

Aligning with the Apartheid Government against Communism

Military, armaments industry, and nuclear relations between Switzerland and South Africa and the UN Apartheid debate of 1948-1994

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Summary of important findings

Swiss relations with South Africa affecting the sectors of politics, the military, and the armaments industry were most intensive during the 1980s when South Africa implemented its policy on racial separation (apartheid) most strenuously accompanied by serious human-rights violations and open use of violence. Swiss industry got around the arms embargo that the UN had imposed on South Africa in grand style. It even violated rules on arms exports defined by Switzerland, although they were interpreted far more narrowly than those of the UN. The administration was informed of many illegal and semi-legal deals. It tolerated them in silence, supported some of them actively, or criticized them only halfheartedly. Yet the Federal Council was not informed of most such deals and hardly fulfilled its role as a monitor. This also applied to intelligence service cooperation between Switzerland and South Africa. The exchange of intelligence information started five years earlier than previously known and contributed to initiating arms deals, combating opponents of apartheid, and airing political propaganda in favor of the South African government. Swiss industry also belonged to the mainstays of the secret South African atomic weapons program. The firms Gebrüder Sulzer AG and VAT Haag delivered components vital to South African uranium enrichment that supplied the fissionable material needed for the six atomic bombs produced by South Africa.

Switzerland was a pillar of support for the apartheid government in various ways. In international comparison a domestic-policy lobby that ranked human-rights issues higher than strategic and economic interests proved weak. By keeping its distance from the UN after 1945, a tendency to harbor racist notions – one replaced at the end of the 1970s by an equally ill-considered anticommunist stance – also remained politically effective. It was customary for most of the actors from Swiss business, society, and all government departments to cooperate with South Africa's apartheid state. Given the climate of the Cold War, any criticism of this was stifled by the argument that the anticommunist bulwark at the Cape must remain intact.

Owing to network formation and threats of legal suits, success occurred in gaining access to South Africa's parallel files and viewing files on a limited basis within the Swiss Federal Archives and the Swiss Federation of Commerce and Industry (*Vorort*), the umbrella group of the Swiss commercial and industry associations. These show that Switzerland maintained close military, intelligence service, armaments industry, and nuclear relations with South Africa during the apartheid era. Clarification of actual procedures is ruled out without opening the archives of firms and private sources in Switzerland and South Africa and without interviewing the most important actors. To this degree, the comprehensive material that this study introduces raises more questions than it may answer. The study increases rather than decreases the need for clarification.

The Project's Issues and Methods

The project's main issue focuses on how Switzerland formulated foreign policy regarding South Africa and which domestic and foreign conditions formed its original core. Since the UN was the world community's most important forum to discuss South Africa's apartheid

policy, UN discussion on South Africa offered a suitable touchstone for studying behavior of those entrusted with carrying out Swiss foreign policy toward apartheid in South Africa.

In its first step, the project clarified which role Swiss officialdom played in this UN process, how this translated into national and social institutions as well as public perception in Switzerland. It also looked into how the UN-South Africa policy of Switzerland reacted to its multilateral stance and to aspects of its bilateral relations with the apartheid state. The outlook on the major stir of the UN-South Africa discussion within the Swiss official and association scene formed the methodological tool to study the sensitivity of the Swiss nation and society toward human-rights issues in South Africa. It also clarified how the government, bureaucracy, associations, and other social circles in Switzerland perceived human-rights problems linked to the apartheid policy and how they reacted to this.

A second step based on a proper sphere of bilateral relations should clarify the extent to which UN anti-apartheid norms influenced Switzerland's conduct toward South Africa. Swiss military, arms-technology, and nuclear relations with South Africa were selected, since the UN observed them with special attention and flatly disapproved of some of them. Comparison of findings from the various levels of multilateral analysis with those of the mentioned sectors of bilateral relations provided a methodological framework sufficiently nuanced for interpretation of certain comments despite incomplete access to the relevant sources.

