

Treasury and Federal Reserve Foreign Exchange Operations and the Gold Pool*

By CHARLES A. COOMBS

During the six-month period September 1963 through February 1964, the volume of foreign exchange operations conducted by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, as agent for both the Federal Reserve and for the United States Treasury, expanded still further. Coming against the background of a sharp improvement in the United States balance of payments, this increase in exchange operations reflected both the ebb and flow of international payments, marked in recent months by sharp swings in the net dollar position of foreign countries, and greater use of the available facilities by foreign central banks.

The bulk of the transactions executed for Federal Reserve account was financed through the network of central bank reciprocal currency agreements, the so-called "swap network". From the first use of the Federal Reserve swap program in March 1962 through the end of February 1964, total drawings on these swap lines by the Federal Reserve and other central banks amounted to \$1,608 million. Over the same period, total repayments of \$1,263 million were made, each generally within six months from the date of the drawing. As of the end of February 1964, the net debtor position of the Federal Reserve under all these agreements combined was \$145 million, compared with a 1963 peak of \$342 million on December 13, 1963. Further substantial progress in reducing this net debtor position is expected during the next few months.

Supplementing their cooperation in foreign exchange markets, the monetary authorities on both sides of the Atlantic have in recent years developed informal arrangements for

coordinated action in the London gold market. The markets for gold and foreign exchange are closely linked, and orderly conditions in both are essential for a smooth functioning of the world monetary system. The history and nature of official operations in the London gold market are described in the second part of this report.

FOREIGN EXCHANGE OPERATIONS SINCE AUGUST 1963

Since August 1963, the Federal Reserve swap network has been broadened to include a \$150 million swap arrangement with the Bank of Japan, while the swap facilities with the central banks of Italy and Germany have each been increased from \$150 million to \$250 million, and those with the Swiss National Bank and the Bank for International Settlements have both been enlarged from \$100 million to \$150 million. The very existence of this central bank network, now embracing twelve national currencies and providing mutual credit facilities of \$2,050 million, exerted a strongly stabilizing influence on the gold and foreign exchange markets, which remained calm in the face of a number of potentially dangerous developments.

During the period under review, drawings by the Federal Reserve upon the swap lines were made primarily for the purpose of absorbing through direct transactions temporary accumulations of dollars on the books of certain foreign central banks, mainly those of Germany, Switzerland, and the Netherlands. There were also occasions, however, when the Federal Reserve intervened directly in the New York foreign exchange market as well as through foreign central banks in their markets in order to cushion the potentially disturbing effects of short-term capital movements arising out of seasonal fluctuations, changing money market conditions abroad, and speculative pressures.

The most striking operation of the latter type occurred

* This is the fourth in a series of reports by the Vice President in charge of the Foreign Department of the New York Reserve Bank who also serves as Special Manager, System Open Market Account. The Federal Reserve Bank of New York acts as agent for both the Treasury and the Federal Open Market Committee of the Federal Reserve System in the conduct of foreign exchange operations.

at the time of the assassination of President Kennedy on Friday, November 22. The initial shock of the news from Dallas temporarily paralyzed the New York exchange market and, as ominous rumors concerning the condition of both the President and the Vice President began to flood the financial markets, there was a clear risk that the panic selling which had hit the stock market might spread to the gold and foreign exchange markets as well.

To provide firm assurance of the continuity of United States international financial policy, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York immediately placed in the New York market for System account sizable offers of most of the major foreign currencies at the rates prevailing just prior to the tragedy. The Bank of Canada simultaneously and on its own initiative took similar steps, which were then reinforced by Federal Reserve actions in New York, to stabilize the Canadian dollar-United States dollar rate. As the market realized that the Federal Reserve with the cooperation of foreign central banks was fully prepared to defend the existing rate levels, speculative reactions subsided and the market closed with a firm tone. By the end of the day, total Federal Reserve intervention in the New York market had amounted to no more than \$23 million in all currencies. Intervention by the Bank of Canada to support the United States dollar on November 22 amounted to \$24 million; half of these acquisitions were subsequently taken over by the Federal Reserve.

