

## Swiss Counterintelligence and Chinese Espionage in the Cold War

### *Article manuscript*

In 1967, a report by the Swiss Federal Police deplored that Switzerland was often described by the international press as a hub for Chinese espionage. The report argued that counterintelligence measures against China were “particularly difficult” because of the high number of Chinese diplomatic staff. “In addition,” the report continued, “there are the difficulties caused by Chinese language, the, to European eyes, quite uniform external appearance of the officials and their Asian mentality.”<sup>1</sup> As this quote shows, identifying Chinese intelligence agents and their informants, and disabling Chinese intelligence operations in Switzerland turned out to be very challenging for the Swiss police. When it recognized the People’s Republic of China (PRC) on 17 January 1950, Switzerland was among the first Western nations to do so. In September 1950, the two countries established official relations. The Chinese mission in Bern (opened in December 1950) and the Consulate-General in Geneva (opened in 1954) were among the first Chinese missions in Western Europe and became China’s political, commercial and intelligence hubs in Western Europe until the late 1960s.<sup>2</sup> This article relies on still classified Federal Police files from the Swiss Federal Archives that were temporarily declassified for a research project,<sup>3</sup> to look at Swiss counterintelligence measures against Chinese intelligence operations in the 1950s and 1960s. It will show that while some measures were fairly typical for European counterintelligence during the Cold War, Swiss counterintelligence also differed from that of most other European countries, which affected Swiss efforts to identify and neutralize the intelligence networks the Chinese ran from Switzerland in the 1950s and 1960s.

Counterintelligence broadly aims at protecting classified information, preventing foreign intelligence agencies from accessing classified information, and identifying spies and

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<sup>1</sup> “Bericht der Bundespolizei betreffend ihre Feststellungen über die Tätigkeit der diplomatischen und konsularischen Vertretungen der Volksrepublik China in der Schweiz,” 1 September 1967, Swiss Federal Archives (SFA) E2001E#1978/84#2315\*. All quotes were translated by the author.

<sup>2</sup> Ariane Knüsel, “Small Country - Great Importance: Switzerland and the Chinese Presence in Europe during the 1950s and 1960s,” in Marco Wyss, Janick Marina Schaufelbuehl, Valeria Zanier, eds., *Europe and China in the Cold War: Exchanges Beyond the Bloc Logic and the Sino-Soviet Split* (Leiden: Brill, forthcoming); Ariane Knüsel, “Beijing’s Headquarters in Europe? Sino-Swiss Relations in the 1950s and 1960s,” in Christian Ostermann, Enrico Fardella and Charles Kraus, eds., *Sino-European Relations and the Cold War* (Washington D.C.: The Woodrow Wilson Center, forthcoming).

<sup>3</sup> One of the conditions was that no names are mentioned whenever a classified file is quoted. This is also why I can only give the Pinyin version of names when I have been able to reconstruct a person’s name with certainty and when it does not occur in classified files.

informants.<sup>4</sup> European counterintelligence in the Cold War – and particularly Swiss counterintelligence – has so far not been studied a great deal, mainly due to a lack of archival access.<sup>5</sup> In Switzerland, the Office of the Attorney-General (OAG) was in charge of taking measures against people and organizations that threatened Swiss internal and external security. This included espionage, subversion, and immigration matters. Swiss counterintelligence was organised at the national, provincial, and local levels. On the national level, the OAG's own police force, the Federal Police (*Bundespolizei*), was in charge of collecting evidence for the prosecution of people and organizations who threatened Swiss security, organising surveillance activities, and issuing nationwide wanted lists with surveillance orders.<sup>6</sup> What made the Federal Police unique among intelligence agencies in the West was that it was a centralised organization. Intelligence agencies in most other Western countries, by contrast, were fragmented and decentralized.<sup>7</sup>

Although Switzerland was a popular location for spies, most academic publications on espionage in Cold War Europe tend to ignore Switzerland.<sup>8</sup> Switzerland's neutrality and location at the center of Europe meant that in the Second World War, it was surrounded by the axis powers. It became such a popular location for foreign intelligence agents that the Swiss Federal Police arrested 1,389 spies during the war.<sup>9</sup> Allan Dulles was also famously stationed

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<sup>4</sup> Frederick L. Wetering, "Counterintelligence: The Broken Triad," *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (2000), pp. 265-300.

<sup>5</sup> Among the few exceptions are Georg Kreis, Jean-Daniel Delley and Otto K. Kaufmann, *Staatsschutz in der Schweiz: Die Entwicklung von 1935-1990* (Bern: Haupt, 1993); Riccardo Tarli, *Operationsgebiet Schweiz: Die dunklen Geschäfte der Stasi* (Zürich: Orell Füssli Verlag, 2015); Andreas Förster, *Eidgenossen contra Genossen: Wie der Schweizer Nachrichtendienst DDR-Händler und Stasi-Agenten überwachte* (Berlin: C.H. Links Verlag, 2016); Jan Bury, "Finding Needles in a Haystack: The Eastern Bloc's Counterintelligence Capabilities," *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (2012), pp. 727-770; Dirk Engelen, *Geschiedenis van de Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst* (Den Haag: Uitgeverij Koninkinnegracht, 1995).

<sup>6</sup> "Botschaft des Bundesrates an die Bundesversammlung zum Entwurf eines Bundesbeschlusses betreffend den Schutz der Sicherheit der Eidgenossenschaft und die Erweiterung der Bundesanwaltschaft," 29 April 1935, *Bundesblatt*, Vol. 1 No. 18 (1935), pp. 742-748; "Bericht des Bundesrates an die Bundesversammlung über die Vorkommnisse, die mit dem Hinschied von Bundesanwalt Dubois in Zusammenhang standen und zur Verurteilung des Bundespolizei-Inspektors Max Ulrich führten," 23 August 1958, *Bundesblatt*, Vol. 2, No. 35 (1958), p. 701. See also Kreis, Delley and Kaufmann, *Staatsschutz*, pp. 109-122 and 699.

<sup>7</sup> Sigurd Hess, "German Intelligence Organizations and the Media," *Journal of Intelligence History*, Vol. 9, No.1-2 (2009), pp. 75-87.

<sup>8</sup> Siegfried Beer (2003) "Bound" to Cooperate—Austria's Little-known Intelligence Community Since 1945, *Journal of Intelligence History*, 3:1, 19-31. Notable exceptions are Kreis, Delley and Kaufmann, *Staatsschutz*; Ariane Knüsel, "'White on the outside but red on the inside': Switzerland and Chinese intelligence networks during the Cold War," *Cold War History*; Daniel A. Neval, "*Mit Atombomben bis nach Moskau*": *Gegenseitige Wahrnehmung der Schweiz und des Ostblocks im Kalten Krieg 1945-1968* (Zurich: Chronos 2003); Luc Van Dongen, "De la place de la Suisse dans la 'guerre froide secrète' des Etats-Unis, 1943-1975," in Janick Marina Schaufelbuehl, Mario König (eds.), *Traverse*, No. 2 (2009), pp. 55-72; forthcoming; Daniele Ganser, "The British Secret Service in Neutral Switzerland: An Unfinished Debate on NATO's Cold War Stay-behind Armies," *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 20, No. 4 (December 2005), pp. 553-580.

<sup>9</sup> Kreis, Delley and Kaufmann, *Staatsschutz*, p. 151.

in Switzerland for the Office of Strategic Services from 1942, turning his office into a hub for intelligence gathering, counter-intelligence and covert action planning, as well as funding of resistance groups and other undertakings during the war.<sup>10</sup> The Soviet GRU military intelligence chief, Alexander (Sándor) Rado, also ran a wartime spy network from Switzerland.<sup>11</sup> Switzerland's popularity among foreign intelligence agencies continued during the Cold War, not least because the Swiss government's policy of recognizing governments from both the Eastern and Western blocs meant that a vast number of diplomatic missions could be found in Switzerland. Moreover, the United Nations (UN) and various other international organizations had their (European) headquarters in Geneva, making the city an excellent location for spying on diplomats, gathering intelligence, and meeting contacts. Nevertheless, Geneva's role in international espionage has so far been ignored with studies focusing instead on cities like Berlin.<sup>12</sup>

During the Cold War, the Swiss authorities were aware that numerous intelligence agencies were present in Switzerland.<sup>13</sup> The Swiss government's staunch anticommunism caused it to define Eastern bloc spies as the main intelligence threat, turning a blind eye to most of the Western agencies' machinations.<sup>14</sup> It is unclear how many foreign agents were in

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<sup>10</sup> Neal H. Petersen (ed.), *From Hitler's Doorstep: The Wartime Intelligence Reports of Allen Dulles, 1942-1945* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1996).

<sup>11</sup> Sándor Radó, *Dora meldet* (Berlin: Militärverlag der DDR, 1980); Józef Garliński, *The Swiss corridor: Espionage networks in Switzerland during World War II* (London: Dent, 1981); Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky, *KGB: The Inside Story* (New York: Harper Collins, 1990), pp. 277-278; Richard J. Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand: Britain, America and Cold War Secret Intelligence* (Woodstock and New York: The Overlook Press, 2002), p. 97; Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive: The KGB in Europe and the West* (London: Allen Lane 1999), p. 134.

<sup>12</sup> Sven Felix Kellerhoff and Bernd von Kostka, *Hauptstadt der Spione: Geheimdienste in Berlin im Kalten Krieg* (Berlin: Berlin Story Verlag, 2016); Paul Maddrell, "British Intelligence through the Eyes of the Stasi: What the Stasi's Records Show about the Operations of British Intelligence in Cold War Germany," *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 27, No.1 (2012), pp. 46-74; David E. Murphy, Sergei A. Kondrashev, and George Bailey, *Battleground Berlin: CIA vs. KGB in the Cold War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997); Wolfgang Krieger, "German-American Intelligence Relations, 1945-1956: New Evidence on the Origins of the BND," *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, Vol. 22, No.1 (2011), pp. 28-43; Aldrich, *Hidden Hand*.

