

The BIS and its staff in wartime Basel

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The BIS continued to operate in Basel throughout the war with a small staff drawn from many countries, among them Germans, Italians, Britons, Frenchmen, Americans and Swiss. The staff lived in Basel, worked together in the offices opposite the railway station and maintained a professional neutrality despite the war between their countries. The situation was delicate: the German members of the staff were suspected by the Allies of collaborating with the Reichsbank, the Allied members by the Germans of espionage.¹

The BIS was also a place where information circulated. Its president, Thomas McKittrick, maintained contacts with both sides. The bank's offices were also a point of contact between German financial officials and American intelligence. The American Office of Strategic Services, whose representative in Switzerland, Allen Dulles, was based in Bern, used contacts at the BIS to obtain information about the German economy and finances.² The BIS thus played, in a small way, a role in the intelligence war, which illustrates the position of neutral Switzerland as a place of contact between the belligerents.

1 Notes

1. On the staff of the BIS during the Second World War and the tensions among its members of different nationalities, see Toniolo, 2005; the memoirs of BIS officials. To be verified. ↩

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2. On the contacts between the BIS (Thomas McKittrick, Per Jacobsson) and the American Office of Strategic Services (Allen Dulles in Bern) during the Second World War, see Toniolo, 2005; the literature on the OSS in Switzerland. To be verified. ↩

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