The Findings in Detail:

The Origin of South African Internationalism and Switzerland, 1910–1945

As a recognized member of the “civilized” community of nations, the South African government almost continuously pursued the goal of enjoying an equal partnership in all important international organizations during the 20th century and was already present on the international stage during the League of Nations era. Already then Swiss diplomacy granted some weight to the South African voice in international organizations. The UN policy of Switzerland and the South African Union again indicated points of tangency after 1945. The specific relationship of the two nations toward Nazi Germany was decisive for this. Since Switzerland had never declared war against Germany, support of the UN's founding states was required in order to achieve its goal of gaining international involvement among as many UN organizations as possible linked with recognition of its neutrality. Along with Great Britain, the South African Union stood among Switzerland's potential allies. The most important domestic policy opponent, the National Party, had also stood up for neutrality during World War II. After the war – similar to Switzerland but in contrast to the Allies – it also derived no need for an international human-rights policy from the suppression of National Socialism. South Africa's interesting position within the UN formed an important argument for the strong boom in bilateral trade relations between Switzerland and the South African Union. The Swiss government called upon Parliament to enact legislation to build up diplomatic relations and open an embassy in Pretoria in September 1945. In 1949 Switzerland belonged to the first countries to which the newly elected Prime Minister Malan of the National Party paid an official visit.

The Outset of the UN South Africa Discussion and Switzerland, 1945–1960

A consensus based on human rights against the policy of racially separate development (apartheid) in South Africa formed promptly within the UN General Assembly. At the request of India, the first UN General Assembly in 1946 had already demanded that the South African government end racial persecution and discrimination. In 1950 the UN General Assem-

bly declared apartheid racially discriminatory *per se* and thus a violation of human rights. Even though the Cold War hindered the work of the UN Human Rights Commission and the General Declaration on Human Rights of 1948 remained legally unbinding, this amounted to a post-war moral authority that could hardly be underestimated because of the *Shoah*. Indeed the Western powers had a basic strategic interest in an anticommunist-oriented government in South African Union. But they could not escape the UN consensus based on human rights and anti-colonialism calling on the South African government to remove apartheid.

Swiss diplomats observed the UN human-rights discussion with suspicion. It struck them – and the South African government made the same argument – as being a tool of the Great Powers to achieve their designs for hegemony. The governments of Switzerland and South African Union also agreed on other issues: *i.e.*, the decisive outlook on anticommunism, the view that the German crimes did not have to be punished, and the emphasis on national sovereignty that addressed real or presumed encroachments by the Great Powers. Nor did Swiss diplomacy – in total contrast to that of the USA and other Western states – have to take domestic antiracist interest groups into consideration. Representatives of Swiss labor unions within the International Labor Organization (ILO) and women's groups as well as teachers' and university professors' associations in the UN Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) indeed took a clear position for human rights and against any form of racial discrimination. Yet their combat readiness was limited, and it was easy for the Swiss government, the Federal Council, and the Swiss diplomatic establishment to marginalize the commitment on behalf of human rights and against racism. This succeeded all the more, since the Swiss scientific community at first failed to take part in UNESCO's breach with racism based on pseudo-science. Such racist ideas extended far beyond National Socialism during the first half of the 20th century and persisted within and outside the diplomatic corps well into the 1960s.

Thus a social constellation took form in the early 1950s that remained decisive beyond the end of apartheid: a strategically justified affinity of Swiss business, political, and social elite groups to the South African government opposed large but weakly organized circles within the population sharing a morally and human-rights based rejection of any form of racial discrimination. In case of doubt, a combination of indifference, vested interest, and anticommunism took priority over moral imperatives.

South African Armament and Switzerland before the UN Embargo of 1963

The nationalistic government in Pretoria only managed to push through its policy of national independence step by step. The South African armed forces were insignificant until 1960 and represented no more than a poorly armed and badly trained appendage of British colonial policy. More than half of the procurement budget of the 1950s flowed into Centurion combat tanks that the South African Union held ready for British armed forces within the framework of the Middle East Defense Concept. But its troops were insufficiently trained and hardly maintained technically. As these troops were withdrawn from the Middle East due to geopolitical changes after the Suez crisis, the South African Union decided to abandon its Centurion combat tanks. Half of them – more than 100 units – went to Switzerland. Indeed in the fall of 1960 the Social Democratic group in Switzerland's Parliament refrained from entering debate on the deal due to South Africa's Apartheid policy. However, given the Cold War cli-

mate, foreign-policy and human-rights considerations found no support outside the left's camp against the argument of combating communism in Switzerland and in South Africa.

