended to reassure the population. In Britain, despite an initial media interest, the whole affair was not perceived as dramatic. In early January 1957, Ambassador Däniker reported from London that he had received many enquiries from the British press. But this interest was short-lived, for no British public figure seemed to be involved in the case.¹³⁶⁰ Meanwhile, Vickers-Armstrongs observed that Hubert Rieser had not only been chosen on his brother's advice, but also because of his qualifications; the tanks would not have been cheaper without the commission; and that it was "a little unfair to say that Hubert Rieser did nothing to earn his commission".¹³⁶¹ In Whitehall, the Arms Working Party shared Vickers-Armstrongs' view that the tanks would not have been cheaper without the commission.¹³⁶² Däniker, who was aware that the British authorities believed that the commission had been neither inappropriate nor excessive, advised Berne not to intervene in London to reclaim a part of the amount which had been paid to Hubert Rieser.¹³⁶³

While representatives and their commissions were seen as part of the business in Britain, the Swiss were or pretended to be revolted by middlemen and their financial gains in the arms trade, and thus believed that the tanks could have been bought more cheaply. Therefore, the Federal authorities had to regain the confidence

¹³⁵⁷ Auszug aus dem Protokoll des Bundesrates, 18.01.1957, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1869, Bd.5.

¹³⁵⁸ Schönenberger (FPO) to Chaudet (FMD), 13.04.1957, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1869, Bd.5; Chaudet (FMD) to Federal Council, 13.06.1957, E2800, 1967/59, Bd.30.

¹³⁵⁹ Rieser to de Montmollin (FMD), 05.01.1957; Aktennotiz über eine Besprechung mit Oberst Rieser, Käch (FMA), 17.01.1957, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1869, Bd.5.

¹³⁶⁰ Däniker (London) to FPD, 02.01.1957; Däniker (London) to Clottu (FPD), 16.01.1957, SFA, E2200.40, 1971/164, Bd.8.

¹³⁶¹ Cunningham (Vickers-Armstrongs) to Littlejohn Cook (Berne), 25.01.1957; Cunningham (Vickers-Armstrongs) to Anderson (FO), 22.05.1957, TNA, FO 371/130614; Cunningham (Vickers-Armstrongs) to von Wattenwyl (MTS), 28.01.1957, SFA, E5155(-), 1971/202, Bd.99.

¹³⁶² AWP/M(57)2, Minutes, 22.01.1957, TNA, DEFE 10/215.

¹³⁶³ Däniker (London) to FPD, 14.02.1957, SFA, E2001(F), 1970/217, Bd.4.

of the Swiss population by avoiding the payment of a commission for the second tank series, and if possible to buy them at a lower price. Although this did not endanger the purchase of another Centurion series *per se*, the path leading to the reinforcement of Switzerland's tank defence became more arduous. In agreement with his fellow Federal Councillors, the Defence Minister decided that instead of the then discredited Military Technical Service, the Swiss Embassy in London would lead the negotiations for another Centurion series. The Military Technical Service would only have an advisory function for technical questions. More importantly, the negotiating partner would no longer be Vickers-Armstrongs, but the MoS.¹³⁶⁴

The British Embassy in Berne was aware of Switzerland's new negotiating position. In mid-January 1957, it warned the FO that if the MoS would now offer the Swiss the Centurions at a lower price than Vickers-Armstrongs had for the first series, the British could be accused of "collusion, unfair trade practice, or questionable tactics". Furthermore, it was feared that this would strengthen the Swiss Labour Party in its charges against the Military Technical Service, and "would also embarrass many of our friends and well-wishers in the Swiss Army, some of whom have openly [...] advocated the purchase of the Centurion as being the best tank for the needs and resources of the country – and in particular Colonel Brigadier de Wattenwyl". On these grounds, the Embassy recommended "[avoiding] any appearance of substantial price differentials between the Centurions produced by the MoS and by Vickers".¹³⁶⁵ In the meantime, the FO received the same advice from Commander Cunningham of Vickers-Armstrongs.¹³⁶⁶ In Whitehall, this reasoning was not only fully endorsed by the FO,¹³⁶⁷ but it also led the MoS to confirm that it would not offer the Centurion at a lower price than the private arms manufacturer – even though it could have done so.¹³⁶⁸ The British were thus well prepared when the negotiations for another Centurion series began.

On 21 February 1957, Ambassador Däniker personally informed the MoS that in the light of the "Rieser affair", Switzerland desired to purchase 100 Centurions on a government-to-government basis. The British counterparts observed, however, that

¹³⁶⁴ Streuli (FFD) to Chaudet (FMD), 02.02.1957; 14.02.1957; Chaudet (FMD) to Streuli (FFD), 06.02.1957, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/101, Bd.128; Aide-Mémoire, MTS, 26.01.1957; Chaudet (FMD) to Petitpierre (FPD), 18.02.1957, SFA, E2001(E), 1970/217, Bd.4.

¹³⁶⁵ Littlejohn Cook (Berne) to Anderson (FO), 14.01.1957, TNA, FO 371/130614.

¹³⁶⁶ Minute, Sniders (FO), 22.01.1957, TNA, FO 371/130614.

¹³⁶⁷ Sniders (FO) to Kirby (MoS), 28.01.1957, 28.01.1957, TNA, FO 371/130614.

¹³⁶⁸ Kirby (MoS) to Sniders (FO), 08.02.1957, TNA, FO 371/130614.

this would only become possible once the Swiss officially withdrew their earlier request for an offer to Vickers-Armstrongs. The MoS argued that it could not become a direct competitor to a private company. Yet, even in the case of an order with the MoS, some of the tanks would probably have to be produced by Vickers-Armstrongs, which was free to have its own business practices – such as commissions to their representatives.¹³⁶⁹ In light of this position, Däniker concluded that the only solution was to ask the British arms manufacturer to cancel the contract with its Swiss representative under the threat that only a limited order would be placed with the MoS.¹³⁷⁰

This solution was immediately taken up by the Defence Minister, who ordered his Military Attaché in London, Lieutenant-Colonel Koch, to ask Vickers-Armstrongs to cancel its contract with Hubert Rieser.¹³⁷¹ This blackmailing was successful, for in early March, Vickers-Armstrongs terminated its working relationship with Rieser.¹³⁷² According to Chaudet, it thus no longer mattered whether Switzerland placed an order with a private company or the MoS. All that mattered now were the price and the delivery dates. Therefore, he stated that while the earlier request for an offer to Vickers-Armstrongs would not be withdrawn, the MoS would have to be asked for a separate offer, from which he expected a lower price. The Defence Minister emphasised that if the British were unwilling to do so, they could be reminded that a Swiss tank order was in their economic interest.¹³⁷³

Yet, Ambassador Däniker learned from his preliminary enquiries, that an offer from the MoS would probably not be cheaper, and would not include a warranty. Therefore, and because of foreseeable price increases through higher salaries in the British iron and steel industry, he urged Berne to start the negotiations with Vickers-Armstrongs.¹³⁷⁴ The enquiries by the Military Attaché in London, who had been put in charge of the negotiations after the issue of the representative had been settled, came to the same result. In mid-April, he was informed by the MoS that there was “no reason to expect that there would be a substantial difference in price if this Ministry

¹³⁶⁹ Aktennotiz über die Besprechung beim MoS, Specker (MTS); Däniker (London), 21.02.1957, SFA, E2001(E), 1970/217, Bd.4; Reisebericht London 20.-23. Februar 1957, Specker (MTS), 25.02.1957, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/101, Bd.128.

¹³⁷⁰ Note, FPD, 25.02.1957, SFA, E2001(E), 1970/217, Bd.4.

¹³⁷¹ Chaudet (FMD) to Koch (London), 01.03.1957, SFA, E2200.40, 1971/164, Bd.8.

¹³⁷² Vickers-Armstrongs to Rieser, 06.03.1957, SFA, E2001(E), 1970/217, Bd.4.

¹³⁷³ Chaudet (FMD) to Petitpierre (FPD), 27.03.1957, SFA, E2001(E), 1970/217, Bd.4.

¹³⁷⁴ Däniker (London) to Petitpierre (FPD), 12.04.1957, SFA, E2001(E), 1970/217, Bd.4.

were to supply the tanks direct to your government”.¹³⁷⁵ Consequently, in line with the Ambassador, he called on Berne to begin the negotiations with Vickers-Armstrongs without waiting for a precise offer by the MoS.¹³⁷⁶ The Defence Minister followed this advice, and authorised the Military Attaché to negotiate with Vickers-Armstrongs without an individual offer from the MoS.¹³⁷⁷

On 26 April, the Military Attaché and a Military Technical Service representative met with Vickers-Armstrongs to begin the negotiations for another Centurion series. On behalf of the Swiss Government, Koch requested – as there was no more middleman – a price reduction in the amount of the commission for the first Centurion series. The Military Technical Service representative added that such a price reduction was essential to calm the Swiss population, and thus not to endanger the purchase of these tanks. Vickers-Armstrongs refused to go that far, but nonetheless promised to look into the issue.¹³⁷⁸ The result was rather modest, for a few days later the arms manufacturer informed the Military Attaché that it would be willing “as a gesture of goodwill to the Swiss Government [...] to make a token total reduction of £20,000”.¹³⁷⁹ Even though this amount was below his expectations, Koch nevertheless believed that it was a sufficiently strong gesture to conclude a contract with Vickers-Armstrongs, and advised Chaudet accordingly.¹³⁸⁰

On the Defence Minister’s request, the Federal Council agreed with this reasoning, and the Military Attaché was authorised to prepare the contract with Vickers-Armstrongs.¹³⁸¹ In early June, the contract for another series of 100 Centurions was signed and ratified. However, with SFr.104.47 million, the tanks came at an even higher cost than the initially expected SFr.100 million in the armaments bill. This was not because of another commission, which could have been smuggled in, but due to salary increases in the British iron and steel industry.¹³⁸² Consequently, had the Swiss not insisted on getting the tanks cheaper through either the MoS or a

¹³⁷⁵ Cox (MoS) to Koch (London), 18.04.1957; Petitpierre (FPD) to Chaudet (FMD), 16.04.1957; Chaudet (FMD) to Koch (London), 17.04.1957, SFA, E2200.40, 1971/164, Bd.8; Koch (London) to Cox (MoS), 17.04.1957, TNA, FO 371/130614.

¹³⁷⁶ Koch (London) to Chaudet (FMD), 25.04.1957, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/101, Bd.128.

¹³⁷⁷ Chaudet (FMD) to Koch (London), 26.04.1957, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/101, Bd.128.

¹³⁷⁸ Reisebericht London 24.-27. April 1957, 29.04.1957, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/101, Bd.111.

¹³⁷⁹ Hill (Vickers-Armstrongs) to Koch (London), 01.05.1957, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/101, Bd.128.

¹³⁸⁰ Koch (London) to Chaudet (FMD), 02.05.1957, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/101, Bd.128.

¹³⁸¹ Auszug aus dem Protokoll des Bundesrates, 03.05.1957; Chaudet (FMD) to Koch (London), 23.05.1957, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/101, Bd.128.

¹³⁸² Contract of Supply between the Service Technique du Département militaire fédéral and Vickers-Armstrongs, 05.06.1957, SFA, E5155(-), 1971/202, Bd.99; Chaudet (FMD) to Streuli (FFD), 21.06.1957, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/101, Bd.128.

price reduction by eliminating Vickers-Armstrongs' representative, they could have bought them earlier and at a lower price.

Yet, whereas the first Centurion series caused a stir in Switzerland, the second series had a similar effect in Britain. Against the background of the Sandys Defence White Paper – which called for cuts in defence spending – and the difficulties the state-run arms factories were facing, the opposition attacked the MoS in the House of Commons for mishandling the Swiss Centurion order. On 29 July 1957, the Labour MP Denis Healey reproached Minister of Supply Aubrey Jones that a private company was making profits with the Swiss tank order, even though the state-run factories were producing half the tanks. According to Healey, the entire order should have gone to the Royal Ordnance Factories, which were “capable of producing these tanks at least 20 per cent cheaper than any private firm”. In light of Switzerland's efforts after the “Rieser affair” to get the tanks directly from the MoS at a lower price, not only the attack, but also Jones' excuse was striking: “because it is part of the Swiss convention of neutrality, if not their neutrality laws, that orders for arms should be placed not with foreign Governments but with firms”.¹³⁸³

This answer was a blatant lie, and did thus not satisfy the Labour MP. Only two days later, and with additional information about the case, he returned to the attack in the House of Commons. He set the scene for his accusations by referring to the first Centurion series and the “Rieser affair”. Healey claimed that Vickers-Armstrongs had secured the first Swiss tank order “after bribing the Swiss Military Attaché in London by appointing his brother as its representative in Switzerland”. Against this background, he observed that the Minister of Supply's justification for the second Swiss Centurion order was “completely untrue”. According to his enquiries with the Embassy of Switzerland, not only could the Swiss buy weapons on a government-to-government basis despite their neutrality, but more importantly, they even had approached the MoS. Yet, they had been told that the Ministry was not only incapable of producing tanks any cheaper than Vickers-Armstrongs, but also to produce the entire tank order. Healey was outraged, for this had happened at a time when the Royal Ordnance Factories were already far below their production capacity,

¹³⁸³ *The Parliamentary Debates: Official Report of the Sessions of the Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*, House of Commons, London: HMSO (hereafter *Hansard*), 29.07.1957, pp.844-845, SFA, E2001(E), 1972/33, Bd.4.

and they could have produced the tanks cheaper than Vickers-Armstrongs. Therefore, he believed that yet again there had been bribery.¹³⁸⁴

Evidently, these accusations were of interest to the Swiss. On the one hand, Ambassador Däniker disagreed with Healey that the first tank order had only materialised because of bribery by Vickers-Armstrongs. On the other hand, however, he approached Jones to ask whether it was true that the MoS could have produced the second Centurion series for less. The Minister answered evasively when he was directly confronted by Däniker in early August. In addition, he falsely stated in the House of Commons that the Swiss had placed an order with Vickers-Armstrongs before the MoS had made an offer.¹³⁸⁵ Jones found himself in a dilemma. He could not reasonably justify to the House of Commons why this arms contract had been secured by a private company, for it had been in the aim to protect Vickers-Armstrongs and British business interests after the outbreak of the “Rieser affair” that the MoS had refused to offer the Swiss the tanks at a lower price. While this reason would probably have had a limited effect on British Labour MPs, it would certainly have had a disastrous effect on the Swiss, who had been intentionally deceived.

Nevertheless, the Federal authorities deduced from Healey’s attacks and Jones’ obviously false statements that they had been deceived by the MoS. Yet, instead of accusing the British, they decided to provide Jones with additional information on the Centurion deals to help him justify his case in the House of Commons. After the very recent “Rieser affair”, it was feared that the debate in the British Parliament could lead to yet another scandal in Switzerland.¹³⁸⁶ These fears were shared by the British Embassy in Berne, especially once the Swiss press had reported on Healey’s allegations, and it became possible that the Federal Assembly could take up the issue. The Embassy was concerned by the adverse effects this could have on British commercial interests in Switzerland, i.e. on arms exports.¹³⁸⁷ The FO understood these concerns and asked the MoS for an official statement to reassure the Swiss, but only if the occasion therefore arose.¹³⁸⁸

¹³⁸⁴ *Hansard*, 31.07.1957, pp.1374-1377, SFA, E2001(E), 1972/33, Bd.4.

¹³⁸⁵ Däniker (London) to Petitpierre (FPD), 02.08.1957; 03.08.1957; *Hansard*, 02.08.1957, pp.1726-1743; Däniker (London) to Kohli (FPD), 06.08.1957, SFA, E2001(E), 1972/33, Bd.4.

¹³⁸⁶ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to Kaech (FMA), 21.08.1957; Chaudet (FMD) to Petitpierre (FPD), 30.08.1957, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/101, Bd.128.

¹³⁸⁷ Berne to FO, 19.08.1957, TNA, FO 371/130614.

¹³⁸⁸ Anderson (FO) to Cox (MoS), 03.09.1957, TNA, FO 371/130614.

Soon thereafter, there was no more need to do so. In early October 1957, the British Embassy in Berne informed London that the fear of further discussions in the Federal Assembly on the statements in the House of Commons had proved groundless.¹³⁸⁹ Nonetheless, Ambassador Lamb “hoped that this unfortunate storm in a teacup will not prejudice future purchases by Switzerland of arms and equipment from the UK”.¹³⁹⁰ Meanwhile in Britain, the debates in Parliament remained apparently also without consequences. The MoS and Vickers-Armstrongs thus got away with their “deception”, whereas Hans Rieser had to suffer the full consequences of his acts and was dismissed with disgrace. It was in the interest of both the Swiss and the British Government neither to divulge the truth, nor to search for it. The problem was that the truth could have endangered Anglo-Swiss arms transfers, which were important for Britain’s economy and war potential, as well as for Switzerland’s defence.

Consequently, Berne and London helped each other in confronting the criticism from their Parliaments and populations. Even though the MoS had deceived the Federal authorities, they neither asked for an apology, nor to be compensated. They certainly were aware that this deception covered their mishandling of the first Centurion purchase to a certain extent, and was thus in their own interest. Despite the complications caused by the “Rieser affair”, the Swiss military leadership had been able to equip the army with another medium tank series. Moreover, in comparison to the first Centurion series, these difficulties were negligible, especially as they only came to the fore once the armament credit had already been approved by Parliament. After the neutralisation of Austria and the crisis year of 1956, the Swiss population and Federal Assembly were again favourable to arms purchases. In Switzerland, tank purchases were mainly militarily motivated, and economic arguments were only necessary to choose the tank model and to overcome the political obstacles during the Cold War’s first détente. In Britain, however, arms sales to Switzerland were largely free of direct strategic and political motivations. London exported weapons to help stabilise its financial situation, and to maintain its war potential.

¹³⁸⁹ Littlejohn Cook (Berne) to Anderson (FO), 07.10.1957, TNA, FO 371/130614.

¹³⁹⁰ Lamb (Berne) to Lloyd, 27.01.1958, TNA, FO 371/137201.

