

**Zeitschrift:** The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK  
**Band:** - (1972)  
**Heft:** 1651

**Artikel:** The swiss secret service during the war  
**Autor:** [s.n.]  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-689194>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. [Siehe Rechtliche Hinweise.](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. [Voir Informations légales.](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. [See Legal notice.](#)

**Download PDF:** 15.10.2024

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

(continued from p.14)

A fourth "non official" source of information was the network set up by the Bernese journalist *Otto Pünter* with ramifications in France, Germany and Britain. Pünter (Berne) had contacts with Rado (Geneva), who was in touch with the Dübendorfer-Boettcher couple. They in turn, had contacts via courier with Roessler in Lucerne, who was working for Büro Hausamann but also kept unofficial links with the *Nachrichtenstelle* in Lucerne through its deputy chief, Captain Mayr von Baldegg. The result of these intermingling connections was that the Rado network beamed information supplied by Roessler to the Russians. Roessler included in his deliveries information taken from the Nachrichtenstelle, with the effect that the Russians were getting information coming from Switzerland's own "official" network.

Information was also travelling from Geneva to Lucerne, and Roessler was able to supply valuable material from mainly French Resistance sources, via Duebendorfer-Boettcher, to the Hausamann Office and hence to the Nachrichtenstelle. Pünter supplied information to Rado and directly to Moscow. No proceedings were taken against him, but Roessler was found guilty of working for a foreign state. He was acquitted in consideration of his services to Switzerland but declared stateless. Duebendorfer, Boettcher and others were sentenced in absence to various terms of imprisonment. Rado was also sentenced to three years imprisonment and banned from entering Switzerland for 15 years in absence, with the additional charge of having supplied information detrimental to Switzerland to a foreign power. He had in fact, supplied a few Swiss military secrets at the demand of the Russians.

#### Up to the OKW

These trials were held at the end of the war in the name of neutrality. Neutrality obviously restricted the means of information available to Swiss intelligence. There was no question, for example, of sending "spies" to Germany or interrogating military deserters.

In addition to the Roessler and Hausamann networks, and those set up by the Nachrichtenstelle and various other agents, the main sources of information of Swiss Intelligence were as follows: Military Attachés abroad; diplomatic services; customs; telephone, telegraphic and postal surveillance study of foreign press monitoring of radio transmissions; interrogation of refugees, deserters and home-bound Swiss abroad.

What seems astounding to the reader of Kurz's book is that Switzerland should have set up an efficient information agency in such a short time. There was no intelligence organisation before the war. A couple of

officers perhaps and a budget of 30,000 francs. Almost overnight, the genius and the dedication of a handful of officers helped to set up a remarkably efficient system with branches extending into the highest echelons of the Nazi hierarchy. Roessler had contacts in Hitler's entourage (Kurz sets out to prove wrong all those who have expressed doubts on the reality of Roessler's sources) and the Nachrichtenstelle, under *Major Max Weibel* (later to become Divisionary Colonel) had contacts in the German General Staff and the OKW. Thus Switzerland knew of all the major German developments in advance. For example, Berne knew that an invasion of Norway was being prepared well before the public heard the news on their radios.

Swiss intelligence was conducted by *Colonel Roger Masson* (who later became a Brigadier). Masson was directly responsible to the Head of the General Staff. Swiss intelligence was divided in two services: Security (*Sicherheitsdienst*) and information (*Nachrichtendienst*). The latter was subdivided in an Evaluation Division in Berne, and an Information Gathering Division in Lucerne. The latter's main department was the Nachrichtenstelle, with "outposts" in St. Gall, Zurich, Schaffhausen, Lugano and Basle. These served as bases for several information networks abroad. Kurz' book says little about the work of the security service since it is not its purpose. But it recalls that Switzerland's spy-catching activities were not to be neglected, as fifteen spies were executed during the war.

#### Masson's initiatives

In a separate chapter, Kurz gives a clear account of the encounters between Colonel Masson and his German counterpart, *General Walter Schellenberg*, head of the German security services under Himmler. These meetings—there were four series of meetings on Swiss soil—caused considerable displeasure in Parliament. The Federal Council was particularly angry when General Guisan, who had supported Masson in his dealings with Schellenberg, met the German security chief in Biglen on 3rd March, 1943. The initiative to these meetings was entirely Masson's. Although it was not the role of an intelligence chief to meet a high-ranking officer of the Gestapo without the knowledge of the political authority, Masson believed that this initiative served his country's chances of survival. Luckily, it turned out that the Masson-Schellenberg meetings had some positive results.

Thus Dübendorf was not attacked by the Germans (a top secret Messerschmitt 110 landed there and the Germans had seriously considered destroying the plane so that it would not fall into allied hands). The Germans also abandoned plans to set up a

Swiss brigade on the Russian front. They freed a Swiss diplomat jailed on suspicions of spying and toned down the anti-Swiss campaign of their Press.

The reason for Masson's initiative was that Germany had doubts on the sincerity of Switzerland's neutral intentions following the capture of secret documents at La Charité sur Loire during the German advance in France. These papers disclosed plans for a Franco-Swiss military alliance and cast a serious shadow of doubt in the minds of the German leaders, foremost among them Hitler, on Switzerland's "trustworthiness". Eventually, General Guisan himself thought fit to meet Schellenberg to make it quite plain to him that Switzerland would fight off an eventual German invasion to the last ditch. Kurz says that Schellenberg's dealings with Masson were a kind of exit in the event of a German defeat. At his trial at Nuremberg, Schellenberg banked heavily on these dealings and claimed that he had "saved" Switzerland from an invasion. Although this was a gross exaggeration, Kurz admits that Schellenberg was instrumental in laying Hitler's hands off Switzerland, but says that Masson's gamble could just as well have gone wrong.

#### The 1943 scare

An account is also given of Masson's blunder regarding the March 1943 "Alert". Through its agents in Hitler's entourage, the Nachrichtenstelle learnt that Hitler and his top generals had considered the possibility of occupying Switzerland so as to shorten communications with Italy, whose resistance was beginning to crumble. Masson immediately contacted his "friend" Schellenberg and sent an officer to Berlin for his own appeasement. The result was that a German general suspected of leaking the news was immediately arrested and that Switzerland nearly lost a vital line of information. In the event, it was proved that no real steps whatever had been taken to invade Switzerland.

The remarkable success of Swiss intelligence during the Second World War is a tribute to the ingenuity and hardwork of a handful of officers with no tradition of intelligence work to fall back on. Their story is admirably told by one of the top Swiss specialists of war-time history.

(PMB)

---

#### PLEASE REMEMBER

the  
**SOLIDARITY FUND**  
of the Swiss abroad.

It is in your own interest.

Information available at  
Swiss Embassy and Consulates.

---