At the outset of the 1960s South Africa's detachment from the British Commonwealth was accelerated. The nationalist government pursued a policy of national strength and independence and within a few years multiplied the South African Republic's military spending. Numerous South African military delegations traveled across Europe and sorted out the availability of munitions on the market. From 1960-61 the top Swiss in the administration, the army, and business received high-ranking delegations from the South African armed forces. Practically all important Swiss suppliers of weapons and military supply goods presented proposals to the South African purchasing officers. There were no objections by business, the military department, or the Swiss army. On the contrary, the military department in Berne and Swiss diplomatic envoys in South Africa took an active role in initiating and handling arms deals. The Swiss army made its firing ranges and ordnance depots available to the private arms industry, so that it could demonstrate its products to the South African purchasing delegations.

Among Swiss suppliers the Oerlikon-Bührle Group exerted the most intensive influence on the South African policy officials. In December 1961 the South African Defense Ministry granted the Oerlikon-Bührle Group a contract to deliver 36 twin antiaircraft artillery units (35 mm) and 18 "Superfledermaus" fire-control equipment with munitions and accessories valued at SFr. 43 million by the end of 1963. In 1963 a contract followed for French Defa guns that served to finalize arming of Mirage aircraft, 30-mm munitions valued at SFr. 10.6 million, and transfer of production licensing rights to South Africa for manufacturing these munitions. In both cases Hispano Suiza (Suisse) SA in Geneva also competed for large contracts but came away empty-handed. The Federal Council immediately awarded Oerlikon-Bührle production approval with insignificant conditions. Bührle's lobbying proved more effective than that of its competitors. Hence the administration rejected an application by Albiswerk Zurich AG on 26 July 1963 to supply observation and target devices valued at SFr. 1.24 million to South Africa. The Federal Council also turned down a request by the Swiss Federal Propellant Plant at Wimmis on 5 November 1963 to grant South Africa licensing rights to produce propellants for 30-mm and 35-mm antiaircraft ammunition. Foreign policy considerations proved decisive in both cases.

Sharpeville and the UN: From Anti-Apartheid Consensus to Action

The Sharpeville massacre in 1963 introduced a turning point at the UN. The General Assembly and Security Council took the step from anti-apartheid consensus to action and also called on all member states to take coercive steps against the apartheid government. The Western states supported the UN resolutions as long as they ordered no obligatory measures. The contradiction between verbal anti-apartheid policy and actual support of the South African government induced the UN to turn directly to the world public during the mid-1960s. This conferred an increasing campaign character on UN anti-apartheid policy. It worked in close cooperation with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to raise the pressure on all Western governments that supported South Africa. The chances that this method could succeed increased in all countries in which strong NGOs implemented the UN anti-apartheid campaign effectively.

In Switzerland only women's organizations and labor unions were prepared to take up UN human-rights issues during the 1960s. Thanks to the women's rights organizations, Switzer-

land cooperated actively in the UNESCO agreement on combating discrimination in education of 1960. However, the Federal Council never presented this to Parliament for approval. The influence of labor unions in the International Labor Organization (ILO) on Switzerland-South Africa policy was clearly more sustainable. Representatives of the Swiss government also agreed for the first time to condemn South Africa's apartheid policy on moral grounds within the preparatory committee of the 45th session of the International Labor Conference in 1961. Opposing the resistance of the more pro-South Africa Political Department, the director of the Swiss Federal Office for Industry, Trade, and Labor (*BIGA*) prevailed in upholding the position that successful development of multilateral cooperation in the ILO was a higher priority than Switzerland's bilateral relations with South Africa. Accordingly, the Swiss government's representatives at the 48th session of the International Labor Conference of 1964 again supported a far-reaching resolution that condemned South African apartheid policy and formed the basis for a long-term ILO program against apartheid.