<sup>13</sup> "Zwischenbericht zur Sicherheitspolitik vom 3. Dezember 1979", *Bundesblatt*, Vol. 1, No. 5 (1980), p. 363; Kern, "Vortrag", 4 September 1964, dodis.ch/30820. See also: Van Dongen, "De la place de la Suisse"; Tarli, *Operationsgebiet Schweiz*.

<sup>14</sup> Dubois to Feldmann, 30 November 1955, dodis.ch/11418. In addition to the government's anticommunism, Cold War Switzerland had quite an array of self-styled anticommunist spearheads who targeted communist subversion in Switzerland such as Ernst Cincera or Józef M. Bocheński, as well as those who participated in transnational anticommunist networks like Peter Sager with Interdoc: Giles Scott-Smith, *Western Anti-Communism and the Interdoc Network Cold War Internationale* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012); Matthieu Gillibert, "The Sovietology of Józef M. Bocheński: Transnational Activism in Catholic Switzerland, 1955-65", in Luc van Dongen, Stéphanie Roulin and Giles Scott-Smith, eds., *Transnational Anti-Communism and the Cold War Agents, Activities, and Networks* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 177-188; Aviva Guttman, "Ernst Cinceras nichtstaatlicher Staatsschutz im Zeichen von Antisubversion, Gesamtverteidigung und Kaltem Krieg," *Schweizerische Zeitschrift für Geschichte*, Vol. 63, No. 1 (2013), pp. 65-86.

Switzerland during the Cold War. According to Georg Kreis, Jean-Daniel Delley and Otto K. Kaufmann, the Federal Police carried out 303 successful counterintelligence cases between 1948 and 1989, 206 of which involved Eastern European agents. However, these numbers have been described as the “tip of the iceberg”.<sup>15</sup>

Intelligence liaisons among Western secret services in the Cold War have been covered extensively but Switzerland is usually not mentioned. However, this article will show that Switzerland profited a great deal from such partnerships with regards to intelligence on Chinese agents and their contacts in Europe, even though Western intelligence cooperation tended to focus on military intelligence about the Soviet Union and East Germany.<sup>16</sup>

The article begins with a description of the Federal Police’s counterintelligence filing system, which was the heart and soul of Swiss counterintelligence in the Cold War, then it discusses the problem of identifying intelligence agents among the Chinese diplomatic staff. This is followed by a discussion of how the Chinese missions were put under observation, wiretapping, and surveilling agents on the move, then two chapters on the issue of identifying informants and collaborators, namely one on Taiwanese UN officials and people publishing, receiving or smuggling propaganda, and another on businessmen who were involved in embargo goods deals with the Chinese Embassy in Bern.

## 1. The Federal Police’s *fiches* system

Frederick L. Wetering has described recordkeeping as “the heart of any counterintelligence program.”<sup>17</sup> This was also the case in Switzerland. The Federal Police’s task of preventing and investigating activities that threatened the internal and external security of Switzerland meant it focused on illegal and subversive political activities. Using a system of index cards, so-called

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<sup>15</sup> Kreis, Delley and Kaufmann, *Staatsschutz*, p. 159.

<sup>16</sup> Exceptions include Christoph Franceschini, Thomas Wegener Friis and Eric Schmidt-Eenboom, *Spionage unter Freunden: Partnerdienstbeziehungen und Westaufklärung der Organisation Behlen und des BND* (Berlin: Ch. Links Verlag, 2017); Richard J. Aldrich, *GCHQ: The uncensored tory of Britain’s most secret intelligence agency* (Hammersmith: HarperPress 2011), p. 174. See also: John N.L. Morrison “Intelligence in the Cold War,” *Cold War History*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (2014), pp. 575-591; David Easter, “Code Words, Euphemisms and What They Can Tell Us About Cold War Anglo-American Communications Intelligence,” *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 27, No. 6 (2012), pp. 875-895; Loch K. Johnson and Annette Freyberg, “Ambivalent bedfellows: German-American intelligence relations, 1969–1991,” *International Journal of Intelligence and Counter Intelligence*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (1997), pp. 165-179; Bob de Graaff and Cees Wiebes, “Intelligence and the cold war behind the dikes: The relationship between the American and Dutch intelligence communities, 1946–1994,” *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (1997), pp. 41-58; Alf R. Jacobsen, “Scandinavia, Sigint and the Cold War,” *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (2001), pp. 209-242.

<sup>17</sup> Wetering, “Counterintelligence,” p. 280.

*fiches*, officials recorded all anti-patriotic and “un-Swiss” actions by people and organisations in Switzerland. Approximately 900,000 cards were filed during the Cold War, most of them on Swiss nationals.<sup>18</sup> About 25,000 cards dealt with Chinese, Korean, and Vietnamese nationals.<sup>19</sup> From the 1960s to the 1980s, the driving force behind the *fiches* system was the aim to ward off external communist threats to Switzerland. Consequently, the majority of index cards from this period dealt with communists or communist sympathizers in Switzerland and their contacts abroad. Likewise, *fiches* about organizations predominantly recorded the activities of leftwing organizations.<sup>20</sup> Such a focus seems to have been fairly typical for Western intelligence agencies.<sup>21</sup>

The Federal Police gathered intelligence on suspicious people in different ways: Firstly, suspicious foreigners were registered when they arrived at a Swiss airport. All hotel guests had to fill out bulletins and hotel staff reported the phone numbers dialed by suspects to the Federal Police. People travelling from Switzerland to Eastern-bloc countries were also registered when they left Switzerland. Secondly, people contacting Eastern bloc missions, or people who had contact with people from the Eastern bloc, such as visiting delegations and businessmen, or were married to people from the Eastern bloc were also recorded and investigated. Thirdly, information about staff from Eastern missions was kept up to date and completed with biographical information from allied secret services and police forces.<sup>22</sup> The extent of the *fiches* system was extraordinary and caused a huge scandal in 1988.<sup>23</sup> However, Switzerland was by no means the only country in Western Europe where intelligence agencies compiled dossiers on law-abiding citizens during the Cold War.<sup>24</sup>

In a letter from 1955, the Swiss Attorney-General stated that counterintelligence measures against Eastern bloc missions in Switzerland were among his “major concerns” and that Swiss counterintelligence should begin with the Chinese.<sup>25</sup> This article relies on tens of

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<sup>18</sup> Delamuraz, “Vorkommnisse im EJPD: Stellungnahme des Bundesrates zum Bericht der Parlamentarischen Untersuchungskommission (PUK) vom 4. Dezember 1989,” *Bundesblatt*, Vol. 1, No. 7 (1990), pp. 887-888. See also Kreis, Delley and Kaufmann, *Staatsschutz*, p. 28.

<sup>19</sup> Kreis, Delley and Kaufmann, *Staatsschutz*, p. 28.

<sup>20</sup> Kreis, Delley and Kaufmann, *Staatsschutz*, pp. 47-53.

<sup>21</sup> Beer, “‘Bound’ to Cooperate,” p. 29; Christopher Andrew, *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5* (London: Penguin Books, 2010).

<sup>22</sup> Kreis, Delley and Kaufmann, *Staatsschutz*, pp. 53-55.

<sup>23</sup> “Vorkommnisse im EJPD Bericht der Parlamentarischen Untersuchungskommission (PUK),” *Bundesblatt* Vol.1, No. 7 (1990), pp. 637-878. See also: Dorothee Liehr, *Skandal und Nation. Politische Deutungskämpfe in der Schweiz, 1988–1991* (Marburg: Tectum-Verlag, 2014).

<sup>24</sup> Beer, “‘Bound’ to Cooperate”; Hess, “German Intelligence”; Erich Schmidt-Eenboom, “The Bundesnachrichtendienst, the Bundeswehr and Sigint in the Cold War and After,” *Intelligence & National Security*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (2001), pp. 129-176.

<sup>25</sup> Dubois to Feldmann, 30 November 1955, dodis.ch/11418.

thousands of Federal Police reports that were used for the *fiches* system. Due to Switzerland's multilingualism, reports were written in German, French or Italian, depending on the police officer or official. The Swiss authorities viewed every person who contacted the Chinese missions as a potential intelligence agent, informant or collaborator. As a result, the Federal Police diligently recorded the names of the tens of thousands of people, companies, and organizations that were in contact with the Chinese missions during the Cold War. This included everybody who wrote, called or visited the Embassy and could be identified. Federal Police files on the contacts of the Chinese Embassy and the Consulate-General can be roughly grouped into six categories: files about Chinese staff (including travel information, phone call logs, etc.), files about businessmen who contacted the Chinese Embassy or Consulate-General, files about civilian informants (mostly Chinese, Taiwanese, Chinese Indonesians), files about intelligence agents (mainly Taiwanese and Chinese), and files about communists and communist sympathizers, as well as files about people asking for propaganda material.

## 2. Identifying Intelligence Agents Among Diplomatic Staff

In order to prevent foreign intelligence agencies from accessing classified information, their agents and informants have to be identified first.<sup>26</sup> However, uncovering Chinese intelligence networks that were run from Switzerland was no easy feat. The Federal Police regarded all Chinese officials in Switzerland as potential intelligence agents, and closely observed the Chinese Embassy in Bern, as well as the Consulate-General in Geneva for evidence of intelligence activity. In 1966, a Federal Police report stated that Swiss counter-espionage and subversion had to focus on “the best trained intelligence officers who are part of diplomatic legations, using a variety of aliases or international organizations in Bern, Geneva and other places. [...] Over and over again it is diplomats from the Eastern bloc, who are leading their agents from Bern and Geneva.”<sup>27</sup> With regards to China, this statement seems to have been only partly correct because many members of the Chinese diplomatic staff were actually agents themselves. In fact, most agents who were identified were working at either the Embassy in Bern or the Consulate-General in Geneva.<sup>28</sup> Although even ambassadors and consuls were involved in intelligence activities, it was usually other diplomats and officials who were in

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<sup>26</sup> Wetering, “Counterintelligence,” p. 279.