Although the European markets were already closed at the time of the assassination, telephone contacts were swiftly made with officials of the major European central banks, and well before the close of Friday afternoon arrangements had been completed for a joint program of official intervention on both sides of the Atlantic to deal with any speculative developments either in New York or abroad. As this coordinated intervention became clear to the European markets, trading remained quiet and orderly at stable rates on the following Saturday morning as well as on Monday (when the New York market remained closed on the national day of mourning). No further Federal Reserve intervention, and only limited intervention by foreign central banks, was required.

The Federal Reserve Bank of New York also continued to intervene in the foreign exchange markets here and abroad on behalf of the United States Treasury. Treasury operations were concentrated in the forward markets in an effort to influence the timing and direction of short-term capital flows between money market centers. In addition to such market transactions, the Treasury expanded its issues of foreign currency securities from \$705 million to \$760 million equivalent. On March 9 the Treasury repaid at maturity a \$50 million equivalent lira bond issued to

Table I
FEDERAL RESERVE SYSTEM RECIPROCAL
CURRENCY ARRANGEMENTS
February 29, 1964

Institution	Amount of facility (in millions of dollars)	Term (in months)
Bank of France	100	3
Bank of England	500	12
Netherlands Bank	100	3
National Bank of Belgium	50	6
Bank of Canada	250	12
Bank for International Settlements	150	3
Swiss National Bank	150	3
German Federal Bank	250	3
Bank of Italy	250	6
Austrian National Bank	50	3
Bank of Sweden	50	3
Bank of Japan	150	3
Total	\$2,050	

the Bank of Italy. This was the first such repayment of a Treasury medium-term foreign currency bond and points up the reversibility of such Treasury medium-term credit operations.

One other development during the period under review that deserves particular mention was the United States drawing on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on February 13. This drawing in the amount of \$125 million equivalent—mainly in German marks and French francs—was made under the \$500 million stand-by agreement with the Fund announced by President Kennedy last July 18. The foreign currency proceeds of this drawing are being sold to other member countries for their use in making repayments to the Fund since, with the Fund's holdings of dollars now equal to the dollar portion of the United States subscription, the Fund cannot at this time accept further dollars in repayment. While this first drawing upon the Fund by the United States was essentially of a technical nature, it nevertheless demonstrated that the resources of the Fund can be called upon by both large and small countries, not only in times of emergency but also in a more or less routine way. Use of the Fund by other countries in such a manner would help to integrate further its large resources into the usable foreign assets of member countries.

There is thus emerging in even sharper focus a spectrum of more or less formalized international credit facilities, ranging from the central bank swap network at the short end to foreign currency bonds and IMF credit facilities in the intermediate area. Each of these credit facilities is complementary to the others. Each may be selectively employed, depending on whether the operational problem calls for immediate action to deal with a temporary situation or a more studied resort to medium-term credit,

either from one government to another or from the international pool of credit provided by the IMF. Further development and refinement of such mutual credit facilities to deal with problems that may lie ahead afford a most useful means for strengthening the world's payments system.

GERMAN MARKS. Since January 1963 there has been almost continuous buying pressure on the German mark, mainly reflecting a substantial improvement in the German foreign trading position, large inflows of long-term capital, and occasional inflows of short-term funds in response to tight money market conditions or hedging operations.

In May and June of 1963, as noted in the preceding report in this series, the Federal Reserve drew the entire \$150 million equivalent of marks available under its mark swap line with the German Federal Bank. In the face of continuing pressure, it then appeared advisable to shift to medium-term United States Treasury financing through a \$25 million issue on July 11 of a two-year mark bond, which provided funds for further intervention during the remainder of July. This issue brought total Treasury issues of mark-denominated bonds to \$225 million equivalent.