However, as made clear by analysis of other UN-South Africa discussions' impact on the broadly fanned-out Swiss official and association landscape, support of the UNESCO and ILO antiracism policy turned out singular. The lack of readiness at the time to clarify Switzerland's involvement in the *Shoah* carried over to denying involvement in the South African apartheid policy. South Africa was viewed as an anti-Bolshevik bulwark. It admittedly resorted to unattractive methods to carry out its pro-Western policy. Yet its anticommunist efforts deserved unreserved support. Accordingly, the Federal Council and administration refused any cooperation with the UN in implementing the weapons embargo of 1963 passed twice by the Security Council. From the Swiss viewpoint, there was no reason to take sanctions against the South African government. Due to an imprudent information policy on the part of the Federal Council and Oerlikon-Bühler, the Swiss government indeed saw itself forced for domestic political reasons to stop arms exports to South Africa in December 1963. But this halt was conceived as temporary. This was no trace of a political will to enforce it effectively.

After the So-Called Halt of Arms Exports to South Africa of 1963

Political will remained omnipresent in Switzerland's influential circles to support the South African government in building up the armed forces and munitions industry infrastructure. This will was not limited to the darkrooms of the intelligence services and some of the profit-hungry armaments industrialists but rife among officials and the export industry. There was no evidence that human-rights issues ever were addressed in their contacts with representatives of the South African administration, the armed forces, or industry. Yet numerous references show that Switzerland's leading circles supported the South African government position without closer examination of the argument that they alone would guarantee that the strategically important country as well as the ocean routes flowing past it did not fall into communist hands. Actually apartheid and the methods to secure it displeased some top officials and politicians in Switzerland. But at the core the actual or assumed struggle against communism took priority over all other considerations.

A South African military attaché was accredited in Switzerland from 1965 on. In 1966 the Swiss chief of general staff at the time, Paul Gygli, and Colonel Helmut von Frisching of the Intelligence and security directorate (UNA) established extraordinarily cordial contacts with the South African chief of the army staff, General Charles Alan Fraser. At Gygli's suggestion, a South African military mission traveled to Switzerland to acquaint it with Switzerland's army

recruiting and training system in regard to South Africa's armed forces reform program. Of special interest for South Africa's military intelligence service was the manner in which the Swiss army combated so-called «subversives» by waging «psychological war». The South African government had hardly set up the notorious Bureau of State Security (BOSS) as a civilian intelligence agency in 1969, with the support of the US secret intelligence agency (CIA), when its no less notorious head, General Hendrik Van Bergh, entertained personal contacts with representatives of its partner services in Switzerland. In 1974 the BOSS Z Squad section carried out from Switzerland one of the South African government's first arranged assassinations of a black opposition figure.

At the endeavor of the then head of the UNA, Brigade Colonel Carl Weidenmann, Switzerland's and South Africa's military intelligence services also built up a close exchange of information starting in 1972. In 1974 Brigadier Friedrich Günther-Benz took two trips to South Africa and left no doubt in a broadly circulated report of the open support for South African government policy. The chief of the Swiss Intelligence division within the Intelligence and security directorate, Colonel Peter Hoffet, along with his wife and daughter, spent three days in 1975 as the guest of the South African military attaché.

Given this background, it was little wonder that Oerlikon-Bührle did not feel bound by the so-called arms export ban of 1963. Between summer 1964 and May 1965 not only the 30 Oerlikon 35-mm artillery units affected by the export ban were delivered illegally to South Africa. During August 1965 another large order was accepted for an added 90 Oerlikon 35-mm artillery units costing SFr. 52.7 million, and – via Italy – 45 “Superfeldermaus” fire-control equipment costing SFr. 54 million were delivered to South Africa. Even afterward, during the course of the Bührle scandal of November 1968 when part of this illegal deal became known – the illicit delivery to South Africa of 36 artillery units and munitions costing SFr. 54 million – Oerlikon-Bührle still continued to honor the illegal deal. The last 16 artillery units were shipped to South Africa from the port of Genoa in August 1969. This was known by the Swiss officials but never became a subject of then ongoing criminal investigation. The officials consistently practiced negligent naïveté, conscious toleration, and active collaboration, which were only made possible by the illegal deals of Oerlikon-Bührle.