12. Hunter

12.1. Interim Solution

During the Korean War, the Swiss reaffirmed their will for a self-reliant armaments policy. As a result, they decided to manufacture the entire Venom aircraft under licence, and to intensify the work on their own jet aircraft, which was to be powered by the British Sapphire engine. Besides the aim of a self-reliant armaments policy, the military leadership held the view that foreign aircraft did not suit Switzerland's particular topographical conditions, and the Vampire and the Venom had been fortunate exceptions. Therefore, they believed in the necessity of an indigenous jet aircraft, which would be adapted to Swiss conditions.¹³⁹¹ But after the Korean War, the P-16 was still not ready to enter production. Thus, the Federal Military Department had to again consider foreign aircraft as yet another interim solution. In the meantime, the British took a close interest in the development work of the P-16. If the Swiss succeeded in their undertaking, they would power the aircraft with British engines. If they failed, however, London intended to step in with its own aircraft, and thus continue its aircraft export success story with Switzerland.

In September 1951, a Swiss delegation to the Society of British Aircraft Constructors Flying Display and Exhibition in Farnborough could see the new prowess of the British aircraft industry, the prototype of the Hawker Hunter. This swept wing fighter aircraft had made its maiden flight in July 1951, but was not intended to enter service until 1953/4.¹³⁹² The British Hunter was supposed to surpass the performances of the American Sabre and the Soviet Mig-15, and the Swiss delegation concluded that it was the fastest and most modern of all aircraft types abroad. Yet they argued that neither the Hunter nor the other foreign aircraft under development suited Swiss conditions. Because of its alpine airfields, the trend towards higher speed and a bigger range of action ran contrary to Swiss needs of a very low minimal speed and short landing distances. Therefore, the members of the delegation were strengthened in their belief that the development of a Swiss jet aircraft was the

¹³⁹¹ Grand, *op. cit.*, pp.58-59.

¹³⁹² Peden, *Arms, Economics...*, *op. cit.*, p.239.

right path to follow.¹³⁹³ The visit to Farnborough the following year led neither to fundamentally new discoveries, nor to a reassessment. But one delegate observed that if the Swiss aircraft industry would not be able to deliver a modern aircraft in time, foreign aircraft would again have to be considered.¹³⁹⁴

Nonetheless, the Swiss military leadership remained convinced of the need to develop an indigenous jet aircraft. Meanwhile, however, the British Embassy in Berne began to plan for the case that Switzerland's aircraft development programme would fail. In early 1952, the British Air Attaché observed that the Swiss had encountered setbacks in the design and production of their aeroplane, and that this had led to disagreements on the practicability of such a project. Moreover, he observed that "some circles in the [Swiss] aircraft industry favour[ed] the continuance of the present programme of manufacturing British aircraft and engines under licence". Spencer believed that this was "the more practical policy", for it would relieve the Swiss of an important R&D burden. In addition, there would never be a large-scale production of the P-16 because the Swiss Air Force was small and an aircraft developed for Swiss conditions was unlikely to sell well abroad.¹³⁹⁵ The British Ambassador shared these views, and argued – together with the Air Attaché – that if Britain "could offer the Swiss new aircraft for the period 1955 onwards the balance might be tipped against the policy of home-designed aircraft and the British aircraft industry might secure the Swiss market permanently".¹³⁹⁶

Although this suggestion was forwarded by the FO to the MoS, it remained without consequences.¹³⁹⁷ Thus, in early 1953, Spencer reiterated his suggestion. He complained that none of Britain's latest designs of fighter aircraft were suitable for the Swiss Air Force, and called for the development of an aeroplane, which would suit Swiss needs. If not, he feared that an extremely important export market for aircraft would be lost.¹³⁹⁸ He was again supported by Scrivener, who emphasised that the prospective loss of aircraft sales, which amounted to four percent of Britain's total

¹³⁹³ Bericht der offiziellen Delegation an die Ausstellung und Vorführung des Verbandes der britischen Flugzeugindustrie in Farnborough 12.-14.9.1951, Gerber (DMA), 15.10.1951, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1854, Bd.82.

¹³⁹⁴ Bericht über die Abkommandierung zum „Flying Display und Exhibition 1952“ nach Farnborough vom 2.-4.9., Bachofner (SAF), 17.09.1952; Reisebericht über den Englandaufenthalt vom 1.-9. September 1952, Greinacher (MTS), 29.10.1952, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1857, Bd.72.

¹³⁹⁵ Annual Report on the SAF 1951, Spencer (Berne), TNA, FO 371/101648.

¹³⁹⁶ Scrivener (Berne) to Eden (FO), 11.02.1952, TNA, FO 371/101648.

¹³⁹⁷ Wright (FO) to Orchard (MoS), 03.04.1952, TNA, FO 371/101648.

¹³⁹⁸ Spencer (Berne) to AM, 03.01.1953, TNA, AIR 2/11375; Report on the SAF 1952, Spencer (Berne), TNA, FO 371/107349.

exports to Switzerland, would be disastrous. He argued that “[n]o increase in ordinary commercial sales could make good this gap”.¹³⁹⁹ There was nevertheless hope, for the Ambassador reported rumours about the possibility “that the Swiss will drop the proposal to manufacture their own aircraft, and they will continue to buy British aircraft”.¹⁴⁰⁰ But despite this prospect and a general agreement with the Embassy’s sorrows, the FO and the AM agreed that the idea of developing an aircraft especially for the very small Swiss market was not only “nonsense”, but in any case such an aircraft would not be ready in time.¹⁴⁰¹

In Switzerland, abandoning the development of an indigenous jet aircraft was, at the moment, out of the question. In early 1953, the National Defence Commission observed that the Swiss Air Force had to be re-equipped with modern fighter aircraft soon, and as there were no suitable foreign aeroplanes, the work on the P-16 had to be intensified.¹⁴⁰² Although the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement basically agreed with the National Defence Commission, it nevertheless tried to plan for the contingency that the development of the P-16 would fail. In the meeting of 20 February, National Councillor and Lieutenant-Colonel of the Swiss Air Force René Bühler argued that it was too risky to base all hopes on the P-16 alone. He thus called for sending a mission abroad to find suitable aircraft, which would afterwards be tested in Switzerland. Thereupon, he was informed that the Military Technical Service had already approached the British to demonstrate the Hunter or the Javelin, which were both – like the P-16 – equipped with Sapphire engines. Professor Ackeret, who was the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement’s President, favoured the Sabre. But Primault decidedly argued that there was no suitable American aeroplane.¹⁴⁰³

Although this discussion did not lead to an immediate decision, by autumn 1953, the Military Technical Service had finally convinced the British to demonstrate the Hunter in Switzerland. Yet, von Wattenwyl and his colleagues were not interested in this aircraft *per se*, for its landing and take-off distances were considered too long. What they wanted to observe was the Sapphire engine in action in hopes of applying

¹³⁹⁹ Scrivener (Berne) to Cheetham (FO), 08.01.1953, TNA, FO 371/107350.

¹⁴⁰⁰ Scrivener (Berne) to Eden (FO), 07.02.1953, TNA, FO 371/107349.

¹⁴⁰¹ Minute, Maby (FO), 24.01.1953; Orchard (MoS) to Heddy (FO), 25.02.1953, TNA, FO 371/107350.

¹⁴⁰² Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 22.01.1953, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4063.

¹⁴⁰³ Protokoll der 26. Sitzung der KMF, 20.02.1953, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1860, Bd.73.

lessons in developing the P-16.¹⁴⁰⁴ This clearly transpired during the Hunter's demonstration in October, because the Military Technical Service analysed the aircraft mainly in relation to the engine.¹⁴⁰⁵ The British Embassy was entirely aware that the Swiss were predominantly interested in the Sapphire, and informed London accordingly.¹⁴⁰⁶ Nevertheless, they did not seem too disappointed, likely because they were reassured by the prospect of another Venom series.

Already in its meeting of 2 December 1952, the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement determined the course for the manufacturing of additional Venoms. The Swiss Air Force observed that the first series of 150 aeroplanes had been planned under the assumption that the P-16 would be ready in 1956. Yet, as it appeared that the aircraft would not be available before 1958, it was argued that another series of 100 Venoms would be necessary to replace the Mustangs by 1955 and avoid a reduction of the fleet to less than 300 aircraft. This reasoning encountered no opposition, and the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement decided that the Swiss Air Force would have to prepare a formal request for another Venom series.¹⁴⁰⁷ It was, however, only in late June 1953 that the Head of the Swiss Air Force submitted the request for 100 more Venoms for SFr.115 million. In addition to the arguments mentioned above, he emphasised that this order would also be helpful for the maintenance of the Swiss aircraft industry, until it could start producing the P-16.¹⁴⁰⁸ The late submission of the request was probably caused by lengthy discussions as to whether there were more suitable aircraft available abroad.

Even before the request would be discussed in the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement, the Swiss Association of the Aircraft Industry began its lobbying in favour of another Venom series, which would again be manufactured by its members. To accelerate the decision-making process, Dechevrens stressed to Kobelt that it was urgent to approve the aircraft series at the very latest by the end of the year on the following grounds: the production of the Vampire and the Venom in Switzerland had not only required enormous efforts, but had also shown that the national aircraft industry was up to the task; this additional order was necessary to maintain the industry at a good level to guarantee the later production of the P-16; a

¹⁴⁰⁴ MTS to FMD, 03.10.1953, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1860, Bd.74.

¹⁴⁰⁵ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to FMD, 26.10.1953, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1860, Bd.74.

¹⁴⁰⁶ MacDermot (Berne) to FO, 18.09.1953; Scrivener (Berne) to FO, 02.10.1953, TNA, FO 371/107350.

¹⁴⁰⁷ Protokoll der 25. Sitzung der KMF, 02.12.1952, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1857, Bd.72.

¹⁴⁰⁸ Primault (SAF) to de Montmollin (FMD), 26.06.1953, SFA, E5560(C), 1975/46, Bd.275.

large part of the required credit would be spent in Switzerland and not abroad; and the international situation was not sufficiently stable to allow for the disappearance of the militarily vital domestic aircraft industry.¹⁴⁰⁹ Although the Defence Minister was sympathetic to this request, he nevertheless wanted a formal recommendation by his advisory body on aircraft matters.¹⁴¹⁰

In the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement meeting of 6 October, both von Wattenwyl and Primault strongly defended another Venom series to maintain the air force's strength. With regard to the choice of the aircraft, the Head of the Swiss Air Force stressed that his troops were satisfied with the Venom, and even if it was of a previous technological generation, it was the only suitable and available aircraft. This reasoning was shared by the entire commission, which unanimously decided in favour of Primault's initial request for 100 more licence-built Venoms.¹⁴¹¹ Two days later, this recommendation was endorsed by the Chief of the General Staff, who in turn advised Kobelt and the National Defence Commission to approve another Venom series to maintain the Swiss Air Force's strength and the Swiss aircraft industry.¹⁴¹² On these grounds, the Defence Minister and the corps commanders endorsed de Montmollin's recommendation without any significant opposition or discussion in their meeting of 21 October.¹⁴¹³

The draft bill for this arms purchase was ready towards the end of the year, and on 9 December, Kobelt submitted it to the Federal Council for approval.¹⁴¹⁴ As usual, however, opposition came from the Federal Finance Department. The Labour Finance Minister Max Weber argued that until the consultative commission – which had been appointed by the Federal Council to examine the increasing military expenditure – delivered its report, it was too early to take a decision on yet another armament bill. According to the Finance Minister, a hasty decision on another aircraft purchase risked prematurely foreclosing the possibility of reducing the military budget and the Swiss Air Force-fleet.¹⁴¹⁵

¹⁴⁰⁹ Dechevrens (ASIA) to Kobelt (FMD), 07.09.1953, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1860, Bd.73.

¹⁴¹⁰ Dechevrens (ASIA) to de Montmollin (FMD), 15.09.1953; Kobelt (FMD) to Dechevrens (ASIA), 17.09.1953, SFA, E5560(C), 1975/46, Bd.275.

¹⁴¹¹ Protokoll der 27. Sitzung der KMF, 06.10.1953, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1860, Bd.73.

¹⁴¹² De Montmollin to Kobelt (both FMD) and NDC, 08.10.1953, E5560(C), 1975/46, Bd.272.

¹⁴¹³ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 21.10.1953, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4063.

¹⁴¹⁴ Kobelt (FMD) to Federal Council, 09.12.1953, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1860, Bd.74.

¹⁴¹⁵ Weber (FFD) to Federal Council, 30.12.1953, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1860, Bd.74.

The other Federal Councillors listened to Weber instead of Kobelt, and the decision to accept another Venom series was postponed.¹⁴¹⁶ The Defence Minister's attempt to challenge this decision by emphasising to his colleagues the urgency of a Venom order for Switzerland's defence and aircraft industry was unsuccessful. On 12 January 1954, despite Weber's resignation in December 1953, the Federal Council maintained its earlier decision. Nevertheless, the Federal Military Department was authorised to discuss the draft bill with the State Council's Military Commission and the Consultative Commission for the Examination of Military Expenditure.¹⁴¹⁷

The Consultative Commission was approached first. Already on 21 January, it gave the Defence Minister its approval for another Venom series. The commission argued that this aircraft purchase would neither overburden the defence budget for years to come, nor prejudice future decisions on the Swiss Air Force's size – as had been assumed by the former Finance Minister.¹⁴¹⁸ Strengthened through this decision, in early February, Kobelt resubmitted the draft bill to the Federal Council.¹⁴¹⁹ As the former Finance Minister's counterargument had been refuted, on 5 February, the Federal Councillors approved the Venom bill.¹⁴²⁰ The State Council's Military Commission, which had not been consulted beforehand, gave its unanimous approval to the bill only three days later.¹⁴²¹

The British Embassy in Berne was somehow reassured by the prospect of another Venom series being manufactured under licence in Switzerland. In mid-February, the Air Attaché rejoiced "that Britain stands to gain, whatever happens, because the sale of 100 more Venoms is excellent for our Foreign Exchange, and if the P.16 does in fact follow the Venom, the sales of Sapphire engines will be valuable. If the P.16 does not win the favour we may gain a further lucrative contract if we have a suitable aircraft to offer". Yet, despite the general assessment that the Swiss market was good for British jets, he observed that in light of probable French competition, there would have to be a strong sales promotion. The aircraft he had in mind for this was the Folland Gnat, a swept wing subsonic jet aircraft, which was

¹⁴¹⁶ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 09.01.1954, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4063.

¹⁴¹⁷ Kobelt (FMD) to Federal Council, 09.01.1954; Auszug aus dem Protokoll des Bundesrates, 12.01.1954, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1860, Bd.74.

¹⁴¹⁸ Bühler to Kobelt (FMD), 21.01.1954, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1860, Bd.74.

¹⁴¹⁹ Kobelt (FMD) to Federal Council, 02.02.1954, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1860, Bd.74.

¹⁴²⁰ Botschaft des Bundesrates an die Bundesversammlung über den Ersatz von Kampfflugzeugen, 05.02.1954; Auszug aus dem Protokoll des Bundesrates, 05.02.1954, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1860, Bd.74.

¹⁴²¹ Protokoll der Militärkommission des Nationalrates, 08.02.1954, SFA, E5560(C), 1975/46, Bd.275.

under development in Britain.¹⁴²² But for the moment, the Embassy was looking forward to the additional 100 Venoms, even though they were not too profitable: the aircraft was being built entirely under licence in Switzerland and the Swiss had a sliding scale agreement with de Havillands, which provided that the royalties and fees would be reduced progressively for each batch of 50 aircraft.¹⁴²³

Yet, both London and Berne had to be patient until the Federal Assembly approved the second Venom bill. The State Council did not represent an obstacle and approved it in March, but the bill failed to gain the absolute majority in the National Council.¹⁴²⁴ It thus took another attempt in mid-June, until the second Venom order was approved by both chambers of the Federal Assembly.¹⁴²⁵ However, in light of the Cold War's first *détente*, this delay was rather negligible. The Swiss believed that another Venom series was necessary, because the air force's strength would have to be maintained until the P-16 were ready, the order would help maintain the domestic aircraft industry, which was considered militarily vital, and no modern foreign aircraft seemed to suit Switzerland's particular needs. Berne's decision for 100 more Venoms positively surprised the British, who had been worried about the future of their aircraft and engine exports to Switzerland. Although the order was of limited economic benefit, London had nevertheless gained time to find a solution to keep the Swiss interested in their more recent aeronautical developments. Yet, this would not be an easy task. Berne had decided to equip the Swiss Air Force autonomously, and even if the development of the P-16 would fail, the French, and perhaps the Americans, would compete for a Swiss aircraft order.

12.2. Temptations

The Venom order not only gave the British a means to gain some time, but did the same for the Swiss, who believed they had filled the aircraft procurement gap until the P-16 would be ready. This assumption was, however, erroneous. It soon appeared that the P-16's development encountered additional problems and further delays, and that

¹⁴²² Scott to Lamb (both Berne), 17.02.1954, TNA, FO 371/112715.

¹⁴²³ Berne to FO, 03.03.1954, TNA, FO 371/112715.

¹⁴²⁴ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 02.06.1954, SFA, E27, -/9001, 4063.

¹⁴²⁵ Bundesbeschluss über den Ersatz von Kampfflugzeugen, 11.06.1954, SFA, E5560(C), 1975/46, Bd.272.

the indigenous aircraft would thus not be available on time to the Swiss Air Force. Yet, the Vampires were ageing, and at least the first series would have to be replaced towards the late 1950s. Therefore, what had once been considered an interim solution – that is, the purchase of foreign aircraft – risked becoming a permanent solution, and the search for modern aeroplanes abroad started all over again.

But the Swiss found that the arms market had changed significantly since the Korean War: the French aircraft industry had again become competitive and was determined to regain its share of the world market, the Eastern bloc appeared to be willing to offer jet aircraft even to neutral Switzerland, and even the Americans now seemed prepared to sell modern fighters to the Swiss. Even though the Federal Military Department was reluctant to consider the purchase of yet another foreign aircraft, the situation was disquieting for both the Swiss and the British aircraft industries, which ran the risk of remaining without an order from Berne. In Britain, the competition from other countries was additionally problematic, for aircraft exports to Switzerland were of great economic importance.

In line with the Air Attaché's suggestion and in fear of French competition, the British tried to promote their aircraft to the Swiss. Initially, their efforts encountered some success, for the Folland Gnat caught the Federal Military Department's interest. In September 1954, at the Swiss delegation's usual visit to the Society of British Aircraft Constructors Flying Display and Exhibition in Farnborough, the Gnat did not go unnoticed – even though it was still under development. The Head of the Swiss Air Force, who was there himself, observed that this aircraft was “without doubt of great interest for our air force”. But he relativized that it was too early to consider the Gnat seriously, for it remained to be seen whether the foreseen improvements would reduce its landing distance.¹⁴²⁶ Primault's impressions were largely shared by the delegates from the Military Technical Service and the Federal Aircraft Factory.¹⁴²⁷

After the delegation's return, in early October, the Gnat somehow accidentally appeared on the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement's agenda. The discussion was initiated by the commission's president, who questioned whether the

¹⁴²⁶ Reisebericht der Delegation zum Besuch des Flying Display und Exhibition in Farnborough 7.-9. September 1954, Primault (SAF), 08.09.1954, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1863, Bd.78.