Despite this shift in the financing of United States operations in marks, the System still was faced with the problem of early liquidation of its commitments under the fully drawn \$150 million swap arrangement. As this appeared likely to take some time, however, the Federal Reserve and the Treasury—in line with the general policy of reserving swap facilities for countering flows that give evidence of being quickly reversible—felt it desirable at this point to substitute, for a portion of short-term obligations of the Federal Reserve to the German Federal Bank, a medium-term United States Treasury borrowing in the form of a further \$50 million issue of two-year mark bonds. The mark proceeds of this issue were immediately sold by the Treasury to the Federal Reserve System and were used to reduce the Federal Reserve swap drawing to \$100 million. This was the first instance of a refunding of a Federal Reserve swap drawing through medium-term Treasury borrowing.

During August and early September, when buying pressure on the mark tapered off, the Federal Reserve System purchased \$25 million of marks which were employed to reduce the swap drawing to \$75 million. The remainder was fully liquidated by October 28, mainly with marks acquired from the German Federal Bank in conjunction with the German Defense Ministry's need for dollars to purchase United States military equipment.

In November the German Federal Bank once again

took in substantial amounts of dollars, as German banks began repatriating funds for the year end. Consequently, the Federal Reserve made new drawings on the swap line—which had been expanded to \$250 million on October 10—both to mop up dollars from the German Federal Bank and to acquire marks to sell in the New York market. Marks were also sold in the New York market for United States Treasury account.

The inflow of funds to Germany persisted through mid-December, by which time Federal Reserve drawings under the swap line had risen to \$136 million (including \$10 million drawn to cover spot sales made in New York on November 22, following the assassination of President Kennedy). Once again, however, the German Defense Ministry's need for dollars enabled the Federal Reserve to acquire marks, in this case totaling the equivalent of \$70 million, during the remainder of December. These marks, supplemented by market acquisitions through the German Federal Bank, were used to reduce the net commitments under the swap to \$59 million at the close of the year. A further reversal of the year-end window dressing early in January enabled the Federal Reserve to acquire through the German Federal Bank sufficient additional marks to liquidate the remainder of the mark swap drawings by January 9, 1964.

Once the post-year-end short-term capital outflow ended, the mark strengthened again as the growing German trade surplus and a continuing inflow of capital for investment in German securities created a heavy demand for marks. Late in February, this demand became further swollen by speculative money movements, mainly within Europe. In order to counter these pressures, the German Federal Bank took in dollars at rates just below the ceiling for the mark and the Federal Reserve Bank of New York intervened in the New York spot market as well as the forward market.

SWISS FRANCS. As has been pointed out by both United States and Swiss officials, the strength of the Swiss franc in recent years has been mainly attributable to recurrent inflows of short-term capital funds associated with international tensions. Whenever these short-term inflows have tapered off, the underlying deficit in the Swiss balance of payments has emerged and generated sizable demands for dollars to finance imports and other payments. During the spring and early summer of 1963, such a demand for dollars reappeared and brought about a strengthening of both the spot and forward dollar rates against the Swiss franc. Under these conditions, the Federal Reserve and Treasury made rapid progress in reducing their short-term debt in Swiss francs, which had totaled \$188 million at the begin-

ing of the year. By June 20, the debt had been fully liquidated.

In late July, however, the Swiss franc strengthened once more, as the Swiss money market became somewhat tighter. To counter the liquidity squeeze, Swiss commercial banks repatriated funds placed abroad, and this inflow—combined with some renewed speculative pressures—created a heavy demand for Swiss francs. In closely coordinated operations in New York and Zurich, the Swiss and United States authorities tempered these market pressures and prevented unduly sharp rate movements. Intervention took the form mainly of United States Treasury sales of Swiss francs for forward delivery and market purchases of spot dollars by the Swiss National Bank, both on a moderate scale.

