

The British Secret Service in Neutral Switzerland: An Unfinished Debate on NATO's Cold War Stay-behind Armies

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In 1990, the existence of a secret anti-Communist stay-behind army in Italy, codenamed 'Gladio' and linked to NATO, was revealed. Subsequently, similar stay-behind armies were discovered in all NATO countries in Western Europe. Based on parliamentary and governmental reports, oral history, and investigative journalism, the essay argues that neutral Switzerland also operated a stay-behind army. It explores the role of the British secret service and the reactions of the British and the Swiss governments to the discovery of the network and investigates whether the Swiss stay-behind army, despite Swiss neutrality, was integrated into the International NATO stay-behind network.

INTRODUCTION

During the Cold War, secret anti-Communist stay-behind armies existed in all countries in Western Europe. Set up after World War II by the US foreign intelligence service CIA and the British foreign intelligence service MI6, the stay-behind network was coordinated by two unorthodox warfare centres of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the 'Clandestine Planning Committee' (CPC) and the 'Allied Clandestine Committee' (ACC). Hidden within the national military secret services, the stay-behind armies operated under numerous codenames such as 'Gladio' in Italy, 'SDRA8' in Belgium, 'Counter-Guerrilla' in Turkey, 'Absalon' in Denmark, and 'P-26' in Switzerland. These secret soldiers had orders to operate behind enemy lines in case of a Soviet invasion; in some countries, in the absence of a Soviet invasion, they linked up with extreme right-wing groups and fought the Communist and Socialist parties with terrorism.¹

Ever since the discovery of the network in Italy in 1990, crucial documents across Western Europe have disappeared or have been classified 'top secret', while witnesses have refused to testify to investigating senators and judges. Due to this difficult research situation, investigations into NATO secret warfare have only progressed very slowly during the last decade, and numerous questions remain open. Therefore, the research discourse on the stay-behind armies is still continuing and remains controversial. Although this essay can not deal with the issue exhaustively, it attempts to contribute to that discourse by offering an international perspective on the secret stay-behind army of neutral Switzerland during the Cold War, with particular reference to the role of the British secret service in that operation.

THE DISCOVERY OF NATO'S SECRET STAY-BEHIND ARMIES

The existence of the NATO stay-behind armies were revealed in Italy during the summer of 1990. Italian judge Felice Casson, who had been working in Rome in the archives of the Italian military secret service SISMI (Servizio Informazioni Sicurezza Militare, previously known as SID: Servizio Informazione Difesa) to investigate mysterious right-wing massacres, stumbled across documents proving the existence of an international stay-behind network linked to NATO. Casson found out that the stay-behind army in Italy was codenamed 'Gladio', or 'Sword'. 'From July until October 1990, I was the only one who knew something', Casson later recalled, 'this could have been unfortunate for me'.² Casson survived and informed the Italian Senate of his far-reaching discovery. A special investigative Senate committee under Senator Libero Gualtieri ordered Italian Prime Minister Giulio Andreotti of the Christian Democratic Party (DCI) to take a stand, whereupon the latter handed a ten-page report to the Senate commission on 24 October 1990, entitled 'The so called "Parallel SID"—The Gladio Case'.

This report officially confirmed for the first time that secret, so-called 'stay-behind armies' linked to NATO existed across Western Europe. Andreotti revealed that after the war, the Italian military secret service and the CIA had set up a so-called 'stay-behind army', which, together with the secret armies of other nations, was supervised and coordinated by two hitherto unknown secret unconventional warfare centres at NATO's Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE), known as the Clandestine Planning Committee and the Allied Clandestine Committee: 'Once the clandestine resistance organisation was constituted, Italy was called upon to participate ... in the works of the CCP (Clandestine Planning Committee) as of 1959, operating within the ambit of SHAPE'. Thereafter, 'in 1964 the

Italian secret service also entered the ACC (Allied Clandestine Committee)'.³ General Vito Miceli, a former senior member of the NATO Security Office that oversaw operations and a former director of the Italian military secret service, could hardly believe that the prime minister had publicly revealed the Gladio secret, and shortly before his death in October 1990 protested: 'I have gone to prison because I did not want to reveal the existence of this top-secret organisation. And now Andreotti comes along and tells it to Parliament!'⁴

As the Italian press raised strong criticism against the anti-Communist conspiracy, the prime minister, in an attempt to defend himself, highlighted the fact that similar secret stay-behind armies existed across Western Europe. Subsequent investigations revealed the existence of secret anti-Communist stay-behind armies in the NATO countries Germany, Turkey, Greece, Portugal, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxemburg, Denmark, and Norway. When France tried to deny its involvement in the international stay-behind network, Andreotti mercilessly declared in public that officers of the French military secret service had also clandestinely participated in the most recent ACC meeting, which had taken place in Brussels on 23 and 24 October 1990 under the chairmanship of General Raymond Van Calster, chief of the Belgian military secret service SGR (Service Général de Renseignement).

Alarmed, the Belgian Senate, like the Senate in Italy, decided to investigate the matter in detail and formed a special committee under Senator Roger Lallemand. After a year of research, the committee presented a detailed 250-page public report.⁵ According to the findings of the Belgian senators, from 1948 onwards, the so-called 'Clandestine Committee of the Western Union' (CCWU) had coordinated preparations for unconventional warfare in Western Europe. Senior officers of the European military secret services met regularly within the CCWU to discuss anti-Communist warfare. When the North Atlantic Treaty was signed in 1949, the CCWU was secretly integrated into NATO and, from 1951 on, operated under the label 'Clandestine Planning Committee' (CPC). As the European headquarters of the military alliance moved from France to Belgium, the chair of the CPC also moved to Brussels in 1968. Furthermore, the Belgian senators found that in 1957, on the orders of NATO's Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR), a second secret command centre, labelled the Allied Clandestine Committee (ACC), had been set up whose duties 'included elaborating the directives for the network, developing its clandestine capability and organising bases in Britain and the United States. In wartime, it was to plan stay-behind operations in conjunction with SHAPE; organisers were to activate clandestine bases and organise operations from there'.⁶

NATO reacted with confusion when these delicate secrets were exposed, and initially categorically denied Andreotti's allegation on 5 November 1990. Senior spokesman Jean Marcotta said at SHAPE headquarters in Mons,

Belgium, that 'NATO has never contemplated guerrilla war or clandestine operations; it has always concerned itself with military affairs and the defence of Allied frontiers'. The next day, a NATO spokesman conceded that NATO's denial on the previous day had been false. The spokesman left journalists with a short communiqué only, which said that NATO never commented on matters of military secrecy, and that Marcotta should not have said anything at all.⁷

According to Spanish press reports, NATO's highest military official in Europe, SACEUR US General John Galvin, and NATO's highest civilian official in Europe, Secretary-General Manfred Wörner, held a closed-door meeting with the ambassadors of the 16 allied NATO nations immediately after the public relations debacle. Behind closed doors they confirmed that SHAPE had coordinated the stay-behind armies, but added that for security reasons, NATO's public position had to be that they would not comment on official secrets.⁸ As the international press protested about the 'no-comment' policy, a NATO diplomat, who insisted on remaining anonymous, reasoned:

Since this is a secret organisation, I wouldn't expect too many questions to be answered, even though the Cold War is over. If there were any links to terrorist organisations, that sort of information would be buried very deep indeed. If not, then what is wrong with taking precautions to organise resistance if you think the Soviets might attack?⁹

THE SECRET STAY-BEHIND ARMY OF SWITZERLAND

To many Swiss people, until today even the thought of a secret army linked to NATO existing in their officially neutral country seems an incredible suggestion. However, following the discovery of the stay-behind armies across Western Europe in late 1990, Swiss and international security researchers found themselves confronted with two clear-cut questions: Did Switzerland also operate a secret stay-behind army? And if yes, was it part of NATO's stay-behind network? The answer to the first question is clearly yes, as will be shown in detail in this section. The answer to the second question remains disputed and will be addressed in the next section.

Switzerland was the only country in Western Europe where the existence of a secret stay-behind army had, by coincidence, already been discovered and confirmed months before Italian Prime Minister Andreotti revealed the secret. The discovery in Switzerland was made by parliamentarians investigating the Defence Department in the summer of 1990. This investigation had been launched in the wake of the so-called 'secret files scandal' ('Fichenaffäre') that had shocked both the Swiss population and the

Swiss Justice and Police Department (EJPD, Eidgenössisches Justiz- und Polizeidepartement) in the previous year. Without the secret files scandal and the turmoil it created, the Swiss secret army might have never been discovered, and therefore it is important to look back upon that scandal.