<sup>27</sup> “Aktion W.O.N.,” January 1966, SFA E4320C#1994/78#770\*.

<sup>28</sup> Bürgy, “Zusammenfassender Bericht über die mit der chinesischen Botschaft in Verbindung stehenden Personen und Firmen,” 28 January 1964, SFA E4320C#1994/78#755\*.

charge of interacting with informants, collaborators and students who were groomed as future agents, most of whom were Chinese, Chinese Indonesians, and Taiwanese.<sup>29</sup>

Of course, not all Chinese intelligence agents acted as handlers or ran intelligence networks. Many Chinese officials in Bern and Geneva were in charge of gathering intelligence, and producing and distributing (illegal) propaganda material.<sup>30</sup> Some officials were tasked with gathering intelligence in the form of publications. The Federal Police tried to keep track of all the books that were ordered by Chinese staff in Swiss bookstores. The main interests seem to have been scientific and military topics, but publications about commerce and politics were also popular.<sup>31</sup> While it was completely legal to buy such publications, the police became active when Chinese officials tried to obtain classified official documents. For example, after one official used a P.O. box to receive classified American documents and other foreign mail, the Swiss government asked for him to be recalled to China, which he was.<sup>32</sup> The Xinhua news agency was also infamous for employing spies as journalists. The Federal Police were aware that the Xinhua office in Geneva was involved in spreading propaganda and gathering intelligence for Beijing. However, when the Federal Immigration Authorities (*Eidgenössische Fremdenpolizei*, FREPOL) refused to grant some Xinhua journalists visas, the Political Department – Switzerland’s Foreign Ministry – became involved, arguing that Sino-Swiss relations would suffer, and eventually the visas were granted. There was little the Federal Police or the FREPOL could do against Xinhua journalists, even when they travelled from other countries to “meetings” in Switzerland.<sup>33</sup>

The Swiss government tried to prevent intelligence agents from being accredited as diplomats in Switzerland but this proved to be easier said than done. Intelligence cooperation

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<sup>29</sup> Knüsel, “White on the outside”.

<sup>30</sup> Bürgy, “Zusammenfassender Bericht über die mit der chinesischen Botschaft in Verbindung stehenden Personen und Firmen,” 28 January 1964, SFA E4320C#1994/78#755\*; Babey, “Intervention à l’encontre de 3 ressortissants français”, 22 June 1965, SFA E2001E#1978/84#2315\*. Examples for intelligence report filed in Bern are: Chinese Embassy in Switzerland, “France’s trend after De Gaulle came to power”, 24 September 1959, Chinese Foreign Ministry Archive (CFMA) 110-00490-01\_1-35; “Foreign Embassy Analysis of Trends in U.K. and U.S. on Vietnam”, 15 July 1965, CFMA W630315,110-01984-01,4-5. I would like to thank Charles Kraus for sharing these two reports with me.

<sup>31</sup> Caviezel, “Akttenotiz. Betr. Kontakt mit der Chinesischen Botschaft in Bern,” 13 May 1958, SFA E4320B#1981/141#232\*; Caviezel, “Kontakte mit der Chinesischen Botschaft in Bern,” 30 June 1958, SFA E4320B#1981/141#232\*; “Botschaft der chinesischen Volksrepublik in Bern und chinesische Handelsabteilung in Muri bei Bern; Ueberwachung,” 15 September 1960, SFA E4320C#1994/78#770\*.

<sup>32</sup> Fischli an Eidgenössische Fremdenpolizei, 18 April 1957, SFA E4320B#1990/133#3197\*; “Bericht der Bundespolizei betreffend ihre Feststellungen über die Tätigkeit der diplomatischen und konsularischen Vertretungen der Volksrepublik China in der Schweiz,” 1 September 1967, SFA E2001E#1978/84#2315\*.

<sup>33</sup> “Les techniques des operations clandestines chinoises,” August 1971, E4320C#1994/78#543\*; “Einreisebewilligung,” 31 Oktober 1958, SFA E4320B#1981/141#232\*. See also Knüsel, “White on the outside”.

was widespread in the Cold War among Western countries. Most countries had several bilateral or multilateral intelligence liaison agreements, which could be based on the sharing of information, technology or training and include joint operations.<sup>34</sup> In order to identify Chinese agents, the Federal Police relied on intelligence from other countries, particularly MI6 and the CIA. After all, the USA's intelligence capabilities dominated the Western bloc and the Americans had also a massive intelligence presence in Hong Kong, while the British had a historical advantage there with intelligence facilities, agents and contacts, and – due to its well-established intelligence network in Asia – a wealth of information on Chinese persons of interest.<sup>35</sup> However, even international intelligence cooperation often failed to identify Chinese agents, not least because the various ways in which Chinese names were transcribed in visa applications made background checks with other agencies and police forces as well as crosschecks with Swiss registers of suspicious persons and with the immigration authorities' registries difficult.<sup>36</sup> It was very rare that Chinese characters were provided in the immigration documentation. Until the 1970s, Pinyin had not been established as a way to transcribe Chinese names in official documents. Instead, it was quite common that Federal Police reports contained two or three versions of a Chinese name. In some cases, there were more than five names recorded, all fairly similar but, of course, for the Federal Police's filing system this was a nightmare.<sup>37</sup>

Another issue was that Western countries were simply not very well informed about Chinese intelligence agents. For example, the Federal Police noted that a Chinese commercial attaché in Bern was “working in the background” and “receive[d] many visitors”.<sup>38</sup> It was only discovered years later that he was an intelligence agent.<sup>39</sup> Of course, some Chinese intelligence

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<sup>34</sup> Richard J. Aldrich, “British intelligence and the Anglo-American ‘Special Relationship’ during the Cold War”, *Review of International Studies* 24 (1998), p. 336; Johnson and Freyberg, “Ambivalent bedfellows”; Alf R. Jacobsen, “Scandinavia, Sigint and the Cold War,” *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (2001), pp. 209-242; Stéphane Lefebvre, “The Difficulties and Dilemmas of International Intelligence Cooperation,” *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (2003), pp. 527-542.

<sup>35</sup> Aman, “Notiz an den Rechtsdienst”, 1 September 1961, dodis.ch/30251. See also: Lu Xun, “The American Cold War in Hong Kong, 1949–1960: Intelligence and Propaganda,” in Priscilla Roberts and John M. Carroll, eds., *Hong Kong in the Cold War* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2016), pp. 117–140; Johannes R. Lombardo, “A mission of espionage, intelligence and psychological operations: The American consulate in Hong Kong, 1949–64,” *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 14, No. 4 (1999), pp. 64-81; Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand*, pp. 305-314.

<sup>36</sup> “Zu Anfrage betr. Yu & Lui”, 12 November 1965, SFA E4320C#1994/78#691\*; “Bericht der Bundespolizei betreffend ihre Feststellungen über die Tätigkeit der diplomatischen und konsularischen Vertretungen der Volksrepublik China in der Schweiz,” 1 September 1967, SFA E2001E#1978/84#2315\*.

<sup>37</sup> See for example Menu, report, 26 August 1957, SFA E4320C#1994/78#792\*.

<sup>38</sup> Caviezel, “Tätigkeit der Chinesischen Botschaft in Bern (Auswertung der TAB vom 1.2.-15.2.1957),” 20 February 1957, SFA E4320B#1981/141#231\*.

<sup>39</sup> Babey, “Note,” 12 July 1962, SFA E4320C#1994/78#780\*.

agents also used several names so that they could travel and work in Chinese missions in Europe incognito.<sup>40</sup>

At a more basic level, Swiss officials grappled with the Chinese order of first and last names. As late as 1958, a note to the head of the Federal Police explained that Chinese last names were written first and contained only one syllable, while the first names could contain one or two syllables. This was crucial for police officers who had to record arriving and departing Chinese and Taiwanese citizens and, of course, for the people responsible for filing entries into the *fiches* system.<sup>41</sup> However, the fact that it was still an issue in 1958 indicates that filing mistakes had been made. Yet, even after the note of 1958, errors apparently still abounded. Yang Hsiao Nung (Yang Xiaonong) is a case in point. Yang was a Xinhua journalist based in Paris who applied for a Swiss residence permit for two years in 1963. He was also later identified as an intelligence agent.<sup>42</sup> After FREPOL wrote a list of questions to the Swiss Embassy in Paris for “Mr. Yang”, one Federal Police officer incorrectly scribbled on the letter “The man is called HSIAO!!”<sup>43</sup>

When Chinese officials were identified as agents the Swiss government had several options including denial of entry, which is a typical counterintelligence measure against foreign agents.<sup>44</sup> Yet, it was very rare that the Swiss government outright refused visas to known intelligence agents. Among the very few cases is that of Li Chu-shan. In March 1966, the Swiss government refused to accept Li as Chinese Ambassador because he had previously been active as an intelligence agent in Indonesia.<sup>45</sup> Most known or suspected agents were allowed to travel to Switzerland because, the OAG was only supposed to investigate and prosecute people who threatened Swiss internal and external security.<sup>46</sup> Thus, there was no automatic legal basis for the Swiss government to refuse a visa for an intelligence agent.

Expelling intelligence officers is a very effective counterintelligence measure but it is done only rarely because it can lead to retaliation from the other government or damage political and commercial relations between the two countries. As a result, foreign spies are

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<sup>40</sup> Siegenthaler, “Notiz,” 22 April 1960, SFA E4320C#1994/78#605\*

<sup>41</sup> “Chinesische Namen: Schreibweise,” 22 January 1953, E4320B#1981/141#231\*.

<sup>42</sup> Knüsel, “White on the outside”.

<sup>43</sup> Dwisselburg to Swiss Embassy in Paris, 27 November 1963, SFA E2001E#1976/17#200\*.

<sup>44</sup> See Wettering, “Counterintelligence,” p. 279.