In September the Swiss franc strengthened still further as a result of inflows of funds associated with the usual market gossip surrounding the annual IMF meeting and also because of a flow of funds from Italy. To help counter these pressures and reduce Swiss official reserve gains, the forward sale of Swiss francs for Treasury account in the Swiss market was resumed and during September some \$72 million equivalent was committed, raising to \$105 million equivalent the Treasury's forward Swiss franc commitments. Nevertheless, the Swiss National Bank had to absorb substantial amounts of dollars. In order to acquire Swiss francs to mop up these excess Swiss National Bank dollar holdings, the Federal Reserve reactivated the swap arrangement with the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), drawing \$50 million on September 30 and \$30 million on October 7. Although there was a temporary easing of the influx when the IMF meeting came to a close, further heavy flows of funds from Italy occurred. To cope with these pressures, the Treasury sold during the first half of October \$44 million additional of forward Swiss francs and the Federal Reserve on October 22 drew the remaining \$20 million of Swiss francs available under the \$100 million swap arrangement with the BIS. Later in the month the Federal Reserve activated its swap arrangement with the Swiss National Bank by drawing \$60 million equivalent, while the Treasury funded \$30 million of its maturing forward contracts through the sale of a Swiss franc-denominated certificate of indebtedness to the Swiss Confederation. In early November, the Swiss franc came off its ceiling as a result both of a slowing-down in the influx of funds from Italy and of an easing in the Swiss money market, and the Federal Reserve was able to acquire sufficient francs to reduce its drawings on the Swiss National Bank and BIS by \$5 million each—to \$55 million and \$95 million, respectively.

In the latter part of November the Swiss franc again

advanced toward the ceiling as Swiss banks began to repatriate funds for year-end needs. By November 22 the rate was just below the ceiling and, after the assassination of President Kennedy, moved to the ceiling, at which level the Federal Reserve sold some \$2 million of francs. On the same day, the swap lines between the Federal Reserve and the BIS and Swiss National Bank were each increased by \$50 million to \$150 million. The franc then remained at, or just below, its ceiling through the end of the year. During December, the Swiss National Bank engaged in a large volume of swap transactions—buying United States dollars spot and selling them forward—with the Swiss commercial banks to provide accommodation for the year-end repatriation of funds. In addition, the Swiss National Bank had to absorb a substantial volume of dollars in the spot market on an outright basis. Most of these excess dollar holdings were mopped up on December 31 by a Federal Reserve drawing of \$70 million of Swiss francs on the swap arrangements with the BIS and the Swiss National Bank. Thus, at the year end the Federal Reserve's swap commitments in Swiss francs totaled \$220 million while the Treasury's forward contracts totaled \$120 million.

In February 1964 the Swiss franc rate eased as the heavy net capital inflows of earlier months began to taper off, thus exposing the underlying Swiss current account payments deficit. Later in the month it was possible for the Federal Reserve Bank of New York to acquire Swiss francs against dollars from the Swiss National Bank. The latter required the dollars so purchased to cover current needs. It is anticipated that sizable reductions will be made over the next few months in the outstanding Federal Reserve and Treasury short-term commitments in Swiss francs.

NETHERLANDS GULDERS. Buying pressure on the guilder developed in mid-March 1963 and continued for more than two months thereafter. Part of the dollar influx into the Netherlands apparently originated in foreign direct investment. But a more important cause was a gradual tightening of money market conditions in the Netherlands. To bolster their strained domestic liquidity positions, Dutch commercial banks repatriated short-term investments from abroad. In these circumstances, it seemed appropriate to prevent through central bank swap operations the potential unloading of such repatriations on the Netherlands Bank. Accordingly, from April 10 through May 28, the Federal Reserve gradually disbursed a total of \$44 million equivalent in guilders acquired through drawings upon the \$50 million swap line with the Netherlands Bank.