At its eruption at the end of the Cold War, the secret files scandal caught the Swiss population by surprise. Within the EJPD, the Swiss Federal Police (BUPO, Bundespolizei), similar to the US FBI, had the task to operate domestically as a police and counter-intelligence service fighting organised crime, sabotage, high treason, terrorism, and forgery in order to protect the security of the state. At the end of the Cold War, it was alleged that the BUPO had overstepped its authority and was secretly and illegally keeping personal files on both Swiss citizens and foreigners. As the media pressed for answers, the parliament decided to set up a special parliamentary commission (PUK EJPD) to investigate the Justice and Police Department. The commission presented its final report in November 1989 and found that although BUPO had generally worked well, it had also massively transgressed its powers in the field of state security by keeping more than 900,000 files in secret archives—thus keeping tabs on every seventh citizen in a population of 7 million. Many files focused on male foreigners from Eastern European countries, but others also targeted Swiss citizens, organisations, firms, and political groups of all colours, mainly on the left.¹⁰

In this context of distrust and scandal, allegations surfaced in the early 1990s that the Defence Department and its military secret service UNA (Untergruppe Nachrichtendienst und Abwehr) were also storing secret files on Swiss and foreign citizens. Although the Defence Department rejected the accusations, the media and the public once again pressed for an investigation, and a second parliamentary commission (PUK EMD) was formed in March 1990 under Senator Carlo Schmid with the task of investigating the Swiss Defence Department (EMD, Eidgenössisches Militärdepartement, today known as the VBS). It was the most thorough scrutiny of the Defence Department ever undertaken by a group of parliamentarians in Switzerland's history, and needless to add, the Defence Department strongly resented the investigation.

In November 1990, the parliamentary commission presented its detailed final report. To the great surprise of many observers, the report confirmed not only the existence of secret personal files also within the Defence Department, but furthermore the existence of a publicly unknown secret stay-behind army codenamed 'P-26', and a secret intelligence gathering unit codenamed 'P-27', both hidden within the Swiss military secret service UNA (Untergruppe Nachrichtendienst und Abwehr). From this point on, the discourse changed from a focus on the secret files to a focus on the secret army.¹¹

These findings left Switzerland in turmoil in late 1990, with protests among the population and above all from the political left against the abuse

of power. The press welcomed the report as a 'political thriller' and agreed that the parliamentarians had done a good job in clarifying some of the most secret aspects of Switzerland's Cold War history.¹² The parliamentarians themselves were completely exhausted after having carried out the delicate job. Carlo Schmid, the president of the parliamentary commission, stressed that the investigation had been a real burden to him and his fellow parliamentarians. 'I was shocked that something like that is at all possible', he explained to the press and made it clear that he was glad to leave 'the conspiratorial atmosphere', which had weighed upon him 'like a black shadow' during the investigations.¹³

The public scandal in 1990 largely ignored the strategic and historic framework within which the secret Swiss stay-behind army had been set up. It is therefore necessary to look back at the historic roots of the secret army. More than anything else, Swiss security planning during the Cold War was influenced by the experiences of World War II. Switzerland, like England, had at no time been occupied by the German army during World War II. Nevertheless, the fear of invasion was very real throughout the war, for as of 1933, Switzerland found itself caught between the fascist alliance of Hitler's Germany in the north and Mussolini's Italy in the south. After Austria to the east of Switzerland was annexed without a shot being fired in 1938, and France to the west defeated in 1940, Switzerland was completely surrounded by Hitler and his allies and lived with the threat of imminent invasion for almost five years until the end of the war.

Unlike England, Switzerland was not attacked by Hitler. The Swiss were prepared to fight against an invasion, with troops lined up along the border throughout the war, and shot down airplanes of both the Allies and the Nazis that had occasionally entered neutral Swiss airspace by mistake during the war. However, the Swiss were also realistic enough to know that they would not be able to protect the frontiers in case of a fascist invasion on numerous fronts. The country was therefore faced with a hard choice of either collaborating with the enemy that surrounded the country, officially impossible due to Switzerland's chosen neutrality, or planning for a retreat if the fascist enemy should attack the country.

Faced with invasion, Switzerland did both. The silent collaboration with Nazi Germany on the economic front left Switzerland storing gold that Nazi armies had stolen in other countries, while on the racial front Switzerland only allowed 35,000 Jewish refugees to enter the country, while thousands of others were turned back after the frontiers were closed in 1942. With little reference to the threat of imminent invasion that had dominated all thinking during the war, Switzerland was heavily criticised for these actions 50 years later by the World Jewish Congress and the United States.¹⁴

Secondly, the Swiss military elite had prepared for the worst-case scenario, namely an invasion. Swiss Commander-in-Chief General Henri Guisan had decided that the Swiss army would not be able to defend the entire territory. According to Guisan's so-called 'Redit strategy', the Swiss army therefore planned, in case of a fascist invasion of the country, to retreat to the heavily fortified Alps that were impenetrable to German or Italian tanks and where the Swiss possessed a natural strategic advantage. It is noteworthy that guerrilla and stay-behind activities figured prominently in this Redit strategy, because Guisan knew that he had to harass the enemy in the plains, and because his Redit strategy meant that the Swiss army planned to abandon the entire northern plateau, and therefore the main part of the population, the best land, and the largest cities to the invader.¹⁵

While in Switzerland Guisan was contemplating his Redit strategy, in England British Prime Minister Winston Churchill decided that secret warfare had to become an integral part of the British strategy to defeat the Nazis. In July 1940, Churchill ordered the creation of a new unit labelled 'Special Operations Executive' (SOE) in order to 'set Europe ablaze by assisting resistance movements and carrying out subversive operations in enemy-held territory'.¹⁶ Operational command of SOE was given to Major General Sir Colin Gubbins, a small, wiry Scotsman with a moustache, who described the task of SOE thus:

The problem and the plan was to encourage and enable the peoples of the occupied countries to harass the German war effort at every possible point by sabotage, subversion, go-slow practices, coup de main raids etc., and at the same time to build up secret forces therein, organised, armed and trained to take their part only when the final assault began . . . In its simplest terms, this plan involved the ultimate delivery to occupied territory of large numbers of personnel and quantities of arms and explosives.¹⁷

As Switzerland was still unoccupied when SOE was founded, it is very likely that the British secretly profited from this advantage and also had British SOE forces operating in and out of Switzerland during World War II. However, it remains a matter of speculation whether Churchill or Gubbins had explicitly agreed with Guisan to assist the Swiss in setting up a stay-behind network during World War II, as no documents supporting such a claim have been found so far.

The parliamentary investigation in 1990 found that following the traumatic experience of World War II, the Swiss government, notably including Defence Minister Karl Kobelt (in office from 1940 to 1954), had intensively analysed different national resistance movements and their tactics of secret

warfare, and hence was also aware of the SOE. After the defeat of Nazi Germany, Switzerland feared an invasion of the Red Army throughout the Cold War, and together with senior military officers, the Federal Council once again contemplated the possibility after 1945 of setting up a secret army with the task of fighting a potential foreign occupation. While historical data on this important early secret planning remains very sketchy, the parliamentarians investigating the history of the Swiss secret army found that a first stay-behind branch was indeed created within the regular Swiss army in the so-called 'Territorial Service' (Territorialdienst). This branch of the army was considered to be best suited for the task, as its members are not trained to fight the enemy at the front, but to carry out domestic police functions among the local population in case of war.