As new documents from South Africa proved for the first time, the illegal armaments deals with the apartheid nation also went far beyond the Oerlikon-Bührle concern. The firm Hispano Suiza (Suisse) SA in Geneva also delivered large but illegal quantities of 20-mm-guns to South Africa. A 1967 delivery contract formed the basis for 126 Hispano 20-mm-guns, munitions, and the transfer of licensing rights valued at more than SFr. 21 million. A Federal Council decision in 1969 ruled out an extension of the criminal investigation beyond Oerlikon-Bührle AG on policy grounds.

Tolerated by the administration, illegal arms deals were also carried out by Autophon AG in Solothurn. It delivered radio communications materials with transmitters and receivers to South Africa's national police from 1966 on for SFr. 3 million. Another incident in February 1965 shows how far involvement of the officials responsible went in violating the war materials decree. The Political Department received information that the Defense Technology Division, in violation of all Federal Council regulations and acting on its own, granted Oerlikon-Bührle approval to provide South Africa spare parts costing SFr. 232,000 for 35-mm anti-aircraft guns. The Political Department also saw no reason to require a detailed explanation for this illegal deal.

The War Materials Decree of 1949 contained so many legal loopholes for allowing arms deals with South Africa to continue that this was only ruled illegal in exceptional cases – Oerlikon-Bührle, Hispano-Suiza, and Autophon. The War Materials Law of 1972 widened the mesh of these loopholes even more. Armaments, when reduced to their components, were waved through Customs en route to South Africa. Degen & Co. AG in Niederdorf benefited from this along with Oerlikon-Bührle. According to a Federal Council decision, its shipments of fuzes components were exempted from the ammunitions list. With the support of Italy's then defense minister, Giulio Andreotti, and its secret service chief, General Egidio Viggiani, Contraves Italiana in Rome and Oerlikon Italiana in Milan largely evaded Italy's arms export ban on South Africa. Swiss officials supported the weapons embargo evasion in neighboring countries through subsidiaries and partner firms. They required no end-user certificate upon shipment of component parts from Switzerland, so that they could move on from their departure point to South Africa without problems.

Switzerland's refusal to implement UN Resolution 182 of 4 December 1963 provided the truly most important loophole. It solemnly called upon all States to cease forth with the sale and shipment of equipment and materials for the manufacture and maintenance of arms and ammunition in South Africa. Only in 1996 did Switzerland subject suppliers to government approval for transfer of licensing rights to produce weaponry as well as other assistance in building up munitions production abroad. From 1964 on the Lyttelton Engineering Works in Pretoria carried out final assembly for 35-mm Oerlikon gun barrels and from the outset of the 1970s for entire artillery units. Supported by licensing contracts with Oerlikon Bührle, the Pretoria Metal Pressings from 1964 manufactured Oerlikon's 30-mm und 35-mm munitions; the required propellants was produced by the African Explosives and Chemical Industries.

From 1967 on, South Africa also manufactured under license the 20-mm guns and munitions from Hispano Suiza. Around 1964 Plessey (South Africa) Ltd. was engaged in final assembly of Contraves Mosquito antitank rockets, though this licensed production task could not be completely clarified. This also applied to final assembly of Tavano igniter components by the Instrument Manufacturing Corp of South Africa in Plumstead near Cape Town. Gretag AG of Regensdorf concluded a licensing contract with South Africa in 1972 for final assembly of its ciphering devices. In 1974 the subsidiary of Wild Heerbrugg AG in the St. Gallen Rhine valley, Wild (South Africa) in Johannesburg, manufactured optical devices for the South African armed forces. All of these licensing transfers were accompanied by shipments and technical advisory services. The wide-meshed Swiss War Materials Export regulations failed to catch any of this. Neither within the industry nor among the officials were voices ever heard that spoke out against the use of these loopholes.

Switzerland and the UN Military and Nuclear Sanctions of 1977

At the beginning of the 1970s the United Nations introduced an intensive discussion process on the extent to which international business ties affected the human-rights situation. A few UN bodies went very far, claiming that any business, political, and cultural activity in South Africa contributed to maintenance of the apartheid policy. To the extent that Swiss foreign policy basically denied that any link prevailed between direct investment in South Africa and mutual trade and financial ties on one hand and the human-rights situation in South Africa on the other, it underscored an extreme position on the other side of the scale.