<sup>45</sup> Janner, “Notiz für Herrn Bundesrat Spühler,” 24 February 1966, SFA E2001E#1978/84#2330\*.

<sup>46</sup> “Botschaft des Bundesrates,” 29 April 1935, *Bundesblatt*, Vol. 1, No. 18 (1935) pp. 742-748.

usually asked to leave the country without publicity.<sup>47</sup> This was also the case in Switzerland.<sup>48</sup> In the few cases that Chinese diplomats were identified as intelligence agents who had violated Swiss laws, the Swiss government was very hesitant to expel them, instead asking for them to be recalled or even deciding to allow them to stay in Switzerland. It also withheld specific information surrounding their cases from the public and issued a gagging order for the press,<sup>49</sup> fearing that, any action taken against Chinese diplomats in Switzerland would provoke retaliatory actions in China against Swiss diplomats or Swiss companies.<sup>50</sup> This was a justified concern as China did punish both diplomats (for instance by refusing to allow them to travel in China) as well as companies (by refusing to enter negotiations about deals or grant visas or allowing them to hold exhibitions) when relations with a country went awry.<sup>51</sup> Switzerland was also internationally isolated after 1945 and used the maxim of ‘universality’ in an attempt to establish itself as a neutral mediating power between the two blocs. For that, it was crucial that it had diplomatic relations with as many countries as possible.<sup>52</sup>

As was shown at the beginning of this article, the Federal Police claimed that the disproportionately large number of Chinese diplomatic staff made counterintelligence measures very difficult. China’s use of Switzerland as a hub for its political, economic, scientific, and cultural relations with Europe required many officials.<sup>53</sup> In the 1950s and 1960s, China consistently ranked second (behind the USA) or third (behind the Soviet Union) in the size of its diplomatic staff in Switzerland but the Chinese government tended to provide only the scarcest of details about the functions of Chinese diplomatic staff.<sup>54</sup> A Federal Police report from 1962 deplored the lack of information about three quarters of the 85 Chinese officials at

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<sup>47</sup> Wettering, “Counterintelligence,” p. 281.

<sup>48</sup> See for example Janner “Besuchsnotiz”, 14 December 1964, dodis.ch/31548. For Swiss reactions to Eastern bloc spies see Neval, *Mit Atombomben bis nach Moskau*, pp. 417-421, 514-520 and 580.

<sup>49</sup> Knüsel, “White on the outside”.

<sup>50</sup> Keller, “Personalbestand der chinesischen Botschaft,” 16.2.1965, SFA E2001E#1978/84#2317\*.

<sup>51</sup> See for example Rezzonico to Abteilung für Politische Angelegenheiten, 28 May 1953, SFA E2200#1968/2#92\*; Keller to Wahlen, 1 January 1964, SFA E2001E-01#1982/58#2441\*; Keller to Protokolldienst, 25 October 1966, SFA E2001E# 1978/84#2384\*; Sühler to Bonvin, 15 May 1968, SFA E2001E-01#1982/58#2391\*.

<sup>52</sup> Petitpierre, speech to the National Council’s Commission of Foreign Affairs, 24 February 1948, dodis.ch/5562; Rudolf Bindschedler, “Der Begriff der Neutralität“, 5 April 1951, dodis.ch/9565. Jakob Tanner, *Geschichte der Schweiz im 20. Jahrhundert* (München: C.H. Beck, 2015), pp. 303-311; Janick Marina Schaufelbuehl, Marco Wyss, Sandra Bott, “Choosing Sides in the Global Cold War: Switzerland, Neutrality, and the Divided States of Korea and Vietnam”, *The International History Review* 37:5 (2015): 1014-1036; Thomas Fischer and Daniel Möckli, “The Limits of Compensation: Swiss Neutrality Policy in the Cold War”, *Journal of Cold War Studies* 18:4 (2016): 12-22; Daniel Trachsler, *Bundesrat Max Petitpierre: Schweizerische Aussenpolitik im Kalten Krieg 1945-1961* (Zürich: NZZ Libro 2011), 100–127.

<sup>53</sup> Knüsel, “Small Country.”

<sup>54</sup> See for example Fischli, “Nationalrätliche Kommission für auswärtige Angelegenheiten. Protokoll der Sitzung vom 31.5.1957,” 31 May 1957, dodis.ch/11693.

the Embassy in Bern. It argued that this was hugely problematic, particularly since “Switzerland has to be considered as a center or a hub for Chinese activity in Western Europe.”<sup>55</sup>

As some police officers had problems distinguishing between individual Chinese, the Federal Police tried to obtain photographs of all Chinese diplomats and officials. When many staff changes took place at the Embassy in 1961, for example, two police officers took photographs with them to identify officials they saw at the Embassy. They also tried to take pictures of all the new Chinese officials. However, one of the officers complained: “Since the Chinese Embassy has a staff of over 86 officials, it is extraordinarily difficult to identify officials on existing photographs, even more so because they could only be seen for a short moment.”<sup>56</sup>

### 3. Surveilling the Chinese Missions

According to Wattering, physical surveillance is “the most common technique of counterintelligence agencies worldwide”.<sup>57</sup> Surveilling the Chinese missions was incredibly expensive and time-consuming. For a small organization like the Federal Police – in 1955 the Federal Police’s field service included only 21 counterintelligence detectives and inspectors – with a tight budget, there was simply not enough manpower, especially since there was only one inspector responsible for intelligence on all the Chinese in Switzerland.<sup>58</sup> MI6’s “B Division”, by comparison, employed over a hundred officials whose sole job was to follow Soviet agents in London.<sup>59</sup> Every few weeks, and whenever an event like a dinner party or a celebration of a Chinese anniversary took place, local police officers were stationed outside the Embassy and the Commercial Office (*Handelsabteilung*) and took notes about every single visitor. Additionally, all visiting cars’ license plates were written down, and – whenever possible – photographs were taken. Such surveillance not only required a lot of personnel but also intelligence technology like teleobjectives, both of which were a problem for many Swiss police forces.<sup>60</sup> As a result, several surveillance reports mention that suspects could not be

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<sup>55</sup> Babey, “Note à l’intention de M. le Procureur général,” 20 July 1962, SFA E4320C#1994/78#800\*.

<sup>56</sup> Spycher, “Ueberwachungsbericht,” 9 September 1961, SFA E4320C#1994/78#766\*.

<sup>57</sup> Wattering, “Counterintelligence,” p. 281.

<sup>58</sup> Dubois to Feldman, 30 November 1955, dodis.ch/11418; Maurer “Dienstbefehl für den Aussendienst der Bundespolizei,” 1 February 1952. SFA E4001D#1976/136#101\*.

<sup>59</sup> Aldrich, *GCHQ*, p. 182.

<sup>60</sup> See for example Dubois to Feldmann, 30 November 1955, dodis.ch/11418.

followed because there were not enough available officers or that surveillance had to be stopped because the officers had to leave to conduct a different surveillance.<sup>61</sup>

In the 1950s and 1960s, the Chinese Embassy in Bern cultivated contacts with pro-Chinese communists from Europe (particularly from Switzerland, France, Italy, GFR, the Netherlands, and Belgium) and from Latin America.<sup>62</sup> The Federal Police tried to keep track of these communist networks by registering all members that could be identified. Whenever communists from abroad were known to visit the Chinese Embassy, police officers tried to track them down, observe their stay at the Embassy, and search them afterwards. If they had illegal propaganda material or money from the Embassy on them, they were expelled for “illegal political activity” and issued entry bans.<sup>63</sup>

Of course, some people suspected that they were under surveillance. In 1960, the Embassy held a big reception for Swiss communists and sympathizers. Two police officers were shadowing two known Swiss communists at the train station in Bern. They followed the men around the train station for some time until the officers realized that the communists were aware that they were being followed and decided to lead them around the station for fun.<sup>64</sup> The Chinese staff was also aware of the surveillance efforts. After a film screening at the Embassy in 1964, for example, police officers complained that they could not recognize visitors “because it was already dark. Additionally, Chinese officials were walking around the area, obviously to find possible observers.”<sup>65</sup>

Once the Federal Police received the guest lists along with the surveillance reports containing the license plate numbers, they asked local police forces, foreign intelligence services and/or police forces for background checks on each person and the registered owners of the cars.<sup>66</sup> Moreover, Swiss hotel bulletins were searched and the hotel staff asked about their stay. Yet, such actions usually meant a lot of effort and few results. After all, so many

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<sup>61</sup> Spycher, “Ueberwachung der Chinesischen Botschaft,” 21 March 1966, SFA E4320C#1994/78#777\*.

<sup>62</sup> Blankart, “Protokoll der Sitzung vom 11. September 1967 in Bern, Parlamentsgebäude Zimmer IV,” 27 September 1967, SFA BAR E2200.174#1988/78#53\*; Caviezel, “Tätigkeit der Chinesischen Botschaft in Bern,” 22 January 1957, SFA 4320B#1981/141#231\*; “Notiz,” 28 January 1966, SFA E4320C#1994/78#766\*; “Telex a ge – canton,” 26 July 1966, SFA E4320C#1994/78#766\*; 13.9.1966; Babey, “Contact de la prénommée avec l’Ambassade de la République populaire de Chine,” 8 March 1967, SFA E4320C#1994/78#766\*.

<sup>63</sup> Babey, “Intervention à l’encontre de 3 ressortissants français,” 22 June 1965, SFA E2001E#1978/84#2315\*; “Kontakt mit der Chinesischen Botschaft,” 15 April 1966, SFA E4320C#1994/78#766\*.

<sup>64</sup> Bachofner and Spycher, “Rapport,” 9 December 1960, SFA E4320C#1994/78#751\*.

<sup>65</sup> Christen and Spycher, “Filmvorführung,” 2 November 1964, SFA E4320C#1994/78#752\*.