Due to the lack of documents, further details on the important early history of the Swiss secret army remain murky until today. The parliamentary investigation lamented: 'The historical record is fragmentary, because almost all documents of the resistance organisation of the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s were destroyed around 1980'.¹⁸ According to revelations in the Swiss press, the first commander of the secret unit within the Territorial Service was, as of 1951, Divisionär Franz Wey (1896–1963), whose army file inconspicuously noted: 'creator of a territorial services organisation'. Officers Burger, Amstutz, and de Pury succeeded Wey as commanders of the Territorial Service. When de Pury was promoted to Brigadier-General and Chief of the entire Territorial Service, he was in an ideal position to run the secret unit within the regular military. Questioned by the press in 1990, Amstutz confirmed the existence of the clandestine preparations and added: 'This was an entirely normal branch of the military. A very agreeable organisation it was, actually'.¹⁹

In December 1956, in the wake of the Suez crisis and the brutal suppression of the Hungarian revolution by the communist Red Army, Erwin Jaeckle, speaking in parliament, raised the issue of secret warfare and resistance outside the framework of the army: 'I request the Federal Council to examine, in the context of the Hungarian uprising, which preparations can be taken in the fields of organisation and training in order to take up and secure total popular resistance, if necessary also outside the framework of the army'.²⁰ In September 1957, Defence Minister Paul Chaudet, who had succeeded Karl Kobelt, replied for the Federal Council: 'The events in Hungary – seen from a military perspective only – have shown that the battle of a resistance movement alone can not be successful'. Chaudet in his reply cautiously argued that neutral Switzerland could not legally erect a secret army outside the framework of the regular forces: 'This battle poses problems of a political and military nature, as well as juridical concerns in the context of international law and

the conventions that we have signed'. While sharing Jaeckle's concerns for an efficient defence of the country, Chaudet stressed the limitations imposed on Switzerland due to its neutrality:

Jaeckle raises the question, however, whether one should transgress the framework of the army, and extend resistance preparations in such a way as to include the whole population, and above all, secret warfare. Although certain measures have been envisaged by the Territorial Service in this area, the possibilities in this field are limited.²¹

In 1990, an unnamed former Chief of Staff explained to the surprised parliamentarians charged with the investigation of P-26 that high-ranking officers within the Swiss military led by Chief of Staff Louis de Montmollin had taken Jaeckle's declined request as the legal basis for their preparations for secret warfare: 'The resistance organisation was built up with the support of this [Jaeckle] request, thus on orders of the parliament. Thereafter, parliament, however, was not informed about the measures taken'.²²

In 1967, the secret army was moved from the Territorial Service of the army to the military secret service UNA, directed by Divisionär Richard Ochsner, and changed its codename to 'Special Service'. In case of invasion, the Special Service would have organised popular resistance to the enemy and supplied the government in exile with intelligence. The Special Service was made up of three hierarchical levels, with the top level consisting of a small group of directing officers, members of the regular military who always dressed in their military uniforms and who were responsible for the administration and training of the secret army. The second level was made up of 'trusted persons' who spread across Switzerland and were responsible for the recruitment of resistance fighters, who formed the third level, in their respective parts of the country. 'The persons recruited by the trusted men could themselves recruit a number of new members to join the resistance organisation; therefore the exact number of members of the organisation is not known', the parliamentarians reported. 'They are said to have been 1000 at maximum, divided among 30 to 50 centres'.²³

In 1973, for the first time in the nation's history, the Swiss Federal Council presented a comprehensive security policy for Switzerland.²⁴ This 1973 security report reaffirmed the core strategic aims that had guided Swiss security policy since the end of World War II, namely the defence of the independence of the country, the defence of the territory, and the defence of the population. The stay-behind army fitted into this larger strategic planning, which remained unchanged throughout the Cold War.²⁵ It is important to note that the 1973 report explicitly stressed the need for resistance in occupied territories, hence the classical stay-behind task. Cipher 426 of the report

stated: 'The occupation of the country must not mean that all resistance has ended. Even in this case, an enemy shall meet not only with aversion, but also active resistance',²⁶ while cipher 717 of the same publicly accessible security report highlighted: 'Guerrilla war and non-violent resistance in occupied areas are being prepared within the limits of international law, and will, if necessary, be carried out'.²⁷

At the time when the Federal Council presented its 1973 security report to the Swiss parliament, Colonel Herbert Alboth commanded the secret Swiss stay-behind Special Service within the military secret service UNA. In 1976, Alboth was replaced as commander of the Swiss stay-behind organisation by Colonel Albert Bachmann. In 1990, when allegations about the existence of a secret army in Switzerland were published in the press, Alboth, then aged 75, promised in a confidential letter to the Defence Department and Defence Minister Kaspar Villiger dated 1 March 1990 that 'as an insider' he could reveal 'the whole truth'.²⁸ There is no doubt that Alboth would have been an important source, but he was never able to testify. On 18 April 1990, Alboth was found dead in his apartment at Wabersackerstrasse 55 in Liebefeld near Berne. He 'was killed with his own military bayonet' with 'several stabs to the stomach', as the press reported, noticing that 'on the chest of the victim the medical examiners have found a set of characters which were written in felt pen and puzzle the investigators'.²⁹ The death of Alboth could never be clarified. The parliamentarians investigating the Swiss secret army noted that a set of pictures of senior members of the secret army, old documents on training and courses, exercise plans of a conspiratorial character, and address lists of members of the old Special Service were found in the victim's apartment.³⁰

In 1977, Hans Senn became Chief of Staff and thus the highest military officer in Switzerland, and his command included the UNA and its Special Service. On 5 September 1979, he reported to the united seven Swiss Federal councillors on the activities of the military secret service UNA, and in this context also informed the executive that a top-secret Special Service existed within the UNA. The Chief of Staff informed the government that the yearly costs for the unit amounted to one million Swiss francs invested secretly, and that the Special Service was tasked with recruiting and training officers and specialists who could continue the fight after an occupation of the country, set up stay-behind arms caches, store specialised equipment that would be required by the resistance movement, and organise 'the necessary infrastructure for the coordinated command of the resistance from unoccupied parts of our country, or from a potential exile base'.³¹ The councillors listened in silence and raised no objections. 'In this specific case, it was obvious that the Federal Council did not want to engage itself due to the principle of plausible denial', Senn later recalled. 'But I was allowed to

assume that they had, with their silence, given me a green light for my decrees, for otherwise they would have had to oppose the matter'.³²

Along with the Swiss government, the Swiss parliament was also informed of the secret preparations for unorthodox warfare following the so-called Bachmann/Schilling affair. In November 1979, Special Service commander Albert Bachmann had sent UNA desk officer Kurt Schilling to Austria to clandestinely observe military manoeuvres. Schilling was detected by the Austrian authorities, arrested, interrogated, and sentenced for espionage. Sent back to Switzerland, unfortunate Schilling was sentenced again for having revealed military secrets. The event caused a rumpus in the Swiss media, and a parliamentary commission was formed to investigate the military secret service UNA.³³ The commission discovered the existence of the secret army and in 1981 reported: 'According to the security policy of the federation, the Special Service has the task of creating favourable conditions for active resistance in Switzerland against an occupying force'.³⁴ With this pronouncement, the Swiss stay-behind preparations had for the first time been officially confirmed in public. The report continued to explain that 'ever since the 1960s, it has been the task of the Special Service to prepare for resistance against potential occupation'.³⁵ Thereafter the report concluded: 'The task and position of a resistance organisation and a special intelligence service today fulfil the criteria that must be met within a democratic and constitutional state', only censuring that 'the internal control of these two services was insufficient'.³⁶

While Colonel Bachmann had to leave, Defence Minister Georges Andre Chevallaz secretly agreed with Chief of Staff Hans Senn and UNA director Richard Ochsner that Switzerland would still require a secret stay-behind army in the future. Under the new codename 'P-26', the Swiss stay-behind was reborn, and Colonel Efreim Cattelan was selected to replace Bachmann and head the secret army from October 1979 on. The codename was chosen with reference to paragraph 426 of the Security and Defence concept of the Federal Council of 27 June 1973 which insisted: 'The occupation of the country should not mean that all resistance has ended. Even in such a case, an enemy shall face not only aversion, but also active resistance'.³⁷

When P-26 was exposed and closed down in 1990, Cattelan stressed in the midst of heavy criticism that 'in 1981 the national council had taken note of the Bachmann Report, and thus also of the existence of a resistance organisation against a potential occupation, or such preparations, respectively'.³⁸ The point was well made, yet the members of the parliamentary investigation were more generous with their fellow parliamentarians and argued, contrary to the historical facts, that 'parliament was never informed of the existence of an organisation that already at the time would have been

able to carry out armed resistance', adding cautiously: 'The Bachmann Report, as well as the debate in parliament, at least did not give specific indications that the Special Service was running a real resistance organisation for armed resistance in occupied territory'.³⁹ Smoothing over the tensions between lawmakers and the military, the Federal Council in a wise judgement concluded 'that in times of manifest threats, the acceptance of secrecy increases, while in times of relaxation, transparency carries more weight'.⁴⁰

Just like the Special Service, the P-26 stay-behind group was also organised into three hierarchical levels. At the top, P-26 Commander Colonel Cattelan directed the stay-behind network together with the so-called 'Command Staff' of P-26, which was mainly composed of military top brass. On a second level, the so-called 'Cadre Organisation' (Kaderorganisation) made up the secretive and well-trained nucleus of the secret army. According to the findings of the Gladio commission, under plans for P-26, the Cadre Organisation should have numbered 800 staff, but at the time of the discovery, it was allegedly only 400 strong, of which again only 300 had been trained. Of these 300, around 150 had been taken over from the Special Service.⁴¹ The third level would only have been created by the Cadre Organisation with new recruits if Switzerland had come under foreign occupation.