¹⁴²⁷ Reisebericht England 9. Sept. – 22. Sept. 1954, König (MTS), SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1863, Bd.74; Bericht über die Reise nach England zum Besuch des Flying Display and Exhibition der SBAC vom 6.-10. September in Farnborough, Buri (F+W Emmen), SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1863, Bd.78.

Swiss Air Force would need light fighter aircraft – such as the Gnat – in addition to the multi-role P-16. The Director of the Federal Aircraft Factory, Buri, stated that light fighters could be of interest to Switzerland, for their cost was bearable in comparison to multi-role combat aircraft. Primault shared this financial argument, and stressed that light fighters had the additional benefit of being highly manoeuvrable and quick. He therefore advocated the purchase of many smaller aeroplanes. This reasoning was in turn endorsed by National Councillor Bühler, who clearly named the light fighter, which everybody had in mind: the Gnat. Moreover, he argued in favour of testing the Gnat alongside the P-16, whose development could still fail. The only one to relativize the enthusiasm for the British light fighter was the commission's president. Ackeret reminded his colleagues that despite its interesting characteristics, the Gnat was for the moment not a realistic option, for it did not yet have the appropriate engine.¹⁴²⁸ Nevertheless, the British Air Attaché rightly concluded in late December 1954 that “the Swiss [were] already interested in the Midge/Gnat concept”, an interest which he had “tried to stimulate”.¹⁴²⁹

In early 1955, the Military Technical Service confirmed that the Gnat was the only aircraft in Britain, which was of direct interest to Switzerland.¹⁴³⁰ This was probably true with regard to British aircraft, but would this still hold true if the Swiss decided to search for jet fighters in other countries? In mid-July, the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement became increasingly interested in foreign aircraft for two reasons: despite the additional Venom series, the Swiss aircraft industry again faced the risk of being left without orders until the P-16 was ready to enter production. And if the Swiss Air Force's strength would be increased from 400 to 500 aircraft or higher – as desired by Primault – another aircraft in addition to the Swiss one would be necessary. In light of this situation, the Military Technical Service argued in favour of yet another Venom series. This solution was, however, clearly opposed by the Head of the Swiss Air Force and the Director of the Military Airfields, who noted that the Venom would be obsolete by 1958. Therefore, both Primault and Burkhard argued to look for a suitable aircraft – perhaps a light fighter – abroad. Yet the discussion remained inconclusive and was postponed.¹⁴³¹

¹⁴²⁸ Protokoll der 28. Sitzung der KMF, 07.-08.10.1954, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1865, Bd.5.

¹⁴²⁹ Annual Despatch on the Swiss Air Force and on Swiss Aviation for 1955, Scott (Berne), 31.12.1954, TNA, FO 371/118096.

¹⁴³⁰ Reisebericht England 7.-25. März, König (MTS), 13.03.1955, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1863, Bd.74.

¹⁴³¹ Protokoll der 30. Sitzung der KMF, 12.07.1955, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1866, Bd.70.

The debate was resumed in the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement meeting of 31 August 1955. This time, the idea of another Venom series did not have the slightest chance of success. From the beginning, the Head of the Swiss Air Force and his subalterns intervened decidedly against the aircraft. According to Primault, the Venom could no longer be used for protecting Switzerland's neutral air space, a task only a modern fighter could fulfill. But despite his interest in modern foreign aircraft, he stated that as long as Switzerland would "be dependent from abroad" for aircraft, it would never get the best aeroplanes. He therefore emphasised the need to continue the development of military aircraft within Swiss borders, and only to procure foreign aircraft if absolutely necessary – and even then, to produce them only under licence. Although Burkhard agreed on the P-16's importance, he also defended the purchase of finished aircraft. Evidently, such suggestions were opposed by Dechevrens and Buri, who were trying to protect the Swiss aircraft industry. Even though von Wattenwyl had first advocated another Venom series, he was quick to realise that this was a lost cause, and suggested a compromise, which was finally accepted by all sides and would have to be submitted to Kobelt and the National Defence Commission: the production of a pre-series of P-16s to keep the aircraft industry busy and to strengthen Swiss aeronautical R&D; and to send missions abroad to study the purchase of a series of modern aircraft with intentions to produce them eventually – and if possible – under licence in Switzerland.¹⁴³²

But before these requests were to be discussed by the National Defence Commission, the British aircraft industry lost ground, and the development of the P-16 encountered a serious setback. At the Society of British Aircraft Constructors Flying Display and Exhibition of 1955, the Swiss could for the first time see the Gnat flying. What they saw was, however, disappointing. The take-off, not the landing distance, was considered far too long – even with the new Bristol Orpheus engine. The Head of the Delegation concluded that the Gnat did not suit Switzerland's conditions and could not be considered any further.¹⁴³³ As a result, by September 1955, there seemed to be no more British aircraft of direct interest to the Swiss. This was somehow symptomatic, for by 1955, most observers agreed that something had gone wrong with the British aircraft industry. Not only had there been the Comet

¹⁴³² Protokoll der 31. Sitzung der KMF, 31.08.1955, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1866, Bd.70.

¹⁴³³ Bericht über SBAC Flying Display and Exhibition Farnborough 6.-8.9.55, Lüthy (DMA), 06.09.1955, SFA, E5001(F), 1000/1866, Bd.69.

crashes in 1954, but there were also problems with the development of fighter aircraft. Even the Hunter encountered technical difficulties. Whitehall thus realised that Britain was falling behind the Americans and Russians in the development of military aircraft, mainly because it could not afford to produce a new type of fighter to match every new development in the US or the Soviet Union. In addition, the rapidly growing French aircraft industry – led by Dassault – appeared as a serious competitor on the world military market.¹⁴³⁴

Obviously, Switzerland was playing in a completely different league, and had – since the abandoning of the N-20 – only one jet aircraft under development. Therefore, it came as a shock, as the first P-16 prototype crashed into Lake Constance on 31 August. Yet despite this significant setback, the commission remained committed to Swiss jet aircraft development.¹⁴³⁵ As a result, in the National Defence Commission meeting of late October, Primault and von Wattenwyl defended the P-16 pre-series to maintain the aircraft industry and the Swiss Air Force's strength. But the Defence Minister and the corps commanders were not yet ready to decide,¹⁴³⁶ and the Heads of the Swiss Air Force and the Military Technical Service had to defend their requests again in late November. This time, the National Defence Commission approved the P-16 pre-series and the aircraft missions. It was during the discussions leading to this decision that von Wattenwyl mentioned a French aircraft – the Mystère IV – which could be of interest to Switzerland.¹⁴³⁷

The Swiss interest in French jet fighters developed against the background of the renewal of closer Franco-Swiss military relations in early 1955. In February, the Head of the Swiss Air Force visited France and met with General Fay, the Chief of Staff of the French Air Force, with whom he discussed possible cooperation between the two countries' air forces in the event of war. This rapprochement presented Paris with an ideal opportunity to promote the French aircraft industry and its products. As a result, by October 1955, the Swiss became interested in French aircraft, especially in Dassault's Mystère IV, a fighter-bomber which had made its maiden flight in 1952.¹⁴³⁸

¹⁴³⁴ Geiger, *op. cit.*, pp.145, 179; Peden, *Arms, Economics...*, *op. cit.*, p.240, 283-284; Hayward, *op. cit.*, p.66.

¹⁴³⁵ Grand, *op. cit.*, p.63.

¹⁴³⁶ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 24.10.1955, SFA, E9500.52(-), 1984/122, Bd.4.

¹⁴³⁷ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 28.11.1955, SFA, E9500.52(-), 1984/122, Bd.4.

¹⁴³⁸ Soutou, Georges-Henri, « La IV^e République et l'évolution de la politique de neutralité armée de la Suisse à l'époque de la guerre froide », *Revue historique des armées*, No. 243, 2006, pp.84-86.

These developments came to the attention of the British Air Attaché, who observed that Britain would maintain aircraft sales to Switzerland if it was “thrustful and prepared to offer a counterblast to the strong French sales drive currently being conducted by their Military Attaché”. He therefore emphasised the need to continue stimulating Swiss interest in British aeronautical products and to be prepared to offer licensing agreements. He nevertheless remained optimistic and believed that the Federal Military Department was still interested in the Gnat and could be tempted by the Hunter’s new two-seater version.¹⁴³⁹ This assessment was shared by the British Ambassador, despite the “intensified French advertising campaign, in which the French Military Attache has apparently been importunately active”.¹⁴⁴⁰

France was not, however, the only country other than Britain willing to sell jet aircraft to Switzerland. In early 1956, Berne received a tempting offer from the other side of the Iron Curtain – most probably with the blessing of the Soviet Union.¹⁴⁴¹ On 30 January, a certain Swiss Colonel, named Philipp Vacano, approached the Military Technical Service. This former representative of a Czechoslovakian aircraft engines and components company had been informed during a recent business trip to Czechoslovakia, that not only did they manufacture Mig fighter aircraft there, but they were also ready to deliver them to Switzerland. Vacano argued that the purchase of these aircraft would emphasise the policy of neutrality. Moreover, he pretended to know that the Russians were not opposed to such a deal.¹⁴⁴² These facts were immediately reported to the Chief of the General Staff.¹⁴⁴³ This time, contrary to his reaction to de Muralt’s suggestion for Russian tanks earlier in the decade, de Montmollin did not reject such a deal *a priori*. While he asked for further instructions, he noted that it could not be in Switzerland’s interest to have arms transfers only with one side of the East-West conflict.¹⁴⁴⁴

In line with his earlier reactions against Soviet radar and tanks, Petitpierre was firmly against any sort of arms transfers with the Soviets. He argued that the armament policy did not affect the status of neutrality, but only the policy of

¹⁴³⁹ Annual Despatch on the Swiss Air Force and on Swiss Aviation for 1955, Scott (Berne), 31.12.1956, TNA, FO 371/124398.

¹⁴⁴⁰ Lamb (Berne) to Lloyd (FO), 06.01.1956, TNA, FO 371/124398.

¹⁴⁴¹ For the Czechoslovak perspective on this offer see Fuhrer, Wild, *op. cit.*, pp.249-250.

¹⁴⁴² Aktennotiz Besuch von Oberst Philipp Vacano, von Wattenwyl (MTS), 30.01.1956, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/100, Bd.97.

¹⁴⁴³ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to de Montmollin (FMD), 30.01.1956, SFA, E5560(C), 1975/46, Bd.276.

¹⁴⁴⁴ De Montmollin to Kobelt (both FMD), 02.02.1956, SFA, E5560(C), 1975/46, Bd.276.

neutrality. His main fear was that such dealings would discredit Switzerland in the eyes of the Western states. Yet this argument was not to be made public.¹⁴⁴⁵ Accordingly, Vacano was informed that Switzerland was not interested in Mig aircraft, because it did not want too large a variety of aircraft, and it had had bad experiences with Czechoslovakia in the supply of spare parts.¹⁴⁴⁶ Contrary to the Federal Political Department, however, the Federal Military Department was not yet ready to fully abandon the idea of arms purchases beyond the Iron Curtain.

Almost simultaneously to Vacano's approach, first a Czechoslovakian diplomat and then the Soviet Military Attaché both signalled their readiness to deliver Mig-15 fighter aircraft to the Swiss. Thereupon, the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement informed the Defence Minister that its members were interested in Soviet aircraft to compare them to western types. Even though the Mig-15 appeared to be obsolete, Chaudet agreed with his advisory body, and addressed in June 1956 the Federal Council emphasising that Switzerland was free to purchase weapons in the West or in the East. While he disqualified Czechoslovakia as a customer itself, he considered the USSR to be a source for weapons. Finally, he expressed his interest in Soviet aircraft.¹⁴⁴⁷

As could be expected, he was met with fierce opposition from the Foreign Minister. Besides his earlier arguments, Petitpierre stressed that the purchase of Russian weapons would undermine the credibility of Swiss neutrality with other states and draw Switzerland into East-West tensions. Moreover, it was impossible for Switzerland to grant a service in return, as it could not deliver strategic goods to the Eastern states because of the "self imposed" trade restrictions in line with CoCom.¹⁴⁴⁸ Obviously, both these arguments were highly questionable. On the one hand, the reason for Switzerland's inability to deliver strategic goods to the Soviet Union and its satellites was that it participated in US economic warfare. On the other hand, whereas Soviet aircraft was ruled out for the sake of neutrality, Berne continued its search for a suitable aeroplane within leading NATO countries.

London was thus not confronted with yet another competitor on the Swiss aircraft market. But nonetheless, Berne seemed to lose its interest in British

¹⁴⁴⁵ Petitpierre (FPD) to Chaudet (FMD), 08.03.1956, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/100, Bd.97.

¹⁴⁴⁶ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to de Montmollin (FMD), 04.04.1956, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/100, Bd.97.

¹⁴⁴⁷ Chaudet (FMD) to Federal Council, 14.06.1956, dodis.ch/13014, *SDD*.

¹⁴⁴⁸ Co-Rapport concernant la proposition du Département militaire du 14 juin 1956 quant aux commentaires sur l'achat de Mig 15 en Tchécoslovaquie, Petitpierre (FPD), 16.06.1956, dodis.ch/13015, *SDD*.

aeroplanes and the lobbying by the British Embassy and aircraft manufacturers could not make up for the lack of Swiss interest.¹⁴⁴⁹ Meanwhile, however, the Federal Military Department had abandoned the belief that there was no suitable foreign aircraft at all, and sent – as foreseen – missions to France, Sweden, and the US. Unlike the French and the British, the American willingness to consider Swiss aircraft orders was not economically, but politically and strategically motivated. In line with NSC-119, Washington intended to foster closer military relations with Switzerland through arms sales. Although the Swiss were reluctant to play this game, they readily took advantage of the possibility to learn more about modern American military aircraft.¹⁴⁵⁰

After approximately half a year of aircraft missions, on 6 July 1956, the results were presented to the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement. The jet fighters, which had been evaluated, were the French Mystère IV, the Swedish SAAB 32 Lansen, and the American Sabre F-86. The Swiss would have preferred to evaluate other, more recent American jet fighters, but they could only inspect and fly the Sabre – in Germany and not the US. Thus, Washington's bait to lure Berne into a closer security relationship remained of a modest, albeit substantial nature when compared to past relations. Nevertheless, with three more countries willing to offer aircraft, the Swiss had for the first time a real opportunity to compare the aeronautical development of a variety of nations.

Among the three evaluated types, according to the mission reports, the Mystère was the only suitable aircraft. The other two were mainly considered inappropriate for Switzerland's military airfields. Startled by the prospect of the Mystère, which could apparently be delivered rather quickly as a finished product, Dechevrens tirelessly defended the Swiss aircraft industry. He observed that the technical differences between the Venom and the Mystère were not significant, and thus argued for another series of the former aircraft to keep the domestic industry going. But his advocacy seemed to be premature, because for the moment it was unclear whether the Mystère would be ordered, and if so, if it would be purchased as a

¹⁴⁴⁹ Lamb (Berne) to FO, 24.05.1956, TNA, FO 371/124400; Reisebericht England 12.-26. Juni 1956, König (MTS), 30.06.1956, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/100, Bd.92.

¹⁴⁵⁰ Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, op. cit., pp.181-182.

finished product or manufactured under licence. In addition, the commission favoured a licence agreement.¹⁴⁵¹

By autumn, the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement had not yet taken a decision on the Mystère. Nevertheless, de Montmollin and Chaudet took the discussion to a higher level, and thus ignored the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement's prerogatives. In the National Defence Commission meeting of 4 October, Primault and von Wattenwyl had to inform the corps commanders about the tests, which had been carried out with the Mystère in Switzerland. They observed that this aircraft was superior to the Sabre, and that its flying characteristics were similar to those of the P-16. Moreover, the French would also be willing to sell the licence. The Mystère could be manufactured in Switzerland in the case that the development of the P-16 would fail, or provide the Swiss aircraft industry with an order until the indigenous aircraft would be ready to enter production. However, the National Defence Commission was not entirely convinced that the Mystère suited the Swiss Air Force's needs and was not willing to take a decision.¹⁴⁵²

Interestingly, neither Primault nor von Wattenwyl had tried to convince the commission, and a few weeks later, the Head of the Swiss Air Force stated in front of the National Defence Commission that he preferred another and more recent French aircraft, the Etendard.¹⁴⁵³ The strongest advocacy for the Mystère came from the Chief of the General Staff, who succeeded in late November to convince the National Defence Commission about the purchase of 40 finished Mystères. The only argument he gave for this acquisition was the need to strengthen the air force.¹⁴⁵⁴ One can assume that this single reason was of sufficient weight against the background of the Suez and Hungarian Crises. Yet, de Montmollin's advocacy for the Mystère could also be seen in light of his secret military contacts in 1956 with a former comrade from the French Staff College, General Jean Etienne Valluy, who was also Commander in Chief Allied Forces Central Europe.¹⁴⁵⁵ But due to a lack of sources, these potential reasons remain mere assumptions.

In any case, despite Dechevrens' direct appeal to Chaudet for another Venom series instead of finished French aircraft, on 7 December, the Federal Council

¹⁴⁵¹ Protokoll der 32. Sitzung der KMF, 06.07.1956, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/100, Bd.97.

¹⁴⁵² Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 04.10.1956, SFA, E9500.52(-), 1984/122, Bd.7.

¹⁴⁵³ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 14.10.1956, SFA, E9500.52(-), 1984/122, Bd.7.

¹⁴⁵⁴ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 21.11.1956, SFA, E9500.52(-), 1984/122, Bd.8.