By early June the tide began to turn, as the Netherlands Bank again reduced the commercial banks' cash reserve

requirements and money market conditions eased. With the decline in Dutch money rates and the strengthening of their liquidity positions, Dutch commercial banks resumed placements of short-term funds abroad. Throughout the summer months the guilder market was quiet, and by July 28 the Federal Reserve was able to acquire sufficient guilders—both from the market and directly from the Netherlands Bank in connection with a prepayment of Netherlands Government debt to the United States—to liquidate all outstanding swap drawings on the Netherlands Bank.

In September the guilder rate again turned upward, as a general debate in the Netherlands over credit and wage policy gave rise to widespread rumors that the guilder might be revalued. This in turn set off brief but heavy speculative demand for guilders, and the guilder rate rose sharply until early October when the revaluation rumors died down. During this period, the Federal Reserve drew \$100 million of guilders under the swap line with the Netherlands Bank—the arrangement was increased from \$50 million to \$100 million on October 2 as the heavy movement of funds to the Netherlands persisted—and sold \$15 million of guilders in the New York market while also absorbing \$80 million of surplus dollars on the books of the Netherlands Bank. In addition, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York sold for United States Treasury account through the Netherlands Bank \$38.7 million of guilders forward for one-month delivery in order to encourage an outflow of funds from the Netherlands.

The guilder eased somewhat in October and November, as funds previously repatriated were reinvested abroad. The Federal Reserve Bank of New York was thereby enabled to acquire sufficient guilders to reduce the System's swap commitment by \$20 million to \$80 million and to liquidate \$21.7 million of the Treasury's forward contracts. The remainder of the guilders needed to meet the Treasury's commitment was acquired through a swap with the BIS of \$17 million of the Treasury's holdings of marks for guilders. (These marks had been acquired for possible market intervention in October through the reversal of an outstanding Treasury swap with the BIS of marks against Swiss francs. The Swiss francs needed for this latter operation were in turn acquired by swapping into Swiss francs part of the lira balances which the Treasury was building up in anticipation of future maturities of lira bonds issued to the Bank of Italy in 1962.)

In the latter part of November, the guilder strengthened again, reflecting the tightening effects in the money market of a bond issue by the Netherlands Government. Then on November 22, following the assassination of President Kennedy, the Federal Reserve sold in the New York market

\$3.2 million equivalent of guilders out of existing balances.

As the guilder again eased at the turn of the year, the Federal Reserve was able to resume sizable purchases of guilders and by the end of February the Federal Reserve's swap commitment had been reduced by \$55 million to \$25 million. In addition, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York acquired from the Netherlands Bank \$17 million of guilders for the account of the United States Treasury and used the guilders to repay the Treasury's outstanding German mark-guilder swap with the BIS when a need for marks arose in early March. This transaction once again demonstrated the flexibility of the third currency swaps in enabling the United States to shift from one foreign currency to another. Thus, of the \$138.7 million short-term guilder debt incurred by the Federal Reserve and the Treasury in September and October 1963, all but \$25 million had been repaid in less than six months.

STERLING. Perhaps the most important single development in the sterling-dollar relationship during the past year was the increase in the swap line between the Federal Reserve and the Bank of England from \$50 million to \$500 million, announced on May 29. The magnitude of this increase in the reciprocal credit arrangement has greatly reinforced market confidence in the stability of the sterling-dollar parity.

In July, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York acquired for Treasury account \$10 million equivalent of sterling, which was immediately swapped into Swiss francs to cope with buying pressure on the Swiss franc. In August, the Bank purchased in the market additional sterling balances of £2.7 million, or \$7.5 million, for the Federal Open Market Account and the Treasury. There were no further Federal Reserve or Treasury operations in sterling until November 22, when the Federal Reserve sold \$8 million equivalent of sterling in the New York market following the assassination of President Kennedy. These sales were covered by a Federal Reserve drawing of \$10 million equivalent of sterling on the swap line with the Bank of England. An easing of sterling in December, as continental commercial banks repatriated funds from the United Kingdom for year-end positioning, enabled the Federal Reserve to purchase sufficient sterling to repay the swap drawing in advance of maturity.