Secrecy was of the utmost importance for the Cadre Organisation, 'which spread across Switzerland like a chessboard', and thus its members were grouped into units of four, but otherwise remained as isolated as possible. 'The units had no connections among each other, there were thus no lateral links, but only links upwards to the Command Staffs, as we called them', Cattelan explained. 'It is important to keep the units separate', he insisted, 'for if anybody is caught by the occupying power, he will talk, sooner or later, there are sufficient means for that today'. Therefore 'in our organisation, too, only two to four people knew each other'.⁴²

The secrecy of the Swiss stay-behind army left some Swiss parliamentarians suspicious. When the network was exposed, the question arose whether P-26 or its predecessors had engaged in illegal acts of sabotage, or even terrorism in Switzerland, similar to the misdeeds other stay-behind armies had been involved in. The international evidence currently suggests that in Italy, the stay-behind army 'Gladio' engaged in acts of terrorism that were blamed on the left in order to discredit the Italian communists; that in Turkey, the stay-behind army 'Counter-Guerrilla' engaged in the torture of Kurds within the country; that both the Spanish dictatorship of Franco and the Portuguese dictatorship of Salazar operated stay-behind armies within their large security apparatus, which they used against domestic opposition; and that in Greece, the stay-behind army 'Hellenic Raiding Force' (or LOK, its Greek acronym for *Lochos Oreion Katadromon*) participated in the 1967

right-wing coup d'état that stopped the Greek left from winning the national election.⁴³

The parliamentarians in the capital Bern knew that the question of whether the Swiss secret army had also engaged in such illegal domestic operations was a far-reaching and sensitive one. However, they also knew that the history of their neutral alpine country after World War II was hardly comparable to that of the Mediterranean countries Italy, Greece, Turkey, Spain, or Portugal. For Switzerland had neither suffered from coups d'états nor from acts of terrorism against human beings at any time during the Cold War.

This social stability was in part a result of laws passed during World War II that had banned political parties to the extreme left and the extreme right from participating in the democratic process. The Swiss Communist Party had been outlawed in 1940 by the Federal Council, together with several smaller fascist parties. Most Swiss Communists had thereafter joined the Swiss Socialist Party, while another faction founded the 'Worker's Party' (Partei der Arbeit, PdA) in October 1944. Although the Swiss establishment, the Swiss secret army, and the Swiss Federal Police BUPO (Bundespolizei) generally considered PdA members to be 'radicals', 'extremists', and 'subversives' throughout the Cold War, the party was at no time in a position to gain power. Unlike the strong Communist Party in Italy, the PdA always remained a small fringe party in Switzerland, securing its best result ever in the 1971 national elections with 5.1 per cent of the vote.

Given the fact that Switzerland featured neither a strong Communist Party nor a coup d'état, nor suffered terror victims during the entire Cold War, the question of a potential abuse of the stay-behind army could only focus on the destruction of material property and political manipulation. And the only question ever asked in parliament was indeed aimed toward this issue. On 13 March 1991, Socialist MP Esther Bührer submitted a parliamentary request in the smaller chamber of the Swiss parliament (Ständerat) asking the Federal Council whether members of P-26 had been involved in the so-called 'Kaiseraugst' sabotage operations. These had occurred during large popular protests against the construction of a new nuclear power plant in Kaiseraugst near Basel.

Due to the extremely strong popular resistance and the occupation of the building site by the anti-nuclear movement, the Kaiseraugst nuclear power plant was never built. But between 1974 and 1984, more than 30 sabotage operations had been carried out in the area. Electricity posts had been blown up, and prominent members of the Swiss anti-nuclear movement were threatened. The police investigations at the time had shown that the sabotage operations 'had been carried out by professionals', but in the end, the investigations were abandoned without results.⁴⁴ In reply to MP Bührer's

request, Defence Minister Villiger categorically rejected the notion that members of stay-behind groups, known to have been trained in the use of explosives, had been involved in the Kaiseraugst sabotage operations, and even the radical left wing Swiss weekly *Wochezeitung* thought 'that the request has little plausibility on its side', as some violent anti-nuclear protesters had allegedly already claimed responsibility at the time.⁴⁵

THE BRITISH SECRET SERVICE AND SWISS NEUTRALITY

While it is a historical fact that Switzerland was operating a secret stay-behind army during the Cold War, the international dimensions of this phenomenon remain subject to further debate and investigation. These investigations and debates are sensitive, for they raise the question of whether Switzerland's neutrality was violated. In 1815, the major powers of Europe had recognised Switzerland's permanent neutrality and had guaranteed the territorial integrity of the country. At the beginning of World War II in 1939, the Swiss Federal Council reconfirmed Switzerland's adherence to this self-determined, permanent, and armed neutrality, which was recognised by the belligerents. Again, during the Cold War, the Swiss government emphasised that it wished to remain neutral between the Warsaw Pact dominated by Moscow and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) dominated by Washington and London. A secret participation in NATO's secret stay-behind network would have clearly violated Swiss neutrality.

However, the Swiss stay-behind force, as the parliamentary investigation reported in November 1990, was not an isolated military unit, but cultivated international contacts. To the surprise of the parliamentarians investigating the Defence Department, 'members of the P-26 organisation have at times frequented training courses abroad', while 'foreign instructors have followed training courses of P-26 in Switzerland'.⁴⁶ Initially, nobody wanted to reveal the identity of the unnamed foreign country that had collaborated with Switzerland in this affair. But it was soon leaked that the unnamed foreign country where training courses had been held was the prominent NATO country Great Britain, while the unnamed foreign instructors who had secretly come to Switzerland were identified as members of the British secret service MI6 and the British elite special forces, the Special Air Service (SAS). From then on, all debates on the potential violation of Swiss neutrality focused on how closely the Swiss secret army had cooperated with the British. The somewhat contorted argument in this context was that if Switzerland was only indirectly linked to NATO via the British during the Cold War, then neutrality had not been violated.

The delicate debate was launched because similar NATO secret armies were discovered in Italy and across Western Europe at exactly the same time

as the Swiss parliamentarians presented their final report on the secret Swiss stay-behind network in November 1990, whereupon the Swiss Socialist Party and the Green Party demanded in parliament that further investigations had to be carried out on the international dimension of the affair. The Swiss government gave respected Swiss judge Pierre Cornu the sensitive task of investigating the connections between the Swiss stay-behind network and foreign secret networks and foreign secret services. Cornu met with the parliamentarians involved in the Gladio investigations in Belgium and Italy, heard testimonies of stay-behind members in Switzerland, saw classified documents, and delivered a final report of some 100 pages to the government.

It is important to note that more than anything else, Cornu had wanted to speak to the British officials directly. Yet, as not even the existence of the British foreign secret service MI6 had been officially confirmed at the time, let alone secret British operations in neutral countries, London repeatedly and categorically refused all comment. Still, in the summer of 1992, there was no official British explanation on stay-behind forces either to Switzerland or to any other country, and journalist Hugh O'Shaughnessy concluded in an article on the secret NATO armies: 'The silence in Whitehall and the almost total lack of curiosity among MPs about an affair in which Britain was so centrally involved are remarkable'.⁴⁷

Upon receiving the Cornu report, the Federal Council and Defence Minister Kaspar Villiger were under some pressure from London not to reveal too much about the secret network, as future exchange of intelligence between the two nations might otherwise suffer a setback. Berne took the hint and decided that the Cornu report had to be classified top secret. In order to satisfy the curious public and the inquisitive press, the government published a 17-page summary entitled 'P-26 not part of an international network' on 19 September 1991. 'Participation by the Swiss resistance organisation in an international structure of any kind would not have been compatible with the principle of neutrality and would formally have violated the Swiss constitution', as the Federal Council's summary of the delicate affair explained, and it continued: 'The report reaches a clear finding in the key question: Neither P-26 nor its predecessor organisations had connections with the international committees, or were present in them; neither were they part of an international resistance organisation'.⁴⁸ This has remained the official position of the Swiss government ever since on the sensitive question of secret warfare during the Cold War, and particularly concerning the links of the Swiss stay-behind organisation to NATO. However, international research on the stay-behind networks now suggests that a new evaluation of the data is necessary as the Swiss resistance organisation – to use the words of the Swiss government – was indeed part of an 'international structure of some kind'.