¹⁴⁵⁵ Soutou, « La IV^e République... », *op. cit.*, p.85.

approved the draft bill, which contained among other armaments 40 Mystères.¹⁴⁵⁶ But although other weaponry on the armaments bill – such as the second Centurion series – was accepted by the Federal Assembly later in December, the Mystères were rejected. In spite of the strained international situation, the Parliamentarians believed that this weapons purchase was overly hasty. They were informed that the Head of the Swiss Air Force himself had argued that additional caverns (mountain hangars) for aircraft had priority over the Mystère, and they had been lobbied by the Flug- und Fahrzeugwerke Altenrhein, which feared the competition against its P-16. Nevertheless, in the National Defence Commission meeting of 27 December, de Montmollin argued in favour of a renewed attempt for the Mystère, because it remained unclear whether the P-16 would be ready on time.¹⁴⁵⁷

It thus seemed as if the path for a series of French Mystères was determined, and no purchase of British aircraft was in sight. Since 1954, the Swiss military establishment had come a long way. Confronted with difficulties and delays in the development of the P-16, they had to abandon the idea that no other aircraft other than their own would suit Switzerland's particular conditions and needs. Out of necessity, the Swiss began to consider other aircraft. Yet, despite an initial interest for a British type, they soon opted for another foreign aircraft, the Mystère. As opposed to past purchasing debates, the Swiss were suddenly able to choose among American, British, French, Soviet and Swedish jet fighters. All these countries, except Sweden, lobbied in Berne. While the Americans and the Soviets did this for strategic reasons, the British and the French – even though political and military motives were not absent – did so for mainly economic reasons. For the moment, everything pointed towards a French victory in the battle for a Swiss order. But whereas Berne clearly stood on the Western side of the Iron Curtain and had refused the tempting Mig aircraft offer, would the Americans, and especially the British, be able to make a comeback?

¹⁴⁵⁶ Dechevrens (ASIA) to Chaudet (FMD), 06.12.1956, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/100, Bd.97; Botschaft des Bundesrates an die Bundesversammlung betreffend ein Sofortprogramm zur Beschaffung von Kriegsmaterial, 07.12.1956, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/101, Bd.128.

¹⁴⁵⁷ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 27.12.1956, SFA, E9500.52(-), 1984/122, Bd.8; Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to de Montmollin (FMD), 12.04.1957, SFA, E5560(C), 1975/46, Bd.272.

12.3. Aircraft Competition

The Federal Assembly's rejection of the *Mystère* reopened the competition for a Swiss aircraft order, and gave Washington and London another chance to sell their aircraft. Whereas the former continued to see arms transfers as a means to bring Berne into a closer security relationship, the latter desired to provide its economy and aircraft industry with a valuable export business. Yet the French entered the competition with a lead, as the *Mystère* had already been chosen once by the National Defence Commission, Chaudet and the Federal Council. In addition, the Swiss Association of the Aircraft Industry continued to oppose the purchase of foreign aircraft, and the Military Technical Service feared for the completion of the ever more delayed P-16.

In mid-January 1957, the Chief of the General Staff continued to defend the purchase of 40 *Mystères* in the National Defence Commission on the grounds that the air force's strength had to be increased or at least maintained: the first P-16s would, at best, be ready in 1960; the *Vampires* could be gradually replaced; and in the case of hostilities in 1958 or 1959, it would be helpful to have an improved fleet. The Head of the Swiss Air Force gave in, and agreed that 40 *Mystères* would reinforce the air force. The corps commanders and Chaudet also agreed with this reasoning.¹⁴⁵⁸ Despite this decision, the National Defence Commission decided not to ignore the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement this time, and to consult it before taking any additional steps.

The issue was taken up by the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement in its meeting of 23 January. The commission's members remained sceptical towards the *Mystère*. With the exception of the Swiss Association of the Aircraft Industry representative, they did not believe that the purchase of this aircraft would endanger the P-16 or the Swiss aircraft industry. But with the opening of the international market for military aircraft, they believed that they could perhaps get a better and more modern aircraft than the *Mystère*. The Head of the Swiss Air Force observed that there were other aeroplanes, such as the American Lockheed F-104 Starfighter and Douglas A-4 Skyhawk, or an improved Sabre F-86, which the Canadian aircraft company Canadair built under licence. The commission did not, however, only

¹⁴⁵⁸ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 17.01.1957, SFA, E9500.52(-), 1984/122, Bd.9.

criticise the type, but also the number of aircraft to be purchased. As an unintended result, the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement reopened the competition for a Swiss aircraft order by recommending the purchase of the Mystère or an aircraft of similar or better quality, and if possible, in quantities of more than 40.¹⁴⁵⁹

Initially, both Chaudet and de Montmollin reacted negatively to the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement's recommendation to consider different and more aircraft, because they feared confusing the Parliament and thus endangering the purchase of additional aeroplanes.¹⁴⁶⁰ But for mainly financial reasons, it appeared increasingly difficult to include the Mystères in the armament bill for March. A decision by the Federal Assembly before June seemed unlikely and the Defence Minister and his Chief of the General Staff were willing to consider other options. In the National Defence Commission meeting of 30 January, Primault argued that because of ever expanding delivery schedules, the P-16 would not be able to replace the Vampire by the turn of the decade, and therefore approximately 75 foreign aircraft would be necessary. Moreover, the type would not necessarily have to be the Mystère, as Switzerland could choose among a variety of aircraft from different countries. In his point of view, the Head of the Swiss Air Force was strongly supported by Corps Commander Samuel Gonard. As a result, the National Defence Commission authorised additional tests with more aircraft types.¹⁴⁶¹

Once it had decided to test other types than the Mystère, the Federal Military Department also tried to get access to recent developments in the American aircraft industry. These attempts were encouraged by Washington. In December 1956, the USAF informed the Swiss Legation that the Departments of State and Defense had established "a more liberal policy concerning the release of military information and military equipment" towards Switzerland, because it was "in the best interest of our Governments to cooperate more closely on defense matters". It was observed that there was no formal arms transfer procedure because of Switzerland's neutrality, but the USAF had been instructed to give "careful consideration" to Berne's requests.¹⁴⁶² Although equipping the Swiss Army retained a lower priority compared to the needs

¹⁴⁵⁹ Protokoll der 35. Sitzung der KMF, 23.01.1957, SFA, E5001(F), 1970/6, Bd.8.

¹⁴⁶⁰ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 24.01.1957, SFA, E9500.52(-), 1984/122, Bd.9.

¹⁴⁶¹ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 30.01.1957, SFA, E9500.52(-), 1984/122, Bd.9.

¹⁴⁶² Oppen (USAF) to Rieser (Washington), 20.12.1956, SFA, E5560(C), 1975/46, Bd.62.

of the US and allied armed forces, the Military Attaché in Washington rightly concluded that this policy shift was of great military and political significance.¹⁴⁶³

This led the Swiss to believe that there was a real possibility to get access to modern American jet aircraft. Therefore, in early February 1957, the Legation in Washington approached the State Department for offers for 50 to 100 Skyhawks, the same amount of Starfighters, and 100 Sabres of a more advanced type.¹⁴⁶⁴ The American Embassy in Berne strongly supported these requests, and warned Foggy Bottom that the Swiss could consider the outcome as a litmus test for the honesty of Washington's declared policy.¹⁴⁶⁵ The State Department shared this reasoning and observed that "the problem of making classified equipment available for sale to the Swiss or for manufacture under license there continues to present a major obstacle to our desire to assist them in strengthening their defenses". On these lines, the State Department advocated the sale of modern aircraft to Switzerland, and emphasised to the Department of Defense that "an increased effort to meet Swiss desires for reimbursable military assistance" had to be made.¹⁴⁶⁶ But for the time being, although Washington's reply to the Swiss requests was not negative, it was somehow sobering: understandably, the Starfighter, which had not yet been introduced into the USAF, was not available; the Skyhawk could only be obtainable in three years; and the Sabres could not be delivered because allied countries had priority.¹⁴⁶⁷

The lack of American willingness to sell modern jet aircraft to Switzerland provided the British with the opportunity to re-enter the competition with the improved Hunter F-6, which now seemed to be free of technical problems. Although this aircraft was, according to Primault, inferior to the Mystère, he observed that it had been retained to make Dassault believe that his aeroplane was not the only suitable one and to strengthen Switzerland's negotiating position accordingly. Finally, while the American-made Sabre remained unavailable, the Swiss could have its Canadian version. Consequently, the Military Technical Service and the Swiss Air Force began intensive tests with these three aeroplanes in Switzerland, not only to be able to justify their choice to the National Defence Commission, Chaudet and the Federal Assembly,

¹⁴⁶³ Rieser (Washington) to Daniel (FMD), 22.12.1956, SFA, E5560(C), 1975/46, Bd.62.

¹⁴⁶⁴ Washington to DoS, 11.02.1957; 06.02.1957, NARA, RG 59, CDF 1955-59, 754.5.

¹⁴⁶⁵ Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, *op. cit.*, p.184.

¹⁴⁶⁶ Elbrick (EUR) to Gray (ISA/OSD), 09.02.1957; Barnes (MSA/DoS) to ISA (OSD), 12.02.1957; 08.03.1957, NARA, RG 59, CDF 1955-59, 754.5.

¹⁴⁶⁷ Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, *op. cit.*, p.185.

but also to all three interested aircraft manufacturers – Canadair, Dassault and Hawker.¹⁴⁶⁸

These tests – which took place between 17 February and 7 March – did not only destroy the myth that there was no entirely suitable foreign aircraft, but also produced an unexpected winner: all three types suited Swiss conditions and, surprisingly, those who had tested them unanimously agreed that the Hunter was the best aircraft. Although the flying qualities of both the Hunter and the Sabre were considered excellent, the British aircraft won the competition because of its better weapons. Meanwhile, the Mystère – the former favourite – came last.¹⁴⁶⁹ As a result, despite a renewed lobbying effort by Dassault and the French Embassy in Berne,¹⁴⁷⁰ the Mystère was eliminated from the competition. Yet even though the Hunter had obtained better results than the Sabre, Ackeret, Primault, von Wattenwyl and Burkhard believed that additional and more detailed tests would be necessary to make a final choice. The question was whether the Sabre's better manoeuvrability would be sufficient to outweigh the Hunter's superiority in weapons and power. In addition, Switzerland's negotiating position with the aircraft manufacturers would be strengthened if its preferences were not declared beforehand.¹⁴⁷¹

Yet, although both the Swiss Air Force and the Military Technical Service advocated additional tests, they followed different agendas. According to Primault, the tests would lead to a final choice, and then a bill for 100 Hunters or Sabres would have to be submitted to the Federal Assembly in June.¹⁴⁷² Von Wattenwyl, by contrast, began to see the purchase of foreign aircraft in competition to the P-16, which he considered of the same generation as the Mystère, the Hunter and the Sabre. He actually feared that the Swiss jet fighter would have to compete for financial resources with foreign aircraft as early as 1957. Therefore, he argued in favour of buying only a very limited number of Hunters or Sabres, or – preferably – to jump to another aircraft generation of American design, if possible.¹⁴⁷³

¹⁴⁶⁸ Primault (SAF) to Chaudet (FMD), 14.02.1957, SFA, E5560(C), 1975/46, Bd.272.

¹⁴⁶⁹ Protokoll der Besprechung über Flugzeugerprobungsergebnisse, 14.03.1957; Schlussbericht über die Fliegerische Erprobung der Flugzeuge Canadair Sabre 6, Hawker Hunter F Mark 6, 17. Februar – 7. März 1957, 18.03.1957, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/101, Bd.117.

¹⁴⁷⁰ Soutou, « La IV^e République... », *op. cit.*, p.86.

¹⁴⁷¹ Akten-Notiz Besprechung in Bern, Gehring (MTS), 04.04.1957, SFA, E5155(-), 1971/202, Bd.89.

¹⁴⁷² Primault (SAF) to Chaudet (FMD) and NDC, 12.04.1957, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/101, Bd.117.

¹⁴⁷³ Von Wattenwyl (MTS) to de Montmollin (FMD), 12.04.1957, SFA, E5155(-), 1971/202, Bd.89.

As a result, in the National Defence Commission meeting of 17 April, Primault and von Wattenwyl argued in favour of continuing the tests with the Hunter and Sabre. Moreover, both requested to send missions to the US for the Starfighter, the Skyhawk, and the Grumman F-11 Tiger, and to Sweden for the Saab 35 Draken. But as before, they argued on the same lines for different reasons. The Head of the Swiss Air Force wanted another aircraft, preferably the Sabre, as soon as possible in addition to the P-16. He observed that the American and Swedish fighter aircraft could only be introduced at a later date, and only if the National Defence Commission decided to equip the air force predominantly with fighters instead of multi-role combat aircraft. The Head of the Military Technical Service, however, clearly favoured foreign aircraft at a later time, for he still believed that an early order of the Hunter or the Sabre would lead to the cancellation of the P-16. The outcome of the meeting was a compromise between these two positions: the tests with the British and Canadian aeroplanes were to be continued and expanded, information on modern aircraft would have to be gathered, and the development of the P-16 had to be accelerated. But because of the lengthy tests and in line with the Federal Council's political considerations, an aircraft bill would at the earliest be submitted to the Federal Assembly in September.¹⁴⁷⁴

This repeated delay in the decision-making process provided the US with yet another opportunity to bring the Swiss into closer security relations through limited arms sales. Already in April, Washington took steps to offer Switzerland "one of two wings of F-86E aircraft [...] held for Yugoslavia".¹⁴⁷⁵ But on 17 June, the American Ambassador called on the Swiss Defence Minister, and informed him about the possibility to purchase 90 Sabre F-86E, which were in Britain, at a lower price than the Canadian Sabre and the British Hunter. The Ambassador emphasised that these aircraft would considerably strengthen the Swiss Air Force at a reasonable cost, and asked Chaudet to withhold the decision on aircraft purchases until these aircraft could be tested by Swiss pilots. The Defence Minister promised to consider the offer and asked the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement for advice.¹⁴⁷⁶

¹⁴⁷⁴ Botschaft betreffend Beschaffung von Kampfflugzeugen, Ergebnis der Sitzungen der Militärdelegation vom 10. und 12.4.57, 16.04.1957, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/101, Bd.117; Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 17.04.1957, SFA, E9500.52(-), 1984/122, Bd.10.

¹⁴⁷⁵ Barnes (MSA/DoS) to ISA (OSD), 12.02.1957; 08.03.1957, NARA, RG 59, CDF 1955-59, 754.5.

¹⁴⁷⁶ Note pour Monsieur le Chef du Département, visite de M. Taylor, 19.06.1957, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/101, Bd.117.

Despite their price, which was between 30 and 50 percent lower than those of the Canadian Sabre and the Hunter, the American Sabre was not well received in the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement meeting of 20 June. Although the commission's members believed that Washington's offer was aimed at strengthening Swiss defences because it was militarily rather than economically motivated, they stated that the Canadian was superior to the American Sabre. Nevertheless, for the low price and in view of future aircraft missions to the US – which were decided in the same meeting – they agreed to send a mission for the F-86E to the UK. This decision was, however, predominantly diplomatically motivated. For in the same meeting, the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement also decided to request the purchase of 100 Hunters in addition to 100 P-16s, after renewed tests had confirmed the earlier results of the Hunter – especially the better weapons – and the P-16 seemed finally to be ready to enter production.¹⁴⁷⁷

The American Embassy in Berne knew about these developments, but instead of giving up, it decided to conduct “a blocking action here against Hunter or Sabre purchases, including prolonged flight tests, until we can throw more facts [...] at the Swiss as fast as possible”.¹⁴⁷⁸ The Embassy remained determined to convince the Swiss to accept the F-86E offer, even after it had been informed by Chaudet in early July that a choice favouring the aircraft was highly unlikely because its armament was deemed insufficient.¹⁴⁷⁹ Washington, however, instructed the Ambassador not to intervene. The Departments of State and Defense had already achieved their aim, which was to attract the Swiss through potential arms transfers. The F-86E was bait to keep the Swiss interested in American aircraft and to foster closer military relations. At least the former intention had been achieved with the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement's decision to send another aircraft mission to the US.¹⁴⁸⁰ Consequently, the American Sabre offer was not chiefly motivated by the Pentagon's desire to obtain Swiss radar information as a *quid pro quo* – as has been argued by Mantovani –¹⁴⁸¹ but was part of a larger design: to bring the Swiss into closer security relations with the US.

¹⁴⁷⁷ Protokoll der 35. Sitzung der KMF, 20.06.1957, SFA, E5001(F), 1970/6, Bd.8.

¹⁴⁷⁸ Taylor (US Embassy Berne) to Dulles (DoS), NARA, RG 59, CDF 1955-59, 754.5.

¹⁴⁷⁹ Chaudet (FMD) to Taylor (US Embassy Berne), 26.06.1957, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/101, Bd.117; Taylor (US Embassy Berne) to Dulles (DoS), 02.07.1957, NARA, RG 59, CDF 1955-59, 754.5.

¹⁴⁸⁰ Herter (DoS) to US Embassy Berne, 05.07.1958, NARA, RG 59, CDF 1955-59, 754.5.

¹⁴⁸¹ Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, op. cit., pp.185-186.

Without further American interventions, on 2 July, Chaudet and de Montmollin agreed with the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement's requests for 100 Hunters and 100 P-16s, and planned to submit a bill to the Federal Assembly in September.¹⁴⁸² This solution was also unanimously approved by the National Defence Commission.¹⁴⁸³ It thus seemed that not only had the Hunter won against its American, Canadian and French competitors, but also that the choice for a foreign aircraft did not translate into a cancellation of the Swiss P-16. But even though in the Federal Council's Military Delegation, the Ministers of Public Economy and Finance approved the foreign aircraft, they questioned whether it was justified to spend SFr.440 million for the production of the P-16 given that its development was not yet complete.¹⁴⁸⁴

In August, after Chaudet had submitted the draft bill for the two aircraft to the Federal Council, these doubts turned into direct opposition.¹⁴⁸⁵ Although the criticism targeted only the P-16, it questioned the bill as a whole. Yet it was not only for this reason that the Federal Council finally postponed the decision on both the indigenous and the foreign aircraft. The Swiss Society of Air Force Officers¹⁴⁸⁶ had successfully lobbied the Federal Government to withhold the decision on future purchases until the procurement possibilities of modern fighter aircraft in the US and Sweden could be studied. The Swiss Society of Air Force Officers had intervened because it advocated an air power doctrine, which placed priority on aerial combat and not on ground support, and thus favoured fighters instead of multi-role combat aircraft.¹⁴⁸⁷

The Swiss remained undecided, for they had an overabundance of choices. For the first time ever, they could choose among a variety of military aircraft from different countries. Even the US, which was overtaking the British in aviation technology, showed an increasing interest in selling modern aircraft. But the diversity of choices was not the only factor leading to the Federal authorities' inability to finalize its

¹⁴⁸² Protokoll der Konferenz betreffend Beschaffung von Kampfflugzeugen, 02.07.1957, SFA, E5001(F), 1970/6, Bd.8.