<sup>66</sup> See for example Lienhard, “Teilnehmer am Empfang vom 4.12.1960 in Bern,” 10 January 1961, SFA E4320C#1994/78#751\*; Zehnder to Bundespolizei, 28 December 1960, SFA E4320C#1994/78#751\*.

things could go wrong during the gathering of information, such as license plate numbers being written down incorrectly or hotel guests refusing to fill in the bulletin or leaving out specific information. In one case, a French citizen with Chinese roots claimed that he could not fill in the hotel bulletin because “he could not write well enough.” Since he had been naturalized and also owned a restaurant in France this seems somewhat odd to say the least.<sup>67</sup>

For information on residents in Switzerland, the Federal Police relied on collaboration with local police forces, delegating surveillance tasks to the intelligence service (*Nachrichtendienst*) of the police forces in the cantons, cities or villages, or asking them for additional information about suspects. The local police forces carried out the requests and then reported back to Bern. This was often a time-consuming process. As a result, there were countless cases in which information about suspects planning to travel to the Chinese Embassy in Bern reached the local police officers too late to carry out surveillance because the information was not processed and passed on fast enough.<sup>68</sup>

The federal structure of Swiss counterintelligence services also made it difficult to stay up-to-date on Chinese intelligence and propaganda networks. A very frustrated Federal Police Inspector wrote in 1957, that he had been waiting for weeks, in certain cases even months, for reports on people and companies who had contact with the Chinese missions in Switzerland. He concluded bitterly: “It is deplorable, when one has to notice every now and then that the investigation of contacts with the ChiEm [Chinese Embassy] is not always met with the necessary interest.”<sup>69</sup> While the frustration is understandable, the number of reports that the Federal Police requested from local police forces was staggering. Even teenagers who wrote to the Embassy about a “Mao bible” or some material for a school presentation were investigated: Their teachers or bosses were asked about them, their reputation and political orientation was assessed, as well as their parents’ jobs, political orientation, and reputation.<sup>70</sup> What is particularly interesting about the reports on young men and women who requested propaganda material is that they were often extremely judgemental. For example, those who were deemed to be interested in socialism were described as “fanatic”<sup>71</sup> or “stubborn”,<sup>72</sup> while a young man

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<sup>67</sup> Babey, report, 22 January 1960, SFA 1994/78\_275 E4320C#1994/78#780\*.

<sup>68</sup> See for example Spycher, “Auswertung der TK,” 25 January 1962, SFA E3420C#1994/78#781\*; Spycher, “Auswertung der TK,” 29 January 1963, SFA E4320C#1994/78#766\*; Spycher, “Besuch der chinesischen Handelsabteilung,” 18 June 1965, SFA E4320C#1994/78#586\*.

<sup>69</sup> Caviezel, “Tätigkeit der Chinesischen Botschaft in Bern (Auswertung der TAB 7.12.-31.12.1956),” 12 January 1957, SFA E4320B#1981/141#231\*.

<sup>70</sup> See dossier SFA E4320C#1994/78#746\*.

<sup>71</sup> Gerber, “Nachtrag,” 15 February 1971, SFA E4320C#1994/78#746\*.

<sup>72</sup> Aeschlimann, “Kontakt mit der Chinesischen Botschaft,” 22 October 1968, SFA E4320C#1994/78#746\*.

who was thought to be resistant to socialist ideals was described as “sober, correct and punctual,”<sup>73</sup> and a teacher who requested material was absolved from any nefarious communist tendencies because he was deemed “conservative and a proper-Swiss”.<sup>74</sup> A description of a teenager’s father was also quite telling: “very reliable and politically speaking an absolutely upright man, who would never allow one of his 3 children to become involved with extreme politics.”<sup>75</sup>

The Federal Police’s rather unsystematic gathering and hoarding of information on Chinese contacts caused most of the files on the Chinese missions’ contacts to be grouped into archival folders that contain several hundred individual reports. Instead of a collection of files about a particular person, network or topic, a typical folder contains files on all the people and cars that were seen at the Chinese Embassy as well as the phone calls made to the Embassy during a certain period in chronological order. As there are tens of thousands of reports and files, it seems that the detectives and inspectors working on Chinese contacts were drowning in a sea of information, particularly when one keeps in mind that information about every single person who had contacted the Embassy or the Consulate-General and was identified in a report was also added to an index card,<sup>76</sup> creating a bureaucratic monster that led to very few criminal measures actually being taken by the OAG. More than 100,000 people were mentioned in the files, but less than 0.1% seem to have suffered consequences like entry bans or expulsions even though a far larger percentage must have been involved in illegal activities related to espionage or dealings with embargo goods.

While it is unclear, how many visitors were actually working as informants or agents, existing literature on other intelligence agencies suggests that it was not typical for intelligence agencies to recruit “obvious” people. According to Reg Whitaker, Soviet handlers did not recruit known communists in Britain, such as members of the Communist Party, during the Cold War.<sup>77</sup> China obviously could not play such a long game as the Soviet Union had, for example with the Cambridge ring. It, therefore, did not have moles in the Swiss government or in the Federal Police. This might have led the Chinese to recruit more obvious targets like

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<sup>73</sup> “Note,” 5 December 1968, SFA E4320C#1994/78#746\*.

<sup>74</sup> “Erhebungsbericht,” 16 October 1970, SFA E4320C#1994/78#746\*.

<sup>75</sup> “Erhebungen über den Empfänger von Maoistischem Propagandamaterial (politische Schriften) aus China,” 20 May 1971, SFA E4320C# 1994/78#710\*.

<sup>76</sup> See for example Kommissariat IV, “Notiz,” 12 October 1965, SFA E4320C#1994/78#602\*.

<sup>77</sup> Reg Whitaker, “Cold war alchemy: How America, Britain and Canada transformed espionage into subversion,” *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 15, No. 2 (2000), p. 178. However, the KGB also used Communist Parties in the West for assistance in intelligence operations: Andrew and Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive*, pp. 360-382.

communists. Wattering also claims that the static surveillance of buildings like embassies would usually only lead to the identification of “‘bottom-feeder,’ [...] would-be spies”.<sup>78</sup> However, because of the *fiches* system, the Federal Police were not just interested in the big fish in the intelligence pond but also virtually anybody who was in contact with the Chinese.

Wilhelm Agrell and Siegfried Beer have shown that neutral countries' intelligence cooperation in the Cold War risked being criticized for violating neutrality.<sup>79</sup> For the Swiss government, which had elevated neutrality to “the uncontested cornerstone of Swiss foreign and security policy in the postwar period”,<sup>80</sup> this was a problem as well. In 1956, a scandal erupted about the Swiss Attorney-General, René Dubois, who had been exchanging classified information with the French attaché, forcing the Federal Council to justify intelligence cooperation with foreign intelligence agencies.<sup>81</sup> The Federal Council justified intelligence liaisons with foreign authorities as crucial for safeguarding Switzerland against subversive agitation and espionage.<sup>82</sup> Switzerland had several treaties with Western nations on mutual assistance in criminal matters, and the Federal Police collaborated with intelligence agencies and police forces from Europe, North America, and Hong Kong to identify potential Chinese intelligence agents and reconstruct Chinese intelligence networks operated from Switzerland.<sup>83</sup> As a result, whenever foreigners who were contact with the Chinese missions could be identified, the Federal Police contacted foreign intelligence agencies or police forces for additional intelligence on the suspects. There were also joint operations between Switzerland and neighbouring police forces. For example, in 1971 Swiss police officers followed a suspicious West German onto the train to Basel where they provided detailed information to the West German border police so that they were able to check him at the border crossing and record his identity.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>78</sup> Wattering, “Counterintelligence,” p. 282.

<sup>79</sup> Wilhelm Agrell, “Sweden and the dilemmas of neutral intelligence liaison,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (2006), pp. 633-651; Beer, “‘Bound’ to Cooperate,” p. 29.

<sup>80</sup> Fischer and Möckli, “The Limits of Compensation,” 21.

<sup>81</sup> “Bericht des Bundesrates an die Bundesversammlung über die Vorkommnisse, die mit dem Hinschied von Bundesanwalt Dubois in Zusammenhang standen und zur Verurteilung des Bundespolizei-Inspektors Max Ulrich führten,” 23 August 1958, *Bundesblatt*, Vol. 2, No. 35 (1958), pp. 676-705.

<sup>82</sup> “Bericht des Bundesrates,” p. 703.

<sup>83</sup> “Aktennotiz”, 9 October 1962, SFA E2001E#1976/17#200\*; Babey, “Note à l’intention de M. le Procureur général”, 20 July 1962, SFA E4320C#1994/78#800\*.

<sup>84</sup> Babey, report, 16 December 1971, SFA E4320C#1994/78#605\*. For German-Swiss intelligence collaboration during the Cold War see also Franceschini, Wegener Friis, and Schmidt-Eenboom, *Spionage unter Freunden*, pp. 136-150.

#### 4. Wiretapping

During the Cold War, among the most common counterintelligence measures to identify moles and informants were hidden microphones and bugs. It was common for both Western and Eastern intelligence agencies to install listening devices in the diplomatic missions and residences.<sup>85</sup> According to the available files, the Federal Police made no efforts to install bugs of microphones in the Chinese Embassy or Consulate-General. There also seem to have been no efforts to decrypt Chinese communication. Switzerland probably would have had access to more advanced counterintelligence technology if it had been willing to cooperate with the CIA against the Chinese. The Dutch *Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst* (BVD), for example, installed bugs in the Chinese Embassy at the urging of the CIA.<sup>86</sup> The CIA was very influential in Western Europe in general, also controlling not the Gehlen Organization in West Germany and shaping the Austrian intelligence community.<sup>87</sup> However, so far, evidence suggests that there was no similar arrangement with Switzerland.<sup>88</sup>

Until 1969 the head of the Federal Police could order phone lines to be tapped and mail to be opened. The consent of a judge only became mandatory in 1979.<sup>89</sup> As a result, many phone lines to the Chinese Embassy, Commercial Office, and Consulate-General were tapped. Phone calls were listened to, translated, and summarized (the majority of phone calls were in German, French or English, not Chinese).<sup>90</sup> Reports were filed for all calls that were deemed important. Anyone mentioned in phone calls was registered and further investigated.<sup>91</sup>

Identifying contacts on the phone was complicated, not least because people often mumbled. There were also bad phone connections, but the biggest problem was the phonetic spelling of names in the call logs, which was a nightmare for the local police officers who were later tasked with identifying these people. Many Swiss surnames can be spelled in different

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<sup>85</sup> David Easter, "Soviet Bloc and Western Bugging of Opponents' Diplomatic Premises During the Early Cold War," *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (2016), p. 28; Aldrich, *GCHQ*, pp. 170-182, 197 and 340; Wetering, "Counterintelligence".