After the shortened Cornu report had been made public in Berne, one London paper headlined 'UK trained secret Swiss force', and correctly reported that 'British secret services collaborated closely with an armed, undercover Swiss organisation through a series of covert agreements which formed part of a west European network of "resistance" groups'.⁴⁹ And the public version of the Cornu report also confirmed: 'The cadres of the Swiss organisation regarded the British to be the best specialists in the field', highlighting the very close collaboration.⁵⁰ 'These connections included particularly the regular participation of Special Service and P-26 cadres in courses and exercises in Great Britain, as well as the participation of British specialists as instructors or observers during exercises of the Swiss services in Switzerland'.⁵¹

Switzerland has had the unique fortune of not having been involved in a war, either on its own territory or abroad, since 1848. This peaceful existence of more than 150 years is probably without parallel across the globe and is understandably the source of much pride in the alpine country. At the same time, the Swiss military cadre laments that this peaceful history, combined with the doctrine of neutrality, has left the Swiss military elite with next to no experience in military warfare. It was to make up for this lack of expertise that leading members of the Swiss secret army were trained by the British both in England and in Switzerland, as the British were respected – not only by the Swiss – as the leading experts in stay-behind operations.

This secret military cooperation between Switzerland and NATO member Great Britain led to a number of peculiar occurrences. In one instance, the Swiss stay-behind soldiers had taken their secretary along to their training session in England, yet the secretary later commented that she did not enjoy participating in a training session in which she and her unit had to change from an airborne helicopter into a submarine that had surfaced in rocky waters. In another instance, military instructor Alois Hürlimann, during an English language conversation course in Switzerland, had already in 1984 revealed in poor English to the surprise of his fellow classmates that he had taken part in secret military training in England. The exercise had allegedly included a real, non-simulated assault on an IRA arms depot in which Hürlimann had participated, in battle fatigues, and in which at least one IRA activist had been killed.⁵²

While the Swiss government claimed that such cooperation was normal and had not violated neutrality, the British press noted with much surprise that MI6 had allegedly been better informed on the secret Swiss army than the Swiss government itself. MI6 knew the details about the Swiss secret army, including 'who headed it, its codenames, and the location of facilities, which included sophisticated arms and underground training bunkers'.⁵³ Judge Cornu was most frustrated that the Swiss stay-behind agents had only

cooperated reluctantly when it came to sensitive questions concerning the link to the British and NATO. Cornu concluded that a

large part of the Swiss involved appear to have known only very little about the identity of their partners, be it the individuals specifically, or the respective services. It must be noted that in this matter the power of recollection has vanished very quickly, and/or that the responsible officers were generally very badly informed about their partners on the other side of the Channel. Precise questions were often answered imprecisely or in a contradictory manner.⁵⁴

While the pressure of the Swiss parliament forced the Swiss government to investigate the stay-behind affair in detail and according to democratic rules present a public report on the matter, the British parliament to this very day has decided to cover up the delicate international stay-behind affair and thus allowed the British defence department to refuse all comment. During the height of the scandal in 1990, while the Swiss government faced inquisitive Swiss parliamentarians and a curious Swiss press, the British government offered variations on: 'I'm afraid we wouldn't discuss security matters', 'It is a security matter. We are not speaking about it', and 'We cannot be drawn into discussing security matters'.⁵⁵

But the international evidence currently available on stay-behind organizations now shows clearly that the British did not only train the Swiss. Other sources have confirmed that the British sent military experts to numerous other countries in order to train stay-behind units, and that stay-behind instructors from many different countries had repeatedly come to England for training sessions. Former MI6 Royal Marine officers Michael Giles and Simon Preston, for instance, confirmed to author Michael Smith that throughout the late 1940s and early 1950s, the British and the US had set up stay-behind units in Western Europe in preparation for an expected Soviet invasion. They themselves had been instructed at the old Napoleonic Fort Monckton on the waterfront near Portsmouth in England, where the MI6 trains its agents together with the British SAS. Thereafter, the two Royal Marines, together with colleagues, had been flown to Austria to set up a secret army in the neutral country and to oversee 'underground bunkers filled with weapons, clothing and supplies' which had been set up by 'MI6 and the CIA'.⁵⁶

Among those trained in England by the British stay-behind experts was Decimo Garau, an instructor at the Italian Gladio stay-behind centre Centro Addestramento Guastatori (CAG) on Capo Marargiu in Sardinia: 'I was in England for a week at Poole, invited by the Special Forces. I was there for a week and I did some training with them'. Instructor Garau recalled his

training together with the British Special Air Service SAS after the Italian Gladio stay-behind had been exposed: 'I did a parachute jump over the Channel. I did some training with them and I got on well with them. Then I was at Hereford to plan and carry out an exercise with the SAS'.⁵⁷

Besides Italy, some stay-behind officers also came from officially neutral Sweden. 'In 1959, I went via London to a farm outside Eaton', Swedish stay-behind instructor Reinhold Geijer recalled a training session in England.

This was done under the strictest secrecy procedures, for instance with a forged passport. I was not even allowed to call my wife. The aim of the training was to learn how to use dead letter box techniques to receive and send secret messages, and other James Bond-style exercises. The British were very tough. I sometimes had the feeling that we were overdoing it.⁵⁸

During their stay-behind training sessions in England, the military officers from the different European countries met each other. It remains unclear whether the Swiss stay-behind members trained closely with the NATO forces and the stay-behind members of other countries in England, or whether their training only took place in national isolation in order to uphold a pretence of neutrality. 'I have met, among others, Americans and Canadians during this work', Swedish stay-behind instructor Reinhold Geijer related the Swedish case. 'Above all we cooperated with Great Britain. They were our masters in the art of running a secret resistance network'.⁵⁹

A former member of the Swiss stay-behind Special Service related to the Swiss press in 2002, on condition of anonymity, that his group had been trained in England in covert action operations by experienced British officers from the military and the secret service, usually in groups of four to ten. He also confirmed that the Swiss stay-behind members did not always have to travel to England, as the British instructors also secretly came to Switzerland. In 1976, the commander of the Swiss Special Service, Colonel Bachmann, had allegedly agreed with the British SAS on such mutual cooperation. 'Each year ten to twenty SAS came inconspicuously as tourists to the Bernese Oberland, for a survival training', the unnamed former member of the Swiss stay-behind force recalled. His implication was clear: The British did not come for their own training, but in order to train the Swiss.⁶⁰

The instruction of Swiss stay-behind members by the British SAS in Switzerland, as well as the training of Swiss stay-behind members in England, represent Switzerland's link to NATO during the Cold War. This is a delicate finding which needs further investigation by both the British and the Swiss government. For if, for instance, Switzerland during the Cold War had secretly cooperated with the Warsaw Pact, and if Russian Spetznatz

Special Forces had secretly come to Switzerland in order to train Swiss P-26, while P-26 had travelled to the USSR to train unorthodox warfare either in national isolation or together with Special Forces from Bulgaria and Poland, such a secret military cooperation would have led to a very serious neutrality debate in Switzerland when discovered after the end of the Cold War.