¹⁴⁸³ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 11.07.1957, SFA, E9500.52(-), 1984/122, Bd.11.

¹⁴⁸⁴ Protokoll der Sitzung der Militärdelegation des Bundesrates, 09.07.1957, SFA, E5560(C), 1975/46, Bd.272.

¹⁴⁸⁵ Chaudet (FMD) to Federal Council, 09.08.1957; 14.08.1957; Streuli (FFD) to Federal Council, 19.08.1957, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/101, Bd.117.

¹⁴⁸⁶ AVIA.

¹⁴⁸⁷ Chaudet (FMD) to Primault (SAF), SFA, E5560(C), 1975/46, Bd.272; Protokoll über die Orientierung der erweiterten Militärkommission des Ständerates und des Nationalrates durch den Chef EMD Bundesrat Chaudet über die Vorbereitung der Botschaft über die Beschaffung von Kampfflugzeugen, 23.08.1957, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/101, Bd.117.

decisions. The desire to maintain a Swiss aircraft industry for the autonomous equipment of the Swiss Air Force during wartime had created a powerful lobby in favour of the P-16, which tried to prevent the purchase of foreign aircraft. Yet the P-16 was put under increasing scrutiny, because its development encountered additional delays, the international arms market had become a buyer's market, and tests had proven that foreign aircraft other than the Vampire and the Venom suited Switzerland's particular conditions. Despite these many factors, the Federal Military Department had finally decided in favour of the Hunter. Seemingly, this choice was hardly affected by the intimate Anglo-Swiss armaments and security relationship. It was rather that of a competition against its French and American rivals, the British aircraft had convinced Switzerland's military leadership of its qualities. However, the final decision was nonetheless postponed until more modern aircraft could be evaluated, because the Swiss Society of Air Force Officers had succeeded in linking future aircraft purchases to the doctrinal debate regarding air power in the Swiss military leadership.

12.4. Doctrinal Doubts

By late summer 1957, it remained uncertain whether the Swiss would again buy British aircraft. The Hunter was confronted with two major obstacles: the doctrinal debate in favour of fighters, which had been championed by the Swiss Society of Air Force Officers, and Berne's continued interest in modern American military aircraft. Obviously, the Swiss Association of the Aircraft Industry continued to oppose the purchase of foreign aircraft, because it still feared for the survival of the Swiss aircraft industry. But even though the Federal authorities paid lip service to a self-reliant armament policy, they grew increasingly frustrated with the P-16s delay, and were ever more tempted by the cheaper and technologically more advanced aircraft on the international arms market. In the meantime, whereas London was worried by Swiss indecision, Washington had yet another possibility to foster a closer security relationship with Switzerland. Also, Moscow made another attempt to increase ties with Berne through weapons transfers, and although the French seemed to have lost for the moment, they had not yet played all their cards. Finally, Dassault tried to take

advantage of the difficulties of the British aircraft industry, which it tried to supplant as Switzerland's aircraft supplier.

The Chief of the General Staff was annoyed by the Swiss Society of Air Force Officers' lobbying for fighters against the Hunter. But in the National Defence Commission meeting of late August, he nevertheless admitted that a discussion on the Swiss Air Force's doctrine was necessary. The question was whether the doctrine remained unchanged and multi-role combat aircraft would still be the suitable type, or a new emphasis on aerial combat would give preference to fighters.¹⁴⁸⁸ The National Defence Commission tackled this question in its meeting of 9 September. De Montmollin opened the discussion by presenting the Swiss Society of Air Force Officers' argument: aerial combat and modern fighter aircraft were necessary to "clear the sky" and thus enable the Swiss Air Force's other aircraft to support the ground troops. Primault generally agreed with this doctrine, but his conclusions on future aircraft purchases were somehow different from those of the Swiss Society of Air Force Officers. He favoured the introduction of fighter aircraft only in about three to four years, when the multi-role combat aircraft would have disappeared. But until then, he believed that multi-role aircraft like the Hunter was suitable for both aerial combat and ground support. Although de Montmollin disagreed with Primault on a doctrinal level and questioned the need for fighter aircraft, on the choice of the aircraft he concurred. Not surprisingly, the National Defence Commission, which had only a limited understanding of air warfare, agreed with the Chief of the General Staff.¹⁴⁸⁹

The doctrinal debate within the National Defence Commission was thus short-lived. Yet officers from the Federal Military Department, the Swiss Society of Air Force Officers and even the Swiss Officers Society, continued to question the current doctrine and the intended order of 100 Hunters and 100 P-16s. The most virulent criticism and argumentation came from Colonel Henchoz. De Montmollin and Primault had sent the air force officer to Paris to visit the NATO aircraft competition, which would suit the conditions of nuclear warfare, and to find out whether there was a type of aircraft which Switzerland might consider introducing in four to five years. But instead of sticking to his instructions, Henchoz questioned the entire Swiss aircraft procurement programme. To prepare the ground for another programme, he argued against the Hunter and the P-16. He argued that the Hunter was of a former

¹⁴⁸⁸ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 28.08.1957, SFA, E9500.52(-), 1984/122, Bd.11.

¹⁴⁸⁹ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 09.09.1957, SFA, E9500.52(-), 1984/122, Bd.11.

generation of technology, still had technical problems, and did not form a basis for future purchases because Hawker had to abandon the development of fighter aircraft as a consequence of the Sandys White Paper's scrapping of various aircraft programmes. Meanwhile, he observed that it would take three to four more years to realise the P-16 and that its production would block the licence manufacture of a more sophisticated aircraft for a lengthy period of time. Instead of the Hunter and the P-16, he suggested the licence manufacturing of modern French fighters, such as the Dassault Etendards IV and VI, and the immediate strengthening of the Swiss Air Force with a purchase of the Dassault Super-Mystère B2 – which he considered superior to the Hunter. His rationale and preference in the French aircraft was based on the fact that modern and light fighters were a doctrinal necessity. The French aircraft industry had caught up with its competitors and it produced aircraft which suited Switzerland's conditions best. Furthermore, cooperation with NATO air forces in the event of war would be facilitated if the Swiss Air Force had the same equipment and the French Government, as well as French Air Force generals, had promised their help for the realisation of this procurement programme.¹⁴⁹⁰

This was not what de Montmollin had expected. He disagreed with Henchoz's ideas and was furious that he had communicated them to the Swiss press. But the air force colonel was not alone in his thinking. His colleagues from the Swiss Society of Air Force Officers, which were in turn backed by their colleagues from the Swiss Officers Society, continued to oppose the Hunter and favoured modern fighters. The Chief of the General Staff thus concluded that the air doctrine would again have to be discussed by the National Defence Commission.¹⁴⁹¹ Yet Chaudet and the corps commanders would only turn to this issue once they would know more about additional procurement possibilities.

In October, the Federal Military Department sent a delegation, headed by Primault, to the US. Besides the study of modern fighter aircraft – particularly the Lockheed F-104 Starfighter, the Douglas A-4 Skyhawk, the Vought F-8 Crusader, and the Grumman F-11 Tiger – the delegation also discussed more general issues of air warfare with their American counterparts.¹⁴⁹² Berne was, however, aware that

¹⁴⁹⁰ Les essais des avions d'appui tactique effectués dans le cadre de l'OTAN, à Paris, en Septembre 1957. Les nouvelles formules analysées en rapport avec notre programme actuel d'achat et de construction d'avions, Henchoz (SAF), 27.09.1957, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/101, Bd.117.

¹⁴⁹¹ De Montmollin to Chaudet (both FMD), 18.10.1957, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/101, Bd.117.

¹⁴⁹² Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, op. cit., pp.188-189.

Washington intended to bring Switzerland into its orbit through arms transfers. Accordingly, the Chief of the General Staff had instructed the mission not to lose sight of Switzerland's neutrality, to limit talks to the military authorities and technical issues, and avoid discussions with the State Department.¹⁴⁹³ The delegation met with high ranking American air force officers, such as Vice Chief of Staff of the USAF Curtis LeMay, and its members were highly impressed by American air power. Yet they respected de Montmollin's instructions and did not make any defence arrangements with the USAF. Nevertheless, their hosts believed that the visit was a starting point "for fruitful working relationships".¹⁴⁹⁴

While Washington succeeded in attracting the Swiss through the promise of arms deliveries, Moscow also made another, albeit less successful, attempt to approach Berne with weapons. In October 1957, there were rumours that the USSR would start a political offensive targeting neutral countries, especially Switzerland and Austria, with offers of war material.¹⁴⁹⁵ But even before the offensive materialised, the Swiss Foreign Minister took measures to settle the question of Soviet weapons once and for all, and requested his Law Service to draw up a report on the question of Eastern arms supplies.¹⁴⁹⁶ According to the Head of the Law Service, Rudolf Bindschedler, "[n]eutrality does not require that for purchases of war material all foreign states or at least the parties of a future conflict have to be equally considered. This liberty could only reach its limits, if through constant purchases of war material from a certain state, Switzerland would become materially dependent on this state and would be unable to maintain essential parts of its armament without its help". Besides this caveat, Switzerland could take an autonomous decision if it wanted to accept or reject a Soviet offer for war material. In both cases, neither of the two blocs could complain.¹⁴⁹⁷

Despite this legal advice, Petitpierre had already made up his mind. He remained opposed to arms imports from the East.¹⁴⁹⁸ Meanwhile, his political reasons had made their way to the military leaders. As de Montmollin gave his view about Bindschedler's report to Chaudet, even though he agreed with the legal

¹⁴⁹³ De Montmollin (FMD) to Koch (Washington), 08.10.1957, SFA, E5560(C), 1975/46, Bd.62.

¹⁴⁹⁴ Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik...*, *op. cit.*, pp.189-190.

¹⁴⁹⁵ Fischli to Petitpierre (both FPD), 18.10.1957, SFA, E2001(E), 1972/33, Bd.5.

¹⁴⁹⁶ Petitpierre to Fischli (both FPD), 21.10.1957, SFA, E 2001(E), 1979/28, Bd.1.

¹⁴⁹⁷ Notiz für den Departementschef Eventualität eines Kriegsmaterialangebots durch Sowjetrußland, Bindschedler (FPD), 05.11.1957, SFA, E2001(E), 1972/33, Bd.5.

¹⁴⁹⁸ Petitpierre (FPD) to Federal Council, 25.11.1957, SFA, E2001(E), 1979/28, Bd.1.

considerations, he was – out of domestic, military-political, and military reasons – against the purchase of Soviet weaponry. He feared that such a development would be misinterpreted by the Swiss population, that the Western powers would refuse to continue delivering weapons as they had earlier because Switzerland would not “be on their side” anymore, that the “cheap” Soviet offer could create a moral dependency, and that military contacts with the East would be a logical consequence.¹⁴⁹⁹ Thus, even though from a legal perspective Switzerland was free to purchase weapons in the West and/or East, the Federal authorities definitively decided against Soviet weapons, because they feared being cut off from Western arms supplies.

To be sure, Washington would probably have reacted strongly if the Swiss had purchased Russian armament. It is questionable, however, whether this would have been a reason for London to stop supplying aircraft and tanks to Switzerland. For economic reasons, the British continued to be eager to sell weapons to the Swiss. This trend became more accentuated after the Sandys White Paper and its heavy toll on the armaments industry, for the survival of the British aircraft industry was at stake. In October, Whitehall played its last card to secure the Swiss Hunter order. The MoS approached the AM with a request to return about twelve unused Hunters to Hawker to allow an early delivery to the Swiss. Due to other commitments – such as a contract with India – the aircraft company was not able to deliver any aircraft to Switzerland until October 1958. The MoS knew that the Swiss Air Force wanted to fill a gap with the British aircraft and therefore argued that such a measure would be “required to keep the Swiss interested in the transaction”. The MoS emphasised that “if Hawkers can achieve this sizeable Swiss order, which is likely to be in the neighbourhood of £15 million in a very desirable currency, then this would be a valuable achievement in itself”.¹⁵⁰⁰

In line with this reasoning, the AM observed that “there are no defence interests and the value of the deal with the Swiss should be simply one of help to our commercial and economic interests”. There was, however, an additional and more selfish reason why the AM favoured the release of 12 Hunters to Switzerland: the money, which would be gained through the transfer, could be used to increase the RAF budget – which had been significantly reduced by the Defence White Paper – for

¹⁴⁹⁹ De Montmollin to Kobelt (both FMD), 30.12.1957, SFA, E5560(C), 1975/46, Bd.62.

¹⁵⁰⁰ Haviland (MoS) to Orme (AM), 10.10.1957, TNA, AIR 20/9171.

buying more recent types of aircraft. Finally, as the Hunters could be taken from the war reserve, the operation would not diminish the RAF's active strength.¹⁵⁰¹ The AM thus agreed to release 12 Hunters to the Swiss in April 1958.¹⁵⁰² Consequently, London was willing to take rather unusual measures to meet Berne's requests and to secure a valuable aircraft order.

By late autumn, the Federal Government had definitely discarded the possibility of purchasing Soviet aircraft, the French had reaffirmed their desire to equip the Swiss Air Force, Washington used the prospect of modern fighters to lure the Swiss into closer security relations, and the British played their last card to stay in the game. Interestingly, however, the lobbying from all sides proved to be largely ineffective. The members of the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement and the National Defence Commission had already made up their minds and were not willing to overturn their earlier decisions. On 2 November, the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement was the first commission to meet. From the outset, the Head of the Swiss Air Force rejected the possibility of purchasing modern American, French and Swedish fighter aircraft instead of the Hunter, on the grounds that they were not suitable for Swiss conditions, were not yet available, were too expensive, or were not really superior to the P-16. Therefore, he recommended, together with the Head of the Military Technical Service, to uphold the Commission for Military Aircraft Procurement's earlier decision for 100 Hunters and 100 P-16s.

However, as the Director of the Federal Military Administration observed, there was the problem that such a bill would surpass the defence budget's limit of SFr.800 million, which the Federal Government had recently determined. It was therefore questioned whether the Hunter should be given precedence, and the P-16 would only be ordered at a later time. Not only Dechevrens, but also the other members of the commission believed that this would mean the end to the Swiss aircraft industry. As a result, they unanimously decided to request both the Hunter and the P-16 series.¹⁵⁰³

Two days later, Primault vehemently defended this decision in the National Defence Commission. Not only did he again reject the foreign aircraft other than the Hunter, but he also refuted Henchoz's report and avoided a discussion about the Swiss

¹⁵⁰¹ Cooper to Hudleston (both AM), 25.10.1957; Hudleston to Ward (both AM), 31.10.1957; Dole to Cooper (both AM), 01.11.1957, TNA, AIR 20/9171.

¹⁵⁰² Orme (AM) to Haviland (MoS), 31.10.1957, TNA, AIR 20/9171.

¹⁵⁰³ Protokoll der 36. Sitzung der KMF, 02.11.1957, SFA, E5001(F), 1970/7, Bd.6.

Air Force's doctrine. He stated that the Super-Mystère was inferior to the Hunter, and accused the French of trying to sell it to Switzerland for purely financial reasons, especially since the Government had nationalised the aircraft factories, which produced this type of aircraft. He also noted that the Etendard was not really superior to the P-16 and that it did not even fulfil NATO's requirement for a light fighter. In addition, he dismissed the Swiss Society of Air Force Officers' criticism by stating that it was impossible to have a uniform view in a military organisation and that the Swiss Air Force officers were only frustrated by the delay of the P-16. This frustration was to a certain extent shared by the Defence Minister, who was also reluctant not to respect the Federal Government's financial guidelines. But despite these concerns, the desire to safeguard the domestic aircraft industry proved to be decisive, and the Defence Minister and the corps commanders finally agreed to purchase both the Hunter and the P-16. Nevertheless, the National Defence Commission also concurred that if the procurement of 200 aircraft would be politically impossible, the Hunters would receive priority.¹⁵⁰⁴

This was what eventually transpired. Although Chaudet submitted a draft bill for both types, the Federal Council was not willing to exceed the military budget, feared that the P-16 would be obsolete when it would finally enter service, and desired instead to have additional information on modern American fighters.¹⁵⁰⁵ Dechevrens' dramatic appeals that this solution would destroy the Swiss aircraft industry, and his request to order first the P-16 and then the Hunter, remained unsuccessful.¹⁵⁰⁶ On 15 November, the Federal Council approved the draft bill for 100 Hunters, which reaffirmed the Swiss Air Force's doctrine by giving priority to ground support.¹⁵⁰⁷

This decision, in effect, announced the cancellation of the domestic military aircraft programme in June 1958. The main reason was that the costly development of the P-16 encountered such a delay that it would have been obsolete once introduced into service.¹⁵⁰⁸ Yet, the evaluation process of foreign aircraft leading to the Federal Council's decision in favour of the Hunter instead of the P-16, had also demonstrated

¹⁵⁰⁴ Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 04.11.1957, SFA, E9500.52(-), 1984/122, Bd.12.

¹⁵⁰⁵ Chaudet (FMD) to Federal Council, 07.11.1957, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/101, Bd.117; Protokoll der Sitzung der LVK, 11.11.1957, SFA, E9500.52(-), 1984/122, Bd.12.

¹⁵⁰⁶ Dechevrens (ASIA) to Chaudet (FMD), 13.11.1957; 14.11.1957, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/101, Bd.117.

¹⁵⁰⁷ Auszug aus dem Protokoll des Bundesrates, 15.11.1957; Botschaft des Bundesrates über die Beschaffung von Kampfflugzeugen, 15.11.1957, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/101, Bd.117.

¹⁵⁰⁸ Grand, *op. cit.*, p.68.

to the Swiss authorities that there were suitable foreign jets available for purchase, and all leading aircraft producing countries were willing to sell to Switzerland. But for the moment, the British Hunter seemed to have won against American, French, Soviet and even domestic competition.