After the political insecurity of the 1976 Soweto massacre and the wave of repression that followed it within and outside South Africa, again hardly a trace was left behind in the Swiss

government. Yet it saw itself increasingly isolated at the international level. To the extent that the social basis of resistance in South Africa spread at the outset of the 1980s and the repression of the South African government hardened and became militarized, Switzerland moved even closer to South Africa at the international level. Swiss diplomacy now rested entirely on the hope that African countries and other critics of the South African apartheid policy within the UN system would adopt such extreme positions in their draft resolutions that a “No” would be easy to justify. As the Group of 77, led by Egypt from 1985, on turned to drafting differentiated resolutions in order to enlist even the last nay-sayers – such as the USA, Israel, and Switzerland – in the worldwide anti-apartheid consensus, this failed to increase Switzerland’s readiness to negotiate and even reinforced its isolation. During 1984-85 the South African government declared a state of emergency. All other countries united behind the call for more or less comprehensive sanctions. Switzerland, with its absolute “No”, had now become very lonely in the UN system.

Parallel to this, the administration also closed ranks. A differentiated stance could be detected for the last time at a conference within the UN system in 1981, as the Swiss delegation in the ILO agreed in a far-reaching declaration to introduce an anti-apartheid committee and a comprehensive action plan against apartheid. After 1981, to avoid total international isolation of Switzerland, it was no longer possible to find proposals from the Swiss federal administration to represent deviating positions at multilateral UN conferences, though this would have been especially urgent in view of the permanent state of emergency in South Africa. Despite the bilaterally conceived but never activated «positive measures» in foreign policy represented by the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (DCH), an immunized and fiercely ideological position took hold within all seven departments opposing specific changes. It was not disposed to react in a differentiated manner to the broad but disparate spectrum of discussion covering UN South Africa policy. A domestic policy counterpart of this stubborn position could be seen in the hardened political schism formed between the left and right that proved incapable of compromising. The matter of course with which all important federal offices and the associations and institutions linked to them supported a Swiss policy on the South Africa issue that differed with the overwhelming majority of UN member states may surprise observers today. Precisely this matter of course confirmed in the meantime that the consensus was broad-based. This was founded on a fervent anti-communism based more on ideological views than specific analyses. In South Africa it seemed to be guaranteed by the white minority government alone.

The Upswing of Switzerland’s Military and Armaments Industry Ties to South Africa, 1976–1990

Findings gained from files in the Swiss Federal Archives regarding Swiss relations with the UN are confirmed by documents in Swiss and South African military archives. Military and armaments industry ties between Switzerland and South Africa experienced a notable consolidation during the 1980s. From 1980 on, the South African military attaché stationed previously in Rome, Cologne, or Vienna established himself in Berne, while many other countries were no longer prepared to accredit South Africa military attachés in the meantime. This resulted in numerous direct contacts between the defense ministries of South Africa and Switzerland as well as between the South African armed forces and the Swiss army. Military administration and troops received South African military delegations on study trips focused on tank training, development of compulsory military service, effective structures for military administration, military financial planning, the army’s logistical functions, as well as exchanges of experience on military policy, strategy, and airforce. Despite resistance from the

federal police, the chief of the South African Medical Service (SAMS) also met with the Swiss army's top medical officer in 1980, and other meetings followed.

In 1977 the Department of Foreign Affairs and in 1979 a military protocol still took a position against officer exchanges between the two countries involving pilots and anti-aircraft troops, but in 1980 the head of Swiss air force, Arthur Moll, introduced a change. He met the South African head of air force at the aviation show in Farnborough and, to his partner's amazement, invited him a few days later to an official visit to Switzerland. It was Swiss officers who sought regular exchanges of Mirage pilots with the South African air force. The secret security agreement of 1983 underpinned this approach. This allowed the South African military's pilots to receive insights on the Swiss air force's secret methods of combat and technical details. The exchange of pilots continued throughout the 1980s.