The cooperation with the British should not be confused with the well-known Alpine training that various members of the British military have been carrying out regularly in Switzerland. As early as 1948, the Royal Air Force Mountaineering Association (RAFMA) had been founded in London, and members of the Royal Air Force had their first 'Alpine Meet' in the Swiss mountain village of Saas Fee in the same year. In subsequent years, the British hiked and trained in Saas Fee, Zermatt, or Arolla, and generally enjoyed the Swiss Alps. In Lauterbrunnen in the Bernese Oberland, around 50 Royal Marines were regular and much-appreciated guests each year. Due to the lack of high mountains and glaciers in Great Britain, it made sense for the Royal Marines to train their Alpine skills in Switzerland. 'The exercises in Switzerland are an official part of our training. The Swiss authorities have been informed. We have done nothing wrong', said Paul Sykes, spokesperson of the Royal Marines, when the training of the British in the Swiss Alps in 2002 attracted some attention from the Swiss press.⁶¹

Not all of the British soldiers came to the Swiss Alps for their personal training and leisure, of course. The most high-ranking British guest in Switzerland during the Cold War was arguably Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery, who had gained much respect among military officers for his victories against Nazi Germany in North Africa during World War II. He was well-informed on all aspects of military defence, and from 1951 to 1958 served as Deputy Supreme Commander of NATO forces in Europe. Montgomery was a friend of Switzerland and the Swiss Alps. From 1946 until 1962, he visited Switzerland regularly and usually spent the entire month of February each year in the Bernese Oberland, dedicating part of his time to military affairs. 'I do a lot of business with the Swiss Minister of Defence: all done under the cover of tourism and skiing', Montgomery wrote to Samuel Hood, the head of the Western Department of the British Foreign Office, in 1953.⁶² In 1946, he met with Swiss Defence Minister Karl Kobelt and Swiss Foreign Minister Max Petitpierre as well as with Swiss Chief of Staff Louis de Montmollin. Montgomery saw that the Swiss government wanted to stick to neutrality and agreed that 'Switzerland must be encouraged to fight for her integrity and to deny passage through her country to an enemy from the East. Provided she will do this, she can remain neutral'.⁶³

However, whether Switzerland could indeed have resisted an armed attack for a lengthy period of time, or whether Switzerland's neutrality would have prevented the country from being occupied by the Soviet army in case of a

war, remained very doubtful. Because a partial or total occupation of Switzerland was a very real possibility due to the limited strength of the Swiss army and air force, stay-behind planning is likely to have figured in the debates between Montgomery and the Swiss government, although no written documents exist to prove such an assumption. In February 1952, Montgomery met for a lengthy discussion with Montmollin. According to the research of Swiss historian Mauro Mantovani, the two military leaders once again discussed how Switzerland could be defended in case of a Soviet invasion. Montgomery and Montmollin agreed that in such an emergency, Switzerland could not defend its entire territory alone and would cooperate with NATO. 'We at last have the Swiss deployed to fight in concert with other Powers in a general European war, and not deployed for all-round defence as was done before I persuaded them to re-deploy their Army in relation to our dispositions in NATO', Montgomery wrote with some relief in 1953 to Samuel Hood in the Foreign Office in London.⁶⁴ This meant that the Swiss military elite had decided to give up the idea of all-round defence, and thus to concede part of the territory in case of an attack, which meant that both stay-behind planning and coordination with NATO became of central essence to Swiss security policy. Mantovani concluded that 'Switzerland during the Cold War was so obviously part of the western camp that western leaders could only wish that all neutrals would take Switzerland as an example'.⁶⁵

Almost 40 years after the meetings of Montgomery with Montmollin, the clandestine cooperation between the British and the Swiss during the Cold War gained new and critical attention in the Swiss parliament. Following the discovery of the Swiss secret army, and after only parts of the Cornu report on the international dimension of the Swiss stay-behind force had been published, a number of parliamentarians argued that the matter should be discussed in public. 'Is the Federal Council willing to publish the entire Cornu report? And if not, what is it the Federal Council wants to hide?', Socialist parliamentarian Paul Rechsteiner asked in the upper chamber of the Swiss parliament (Nationalrat) on 30 September 1991.⁶⁶ Defence Minister Villiger, in an attempt to defend both the reputation of Swiss neutrality and the valuable contacts to the British secret service, replied:

The Cornu Report contains numerous pieces of information on foreign secret services and resistance organisations, as well as their structures, hierarchies, and connections . . . The Cornu Report will not be released and published because it is not the business of the Federal Council to reveal the secret affairs of foreign states.⁶⁷

Socialist parliamentarian Susanne Leutenegger-Oberholzer was not convinced by the defence minister's reply. She wisely declared:

I think we must work on the assumption that such reports cannot be kept secret in the long run. I therefore ask the Federal Council whether it agrees that a wiser information policy might be to publish the report on its own initiative. Furthermore, is the Council not of the opinion that it is deplorable if foreign secret services receive more information than, for instance, Swiss parliamentarians?⁶⁸

But Defence Minister Villiger remained firm: 'I have given the reasons why we cannot and do not want to publish the report'. The implicit message was that the British government so far had refused all comment on the stay-behind affair, while Switzerland had presented more data on the subject to its population than any other democracy in the west, including the United States, where the public was not informed at all. Villiger was thus correct when he insisted: 'Even what we have published goes very far by international comparison, and has led to certain irritations'.⁶⁹ Several years later, an academic research request by the author to gain access to the entire Cornu report was declined.⁷⁰

The Cornu summary did not say specifically whether the Swiss stay-behind P-26 and its predecessors had directly participated in NATO's ACC and CPC meetings, or whether MI6 or the CIA represented the Swiss groups in these clandestine NATO forums that directed stay-behind operations across the continent. Instead, the summary covered the contacts with NATO in very general terms: 'During the investigation, those involved in the Special Service and in P26 have vehemently denied any contact with NATO. The members of the military questioned have made the same statements'.⁷¹ Most prominently Colonel Efreim Cattelan, commander of the Swiss stay-behind group P-26, claimed 'we only learned such terms like "Gladio", "Glaive", "Sword" etc. for the first time from the media in November [1990]. Without wanting to anticipate potential further investigations, I can declare for the record that we did not have any relations with these organisations'.⁷² Yet parliamentary Rechsteiner was not convinced and protested in parliament:

What kind of state are we living in then? Documents, the crucial documents, have been destroyed; they can no longer be found; they have vanished. The responsible officials in the Defence Ministry, the members of the P-26 secret army, they refuse to cooperate . . . It was a violation of neutrality, because the core of neutrality, military co-operation itself, was involved. This cannot be overlooked . . . these events [must be] clarified, also through investigation abroad.⁷³

Villiger, in response, stressed that the Swiss authorities had contacted the Belgian senators who had investigated not only the Belgian stay-behind force, but also NATO's secret Allied Clandestine Committee (ACC) and

Clandestine Planning Committee (CPC) command centres: 'The Belgian investigative commission . . . only received permission to see the protocols of the Allied Coordination Committee of the NATO states one and a half months ago', Villiger told Rechsteiner.

Last week, it assured [us]: 'In the ACC protocols examined on a trial basis, no trace whatsoever of relations with Switzerland was found'. This confirms the plausible reflections of your commission, shared by the Federal Council. This positive investigative finding for P26 is very important from the perspective of neutrality.⁷⁴

The Defence Minister, basing his answer not on firm knowledge but on plausibility only, despite the huge importance of the issue, failed to add that the Belgian senators themselves had faced great difficulties when accessing NATO documents and were effectively hindered in shedding light on the exact role of NATO, as they themselves lamented in their final report. Belgian Senator Cecile Harnie of the Green Party even complained vehemently that the work of the commission had been greatly hindered because witnesses often hid behind NATO secrecy, thus refusing to answer questions about the links between the CPC, the ACC, other nations and NATO's Supreme Allied Headquarters Europe (SHAPE). After the termination of the Belgian Senate inquiry into Gladio in October 1991, Harnie therefore called for a further investigation focusing on the role of NATO, which however, was turned down in a majority decision.⁷⁵

'Strictly neutral states, such as Switzerland, were also part of this network, making this organisation in Western Europe one of the biggest military and political secrets of the post-war period', an unnamed former MI6 agent confirmed to the Swiss press. 'When the cover of Gladio was blown in Italy, this was a massive shock for the British, and for NATO. But no government will ever tell the truth about it, they will never admit this'. Italian Judge Felice Casson, who had discovered the secret Gladio army in 1990 in the archives of the Italian secret service, also confirmed: 'I am sure that I also saw documents on Gladio contacts with Switzerland' in the Palazzo Braschi in Rome, archive and headquarters of the Italian secret service SISMI. 'However, I do not remember details, as my investigation did not focus on the relations of Gladio with foreign countries'.⁷⁶

Hard evidence suggesting that the Swiss secret army was not isolated and neutral, but integrated into the secret NATO stay-behind network can be found in the communications equipment used by the secret soldiers. In Germany and Belgium, investigations into the national secret stay-behind armies had revealed that in the beginning of the 1980s, the communication system Harpoon had been developed and produced on the orders of NATO's

command centre ACC by the German firm AEG Telefunken, a subsidiary of Daimler holdings. The Harpoon system, greatly valued by stay-behind agents in numerous countries, was able to send and receive encrypted radio messages across 6,000 km, and thus connected the different stay-behind troops much more rapidly than previous older technology. In order to hide the top-secret ACC, the German secret service BND (Bundesnachrichtendienst) acted as the official purchaser and bought a total of 854 Harpoon systems from AEG Telefunken for 130 million German marks.⁷⁷