The State Council's Military Commission shared the Federal authorities' reasoning in favour of the Hunter and against the P-16, and unanimously recommended the bill to the Federal Assembly.¹⁵⁰⁹ The die was cast, and even the intervention of the Government of St. Gallen – the canton where the Flug- und Fahrzeugwerke Altenrhein was based – against the Hunter bill in favour of the P-16, proved to no avail.¹⁵¹⁰ As a result, the State Council approved the purchase of 100 British aircraft on 5 December 1957, and the National Council followed on 29 January 1958.¹⁵¹¹ The British Embassy in Berne was greatly relieved by this outcome, which it had not taken for granted, because it had feared that the Rieser affair could have negatively affected the sale of weaponry to the Swiss.¹⁵¹²

Therefore, during the decision-making process leading to the Hunter order, the Air Attaché in Berne had been “extremely cautious over every aspect of the sale of British equipment to the Swiss Air Force”. Moreover, he had not wanted to be associated with the “very underhand activities by one of [his] latin colleagues concerning the sale of aircraft to the Swiss”.¹⁵¹³ The British Embassy, which had acted with restraint despite a strong interest to sell the Hunters to Switzerland, was irritated when in spring 1958 it heard rumours that Hawker had bribed Swiss Air Force officers. Yet the British aircraft company categorically assured Whitehall that it had not resorted to any form of bribery, and it seemed as though the French firm Dassault was at the origin of these rumours. This appeared plausible to the FO, because not only had Dassault lost the competition for a Swiss order, but he was also “known to have tried everything, including political pressure in Paris and lobbying of

¹⁵⁰⁹ Protokoll der Sitzung der Militärkommission des Ständerates, 30.11.1957, SFA, E5560(C), 1975/46, Bd.272.

¹⁵¹⁰ Auszug aus dem Protokoll der Konferenz vom 2. Dez. 1957, FMD, 02.12.1957, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/101, Bd.117.

¹⁵¹¹ Bundesbeschluss über die Beschaffung von Kampfflugzeugen, 29.01.1958, SFA, E5001(F), 1968/101, Bd.117.

¹⁵¹² Berne to FO, 03.02.1958, TNA, FO 371/137204; Lamb (Berne) to Lloyd (FO), 17.02.1958, TNA, FO 371/137181.

¹⁵¹³ Annual Despatch by H.M. Air Attaché Berne for 1957, Wickham (Berne), 23.10.1958, TNA, FO 371/137203.

Swiss politicians in Switzerland, to get this contract”.¹⁵¹⁴ Indeed, the French Military Attaché and two retired French generals had lobbied on Dassault’s behalf, which had greatly upset the Federal Government.¹⁵¹⁵

Despite the French machinations, the British had won against the French aircraft. This was, however, the last time Britain could secure an important Swiss aircraft order. After the decision to purchase modern fighters instead of the P-16, Berne finally settled on the Dassault Mirage – a purchase, which culminated in the so-called “Mirage Affair”.¹⁵¹⁶ In spite of arduous efforts to promote their aircraft, the British were eliminated from the competition at a very early stage. Already in late spring 1958, Anglo-Swiss talks on the English Electric Lightning – a supersonic fighter which only entered service in 1961 – broke down. This “defeat” was symptomatic for the British aircraft industry, which no longer ruled over the European military aviation market as it had done in the immediate post-war period.¹⁵¹⁷

In the end, the Swiss military leadership chose the Hunter, because in light of the deteriorating international situation, it aimed to strengthen the air force and refused to fundamentally question its air doctrine. Accordingly, with the British aircraft being superior to its competitors of the same generation, the lobbying from all sides was largely ineffective. Yet there were also other reasons: the Soviet offers were rejected on political grounds and out of fear of losing access to the Western military arsenal; the Swiss were not yet willing to enter into closer security relations with the Americans as a *quid pro quo* for military aircraft; and the aggressive French tactics appeared suspect or were considered inappropriate. Finally, the indigenous aircraft lost against the Hunter because with continued delays of the P-16, the Federal authorities lost confidence in the autonomous development of military aircraft and in the Swiss aeronautical industry, and because there were plenty of suitable jets available abroad. As a result, neither the Swiss Association of the Aircraft Industry representative nor the Canton of St. Gallen were able to stop the British aircraft industry’s last victory in Switzerland.

¹⁵¹⁴ Anderson (FO) to Littlejohn Cook (Berne), 25.04.1958; Littlejohn Cook (Berne) to Anderson (FO), 14.04.1958; Wickham (Berne) to AM, 14.04.1958, TNA, FO 371/137204.

¹⁵¹⁵ Soutou, « La IV^e République... », *op. cit.*, p.88; Grand, *op. cit.*, p.61.

¹⁵¹⁶ Braun, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

¹⁵¹⁷ Berne to FO, 02.06.1958, TNA, FO 371/145578; various documents in TNA, FO 371/137203-4; Peden, *Arms, Economics...*, *op. cit.*, pp.284-285; Bartlett, Christopher J., *The Long Retreat: A Short History of British Defence Policy, 1945-1970*, London: Macmillan, 1972, pp.188-189.

CONCLUSION

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In early 1958, the Swiss order for 100 British Hunter aircraft rounded off the impressive Anglo-Swiss armaments relationship of the early Cold War. During this period, Britain was Switzerland's main supplier for fighter aircraft, tanks and jet engines. The British earned hundreds of millions of Swiss francs for supplying the Swiss Armed Forces with hundreds of Vampires, Venoms, Centurions and Hunters, as well as state-of-the-art jet engines. Due to their sheer size and financial value, these arms transfers were of major importance to both countries, and involved decision- and policymakers from the lower to the highest levels, attracted the interest of the US, the USSR and France, and had an impact on and were affected by Anglo-Swiss relations. As a result, the reconstruction and analysis of the arms transfers improved our understanding and evaluation of the bilateral relations between Britain and Switzerland during the early Cold War. In addition, by detecting Berne's and London's incentives for these arms deals, it was possible to increase our knowledge of arms and technology transfers and the arms transfer system, while also better appreciating the roles played by neutrality and Britain during the early stages of the East-West conflict.

1. Anglo-Swiss Relations

As a result of the crossing of the two countries' political, economic and security relations with their incentives for arms sales and purchases, one can conclude that Anglo-Swiss relations between 1945 and 1958 were "not special", but had "traits of specialness". On a military level, there was not "Another Special Relationship", as stipulated, albeit with caveats, by Mantovani. Nonetheless, there was a silent yet intimate relationship, which took shape during the Korean War and intensified in view of and through the arms transfers. In the realm of economics, the relationship was characterised by interdependence, at least until the early 1950s. Even though Paccaud and Maurhofer have demonstrated aspects of the interwoven economic relations for the immediate post-war period, they have not detected the significant role that

¹⁵¹⁸ If authors are not referenced in the conclusion, their arguments and the related references can be found in the introduction.

weapons played therein. Arms transfers were an important tool for both countries to rebalance their balance of payments, and to further their economic interests writ large. Accordingly, Mantovani, Frey and Braun were right in their assumptions that Britain's readiness to sell weapons to Switzerland was largely financially motivated. Yet they did not acknowledge that arms exports were part of a larger scheme to stabilise the financial situation and uphold the war potential of Britain, and could also be influenced by strategic and political considerations. The arms transfers were not, however, directly related to Anglo-Swiss political relations. Nevertheless, the analysis of diplomatic relations has shown that Maurhofer was right by observing a "trait of specialness" in the punctual but continuous cooperation against European integration. Rather obviously, the cordial bilateral relations, which the two countries enjoyed, provided a favourable background for prolific arms sales and purchases.

During the immediate post-war period, the Swiss and the British were "mutually attracted" on economic and, to a lesser extent, political and security grounds. The early arms transfers illustrate, that whereas Berne looked hesitantly to London for its security, Britain – despite Montgomery's soft spot for the Swiss – was neither politically nor strategically interested in Switzerland. London was mainly attracted by Swiss francs, and the economic interdependence provided the Federal Military Department with an argument to tip the scales in favour of the Vampire purchases. The period after the founding of NATO saw the establishment of an Anglo-Swiss defence relationship, which was brought about by Field-Marshal Montgomery. Thereafter, this relationship was intensified, not only on the ground – as Mantovani has already shown – but also in the air. Simultaneously, the Swiss Air Force gained in strategic importance, the British armaments industry longed for Swiss machine tools, and financial considerations were only temporarily suspended in London. These reasons were sufficient for providing Berne with state-of-the-art jet engines and aircraft licences. This "honeymoon" was nevertheless troubled by the "storm" of the Korean War, during which it became evident that Switzerland was not strategically important enough to receive scarce war materiel like modern tanks. As the international situation stabilised thereafter, the Anglo-Swiss relationship, especially on a security level, turned into a "marriage of convenience". Whereas the Swiss preferred a security relationship with Britain to one with the US, Berne was not committed to British, but to western weapons more broadly. The access to American weapons would have involved, however, entering into closer defence relations with

the US, i.e. the Western superpower. British weapons, by contrast, came without strings attached and an intimate but rather discreet defence relationship already existed.

Admittedly, between 1945 and 1958, Montgomery was the pillar of this relationship, and it is beyond doubt that he was an important point of contact for Switzerland with the British military authorities and NATO. Yet it remains unresolved whether he was officially the go-between, or if he acted semi-officially and was not only driven by security concerns, but also by his vanity, which was flattered by his Swiss admirers. In any case, the British Field-Marshal's close contacts with the Swiss Federal Council and General Staff were not sufficient to raise the Anglo-Swiss relationship during the Cold War to the status of "specialness". Nonetheless, the relationship had – as mentioned earlier – "traits of specialness", for both countries had common interests, which they selfishly pursued. The upshot was that weapons were an important common denominator for Anglo-Swiss economic and military affairs, so much so that Britain became Switzerland's main weapons supplier after the Second World War.

2. Arms and Technology Transfers

In both Britain and Switzerland, the incentives for selling and buying weapons were multifaceted, but were nonetheless dominated on each side by one reason. *Britain sold its advanced weaponry to Switzerland for predominantly economic reasons, i.e. – to use Krause's words – in the "pursuit of wealth".* Thus, Durch has rightly emphasised the economic aspect of British arms sales during the Cold War. Krause, by contrast, seems to have been mistaken by suggesting that London privileged political and strategic considerations in its arms sales. *Switzerland, meanwhile, purchased weapons in a quest for security, and this incentive falls within Krause's "regional" set of motives.* Accordingly, the Swiss did not necessarily buy aircraft and tanks due to a change in military strategy, as stated by Vautravers. They acquired modern weaponry to guarantee the security of their country in line with the policy of armed neutrality. The shift in strategy only reinforced the military leadership in its belief that it was necessary to re-equip the army with modern weapons.

Yet, as stated above, the motivations in Anglo-Swiss arms transfers were multifaceted, for both in Berne and in London there was a combination of economic and security reasons at work. These other factors ebbed and flowed, depending on international and domestic situations. In Berne, arms purchases were always predominantly militarily motivated. Nevertheless, it was only in the immediate post-war period and especially during the Korean War, that security reasons were sufficient to justify the arms purchases. During periods of lesser tension, and especially during détente, economic reasons were necessary to overcome political hesitancy or opposition. Consequently, Buzan and Herring, as well as Krause, seem to have missed the point that the recipient state can also have economic incentives to purchase weapons. On the other hand, the Swiss also had a reason, which falls into the “systemic” set of motives: they purchased weapons to uphold the status and reputation of an armed neutral. In London, meanwhile, arms sales were constantly financially motivated. This incentive was, however, partially outweighed by security concerns during the Korean War. Even before and after this conflict, the desire to maintain Britain’s war potential favoured the export of aircraft and tanks. Interestingly, the British did not try to use arms sales as a tool to wean Switzerland from neutrality, even though during the Korean War, Berne appeared willing to make limited political sacrifices to equip its army with modern tanks. Consequently, and in contrast to Laurance’s and Pierre’s general assumptions, the British did not use arms trade as an instrument of foreign policy, at least not towards Switzerland.

Meanwhile, Anglo-Swiss arms transfers depended on and took place in an international arms market, which evolved between 1945 and 1958 from a seller’s into a buyer’s market. In addition, the global arms transfer system of the early Cold War was not, as claimed by Laurance and Keller, only dominated by the US and the Soviet Union. This period was, in Sampson’s words, the “golden age for British arms exports”. This golden age came to an end in the late 1950s, after the British armaments industry had encountered serious setbacks, the US had begun to relax its arms exports policy, and Britain’s pre-war competitors – particularly France – had re-emerged on the international arms market. During the immediate post-war period, Britain was the sole leading arms manufacturer willing to sell modern weapons to almost anyone who paid for them – including neutral Switzerland. Whereas Moscow and Washington were unwilling to sell weapons to the Swiss for political and strategic reasons, Britain’s traditional competitors – such as France and Germany – had yet to

rebuild their armaments industries. Thus, the international arms market – at least with regard to Europe – was a seller's market to Britain's advantage. After the outbreak of the Korean War, the market was almost non-existent, for the supplier states absorbed most of their weapons themselves. Only once peace was looming over Korea, and the US shifted to a less restrictive and strategically more pragmatic arms exports policy, the arms market slowly began to open up. Thereafter, with the French armaments industry becoming increasingly competitive, and Washington's decision to transform weapons into a tool to bring countries into its orbit, the international arms market transformed into a buyer's market.

This market, in which Switzerland could participate to its own advantage, was, however, only one of two arms transfer systems. There was another one on the other side of the Iron Curtain, in which the Swiss had refused to participate. *But through participating solely in the Western arms transfer system, Switzerland gained access to modern weapons technology.* Even though the degree of technology transfers varied in relation to the international arms market, Switzerland had near continuous access to British know-how. Britain, in contrast to the US, was also largely willing to sell its military innovations in the form of licences. First, the Swiss acquired jet aircraft technology through "material transfer". Later, and especially during the Korean War, they opted for "design transfer", and decided to manufacture the jets under licence in Switzerland to become less dependent on foreign arms supplies. Whereas these technology transfers were slowed down by Whitehall's awakening to the dangers of technological dissemination through the "Nene-blunder", they were neither hindered through CoCom, nor by the US itself.

Yet the Swiss were not really able to use the British technological know-how to the advantage of their own jet aircraft, the development of which was abandoned in 1958. Even though the Military Technical Service, the Federal Aircraft Factory and the Flug- und Fahrzeugwerke Altenrhein had had the opportunity to learn from the British, first through "material" and then through "design transfer", they failed in the development of an indigenous jet aircraft. The Swiss had neither the political will nor the domestic resources to gain independence in all fields of military technology and to establish a comprehensive modern armaments industry. While they achieved the development of individual, smaller or less complex weapons systems, the development of a competitive jet aircraft proved to be financially and technologically too demanding. Moreover, the Federal authorities realised, that foreign aircraft were

not only increasingly accessible and cheaper, but also suited what they perceived as Switzerland's particular topographical and military conditions. By the late 1950s, the Federal Government abandoned its view that foreign aircraft were an interim solution, and realised and admitted that aircraft would in the future have to be purchased as a finished product, or manufactured under licence. In the end, Berne could accept this solution, for through the opening of the Western arms market, and Switzerland's informal participation in CoCom, it had gained access to the weapons and the related technology of all three leading NATO weapons producers – Britain, France and the US.

3. Neutrality

During the early Cold War, Britain had a pragmatic approach towards neutrality, especially in the case of Switzerland. For political, economic and strategic reasons, the British accepted, and to a certain extent respected, Swiss neutrality. As long as this neutrality was western-oriented and did not run contrary to British interests, London did not see the need to seriously challenge it. This acceptance of Swiss neutrality was probably among the main reasons for why Britain refrained from using arms supplies as a tool to wean Switzerland from neutrality. Consequently, even though Whitehall sporadically criticised Switzerland and Sweden for their war record, and doubted whether neutrality was sustainable in a Cold War setting, Salmon is mistaken in his claim that the British deprecated neutrality on practical and moral grounds. Moreover, in contrast to Kaiser's observations, the pragmatic approach of British Governments towards the European neutrals was not only, but also to gain their cooperation to forestall further European integration.

Whitehall had an amoral approach towards Swiss neutrality and neutrality *per se*. There was neither empathy nor contempt, but through its own understanding of history, London could see the political, economic and military benefits of a neutral but western-oriented Switzerland. The British position was thus markedly different from the American and Soviet positions. Both the US and the Soviet Union had a moral and ideological position towards neutrality. It was only in the early 1950s, that Washington and Moscow realised the advantages that neutrality could entail and thus began to change their approaches. Yet for them the neutrality of a country had to be

either western- or eastern-oriented, and therefore Switzerland's status and policy was more acceptable for and to the advantage of the US.

Meanwhile, Switzerland's political and military leaders never doubted that neutrality was the right status and policy for their country. Nevertheless, although they refused official collaboration with the Western powers in the political and military spheres, they were amenable to diluting their neutrality through their secret defence relations with Britain, and by participating in the strategic embargo. *But it was finally the hunger for modern weaponry, which led Switzerland to manoeuvre itself into a relationship of dependency with Britain and the West more generally, and – if one accepts Bindschedler's and Hakovirta's views – to infringe upon its neutrality status and to discredit its neutrality policy.* Even though the Swiss wished to pursue – because of their armed neutrality – a self-reliant armament policy after the Second World War, the deficiencies in their armaments industry, the lack of modern heavy military equipment, the fear of a Soviet attack, their anticommunism, and their western identity, made them purchase weapons in the West. In the predominantly bipolar Cold War system, for a Western neutral like Switzerland, “honest” neutrality did not seem to be an option. Paradoxically, it was the defence policy of “armed neutrality” that led the Swiss into a relationship of dependency for their arms supplies.

In Switzerland's quest for weapons, between 1945 and 1958 the British arms industry evolved into the main source of modern aircraft and tanks. From the early 1950s on, the Swiss did not only qualify to receive American military aid, but they could also purchase weapons in the re-awakened French armaments industry. Meanwhile, the Federal authorities were not only unwilling to approach the Soviet Union and its satellites for weapons, but they also rejected any eventual offer for weapons coming from the eastern side of the Iron Curtain. The political leaders and, to a lesser extent, the military leaders, feared that the purchase of Soviet weaponry could compromise the standing of Switzerland and, paradoxically, its neutrality in American and British eyes. It also ran the risk of being misunderstood by the Swiss population while providing the Swiss communists with a propaganda victory. In contrast, the Federal authorities were willing to give their allegiance to the West through their arms purchases, as Switzerland's qualification for reimbursable American military aid clearly illustrates. Admittedly, with France and the US stepping in as new suppliers in the early 1950s, the Swiss were no longer solely dependent on British weapons. However, they remained dependent on weapons from the Western

bloc, as Britain, France, and especially the US, were the leading members of NATO. The Swiss leadership seemed to be aware of this dependency, for it was unwilling to jeopardise the supply with western military hardware by considering the purchase of Soviet weapons. Consequently, one can talk in terms of a Swiss dependency on American, British and French weapons.

