

11. **Anthony Eden (Britischer Aussenminister) an Clifford Norton (Britischer Gesandter in Bern), 16. 4. 1943**

Most secret.

Copy No. 8
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Mr. Eden to Mr. Norton (Berne).
(No. 1244.)

Foreign Office, April 16, 1943.

Sir,

When the Swiss Minister¹ came to see me to-day I said that I would like to take this opportunity of speaking to him about the reports which had reached me that the Swiss and German Governments had agreed to revive the Swiss-German trade agreement of

¹ Walter Thurnheer, Schweizerischer Gesandter in London 1940-1944.



1941 which had lapsed at the end of 1942. The Germans, on their side, were to supply the Swiss with the arrears of coal and raw materials outstanding under this agreement and the Swiss were to give the Germans large additional credits for purchases of munitions and other war materials in Switzerland. In addition, the Germans were to supply some further quantities of coal over and above those provided for in the 1941 agreement, and in return the Swiss were to give the Germans additional credits for purchases in Switzerland. At a time when Germany was finding it difficult to produce enough of the specialised products which she obtained from Switzerland, such as fuses and anti-aircraft ammunition, His Majesty's Government could not but take a serious view of the Swiss Government's agreement to facilitate German purchases in Switzerland by means of credits.

2. I continued that I must therefore inform his Excellency of the serious concern with which His Majesty's Government had learnt of these arrangements, and tell him that His Majesty's Government were considering what action to take. I must further warn his Excellency that, unless the Swiss, in their detailed negotiations with the Germans which were about to take place in Berlin, could reach an agreement which was not too damaging to our interests, the action we should take was likely to be unwelcome to the Swiss.

3. The Minister said that he, too, had been preoccupied by the information which had reached him. His Excellency said that he would, of course, report what I had said to his Government. At the same time I would understand the difficulty in which his Government was placed in having to meet insistent German demands at the present time. I would agree, no doubt, that his Government had strongly resisted previous German pressure. It was no small achievement for a small country to have maintained her neutrality in the midst of Europe at a time like this. I agreed, but added that the measure of Germany's present difficulty was the measure of Swiss strength. The greater the German need of the war material Switzerland could provide, the stronger the pressure the Swiss Government would be subjected to. The Germans would bluster the harder, the weaker they were, but the Swiss Government should not be the dupes of these tactics. Moreover, I was greatly concerned at the effect on British opinion if at a time like this Switzerland were to yield to German demands. It was in the interests of Switzerland, as it was to our own, to shorten the war. Every item of war material sent by Switzerland to Germany prolonged it. Therefore, I counted on Switzerland's help to do all within her power not to prolong the war.

4. The Minister repeated the stock explanations of Swiss difficulty, but I think that he will send a strong telegram to his Government in the sense that we would wish.

I am, &c.
Anthony Eden.

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