The Harpoon communication equipment is not compatible with the communication system used by the regular Swiss army. Yet Cornu found that in 1987, P-26 had bought central units and connected foreign stations of the Harpoon system for around 15 million Swiss francs. 'At the time of the purchase, the officials responsible could work on the assumption that the same Harpoon system was also being used by several resistance organisations abroad', Cornu observes.⁷⁸ The purchase of the Harpoon equipment linked to NATO command centres in Brussels, the CIA in the US, and MI6 in Great Britain realised the integration of the Swiss stay-behind in the European stay-behind network at a very basic, hardware level. Former Belgian stay-behind agent Michel Van Ussel, who himself had operated Harpoon communication systems and trained with foreign agents, knew that because a Soviet invasion could have covered the entire continent during the Cold War, 'stay-behind networks were created in the countries of Western Europe independent of whether they were NATO members or not'.⁷⁹

CONCLUSION

The enlargement of NATO has proceeded more rapidly than the clarification of NATO's history. In 1996, the four neutral states Switzerland, Sweden, Austria, and Finland joined the 'Partnership for Peace', according to NATO 'the most intensive programme of military-to-military collaboration ever conceived'.⁸⁰ Thereafter, in 1999, Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic became full members of NATO, increasing the size of the alliance to 19 members and overcoming the historical Iron Curtain that had divided Europe for half a century. In 2004, the alliance grew to 26 members, when Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovenia, and Slovakia joined NATO as full members.

After more than ten years of research following the discovery of the stay-behind networks in Italy in 1990, the knowledge about NATO's secret armies has progressed much more slowly. What has emerged until now is that not only the NATO states, but also neutral Sweden, Finland, Austria, and Switzerland operated secret stay-behind armies. Yet, given the sensitivity of the phenomenon for all countries in Western Europe, to this day only Switzerland, Italy, and Belgium have carried out detailed parliamentary investigations and

presented public reports, which – besides scarce archive material – now form the basis for future Cold War research into stay-behind operations.

The fact that Switzerland also presented a second report on the international dimension of the phenomenon in 1991, in addition to the public and detailed parliamentary report of 1990 on the national stay-behind army, is a solid and outstanding democratic performance unparalleled by any other country in Europe and North America involved in the stay-behind operations. No other democracy has dared to investigate its stay-behind army with so much rigour. Above all, as shown in this paper, the governments of both the United States and Great Britain still today refuse all comment despite their leading role in the stay-behind affair. Together with other governments in the west, Washington and London need to publicly address the stay-behind issue in the future in order to enable researchers and the public to understand this secret and hidden side of NATO. But not only the governments of NATO states are challenged by the stay-behind data. Also neutral states including Switzerland, Austria, Sweden and Finland must take a second look at the secret history of their stay-behind armies and potential links to NATO. For, as the data presented in this paper suggests, the conclusions drawn by the Swiss government in the 1991 report might be mistaken and deserve further research, as the evidence available as of now suggests that Switzerland, despite its official neutrality, was integrated into the international stay-behind network of NATO covering Western Europe during the Cold War.

Upon the discovery of the stay-behind armies, the parliament of the European Union (EU) criticised in a special resolution that it had taken notice ‘of the existence for 40 years of a clandestine parallel intelligence and armed operations organisation in several Member States of the Community’, and observed with concern that ‘these organisations operated and continue to operate completely outside the law since they are not subject to any parliamentary control and frequently those holding the highest government and constitutional posts are kept in the dark as to these matters’. The European Parliament in highly critical remarks

condemned the clandestine creation of manipulative and operational networks and called for a full investigation into the nature, structure, aims and all other aspects of these clandestine organisations or any splinter groups, their use for illegal interference in the internal political affairs of the countries concerned, the problem of terrorism in Europe and the possible collusion of the secret services of Member States or third countries.

In communicating its resolution to the US government of George Bush senior, the EU made it clear that it ‘protests vigorously at the assumption by

certain US military personnel at SHAPE and in NATO of the right to encourage the establishment in Europe of a clandestine intelligence and operation network'.⁸¹ The European Union had stumbled across a uniting military scandal. But the dog's bark was worse than its bite. As military affairs largely remained within the sovereign domain of each member state the European Parliament remained powerless, while national governments saw nothing to be gained by investigating a transnational military scandal.

NOTES

- 1 For an international analysis of the stay-behind armies, see Daniele Ganser, *Operation Gladio. NATO's Secret Stay-behind Armies and Terrorism in Western Europe* (London: Frank Cass 2005), available also in Italian, *Gli Eserciti Segreti della NATO. Operazione Gladio e terrorismo in Europa occidentale* (Rome: Fazi 2005) and in Turkish, *Nato'nun Gizli Ordulari. Gladio Operasyonlari, Terörizm ve Avrupa Güvenlik İlkeleri* (Istanbul: Güncel Yayıncılık, 2005)
- 2 No author specified, 'Spinne unterm Schafsfell. In Südeuropa war die Guerillatruppe besonders aktiv—auch bei den Militärputschen in Griechenland und der Türkei?', *Der Spiegel*, No. 48, 26 November 1990. Note: all translations other than from English original hereafter are by the author who bears the responsibility for their accuracy.
- 3 Franco Ferraresi, 'A Secret Structure Codenamed Gladio', *Italian Politics. A Review* (1992) p.30. Ferraresi quotes directly from the Andreotti document, which was published by the Italian daily *L'Unita* in a special edition on 14 November 1990. Jean Francois Brozzu-Gentile, in his book on Gladio, also includes the entire document 'Il SID parallelo – Operazione Gladio' in his appendix. See Jean Francois Brozzu-Gentile, *L'affaire Gladio* (Paris: Editions Albin Michel 1994).
- 4 Italian political magazine *Europeo*, 16 November 1990.
- 5 Sénat de Belgique, *Enquête parlementaire sur l'existence en Belgique d'un réseau de renseignements clandestin international. Rapport fait au nom de la commission d'enquête par MM. Erdman et Hasquin*, Brussels, 1 October 1991. The report of the Italian Senate on the stay-behind militia is: Senato della Repubblica Italiana, *Commissione parlamentare d'inchiesta sul terrorismo in Italia e sulle cause della mancata individuazione dei responsabili delle stragi: Il terrorismo, le stragi ed il contesto storico-politico*, Roma 1995.
- 6 Belgian Parliamentary Commission of Enquiry into Gladio, as summarised in Belgium periodical *Statewatch* (January/February 1992).
- 7 British daily *The European*, 9 November 1990.
- 8 No author specified, 'Gladio. Un misterio de la guerra fria. La trama secreta coordinada por mandos de la Alianza Atlantica comienza a salir a la luz tras cuatro decadas de actividad', *El Pais*, 26 November 1990.
- 9 International news service *Reuters*, 15 November 1990.
- 10 For a detailed analysis of the files and their historical context, see Georg Kreis (ed.), *Staatsschutz in der Schweiz. Die Entwicklung 1935–1990. Eine multidisziplinäre Untersuchung* (Bern: Haupt 1993). Researched and written at the request of the Swiss Federal Council in the aftermath of the secret files scandal, the book through its 'open description of the events aims to contribute to the mastering of the "secret files affair" and help in regaining lost trust' (back cover).
- 11 *Bericht der Parlamentarischen Untersuchungskommission zur besonderen Klärung von Vorkommnissen von grosser Tragweite im Eidgenössischen Militärdepartement*, Bern, 17 November 1990. Referred to in the following as 'PUK EMD'.
- 12 Urs Frieden, 'Ergänzungen zum PUK EMD Bericht. Hürlimann, Meister, Cattelan—und wie ein Schriftsteller zum "Beso Fall" wurde', *Wochezeitung*, 30 November 1990.