Although a neutral state is free in its arms purchases, through the dependency on western weapons, the Swiss could have infringed upon their neutrality status, for they critically undermined their capacity to remain aloof from future conflict. Admittedly, one could argue that weapons are just like other manufactured goods and thus follow the rules of international trade. This position, however, is hardly credible, because arms sales always involve political or strategic considerations, even if economic reasons dominate. During the Cold War in particular, the acquisition of arms from one of the two sides was generally considered as evidence of a state's allegiance to one of the blocs. Moreover, with a few notable exceptions, such as the "Nene-blunder", in the zero-sum game of the Cold War, the opponents were not interested in delivering weapons to potential adversaries, but rather to equip allies and friendly countries. Accordingly, Britain did not question Switzerland's western credentials, and was thus willing to equip the Swiss Armed Forces with state-of-the-art weapons systems. More significantly, the US changed its armaments policy towards Switzerland only once it took for granted that the Swiss were firmly on the western side, considered the Soviet Union as the sole potential enemy and, if attacked, would fight in concert with NATO.

Meanwhile, if war broke out, Swiss weapons systems would be dependent on spare parts and technical assistance from abroad, and this would most likely only be forthcoming if Switzerland aligned itself with the supplier state and its allies. Furthermore, the arms transfers led to increased military contacts first with Britain, and then with the US and France. To secure access to US weaponry, Berne had to disclose military secrets – such as the strength of its air force – to Washington, subscribe to the same military assistance system as US Allies (Mutual Defense Assistance Act), which clearly indicated that the Swiss Army would fight on the Western side and was a strategic asset, whether it was neutral or not; and to align its trade and economy with the West. Despite the qualification for American military aid, Berne preferred to align itself first with London, and only if truly necessary, with Washington. The Swiss were aware that the Americans, contrary to the British, used

aircraft and tanks as a bait to lure them into closer security relations, and were thus reluctant to buy their weapons. Although towards the late 1950s the rapprochement between Berne and Washington was well under way, London remained Switzerland's favoured security partner and key NATO contact.

In addition to the infringement upon its neutrality status, Switzerland's one-sided arms purchases could also overtly discredit its neutrality policy. On the one hand, because jet aircraft and tanks are very visible military hardware, the Swiss openly showed the whole world that they were equipping their army with British and, if necessary, American and French weapons. On the other hand, they also rejected Moscow's indirect offers for weapons during the 1950s. Most probably, this discredited neutral Switzerland in the eyes of the Soviets and their Allies. Yet Britain, the US and France could have lost some of their respect for Swiss neutrality as well; Berne had shown its hand, and it came in the form of a clear commitment to the West through arms purchases. Some Swiss policymakers – at least in the Federal Military Department – feared for the credibility of neutrality, and suggested the purchase of weapons in the East to counterbalance the dependency on weapons from the West. Even Foreign Minister Petitpierre, although rejecting the idea that weapons purchases could also affect the status of neutrality, admitted that they could discredit neutrality policy. However, he and his colleagues were more afraid of discrediting their “western neutrality” in London's and Washington's eyes, than of discrediting neutrality *per se*.

It is important to emphasise that for Switzerland – which believed it needed weapons from abroad – the Western arms market was the obvious choice. Politically, economically, ideologically, and culturally, the Swiss were part of the West. As a fiercely anticommunist country, Switzerland considered the Soviet Union its sole potential enemy. In addition, the political and military leadership feared that the country's anticommunist population would not understand if the army was equipped with Soviet weapons and, more importantly, it was unwilling to risk its “western status”. Berne was so preoccupied with its fear of being discredited in western eyes, and of becoming dependent on the USSR, that it became dependent on NATO and discredited its neutrality. Nevertheless, the Federal authorities got away with it, for whereas Britain had a pragmatic approach, the two superpowers seemed to have an opportunistic approach towards neutrality, which allowed for “western-” and “eastern-oriented” neutrals.

Berne was aware of the foreign policy implications of arms purchases, because if it had not been, it would not have refused to consider the purchase of weapons beyond the Iron Curtain. Through its arms import policy, Switzerland not only discredited its neutrality policy, but also infringed upon its neutrality status. Therefore, Berne's dependency on western weapons could have been even more detrimental to neutrality than its informal participation in the strategic embargo, for neutral players have no legal obligations regarding the export and transit of strategic material,¹⁵¹⁹ and the compliance with CoCom did not practically reduce Switzerland's ability to remain aloof from a future war. This did not mean that genuine neutrality was impossible during the early Cold War, but considering Switzerland's anti-Soviet security outlook, cooperation with the West appeared necessary.

4. Britain's Role

Although Britain was still a great power in the early Cold War, to which Switzerland looked for help and advice, it was not able to provide leadership without American support. Initially, some British policymakers dreamed of a "Third Force", but the arms deliveries to the Swiss were not even hypothetically part of this design. *Even if London had attempted to use its modern weapons to bring Berne into its orbit, the need for hard currency, and the pressure from the Atlantic and Empire circles, would have ruled this option out.* The use of arms transfers to maintain the world role became even more illusory once the British armaments industry encountered difficulties from the 1950s onwards, and particularly towards the end of the decade, as it appeared that it would definitely lose the Swiss aircraft market in the near future.

After the Korean War, British power continued to erode. The Suez crisis accelerated this process in 1956 by showing Britain the limits of its power the hard way if it failed to follow America's line. Although the British had already encountered difficulties in the Empire and Atlantic circles before the Americans whistled them back from Egypt, they had been unwilling to modify their great power role substantially. It was only the Sandys White Paper of 1957 that marked the first step towards reducing London's global military commitments.

¹⁵¹⁹ Riklin, *op. cit.*, p.196. For a detailed legal analysis see Schaller, *op. cit.*, pp.178-200.

Before this defence reform, Britain needed aircraft and tank orders – like those from Switzerland – to earn valuable currency and to maintain war potential. The country's economy was considered weak, which meant that the potential loss of Swiss aircraft orders was not a loss London could afford. After the 1957 White Paper, which had a drastic impact on the British armaments industry by scrapping many weapons programmes, it became even more urgent to secure foreign aircraft and tank orders to maintain the war potential of a great power. As a result, financial and security considerations dictated the sale of weapons, and there was no room for political manoeuvres, which could have linked the arms sales to political or military concessions from Berne.

Even though Britain continued to be Switzerland's reference in security affairs, the Swiss were aware that the British Empire was losing ground, and they intended to use the financial argument to extract more favourable conditions for their weapons purchases from London. They also had more room to manoeuvre in their negotiations, for the British were witnessing more and more competition in the arms market. Whereas the Americans had still encouraged the Swiss to buy British weapons in the mid-1950s, a few years later they were more sanguine about Whitehall's need to earn hard currency, and competed, albeit half-heartedly, for a Swiss aircraft order for strategic purposes. In addition, the fast-growing French aircraft industry had become a serious competitor, while Britain was falling behind in aeronautical development. If anything, the crisis of the British aircraft industry was symptomatic of Britain's diminishing world role. Accordingly, the Hunter was the last major aircraft order the British could secure from Switzerland.

The situation was thus markedly different from the immediate post-war period, as Britannia ruled over the international military aviation market, and was one of the three victorious powers of the Second World War. The Swiss looked up to Great Britain, especially because it was still powerful enough to help them in their dealings with Moscow and Washington. In the light of the American disengagement from Europe immediately after the war and the perception of a Soviet threat, the British took the lead in Western Europe. Although Bevin for some time flirted with the idea of a "Third Force" between the superpowers, the British Empire and its European partners were not strong enough to counterbalance the Soviets on their own. He therefore had to entangle the US in European security affairs. Britain had no choice

but to look for a superpower partner to maintain its incumbent great power commitments; the Treasury would not allow for anything else.

During this period, London was interested in Switzerland. On the one hand, the healthy Swiss economy was needed for European reconstruction, and the Swiss Army was one of the very few remaining intact armies on the continent, which could help oppose the Red Army. On the other hand, through its credits and arms purchases, Switzerland was essential for Britain's financial survival and war potential. Therefore, London could not exploit arms deliveries to extract political or strategic concessions from Berne. Yet the British dilemma was that Washington had no understanding for economically driven arms sales, and asked London to consider arms transfers politically and strategically. Britain refused to play the American game, because it considered itself still a great power, which was entitled to a leading role in world affairs.

British power, however, continued to wane. As Britain had to implement the strategic embargo in Europe on America's behalf, the Western European states – especially the neutrals like Switzerland – were not willing to follow its lead, and Washington's intervention was necessary to make them comply. Although London's "failure" to bring about Switzerland's compliance with CoCom was also due to its pragmatic approach towards neutrality and its own trade interests with the East, it was too dependent on the financial gains from its arms sales to exploit them for political and strategic purposes. While Britain's arms exports were mostly dictated by financial needs, in periods of crisis or war – such as the Korean War period – they were largely dictated by its own armed services, the US and other major Allies.

Nonetheless, even in such crisis-ridden times, the Swiss could extract limited weapons deliveries from London, for they had the machine tools the British arms industry needed. The Federal authorities were aware of their strengths, especially as they also understood that Britain's world role was diminishing. It probably was for this reason, that they were not willing to overtly compromise their neutrality by becoming part of the British rearmament effort in exchange for Centurions, whereas they were willing to deliver Oerlikon-Bührle rockets to the American superpower in exchange for Pattons. Paradoxically, Berne felt more comfortable engaging in secret security relations with London than with Washington. It was less compromising for a neutral to have a defence relationship with Britain, than with the leading Western

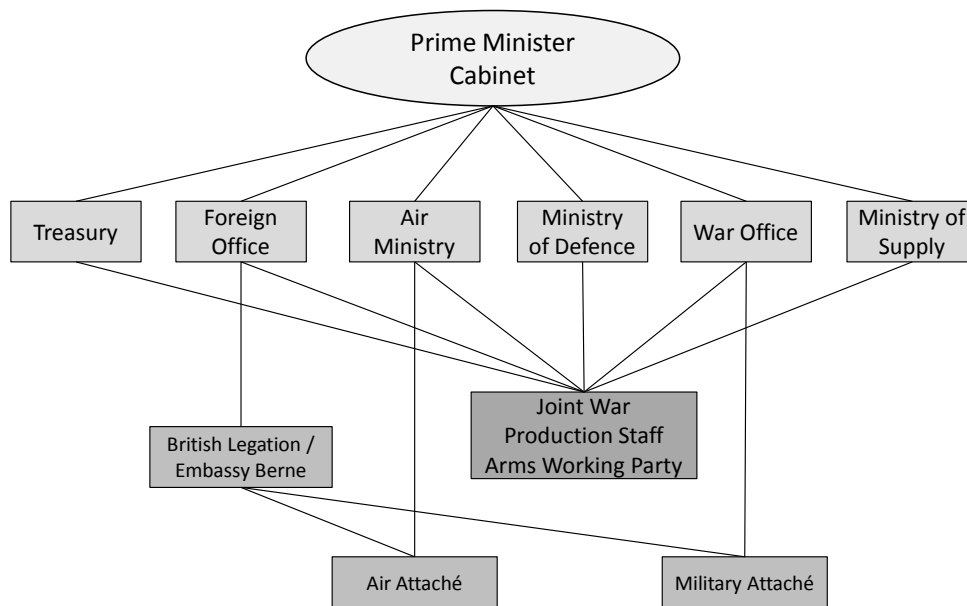
power. The Americans appeared not to be trustworthy, as they used arms deliveries for political purposes and were unable to keep the military contacts secret.

APPENDICES

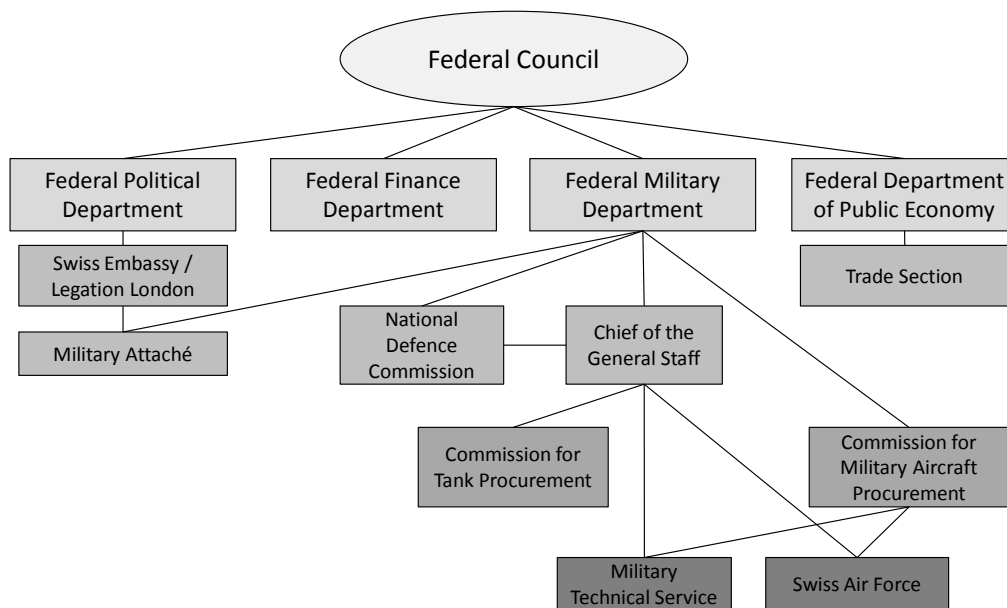
APPENDICES

1. Organisational Charts

Involved Parties in the British Government



Involved Parties in the Swiss Government



2. Exchange Rates

Market Exchange Rates between the British Pound Sterling and the Swiss Franc

(Annual Average from 1938 to 1958)¹⁵²⁰

Year	British Pound Sterling	Swiss Francs
1938	1	21.37
1939	1	19.67
1940	1	16.64
1941	1	17.06
1942	1	17.27
1943	1	17.30
1944	1	17.31
1945	1	17.31
1946	1	17.35
1947	1	17.34
1948	1	17.34
1949	1	15.86
1950	1	12.23
1951	1	12.23
1952	1	12.20
1953	1	12.19
1954	1	12.22
1955	1	12.23
1956	1	12.23
1957	1	12.24
1958	1	12.23

¹⁵²⁰ Eidgenössisches Statistisches Amt, *op. cit.*, p.284.

3. Photographs

Vampire

Swiss DH-100 Vampires Being Refuelled, Date Unknown¹⁵²¹



¹⁵²¹ Photo Archives, Air Force Center Dübendorf.

Swiss DH-100 Vampires Flying, Date Unknown¹⁵²²



¹⁵²² *Ibid.*

Mustang

The First Operational P-51 D No. J-2001 in Dübendorf after Refit, 27 February 1948¹⁵²³



¹⁵²³ *Ibid.*

Two P-51 D's (No. J-2038 and 2088) on Patrol Flight over the Swiss Foothills of the Alps, 01 June 1948¹⁵²⁴



¹⁵²⁴ *Ibid.*.

Venom

Swiss DH-112 on Runway, Date Unknown¹⁵²⁵



¹⁵²⁵ *Ibid..*

Swiss DH-112 Venom Flying, Date Unknown¹⁵²⁶



¹⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*

Centurion

Swiss Vickers-Armstrongs Centurion, Date Unknown¹⁵²⁷



¹⁵²⁷ Photo Archives, Stiftung Historisches Material der Schweizer Armee (Stiftung HAM).

Swiss Vickers-Armstrongs Centurion, Date Unknown¹⁵²⁸



¹⁵²⁸ *Ibid..*

Hunter

Swiss Hawker Hunter Taking Off, Date Unknown¹⁵²⁹



¹⁵²⁹ Photo Archives, Air Force Center Dübendorf.

Swiss Hawker Hunter Flying, Date Unknown¹⁵³⁰



¹⁵³⁰ *Ibid..*

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Militär- und Luftattaché London

Administratives; Mitteilungen, u.a. betr. Kriegsmaterialeinfuhr in die Schweiz, u.a. Centurions; Kriegsmaterialausfuhr aus der Schweiz; Lizenzfabrikation von Kriegsmaterial; Drucksachen und Waffenübermittlung

-/9001

9767

Militär- und Luftattaché London

Berichte 1941-1949

Bd. 3 1945-1946

Bd. 4 1947-1949

-/9001

9815

Ausländische Militärattachés in der Schweiz

Grossbritannien

1906-1950

-/9001

15749

1928-1950

Abkommandierungen ins Ausland betr. Flugwesen und Fliegerabwehr

Grossbritannien

Bde. 1-6

-/9001

17971

Kriegsmaterialeinkauf im Ausland während und nach dem Aktivdienst

1943-1951

-/9001

17987

Reiseberichte, Unterlagen zu den Abkommandierungen ins Ausland, Besuch von Lieferanten, Materialabnahme, Fabrikationskontrolle

Bd. 8

Abkommandierung einer Militärmission unter Oberstbrig. von Wattenwyl nach England betr. Studium von neuen Infanteriewaffen und Verhandlungen betr. Lieferung von Vampire-Flugzeugen, 12.-19.7.1946

Bd. 13

Abkommandierung von Offizieren unter Leitung von Oberstdiv. von Muralt nach England zum Studium von Panzerwagen und Besprechungen betr. Ankauf von Panzerwagen, vom 6.3.-18. März 1950 – Bericht, 11.4.1950 mit Beilagen.

Bd. 14

Reisen von KTA-Beamten nach Grossbritannien 1949-1950

-/9001

18299

Abkommandierungen ins Ausland zum Studium der Radargeräte

Bd. 2

Orientierungsreise über Radargeräte nach London, Juli/Aug. 1946

Bd. 3
Abnahme-Reise für Radargeräte Mk 4, Aug.-Sept. 1946
Bd. 4
Instruktionskurs für Radargerät AMES 21 in England, Juni – Juli 1948
Bd. 6
Reise Beamte der KTA nach England Mai-Juni 1948 Instruktion und Abnahme
Radargerät Mk 7
Bd. 7
Abkommandierungen nach England zur Abnahme und Einführung in das Feuerleit-
Radargerät Mk 7
1949

-/9001
18505
Panzerwagen und Panzertruppe
1937-1951
Bd. 1
Allgemeine Rüstungsfragen bei der Panzertruppe DMV: 1949-1950
Bd. 2
Allgemeine Rüstungsfragen bei der Panzertruppe
Gst abt: 1928, 1935-37, 1949-1951
Bd. 4
Allgemeine Rüstungsfragen bei der Panzertruppe
Materialsektion: 1940-1951

-/9001
18882
1942-1949
Bd. 1: 1942-1947
Bd. 2: 1947-1949
Kommission für milit. Flugzeugbeschaffung.