<sup>86</sup> Engelen, *Geschiedenis*, 320 and 326.

<sup>87</sup> Krieger, "German-American Intelligence Relations;" Beer, "'Bound' to Cooperate;" de Graaff and Wiebes, "Intelligence,;" Jens Wegener, "Shaping Germany's Post-War Intelligence Service: The Gehlen Organization, the U.S. Army, and Central Intelligence, 1945-1949," *Journal of Intelligence History*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (2007), pp. 41-59.

<sup>88</sup> Aldrich mentions a joint operation between the CIA and Switzerland, which was cancelled before it began: Aldrich, *The Hidden Hand*, p. 398.

<sup>89</sup> Dick, "Betr. Telephonkontrolle diplomatischer Vertretungen", 28 March 1957, dodis.ch/11420. See also: Kreis, Delley and Kaufmann, *Staatschutz*, pp. 138-139.

<sup>90</sup> Caviezel, "TAB Chinesische Botschaft in Bern," 5 June 1958, SFA E4320B#1981/141#232\*; Dick to Generaldirektion PTT, 26 Januar 1959, SFA E4320B#1981/141#232\*; Dick to Generaldirektion PTT, 5 February 1959, SFA E4320B#1981/141#232\*.

<sup>91</sup> see for example Kaufmann, "Aktennotiz," 23 May 1961, SFA E4320C#1994/78#677\*.

ways even though they are pronounced in the same way or in a similar way. Consequently, local police officers had to do background checks on everyone with names that sounded similar in order to identify some of the callers. This was very labor-intensive because Swiss family names tend to occur frequently in specific geographical areas.<sup>92</sup> Extensive background checks were usually carried out once a person was identified as a caller and included the person's date of birth, occupation, political orientation, criminal activity, information about the parents, dealings with the police, opinions of employers, and in some cases opinions of mayors or other local officials. For foreigners visiting Bern, hotel bulletins were checked and officers were stationed either at the Embassy or, if the people were suspected of being involved in potentially illegal activities, they were put under surveillance.<sup>93</sup>

Chinese last names were also difficult to spell because of the different ways of writing them. For example, in a transcribed conversation of a phone call to the Chinese Vice-Consul in Geneva the caller identified himself as "Shih", stating that he was in Geneva. Police officers tried to locate him in Geneva but were not successful. In order to identify him, the officers ended up not only searching for men named "Shih" but also the following combinations, which all sounded similar: "CHEE – CHI – SCI - SHEE – SI – SIH – TCHEE – TCHI – TSCHEE – TSCHI".<sup>94</sup>

The popularity of the Chinese missions in Switzerland provided Swiss counterintelligence with an additional challenge. When the Embassy's phone conversations were recorded in 1958, the recordings filled fourteen tapes per day. However, the Federal Police did not have enough staff for their analysis, and only temporarily hired interpreters to translate Chinese conversations.<sup>95</sup> Only from 1962 did Chinese translators start working all year round for the Federal Police.<sup>96</sup> Unfortunately, the Chinese diplomatic staff were very cautious on the phone and did not discuss sensitive topics. A report on phone conversations from 1956 stated for example: "Spectacular results could not have been expected because it is known that the Chinese are extremely security-conscious."<sup>97</sup> A few months later, a conversation was recorded in which a Chinese official admonished another official to never talk about sensitive information on the phone and instead use a courier. Ironically, this was

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<sup>92</sup> Bärtschi, "Telefonabhörbericht," 24 May 1962, SFA E4320C#1994/78#755\*.

<sup>93</sup> "Akttennotiz", 9 October 1962, SFA E2001E#1976/17#200\*; Babey, "Note à l'intention de M. le Procureur général", 20 July 1962, SFA E4320C#1994/78#800\*; Rüfenacht, "Feststellungen," 9 March 1959, SFA E4320B#1981/141#232\*.

<sup>94</sup> Cristina, "Note," 29 November 1966, SFA E4320C#1994/78#605\*.

<sup>95</sup> Caviezel, "TAB Chinesische Botschaft in Bern", 5.6.1958, E4320B#1981/141#232\*.

<sup>96</sup> Babey, "Note à l'intention de M. le Procureur général," 20 July 1962, SFA E4320C#1994/78#800\*.

<sup>97</sup> Bühlmann, "Notiz," 24 July 1956, SFA E4320B#1981/141#231\*.

recorded because a careless official had put the phone on the table instead of hanging up, allowing the Federal Police to listen in.<sup>98</sup> Chinese officials also usually asked callers to send them information or requests by mail or telex.<sup>99</sup>

Chinese officials also used code words for sensitive topics. This was, of course, normal for intelligence communications.<sup>100</sup> In November 1966, for instance, a known Chinese intelligence agent in Geneva called an official in Bern about “the silk issue”. Other code words included “medicine”, “watches” or “tea merchant”. Thus, somebody from the Consulate would call Bern to say that the “medicine” had arrived and that somebody would be bringing it to Bern or that the “tea merchant” would arrive on a certain date.<sup>101</sup> While it is possible that these code words referred to documents, the conversations also informed agents in Bern that an informant had arrived in Geneva and wanted to talk.

## 5. Surveilling Agents on the Move

Mobile surveillance required not only a lot of manpower but also very skilled counterintelligence officials, in order to avoid being detected while trailing a suspect.<sup>102</sup> Both were an issue for the Federal Police. Local police officers had to notify the Federal Police whenever they saw a car from a foreign legation. They had to observe the car and file a report, which was sent to the Federal Police. Whenever possible, the Embassy’s staff was shadowed when they travelled. The Federal Police usually learned about planned visits when the Chinese phoned a company or factory to set up a visit. Once such a visit was recorded, the Federal Police notified local police stations so that they could carry out the surveillance after which they wrote a report that was sent to the Federal Police. The surveillance was typically divided into various segments. When the Chinese officials entered the territory of another canton, a new police officer or a new pair of officers took over the surveillance. The problem with this was that communication between the different police forces had to be excellent, otherwise the officers taking over the surveillance missed their targets. Train surveillance was particularly

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<sup>98</sup> Caviezel, “Tätigkeit der Chinesischen Botschaft in Bern (Auswertung der TAB vom 1.11.-15.11.56),” 20 November 1956, SFA E4320B#1981/141#231\*.

<sup>99</sup> Caviezel, “Tätigkeit der Chinesischen Botschaft in Bern (Auswertung der TAB vom 1.1.-15.1.1959),” 17 January 1959, SFA E4320B#1981/141#232\*.

<sup>100</sup> Easter, “Code Words.”

<sup>101</sup> Cristina, “Note,” 29 November 1966, SFA E4320C#1994/78#605\*; Babey, “Activité suspecte de diplomates de la république populaire de Chine en Suisse,” 18 January 1966, SFA E4320C#1994/78#547\*; Bürgy, “Auswertung TAB der chines. Botschaft,” 21 October 1963, SFA E4320C#1994/78#547\*.

<sup>102</sup> Wettering, “Counterintelligence,” p. 282.

challenging because the police officers normally did not accompany the Chinese on the train, instead informing the police station at the presumed destination so that an officer could be at the station when the train arrived to continue the surveillance. Needless to say, this did not always pan out. Sometimes the Chinese could not be identified, either because they did not get off at the presumed destination or because they managed to slip by the officers.<sup>103</sup>

Surveillance by car was also tricky because it was usually carried out with only one undercover police car. If the Chinese passengers split up, the police officers had to decide whom to follow.<sup>104</sup> Quite a few police accounts on aborted surveillance efforts seem like a screenplay for a comedy movie. For example, in 1963, a known Chinese intelligence agent had arrived in Switzerland from London. Although police officers in Bern managed to take over surveillance from their colleagues from Geneva, the officers in Bern then proceeded to lose the car with the agent because of the one-way system around the Chinese Embassy, which had been there for over ten years, so there was little excuse for such a mistake. It also did not help that the officers decided to stay and observe the Embassy but left when snow began falling (again a fairly common occurrence in winter) and they could not see well anymore.<sup>105</sup>

It is also interesting how often the Chinese driver got lost. A typical surveillance report about the Chinese driving around Zurich usually went like this: the Chinese mission's car would first drive through Zurich with the police car tailing, then stop and either ask pedestrians for directions or the Chinese passengers would get out a map and discuss how to proceed. After a while, the map would be stowed away and the car would take off again with the police car still following.<sup>106</sup> This happened so often that it makes one wonder if the Chinese really got lost or were just toying with the police officers who would always have to stop and wait for them to figure out where to drive next, all the while trying to stay hidden. It could, of course, have been a ploy to check if they were being followed, especially if the trips were of a more confidential nature, for example to meet contacts or business partners. Yet, two accounts by former Chinese diplomats in Switzerland recall getting lost a lot in Swiss cities and having to ask for directions, so perhaps the Chinese really did get lost often.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> see for example Bachofner, "Beantwortung einer FS-Meldung," 15.3.1960, SFA E4320C#1994/78#545\*. It is unclear why the police officers so rarely followed the Chinese onto trains. It could be that the local police forces did not have enough officers to spare.

<sup>104</sup> Hostettler, "Aktion W.O.N.," 17 May 1965, SFA E4320C#1994/78#770\*.

