



Negotiations between the E.P.T.A. Neutrals
and the E.E.C.

During his discussions in Berne Mr. Jackling undertook to give the Swiss authorities our further views on informal discussions with the Six after the Lord Privy Seal had considered the information provided by the Swiss about their position.

As regards our own negotiations, our objective, which is apparently shared by the Six, is to break the back of the work by the end of July or early August. We therefore hope that the whole series of the negotiations between individual E.P.T.A. countries and the Community can begin as soon as possible.

The Lord Privy Seal reminded the Six at the Brussels Ministerial meeting on February 22 of the need to make progress in considering the neutrals' applications because of the connection between their negotiations and our own. We are, therefore, concerned at the continued delay on the part of the Six. This seems to be due to general pressure of work, reluctance to tackle the political problems involved and a feeling that more headway must first be made with our negotiations. There is, therefore, no guarantee that the neutrals will have an opportunity of presenting their case formally to the Six in the near future or even within the next two months.

There are signs that, in considering the neutrals' applications, the Six may try first to formulate a doctrine of association. While we believe that Germany, the Netherlands and Luxembourg are sympathetic towards the neutrals, there is a body of opinion in the Community which would like to see Article 238 interpreted in such a way that association would be a temporary arrangement available to less developed member countries which (like Greece) needed time to adapt their economies preparatory to assuming the obligations of full membership. While the Six are unlikely to adopt such an extreme interpretation, it is clearly in both British and Swiss interests to discourage the Six from adopting a doctrinaire approach and to ensure that applications are considered on their merits.

Since the Swiss believe that there are disadvantages in preliminary soundings, we consider that it is probably preferable that they should attempt to induce the Six to open formal negotiations at an early date. Would it be possible for the Swiss to respond to the German approach and invite the German Government to use their good offices to secure the agreement of the Six to opening negotiations at an early date - e.g. in May?