Beside the military technology level, the military policy level is also noteworthy. The sharpening of social conflicts within South Africa and the increasing international pressure on South Africa from the outside world prompted the South African armed forces to expand their propaganda activity greatly during the 1980s. The armed forces and particularly the military intelligence service were not afraid to spend money or use contacts ranging all the way to right-wing extremist forces ready to resort to violence to implement their so-called ComOps projects (an abbreviation for communications operations). In Switzerland the South African military attaché and others in his network built up contacts to some ambiguous figures on the extreme right fringe of the political spectrum, among them Jürg Meister, editor in chief of *«intern informationen»*, published by Karl Friedrich Grau. As emerges from documents prepared by South Africa's military intelligence service, he considered it important to contact people like the Zurich "subversive hunter" Ernst Cincera, the director of the Swiss Ostinstitut, Peter Sager, and the president of the Working Group on Southern Africa, Christoph Blocher. The efforts of ComOps operations in Switzerland exerted pressure on television, radio, and the print media as well as participation in sporting events – especially military-related contests such as the international two-day march in Berne. Only when other countries like the Netherlands threatened to boycott the two-day march if the South African armed forces continued to be represented with large delegations was this confined to civilian participants from 1988 on. Protests by the Anti-Apartheid Movement of Switzerland continued to be ignored.

A long series of unexplained cases raises more questions than answers. The Swiss Federal Police and other investigative agencies received strong evidence of crimes and broken sanctions, but shrunk back taking legal action on the information out of consideration for the South African government and its prominent friends in Switzerland. In the case of a well known armaments firm in eastern Switzerland that entered major gun-running deals with South Africa, the federal police were content to urge that the firm's top management remove a rather unsuited project coworker from this operation and take care that the gun-running be handled more discreetly.

The collaboration of the Swiss Federal Propellant Plant at Wimmis with the leading South African producer of munitions and propellants Somchem was far-reaching. Working via Oerlikon-Bührle AG, Wimmis provided Somchem a production license in 1979 covering propellants for 20-mm und 35-mm munitions. It also trained Somchem engineers in top-secret facilities at Wimmis and conferred for weeks at a time with its top managers, among them Somchem's director and ranking chemist in order to solve problems arising in licensed production and development of other military explosives. Oerlikon-Bührle provided major technical and management assistance in connection with the Sleeve und Skavot project for con-

tinuing development of the 35-mm anti-aircraft system. Numerous other such top-secret 1980s deals developed by South Africa and supported by the Swiss military secret service could be verified, among them the army projects Floor, Jansalie, Algebra, Fargo, and Nack. They also included the South African air force project Divorce and Finial (concerning airport navigation), another project to remove material wear-and-tear problems concerning Mirage aircraft, Project Aquila (concerning arms purchase in the Geneva area), Project Janitor (involving the build-up at an integrated civilian/military air-space observation system), and Projects Alexandria and Bessie (which the South African navy developed in Switzerland during the 1980s). Without examining the relevant archives of the collaborating firms, we obviously remain in the dark about the scope and importance accorded to these projects individually. Measured in comparison to South Africa's total armaments program, these munitions industry ties between Switzerland and the apartheid nation were probably not fundamental in their importance. Measured by the politically explosive nature associated with these deals – supported by the South African military files – the following has to be said: the Swiss Federal Council had every reason to block review of the South African files in Switzerland on 16 April 2003. For there are many in Switzerland who supported the apartheid government in South Africa out of deep conviction and profited greatly by business that violated international law. Uncovering this seems necessary if ongoing efforts by the UN and Switzerland to involve business more intensively in a preventive human-rights policy is to achieve a breakthrough.

Switzerland's Nuclear Relations with South Africa

South Africa had already risen in the 1950s to become the world's largest uranium producer. Still during the 1970s it was the only country that was prepared to export uranium without conditions against further proliferation of atomic weapons. Therefore, Switzerland, which like South Africa maintained an atomic weapons program but had no uranium of its own, found South Africa an interesting partner and supplier. The efforts pursued by the Federal Council from 1952 on to receive uranium from South Africa, gained support from the Swiss Bank Society in 1954. In later campaigns the goal was again to receive South African uranium without conditions («whether it would be sold unconditionally»).