<sup>105</sup> Bachofner, "Ueberwachungsbericht," 19 February 1963, SFA E4320C#1994/78#552\*.

<sup>106</sup> See for example Hostettler, "Aktion W.O.N.," 15 June 1965, SFA E4320C#1994/78#770\*; 15 June 1965; Niederer, "Aktion W.O.N.," 26.5.1965, SFA E4320C#1994/78#770\*.

<sup>107</sup> Li Duanben, "Die unvergesslichen Kleinigkeiten und normalen Menschen," in: Xu Yingzhi (ed.), *Geschichten der Freundschaft über China und die Schweiz* (Beijing: Interkontinentaler Verlag China, 2016), p.

Sometimes surveillance also took place as part of a wider operation like the *Aktion WON*, which was a collaborative exercise between the Federal Police and local intelligence police officers that lasted from May to June 1965. The goal was to shadow all vehicles from Eastern-bloc missions and to register potential intelligence officers among the staff of the foreign legations. During the operation, the Chinese Embassy's car was usually first registered on a highway near Bern. Police officials then used wireless to alert nearby police stations so that officers from other villages were waiting along the highway for the car to go past or exit the highway. When the Embassy's car left the highway, it was usually shadowed by a car with two police officers. Contrary to other legations like the Soviet Union, Poland, Romania or Hungary, the Chinese drivers neither seemed to be aware that they were being followed nor did they try to lose their followers.<sup>108</sup> However, since most of the Chinese journeys recorded during *Aktion WON* were from Bern to Zurich Airport, where Chinese officials and diplomatic couriers arrived or departed, these drives were not of a clandestine nature. A few times the Chinese drove into the city of Zurich, and, of course, on almost every single trip the Chinese driver got lost. There was also some additional odd behavior by the Chinese. For example, during one surveillance, the Embassy's car stopped in a forest and the Chinese proceeded to have lunch in the car, while under surveillance by a team of police officers in a car nearby.<sup>109</sup>

## 6. Measures against Informants and Collaborators

The Chinese operated a variety of intelligence networks from Switzerland. Contrary to other intelligence agencies, the Chinese do not seem to have used dead drops. Instead, they had meetings with their informants or used a person as a letterbox.<sup>110</sup> This chapter looks at some of the Federal Police's counterintelligence measures against two groups of collaborators, namely Taiwanese UN officials and embargo goods dealers.

UN officials – most of them Taiwanese – formed one of the intelligence networks run by the Chinese missions in Switzerland. In 1949, China's *Guomindang* government lost the Civil War against the Communists and relocated to Taiwan, where Jiang Jieshi established the

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106; Qu Hongfa, "Unvergessliche Erinnerungen," in: Xu Yingzhi (ed.), *Geschichten der Freundschaft über China und die Schweiz* (Beijing: Interkontinentaler Verlag China, 2016) p. 192.

<sup>108</sup> Maurer, "Aktion WON 9. Juni 1965," 9 June 1965, SFA E4320C#1994/78#770\*; Ruckstuhl, "Aktion WON" 16 June 1965, SFA E4320C#1994/78#770\*.

<sup>109</sup> Niederer, "Aktion WON," 26.5.1965, SFA E4320C#1994/78#770\*; Ruckstuhl, "Aktion WON" 16 June 1965, SFA E4320C#1994/78#770\*; Hostettler, "Aktion WON," 17 May 1965, SFA E4320C#1994/78#770\*; Hostettler, "Aktion W.O.N.," 15 June 1965, SFA E4320C#1994/78#770\*.

<sup>110</sup> Knüsel, "White on the outside".

Republic of China (Taiwan). The USA supported Taiwan but China refused to accept it as a separate country.<sup>111</sup> Switzerland broke off official relations with Taiwan when it recognized the PRC but there were several Taiwanese diplomats in Switzerland because of the UN in Geneva. The Federal Police identified about 20 Taiwanese who acted as informants for Chinese officials in Bern and Geneva, although the actual number of informants was thought to be much higher. The majority of the identified Taiwanese informants worked for the UN in New York. Travelling to Geneva on UN business, they used their stay in the city to meet Chinese diplomats or officials or pass on intelligence via middlemen. Some also mailed information for the Consulate-General in Geneva to Shi Zhengxin, a Taiwanese employee of the WHO, who lived in Geneva. The reasons for collaboration were quite diverse: Some of the informants had parents in China, others had parents who wanted to return to China, while others wanted to return to China themselves.<sup>112</sup>

Although a former Swiss observer at the UN in New York had reported that it was “not a secret” at the UN that many Taiwanese officials passed on information to China,<sup>113</sup> the Swiss government was in a bind when dealing with these Taiwanese informants. The Federal Police asked the Swiss Consulate in New York to inform them whenever visas were issued to suspected or known Taiwanese informants,<sup>114</sup> but the Swiss government’s hands were tied since it could not prevent these Taiwanese from entering Switzerland because they were accredited as diplomats with the UN, not with Switzerland. Moreover, the diplomatic immunity of the informants severely restricted any possible counterintelligence actions by the Swiss police, since actions against Taiwanese UN officials threatened to sour relations with the UN or its associated organizations.<sup>115</sup>

The Federal Police also could not simply arrest the informants because it was only mandated to become active when Switzerland’s security was threatened.<sup>116</sup> The case of Yu Paoliang illustrates this: Yu worked as a translator at the UN in New York. He wanted to move to China with his family, and used Shi in Geneva as a middleman to send documents and books to the Chinese Consulate when he could not hand them over in person.<sup>117</sup> The Swiss Attorney-

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<sup>111</sup> See Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

<sup>112</sup> Babey, “Note à l’intention de M. le Procureur général,” 20 July 1962, SFA E4320C#1994/78#800\*. See also: Knüsel, “White on the outside”.

<sup>113</sup> Micheli to Bundesanwalt, 22 June 1966, SFA E2001E#1978/84#2318\*.

<sup>114</sup> Bundespolizei to Wüthrich, 8 June 1966, SFA E4320C#1994/78#605\*.

<sup>115</sup> Bundesanwaltschaft, “Report on Chen Wen-Kuei,” 12 February 1968, dodis.ch/33537; Janner to Keller, 25 March 1966, SFA E2001E#1978/84#2316\*.

<sup>116</sup> Micheli to Bundesanwalt, 22 June 1966, SFA E2001E#1978/84#2318\*.

<sup>117</sup> Babey, report, 3 June 1966, SFA E2001E#1978/84#2318\*.

General wanted to detain and question Yu when it became known that he would travel to Geneva in 1966.<sup>118</sup> However, the General Secretary of the Political Department, Pierre Micheli, stated that unless there was evidence that Switzerland's security was threatened, the UN would be justified in their protests if Yu was questioned by the police because of his contacts with the Chinese Consulate. Consequently, Micheli asked the OAG to leave Yu alone during his visit in Switzerland.<sup>119</sup>

Another Chinese network that the Federal Police were concerned about were people who dealt with embargo goods. In the 1950s, the Soviet Union assisted China in its economic development by providing advisers, helping with the construction of research and production facilities, and allowing Chinese students to study in the Soviet Union. With the Sino-Soviet Split, however, this assistance ended and Sino-Soviet trade as well as Chinese trade with Eastern Europe decreased sharply, forcing China to increasingly rely on Western products, know-how, and information.<sup>120</sup> The Chinese Commercial Office in Muri, became the main location for Chinese business negotiations and deals with Western European companies. All businessmen and companies that were in contact with Chinese officials in Switzerland were registered in the Federal Police's *fiches* system when they could be identified.<sup>121</sup>

Switzerland did not follow the NATO powers' embargos against Eastern bloc countries but instead in 1951 it entered a gentlemen's agreement with the USA (the so-called Hotz-Linder Agreement), which was based on a *courant normal* of export quotas.<sup>122</sup> As Switzerland's economy depended on trade with the Western bloc and the Swiss Army also relied on arms imports from Western countries, the Swiss government prohibited the export of goods to China if they could be used in war or to produce nuclear weapons.<sup>123</sup> Nevertheless,

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<sup>118</sup> Maurer to Zimmermann, 20 June 1966, SFA E2001E#1978/84#2318\*.

<sup>119</sup> Micheli to Bundesanwaltschaft, 22 June 1966, SFA E2001E#1978/84#2318\*.

<sup>120</sup> Zhihua Shen and Danhui Li, *After Leaning to One Side: China and Its Allies in the Cold War* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2001), pp. 117-134; Shu Guang Zhang, *Beijing's Economic Statecraft during the Cold War, 1949-1991* (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2014); Zhihua Shen and Yafeng Xia, *Mao and the Sino-Soviet Partnership, 1945-1959* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015), pp. 88-91 and 205-240; Lüthi, *Sino-Soviet Split*; Liang-Shing Fan, "The Economy and Foreign Trade of China," *Law and Contemporary Problems*, Vol. 38, No. 2, (1973), pp. 255-258.

<sup>121</sup> Caviezel, "Tätigkeit der Chinesischen Botschaft in Bern (Auswertung der TAB 7.12.-31.12.1956)," 12 January 1957, SFA E4320B#1981/141#231\*; Caviezel, "Tätigkeit der Chinesischen Botschaft in Bern (Auswertung der TAB vom 15.1.-31.1.1959)," 3 February 1959, SFA E4320B#1981/141#232\*.

<sup>122</sup> "West-Ost Handel," 28 July 1951, SFA E2200.174-02#1968/2#94\*. For the CHINCOM embargo see Shu Guang Zhang, *Economic Cold War: America's Embargo against China and the Sino-Soviet Alliance, 1949-1963* (Washington, D.C. Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2001); Zhang, *Beijing's Economic Statecraft*, pp. 21-95; Frank Cain, "The US-led Trade Embargo on China: The Origins of CHINCOM, 1947-52," *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 4 (1995), pp. 33-54.