-/9001
18961
De Havilland DH-100 „Vampire“, Bd. 1-5.
1946-1948
Bd. 1. Berichte über Englandreisen betr. Vampire-Erprobung und –Beschaffung,
1946.
Bd. 2. Flugversuche in Boscombe Down, 1947.
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-/9001
18962
De Havilland DH-100 „Vampire“, Bd. 1-4.
1946-1947
Bd. 1. BB vom 23.9.1947 über die Beschaffung von Flugzeugen (Akten der DMV).
Bd. 2. BB vom 23.9.1947 über die Beschaffung von Flugzeugen (Akten der Gst.Abt.).

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-/9001

18963

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1948-1949

Bd. 1. Beschaffung „Vampire“, 1948-1949.

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-/9001

18964

De Havilland DH-100 „Vampire“, Bd. 1-10.

1945-1951

Bd. 1. Ankauf von Vampires in England, 1945-1950.

Bd. 2. Lizenzfabrikation, 1947-1949.

Bd. 3. Eingabe von NR Oprecht v. 17.4.1946 betr. Vampire-Beschaffung, 1946.

-/9001

18966

De Havilland DH 112 „Venom“

1950-51

-/9001

19027

1942-1951

Bd. 2. Beschaffung von Radargeräten (Allgemeines, Kredite)

1947-1949

Bd. 3 Radar-Forschung, Vorführung versch. Geräte

1947-1951

-/9001

19028

Versuche mit Radargeräten

1945-1950

-/9001

23347

Besuche und Aufenthalte ausländischer Staatschefs, Regierungsmitglieder, Offiziere. Abkommandierungen ausländischer Offiziere zum Dienst in der Schweizer Armee

1871-1947

Bd. 2 Besuch Winston Churchill

1946

Bd. 3 Marshall Montgomery in der Schweiz

1946

Bd. 4 Besuch Feldmarschall Montgomery

1946

Bd. 5 Besuch Feldmarschall Montgomery

1947

Bd. 6 Feldmarschall Montgomery

1948

Bd. 7 Feldmarschall Montgomery

1949

Bd. 9 Besuch von Brigadier R.C. Cottrell Hill und Major R.W. Walker bei der schweiz. Armee, Sept./Okt. 1949 – Geheimbericht Cottrell Hill

1949-1950

Bd. 11 Grossbritannien

Federal Military Administration

E 5001 (F)

1000/1851

003.22

Kommission für militärische Flugzeugbeschaffung

1950

Bd. 1

1000/1851

090.1

Feldmarschall Montgomery

1950-1951

Bd. 13

1000/1851

090.2

Luftmarschall Lord Tedder

1950

Bd. 13

1000/1851

094.GB

Verkehr mit den schweiz. ausl. Vertretungen

GB – mit Grossbritannien

1950

Bd. 14

1000/1851

641.5

Einladung englischer Offiziere

1950

Bd. 55

1000/1851

701.01

Abkommandierung nach England

Beschaffung von „Vampire“

1950

Bd. 65

1000/1851

701.11

Abkommandierung betr. Panzerbeschaffung

1950-1951

Bd. 66

1000/1851

701.12

Besuch englischer Offiziere bei Tavarro und KTA

1950

Bd. 66

1000/1851

701.15

Besuch englischer Delegation Flugzeugbeschaffung

1950

Bd. 66

1000/1851

701.49

Abkommandierung nach England

Flugerprobung „Venom“

1950-1951

Bd. 67

1000/1851

710.08

Flugmeeting der R.A.F. am 7./8.7.1950

1950

Bd. 68

1000/1851

710.12

Flugzeug-Ausstellung

1950-1951

Bd. 68

1000/1851

711.2

K.M.F. Tätigkeit

1950-1951

Bd. 69

1000/1851

712.05

Nachtjäger Vampire DH 112

1950

Bd. 69

1000/1851
712.11
Nationalrat Ph. Schmid, Düsenjäger aus England
1950
Bd. 69

1000/1851
780.08
Ein- und Ausfuhr von Kriegsmaterial
1950
Bd. 79

1000/1853
043.14
Exposé Montgomery
Bd. 2
1950

1000/1853
712.09
Ausrüstung unserer Flugwaffe
1950-1967
Bd. 12

1000/1853
712.12
Lieferung von Triebwerken aus England (für 2. Vampire-Serie)
1950-1951
Bd. 12

1000/1854
090.1
Feldmarschall Montgomery
1951
090.2
Feldmarschall Montgomery
1951-1952
Bd. 22

1000/1854
094.0
Grossbritannien Allgemeines
1951
Bd. 23

1000/1854
641.3
Englische Offiziere, Winter WK in der Schweiz 1951
1951

Bd. 68

1000/1854

710.06

Ausstellung britische Flugzeugindustrie in Farnborough

1951

Bd. 82

1000/1854

711.1

Tätigkeit der KMF

1951-1952

Bd. 82

1000/1854

712.4

Flz.-Ersatzmaterial; Triebwerke

1951-1952

712.6

Düsentriebwerke für Jagdflugzeug-Entwicklung

1951

Bd. 83

1000/1856

712.1

Venom: Allgemeines; Oberst Karnbach, Handakten des Hr. Dep. Chef

1951-1953

Bd. 7

1000/1856

7707.1

Panzer-Beschaffung

1951-1953

Bde. 8-9

1000/1857

003.30

Bildung Panzerkommission

1952-1953

Bd. 1

1000/1857

094.0

Verkehr mit dem Ausland: Grossbritannien Allgemeines

1952

Bd. 15

1000/1857

701.11

Delegation des Ministry of Supply

1952
Bd. 68

1000/1857
704.1
Lieferungen aus dem Ausland: Tschechoslowakei
1952
Bd. 72

1000/1857
710.2
Ausstellung des Verbandes der brit. Flz.-Industrie
1952-1953
Bd. 72

1000/1857
711.1
Tätigkeit der KMF
1952
Bd. 72

1000/1857
712.07
Vampire Nightfighter
1952
Bd. 72

1000/1857
77.02
Beschaffung von Radargeräten
1952-1953
Bd. 75

1000/1858
090.1
Feldmarschall Montgomery
1952
090.2
Feldmarschall Montgomery
1952-1953
Bd. 4

1000/1859
043.02
Unterredung mit Oberst Fryer
1952
Bd. 1

1000/1859
712.2

Triebwerk für Düsenflugzeuge
1952-1953
Bd. 8

1000/1860
64.04
Schweiz. Fliegermission bei der RAF in Deutschland
1953-1966
Bd. 58

1000/1860
641.1
Engl. Fliegermission, RAF
1953
641.4
Austausch von Of. mit England
1953
Bd. 60

1000/1860
710.08
Britische Flz.-Industrie, Anglo-American Aeraonautical
1953-1955
711.1
Tätigkeit der KMF, N-20
1953-1954
711.3
Fabrikation von 100 Flugzeugen Venom
1953
Bd. 73

1000/1860
712.09
Vorführung ausl. Flugzeuge; „Javelin“, „Auster“, „Hunter“
1953
712.14
Venom II. Serie
1953-1957
Bd. 74

1000/1860
7707.01
Versuche mit Pzw. Centurion und Patton
1953-1955
7707.5
Panzerbeschaffungskommission Sitzung 13.4.53
1953
7707.7
Panzerbeschaffungskommission Sitzung 4.5.53
1953

7707.8
Panzerbeschaffungskommission Sitzung 13.5.53
1953
7707.10
Panzerbeschaffungskommission Sitzung 30.6.53
1953
7707.12
Panzerbeschaffungskommission Sitzung 7.7.53
1953
Bd. 79

1000/1860
7707.13
Panzerbeschaffungskommission Sitzung 27.8.53
1953
7707.14
Panzerbeschaffungskommission Sitzung 14.9.53
1953
7707.15
Panzerbeschaffungskommission Sitzung 1.10.53
1953
7707.19
Panzerbeschaffungskommission Sitzung 24.11.53
1953
Bd. 80

1000/1861
090.4
Feldmarschall Montgomery
1953
Bd. 7

1000/1862
7707.1
Panzerbeschaffung
1953-1954
Bd. 7

1000/1863
0066.4
Erweiterte ständ.ätl. Kommission für Panzerabwehrwaffen u. Panzer
1954
Bd. 6

1000/1863
094.GB.3
Kürzung amerikan. Hilfe an engl. Air Force
1954
Bd. 17

1000/1863
64.4
Kontakt der schweiz. Armee mit ausl. Armeen
1954
641.1
Einladung britischer Offiziere
1954
Bd. 67

1000/1863
701.02
England, Venom, P-16 1954-1955
1953-1956
Bd. 74

1000/1863
701.23
Air Chief Marshal Sir John Baker, England
1954-1955
Bd. 75

1000/1863
710.12
Ausstellung brit. Flugzeug-Industrie
1954-1955
711.4
„Ghost“ Triebwerk, KMF
1954
711.6
KMF
1954
712.06
Vampire-Trainer
1954
712.08
„Ghost“-Turbotriebwerke; Vertrag mit Sulzer
1954-1955
Bd. 78

1000/1863
7707.01
Panzer u. Panzerbeschaffung
1954
Bde. 86-88

1000/1863
7707.02
Panzerbeschaffungskommission 22.2.1954
1954
Bd. 89

1000/1864
090.1
Feldmarschall Montgomery 1954-1955
Bd. 5

1000/1865
711.7
KMF 54
1954-1955
712.13
Triebwerke für Düsenflz.
1955-1956
Bd. 5

1000/1866
0065.2
Nationalrätl. Kommission für die Beratung über die Panzerabwehrwaffen und Panzer,
Sitzung 15.3
1955
0066.1
Ständerätl. Kommission für die Panzerbeschaffung, Sitzung 17.3
1955
Bd. 4

1000/1866
641.3
Engl. Of. Winter und Sommergeb. Kurse
1955
Bd. 52

1000/1866
701.12
England / Panzerwagen Centurion
1955
701.14
Englische Parlaments-Delegation
1955
Bd. 63

1000/1866
701.39
Ausbildung am Centurion-Pzw. / Instr. Personal
1955
Bd. 64

1000/1866
710.15
Ausstellung Farnborough Abkdg.
1955

Bd. 69

1000/1866

711.2

KMF Sitzg. f. 12.7.55

1955

Bd. 70

1000/1866

7707.1

Panzerbeschaffungskommission

1955

Bd. 79

1000/1869

207.21

Oberst Rieser, Hans

1956

Bd. 5

1968/100

003.29

Panzerbeschaffungskommission, Aufhebung

1956-1957

Bd. 2

1968/100

641.2

Brit. Of. im Zentralkurs für Wintergebirgsausbildung

1956

641.3

Teilnahme brit. Of. am ZK für Sommergebirgsausbildung

1956

Bd. 83

1968/100

701.1

England, Centurion

1956-1957

701.3

England, Flugzeuge

1956-1957

Bd. 92

1968/100

701.35

Abkomm. Nach England, Radarstation Type 80

1956

Bd. 93

1968/100
701.59
Abkomm. nach England, Demonstration brit. Flugzeuge, Farnborough
1956
Bd. 94

1968/100
704.1
Kriegsmaterialeinfuhr-Möglichkeit aus der Tschechoslowakei
1956-1957
704.3
KM Ein- u. Ausfuhr EZU
1956-1957
711.3
KMF-Sitzung vom 6. Juli
1956
711.4
Beschaffung von Kampfflugzeugen
1956-1957
Bd. 97

1968/100
712.01
Turbotriebwerke Goblin
1956
712.06
MiG 15 aus der Tschechoslowakei
1956
712.07
Flz.-Beschaffung, Helikopter-Beschaffung
1956-1957
712.08
Triebwerke P-16
1956-1958
Bd. 98

1968/101
090.1
Feldmarschall Montgomery
1957
Bd. 22

1968/101
64.02
Echange engl. Of
1957
Bd. 101

1968/101
701.001

England, Centurion
1957-1958
701.003
England, Vampire/Venom
1957-1958
Bd. 111

1968/101
704.5
KM UdSSR
Bd. 115

1968/101
712.03
Venom Flz. 1. Serie
1957
Bd. 116

1968/101
712.05
Beschaffung Kampfflugzeuge
1957-1958
Bd. 117

1968/101
7707.03
Centurion 2. Serie
1957-1958
Bd. 128

1970/4
003.17
Kommission für militär. Flugzeugbeschaffung
1958
003.18
Arbeitsgruppe für die Flugzeugbeschaffung
1958
Bd. 1

1970/4
090.2
Feldmarschall Montgomery
1958-1959
Bd. 25

1970/4
641.6
W.F.R. Wilby, Testpilot der Fa. Rolls-Royce
1958
Bd. 106

1970/4
701.103
England, Einsatztaktik und Umschulung Flz. Hunter
1958
Bd. 121

1970/4
710.19
Luftraumverteidigung der Schweiz. Zusammenarbeit mit dem Ausland
1958-1960
Bd. 124

1970/4
712.12
„Hunter“, Stand der Beschaffung
1958
Bd. 134

1970/6
043.3
Besuch Feldmarschall Montgomery: Notizen
1957
Bd. 4

1970/6
711.1
KMF
1957
7707.6
Handakten Dep. Chef: Armes antichars et chars blindés
1950-1955
Bd. 8

1970/7
043.4
Besuch Feldmarschall Montgomery: Notizen
1958
Bd. 5

1970/7
711.1
KMF
1957-1958
Bd. 6

1970/7
712.24
Triebwerke Sapphire Sa 6 u. 7
1958

Bd. 9

Military Technical Service

E 5155 (-)

1968/12

194

Beschaffung von Panzerwagen

1947-1950

Bd. 47

1968/12

213

Beschaffung von Panzerwagen Januar – April

1951

214

Beschaffung von Panzerwagen Mai – Dezember

1951

Bd. 53

1971/202

1

Flugzeugbeschaffung, Flugzeugentwicklung

1943-1954

2

Beschaffung von Panzerwagen

1952-1953

3

Beschaffung von Panzerwagen

1954

Bd. 61

1971/202

17

Kommission für militärische Flugzeugbeschaffung: Protokolle

1951-1958

Bd. 68

1971/202

42

Panzerfahrzeuge Centurion

1950-1957

Bd. 77

1971/202

88

Vampire

1946-1949

89

Venom
1951-1958

91
Düsentriebwerke
1945-1959
Bd. 88

1971/202
93
Flugzeugtypen Canadair, Hunter etc.
1957
Bd. 89

1971/202
124
Centurion – Patton: technische Fragen
1953-1955
Bd. 93

1971/202
166
Panzerfahrzeuge: Centurion
1954-1959
167
Panzerfahrzeuge: Centurion 2. Serie
1957-1961
Bd. 99

1971/202
192
Hunter Serie
1957-1962
Bd. 104

1971/202
266
Flugzeugbeschaffung und Entwicklung
1955-1960
Bd. 123

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E 5560 (C)

1975/46
101
Protokolle der gemeinsamen Sitzungen des BR und der LVK
1951-1959
Bd. 1

1975/46
102.1
Aktennotiz über die Konferenzen beim Chef EMD
1948-1960
Bd. 5

1975/46
137.1
Ein- und Ausfuhr und Handel von Kriegsmaterial
1951-1960
Bd. 62

1975/46
322.2.03
Abkommandierungen aus England
Allgemeines
1951-1960
Echange au Pair
1953-1960
Feldmarschall Montgomery
1956-1960
Marshal Sir John Baker
1954
Bd. 170

1975/46
322.4.03
Berichte aus England
1951-1960
Bd. 180

1975/46
562.1
Flugzeugbeschaffung
1951-1960
Bd. 272

1975/46
562.1
Flugzeug HUNTER
1953-1960
Flugzeug VENOM
1951-1960
Bd. 275

1975/46
562.1
Flugzeugbeschaffung Tschechoslowakei
1956
Bd. 276

1975/46
910
Gespräche mit Feldmarschall Montgomery
1957
Bd. 389

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Handakten BR Karl Kobelt
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-/1
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Schreiben Oberst Bracher an Chefs des EMD betr. Fragen der Neutralität (vermehrter Kontakt mit ausländischen militärischen Persönlichkeiten), 23.2.1951
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2
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1952
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12
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1956
Bd. 2

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1984/122
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004-1-004-3 – 004-74-004-76
1955-1958
Bde. 1-16

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1000/1318
486
Definition der Neutralität im militärischen Sinn
1957-1961

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1948-1951
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1955-1963

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1945-1946

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and Foreign Air Forces (Policy and Supply) Committee

1945-1946

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1956

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1949-1952

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Entry 1289

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Records of the Officer in Charge of Politico-Military Affairs

Miscellaneous Subject Files, 1951-55

Box 2

Entry 1389

Subject Files Relating to European Defense Arrangements, 1948-54

Box 2

Office of the Secretary of State

Office of International Security Affairs

Entry 1472

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Boxes 10-11

Entry 1473

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Box 40

Entry 1479

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Box 18

Entry 1545

Miscellaneous Files of the Office of Munitions Control 1934-1959

Boxes 6-7

Records of the Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State RG 84

Switzerland U.S. Embassy and Legation, Bern

Entry 3208 Classified General Records, 1940-1963

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1947

Box 46

1948

Box 69

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RG 218

Entry 13
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Box 53
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Entry 25
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Box 16
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RG 330

Assistant Secretary of Defense
International Security Affairs

Entry 17
Office of Military Assistance
General Decimal and Project Files 1953
II. Project Files, January – June 1953
Box 12
IV Project Files, 1953
Box 39

Entry 18
Office of Military Assistance
General and Project Decimal File, Apr. 1949 – May 1953
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Box 77

Entry 21
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Box 82

Entry 21A
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Box 6

Records of the Office of the Secretary of the Army
RG 335

Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Army
Records of the Army Member of the State-Army-Navy-Air Force Coordinating Committee

Entry 37
SANACC Agencies and Memoranda of Meetings, 1948-49
Box 1

Entry 38
SANACC Minutes of Meetings; Security Classified, 1946-49
Box 1

Entry 39
SANACC Alphabetical Index to Numbered Papers 10/15/1948
Box 1

Entry 40
SANACC Numeric Index to Numbered Papers 1944 – 10/15/1948
Box 1

Entry 41
SANACC Numbered Papers; Security Classified, 1944-49
Box 26, Paper No. 367

Records of the International Trade Administration
RG 489

Bureau of Foreign Commerce Office of Export Control Policy Planning Division

Entry 14
Records of the Coordinating Committee (CoCom) Subcommittee on Export Control,
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Boxes 1-3

Entry 15
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Boxes 1-11

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