- 13 Unnamed author, 'Schwarzer Schatten. Das eidgenössische Gegenstück zu den Geheimsoldaten der NATO hiess P26 – eine private Truppe, heimlich finanziert aus der Bundeskasse', *Der Spiegel*, 10 December 1990.
- 14 After harsh criticism from the World Jewish Congress (WJC) under Edgar Bronfman and from representatives of the United States, including Republican Senator Alfonse D'Amato and Under Secretary of State Stuart Eizenstat, concerning the role of Switzerland during World War II, the Swiss parliament in December 1996 created an international independent commission of nine experts. Under the direction of Jean Francois Bergier, professor of history, the commission, including Swiss historian Professor Georg Kreis, spent five years and 22 million Swiss francs researching the role of the country during the war in 25 single studies on issues such as gold transactions, trade, and refugees. After over 11,000 pages had been produced, the commission presented its final report in 600 pages. See Jean Francois Bergier, *Switzerland, National Socialism and the Second World War* (Bern: Pendo Books 2002).
- Independently of the Swiss government, the Swiss banks were also sharply attacked by the WJC for their role in World War II. Threatened with boycotts and potentially costly legal procedures in the United States, the Swiss banks Credit Suisse and UBS paid US\$1.25 billion in August 1998 to avoid a lawsuit. The money was supposed to go to surviving holocaust victims, but – according to the research of Norman G. Finkelstein – mostly ended up in the accounts of lawyers. See Norman G. Finkelstein: *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* (London: Verso Books 2001).
- 15 The Swiss wartime organisation 'Aktion Nationaler Widerstand', formed on the basis of close collusion between selected army figures and conservative civilian circles, for instance had the explicit task to stiffen national resolve and resistance in the face of foreign occupation.
- 16 David, Stafford, *Britain and European Resistance, 1940–1945. A Survey of the Special Operations Executive* (Oxford: St. Antony's College, 1980) p.20.
- 17 E.H. Cookridge, *Inside SOE. The Story of Special Operations in Western Europe 1940–45* (London: Arthur Barker Ltd 1966) p.13.
- 18 PUK EMD (note 11) p.175.
- 19 Niklaus Ramseyer, 'Organisation P26: Geheim, gesetlos, gefährlich. Generalstabschefs schufen sich unkontrollierte Geheimmarmee auf Kosten des Bundes', *Tages-Anzeiger*, 24 November 1990.
- 20 PUK EMD (note 11) p.176.
- 21 *Ibid.* p.178.
- 22 *Ibid.* p.183.
- 23 *Ibid.* p.181.
- 24 *Bericht des Bundesrates über die Sicherheitspolitik der Schweiz. Konzeption der Gesamtverteidigung*, Berne, 27 June 1973.
- 25 For a detailed discussion of the evolution of Swiss security policy see Kurt Spillmann, Andreas Wenger, Christoph Breitenmoser and Marcel Gerber, *Schweizer Sicherheitspolitik seit 1945* (Zurich: Verlag Neue Zürcher Zeitung 2001). The novelty of the 1973 security report consisted in the fact that it took a broader perspective on the issue of security and also included non-military elements by stressing that civilian means should also be employed by Switzerland in order to promote international peace and development, as such a development was in the best interest of the country. Cf. *ibid.* p. 88. The 1973 security strategy remained valid until the end of the Cold War. Thereafter, in 1990, the Swiss government presented a new security report, which replaced that of 1973 (*Bericht des Bundesrates an die Bundesversammlung über die Sicherheitspolitik der Schweiz: Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik im Wandel*, Berne, 1 October 1990). The 1990 report again took a broader perspective – also including, for instance, ecological risks – and followed a 1989 popular vote in which a surprising 35 per cent of the population had favoured the complete abolition of the Swiss army. Against the background of a rapidly changing world, the Swiss government presented a new security report in 2000 that emphasised international cooperation and replaced the 1990 report (*Bericht des Bundesrates an die Bundesversammlung über die Sicherheitspolitik der Schweiz: Sicherheit durch Kooperation*, Berne, 7 June 1999). This last report signalled the most fundamental change in Swiss security policy since the end of the Second World War: From autonomous defence towards international cooperation. Exactly what form this international cooperation shall take remains subject to intensive debate in Switzerland.

- 26 PUK EMD, p.183.
- 27 Ibid. p.225.
- 28 PUK EMD (note 11) p.181.
- 29 Swiss daily *Der Bund*, 21 April 1990, and 9 May 1990.
- 30 PUK EMD (note 11) p.181.
- 31 Ibid. p.187.
- 32 Ibid. p.187.
- 33 The investigative committee was presided over by parliamentarian Jean Pascal Delamuraz, Minister for Economic Affairs from 1987 to 1998. On 19 January 1981, the committee presented its 25-page public report: *Bericht der Arbeitsgruppe der Geschäftsprüfungskommission an den Nationalrat über ihre zusätzlichen Abklärungen zur Angelegenheit Bachmann*; vom 19. Januar 1981. Nationalrat, Frühjahrsession 1981. Referred to in the following as '*Bachmann 1981 Report*'. Part of the report, of unknown length, remained classified.
- 34 Ibid. p.8.
- 35 Ibid. p.10.
- 36 Ibid. p.24.
- 37 PUK EMD (note 11) p.183.
- 38 Speech of E. Cattelan at the Press Conference on P-26 of 7 December 1990, in Bern. Printed entirely in: *Bulletin Vereinigung Schweizerischer Nachrichtensoffiziere*, No. 2 (1991) pp.18–21.
- 39 PUK EMD (note 11) p.226.
- 40 Swiss daily *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, 24 November 1990.
- 41 PUK EMD (note 11) p.202.
- 42 Swiss periodical *Schweizer Soldat*, No. 1 (1992) p.15.
- 43 For an international analysis of the stay-behind armies, see Ganser (note 1).
- 44 Unnamed author (note 13).
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- 48 *Schweizer Bundesrat: Schlussbericht in der Administrativuntersuchung zur Abklärung der Natur von allfälligen Beziehungen zwischen der Organisation P26 und analogen Organisationen im Ausland. Kurzfassung für die Öffentlichkeit*. 19 September 1991, p.2. After the PUK EMD report, this document is the second most authoritative source for data on the Swiss stay-behind force. Quoted hereafter as '*Short public version of the 1991 Cornu Report*'.
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- 51 Ibid. pp.16–17.
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- 61 Andrea Bleicher, 'Marine wundert sich. Die Übungen im Berner Oberland sind laut britischem Militär "Teil der offiziellen Ausbildung"', *SonntagsZeitung*, 12 May 2002.
- 62 Quoted in Mauro Mantovani, *Schweizerische Sicherheitspolitik im Kalten Krieg 1947–1963. Zwischen angelsächsischem Containment und Neutralitäts-Doktrin* (Zürich: Orell Füssli Verlag 1999) p.112.
- 63 Memorandum from Montgomery, November 1948, on the strategy for the defence of Western Europe. Quoted in Mantovani (note 62) p.96.
- 64 Mantovani (note 62) p.112.
- 65 Cf. *ibid.* p.253.
- 66 Official Records Swiss parliament. Frage Leutenegger-Oberholzer. Cornu Bericht. Frage Rechsteiner. Cornu Bericht über P26, *Amtliches Bulletin der Bundesversammlung*, Nationalrat, 1991, p.1710.
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- 69 *Ibid.* p.1711.
- 70 In September 1999 the author in his native Switzerland officially asked for access to the secret Cornu report in the interest of academic research and the understanding of the Swiss secret army. A group of six parliamentarians overseeing the Swiss secret service (the so-called 'GPK commission' which then included Helene Leumann (FDP), René Vaudroz (FDP), Hans Hoffmann (SVP), Franz Vicky (CVP), Hugo Fasel (GPS), and Alexander Tschäppät (SPS)) dealt with the request and read both the secret Cornu report as well as the arguments of the author. Upon the suggestion of acting Defence Minister Adolf Ogi in June 2000 the commission decided to decline the request of the author. The commission highlighted in its letter to the author that the report has been classified as 'secret' because it contains 'numerous data and information which must be protected, as well as data on persons who are still alive, and even persons who are still doing service'. Furthermore the commission argued that the secrecy can not be lifted due to international considerations because 'according to the opinion of the commission the reproduction and processing of the information contained in the report could damage the relationship which Switzerland has with other countries, which in turn could seriously impair the liberty of action of the Federal Council'.
- 71 *Short public version of the 1991 Cornu Report* (note 48) p.2.
- 72 Speech of E. Cattelan (note 38) pp.18–21.
- 73 Official Records Swiss parliament, *P26 und Auslandsbeziehungen*, Nationalrat 12. Dezember 1991, *Amtliches Bulletin der Bundesversammlung*, Nationalrat 1991, p.2434.
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- 81 *Resolution of the European Parliament on the Gladio Affair*, 22 November 1990.