<sup>123</sup> Stutz to Direction de l'Administration militaire fédérale, 29 March 1956, SFA E2001E#1976/17#2118\*; Kobelt, "Ausfuhr von Kriegsmaterial," 24 January 1953, dodis.ch/9313. See also Marco Wyss, "Neutrality in

the Chinese attempted to buy such goods. In 1957, for instance, Liang Sili was part of a commercial delegation that visited Switzerland with the secret mission of buying theodolites, missiles and other equipment.<sup>124</sup>

From the 1950s to the 1970s, various people contacted the Chinese Embassy about potential deals involving embargo goods.<sup>125</sup> Whenever the callers could be identified, the Federal Police had them investigated and observed. Many of them had a murky past, for example as con artists or bankrupt businessmen with debts, while others had received prison sentences for fraud.<sup>126</sup> The Chinese staff seems not to have made embargo goods deals with people who mentioned them or even hinted at them on the phone. Since the Federal Police usually put the Embassy under surveillance when a meeting had been scheduled on the phone, the lack of phone conversations made it very difficult for the police to find out the specific details of the embargo deals and trace the people involved in them. When people who were suspected of being involved in embargo goods deals made an appointment with the Chinese, they were put under surveillance during their visit. Only very rarely were phone lines tapped or mail controlled, or the premises of businessmen or companies searched.<sup>127</sup> As most of the Chinese missions' embargo deals in Switzerland involved people in West Germany and other Western European countries, the Federal Police also collaborated with foreign intelligence agencies. Whenever the Federal Police received information about a (potential) deal, it notified police forces and/or intelligence agencies in all involved countries. If the goods were already on their way to China, police forces collaborated to locate and confiscate the containers or

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the early Cold War: Swiss arms imports and neutrality,” *Cold War History*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (2012), pp. 25-49. For Swiss exports to the USA see David Gaffino, “Die Schweiz im Schatten Washingtons,” *Traverse*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (2009), pp. 23-36. For the Cold War's effects on the circulation of scientific knowledge see David Baneke, “The Absence of the East: International Influences on Science Policy in Western Europe during the Cold War,” in Jeroen van Dongen, Friso Hoeneveld, Abel Streefland (eds.), *Cold War Science and the Transatlantic Circulation of Knowledge* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), pp. 165-183.

<sup>124</sup> Zuoyue Wang, “The Cold War and the Reshaping of Transnational Science in China,” in Naomi Oreskes and John Krige, eds., *Science and Technology in the Global Cold War* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2014), p. 357; 石磊 Shi Lei and 杨利伟 Yang Liwei, 梁思礼院士传记 *Liang Sili Yuanshi Zhuanji* (Beijing: 中国宇航出版社 Zhongguo Yuhang Chubanshe, 2015), pp. 110-112. I would like to thank Zuoyue Wang for suggesting this book to me.

<sup>125</sup> See for example Caviezel, “Tätigkeit der Chinesischen Botschaft in Bern (Auswertung der TAB vom 1.11.-15.11.56),” 20 November 1956, SFA E4320B#1981/141#231\*.

<sup>126</sup> Bühler to Bernhard, 26 July 1961, SFA E4320C#1994/78#677\*; Furrer, “Aktentnotiz,” 14 March 1959, SFA E4320B#1981/141#232\*; Lienhard, “Verbindungen aus Zürich von Geschäften und Personen zur rotchinesischen Botschaft in Bern,” 4 March 1957, SFA E4320B#1981/141#231\*; Furrer, “Notiz,” 4 July 1966, SFA E4320C#1994/78#602\*.

<sup>127</sup> See for example Kommissariat IV, “Notiz,” 25 January 1963, SFA E4320C#1994/78#766\*; Spycher, “Auswertungsbericht PK,” 13 July 1965, SFA E4320C#1994/78#586\*; Kommissariat IV, “Notiz,” 12 October 1965, SFA E4320C#1994/78#602\*.

parcels.<sup>128</sup> Once enough evidence had been amassed, entry bans were issued against foreigners, and some foreigners were arrested in their country of residence.<sup>129</sup>

Switzerland also participated in Interpol operations that dealt with Chinese attempts to buy embargo material in Europe. For example, an Interpol operation involving branches in West Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, and Italy targeted an attempted theft of uranium in Belgium in 1965 by West German, Austrian, and Swiss citizens, who wanted to sell it to the Chinese.<sup>130</sup> In the mid-1960s, in turn, *Operation Eiger* saw the collaboration of British, Swiss, West German, French, Italian, Dutch, and Danish police in an attempt to prevent China from accessing information on the production of nuclear weapons and the equipment needed for it. Deals were discovered between various businessmen and Chinese officials in Bern involving heavy water, high speed cameras, and uranium.<sup>131</sup> *Operation Eiger* could not prevent China from developing nuclear weapons, but China's first nuclear weapons test in October 1964 was actually interpreted as good news for Switzerland by a Federal Police officer tasked with investigating China's attempts to obtain more ultra high speed cameras: "For us, Chinese atomic espionage has, therefore, become less of a burning issue and, with it, that of the 'ULTRA-HIGH-SPEED CAMERA' which remains a very important research tool."<sup>132</sup>

## Conclusion

Swiss counterintelligence was unique in Western Europe during the Cold War in several ways. Although many countries had detailed data systems on communist sympathizers and potential spies, Switzerland took it a step further with its *fiches* system that detailed the slightest contact people had with Eastern bloc countries and people, resulting in a gargantuan bureaucratic monster. The *fiches* system had the effect that the Federal Police not only investigated potential Chinese agents and informants in Switzerland, but also investigated any person or company that had contact with the Chinese Embassy, the Consulate-General or the Commercial Office.

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<sup>128</sup> Bühlmann, "Notiz," 9 September 1965, SFA E4320C#1994/78#586\*.

<sup>129</sup> Schoch, "Eröffnung der Einreisesperre," 12 October 1965, SFA E4320C#1994/78#602\*; Furrer, "Notiz," 30 January 1967, SFA E4320C#1994/78#766\*.

<sup>130</sup> Dickhoff, "Vol prétendument projeté d'uranium en Belgique," 25 May 1965, SFA E4320C#1994/78#602\*.

<sup>131</sup> see for example Amstein to Nachrichtendienst der Kantonspolizei Zürich, 9 September 1965, SFA E4320C#1994/78#602\*; Kommissariat IV, "Schweres Wasser für die chinesische Atomproduktion," 10 May 1965, SFA E4320C#1994/78#599\*; Dickhoff, "Vol prétendument projeté d'uranium en Belgique," 25 May 1965, SFA E4320C#1994/78#602\*.

<sup>132</sup> Gailloz, "Laboratoire de recherches sur la physique es plasmas, Lausanne," 3 November 1964, SFA E4320C#1994/78#600\*.

This meant that tens of thousands of people were investigated for actions that ranged from asking for material on China for a school presentation to selling embargo goods to the Chinese.

Another difference from most Western European intelligence agencies was the small size of the Federal Police, which caused it to lack the necessary manpower to carry out extensive surveillance operations on Chinese officials, and forced the Federal Police to rely on local police forces for most surveillance operations. However, the local police did not always have officers immediately at hand to complete the tasks set by the Federal Police, which caused countless counterintelligence investigations to drag on over a long period of time or even to have to be aborted or fail. Moreover, the federal nature of the counterintelligence organization meant that whenever suspects travelled between cantons, different police forces became involved. This necessitated fast and accurate communication, otherwise the police officers lost eyes on the targets.

Switzerland had intelligence liaisons with several Western countries and used them to investigate foreigners who contacted the Chinese missions as well as Chinese officials who applied for Swiss visas. It also relied on international assistance in criminal matters and participated in police operations against embargo goods dealers, including Interpol operations, however, were common. Since the Federal Police relied mostly on recorded phone conversations to identify people, the phonetic spelling of suspects' names made a correct identification difficult. The Federal Police also struggled to identify Chinese intelligence agents because of the different spellings of Chinese names and the absence of Pinyin or Chinese characters in official paperwork and most intelligence on Chinese officials. Finally, international intelligence cooperation on potential Chinese agents was also hampered by a general lack of knowledge about Chinese intelligence operations in Europe.

Switzerland did not seem to collaborate with the CIA to as great an extent as most other Western European countries. The lack of CIA influence could explain why the Federal Police only used basic counterintelligence measures against the Chinese, like surveillance and wiretapping, and not more advanced technology, for instance the Federal Police files mention no attempts at installing listening devices in the Chinese missions. It is unclear if this was because of the Federal Police's tight budget, the lack of technology or the legal situation, but it is likely that a closer intelligence partnership with the CIA would have allowed the Swiss to use more advanced signals intelligence, allowing them to identify the members and exact nature of Chinese intelligence networks operated from Switzerland in much greater detail. It is, of course, possible that the Federal Police simply had no interest in such measures because

it was not only concerned with identifying agents and informants, but every person who contacted the missions, in order to complete data collected in the *fiches* system. Moreover, the Swiss government was hesitant to take action against Chinese officials or Taiwanese diplomats who were identified as Chinese intelligence agents because of their diplomatic immunity, potential retribution by the Chinese government against Swiss diplomats and companies in China, and the Swiss government's definition of the Federal Police's task to only investigate intelligence activities affecting Swiss security.

Swiss counterintelligence measures against the Chinese in the 1950s and 1960s, therefore, led to a vast amount of paperwork for Swiss police officers and countless hours of surveillance. Although the actual effect on China's intelligence networks that were operated from Switzerland was rather small since they seem to have continued until China established missions in most other Western European countries in the early 1970s, they can still be regarded as (at least) partially successful. After all, quite a few intelligence agents were identified, and several spies and civilian informants were expelled from Switzerland and issued with entry bans. Moreover, the Swiss used their counterintelligence operations against the Chinese to complete their data on Swiss and foreign communists as well as people who had contact with foreign communists. The tens of thousands of individuals and companies that were registered in the *fiches* system because of these operations would certainly have been interpreted by the Federal Police as a success.