Within the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) formed in Vienna in 1957, the two countries – as in other UN organizations as well – regularly represented similar positions and supported each other's candidates for election to the board of governors. There was a close bond between Donald Sole, who represented South Africa on the IAEA board of governors, and the Federal Council's delegate for atomic energy, Urs Hochstrasser, whose election to the board of governors was supported by South Africa in 1963. Hochstrasser used sideline meetings with Sole at international conferences to intensify bilateral nuclear relations between the two states and to try to draw large amounts of uranium from South Africa in order to build up national stockpiles.

The South African-Israeli atomic bomb test of 1979 – one recognized as such by a Vela satellite because of its typical double flash – touched off no review of nuclear relations with South Africa in Switzerland. The Political Department listened one-sidedly to any voices expressing the belief that it involved a false alarm. We know today that Swiss diplomacy listened to the wrong side.

As President Frederik Willem de Klerk announced on 24 March 1993, South Africa had built six atomic bombs. Already in March 1969 the Swiss ambassador in Pretoria informed Berne for the first time that the South African government demanded the «right» to become an

atomic power with its own atom bombs. The fissionable material needed for this originated from the uranium enrichment that South Africa had built up with technical support from Switzerland, Germany, and other countries. As Donald Sole received the formal assignment from the South African Atomic Energy Board to create technology for uranium enrichment in Europe in 1968, Urs Hochstrasser also approached him with this topic. In 1970 Hochstrasser talked at an IAEA conference with the director of the Atomic Energy Board of South Africa, Abraham J. A. Roux, about the South African program for uranium enrichment. Hochstrasser promised to "clarify if Swiss business had an interest in cooperating with South African industry. In regard to political problems, it would presumably be best if one transferred the matter to the level of direct private contacts." A year later Hochstrasser also showed himself «aware of the political implications of cooperation with South Africa. Involvement of official Swiss agencies was out of the question in his opinion; on the other hand, there would be nothing against private contacts (especially of private industry)» for the South African uranium enrichment program. In 1977 Gebrüder Sulzer AG made clear that it would supply highly sensitive technology to the South African uranium enrichment program and «expressly» rejected «any political judgment». Since it involved a «three-digit million franc deal», Sulzer was reportedly prepared «to go to the limit of its legal options.» Though details are not clear, deliveries occurred via the subsidiary in South Africa. The firm VAT Aktiengesellschaft für Vakuum-Apparate-Technik in Haag (Canton St. Gallen) also supplied aluminum vacuum outlets to South Africa at a later date. They played an important role in uranium enrichment.

The Swiss corporation Brown, Boveri & Cie (BBC) in Baden, which maintained close business ties to South Africa's Electricity Supply Commission (ESCOM) for decades, applied in 1975 to supply- two turbo groups and accessories of 1,000 mW each to build the Koeberg atomic power plant valued at SFr. 3,230 million. Despite international protests, the Federal Council granted the export risk guarantee. South Africa decided in the meantime in favor of another supplier.

The USA announced in July 1979 that it was not prepared to supply South Africa uranium enriched to 3 percent to operate the Koeberg atomic power plant under construction near Cape Town unless South Africa signed the international Non proliferation treaty. South Africa refused to sign, whereby the Kaiseraugst AG jumped into the gap and supplied the slightly enriched uranium needed in the initial phase by the Koeberg atomic power station. Koeberg stations I and II began operation in 1984 and 1985. A Swiss consortium (Elektrowatt, Motor Columbus, BBC, and Sulzer) competed for the ESCOM contract to provide the Koeberg plant's maintenance, but they came away empty-handed.

Close scientific and technology cooperation existed between the Swiss Institute for Nuclear Research (SIN) in Villigen and South Africa from 1971 to 1985 in the sectors of acceleration technology and uranium enrichment; South African atomic scientists were trained and gained the know-how to build a South African accelerator. In 1985 the Department of Foreign Affairs intervened in vain within the Federal Council against participation of the SIN director, Prof. Jean-Pierre Blaser, at dedication ceremonies in South Africa. After discussions with the president of the school inspectorate, Maurice Cosandey, Federal Councilor Alfons Egli defended the trip successfully.

Switzerland also obtained uranium from Namibia in violation of international law. Firms with branches in Switzerland dealt with it. Despite international protests, policy officials saw no reason to take action.