The sterling market was quiet at the beginning of 1964, but in late February sterling came under some speculative selling. On February 27 the Bank of England's discount rate was increased from 4 per cent to 5 per cent. Prior to the increase, some support for sterling had been provided by the Bank of England through intervention in the ex-

change markets and, in a minor way, by Federal Reserve purchases of sterling in New York. Following the bank rate action, these pressures subsided quickly.

CANADIAN DOLLARS. Throughout 1963 both the Canadian and United States authorities kept a close watch on potentially disturbing flows of short-term capital between the two countries. The desire to minimize such flows appears to have been reflected in part in adjustments in the Bank of Canada's discount rate in May, when it was reduced to 3½ per cent, and again in August, when it was raised to 4 per cent following the increase in Federal Reserve discount rate and the change in Regulation Q ceilings. With Canadian short-term rates thus running only slightly above United States rates and the forward Canadian dollar at a small discount, the incentive to move funds on a covered basis was relatively minor.

The completion in September of a \$500 million Canadian wheat sale to the Soviet Union introduced a new technical problem, which was quickly resolved. The wheat sale naturally created heavy demands for Canadian dollars for future delivery against United States dollars since the sales contracts between the Soviet Union and the international grain companies—which were acting as intermediaries—called for settlement in United States dollars, whereas the grain companies had to purchase the wheat from the Canadian Grain Board with Canadian dollars. Consequently, the forward Canadian dollar moved to a premium vis-à-vis the United States dollar. Such a premium on the forward Canadian dollar, coupled with the existing interest differential in favor of Canadian money market instruments, might well have generated a sizable flow of arbitrage funds from the United States to Canada. In these circumstances, acting in close cooperation, the United States and Canadian authorities intervened to eliminate the forward premium on the Canadian dollar and thus reduced the covered interest arbitrage incentive in favor of Canada. In this connection, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York engaged in swap transactions for United States Treasury account, buying Canadian dollars spot and selling them forward against United States dollars. Such operations helped to meet market demands for forward Canadian dollars, and reduced to a minimum the flow of interest arbitrage funds during this period.

On Friday, November 22, the Federal Reserve sold \$2.3 million of Canadian dollars in the New York market following the assassination of President Kennedy. Early in the following week, the Federal Open Market Account sold \$14 million equivalent of Canadian dollars to the Bank of Canada to mop up some of the latter's United States dollar

acquisitions during the crisis period. The Canadian dollar resources for these operations were acquired through a \$20 million equivalent drawing on the Federal Reserve swap line with the Bank of Canada. In mid-December, when the Canadian dollar weakened as a result of the usual year-end pressures arising from heavy interest and dividend payments abroad, the Federal Reserve was able to purchase from the Bank of Canada the Canadian dollars necessary to cover these swap commitments and it repaid the \$20 million drawing in advance of maturity.

BELGIAN FRANCS. As previous reports in this series have pointed out, the Federal Reserve-National Bank of Belgium swap has been fully drawn at all times and the mutual balances thereby created have been employed regularly to finance swings in Belgium's dollar position. In July and August the Belgian franc market was quiet, and there was no need for either party to employ the swap balances. In September, however, the National Bank of Belgium disbursed \$10 million of the swap proceeds, as there was some downward pressure on the franc rate. Subsequently, the Belgian money market tightened (on October 31 the National Bank raised its discount rate from 4 per cent to 4¼ per cent) and the franc strengthened, thus permitting the National Bank to reconstitute the \$10 million disbursed in September plus \$5 million disbursed earlier in the year. As Belgian accumulations of dollars continued through December, the Federal Reserve used \$15 million of the francs drawn under the swap to mop up excess dollars from the National Bank of Belgium, but in February 1964 was able to reconstitute its Belgian franc balances when the National Bank needed dollars. Thus, during the period the continuing mutual use of the swap facility made it possible for the Federal Reserve and the National Bank of Belgium to smooth out fluctuations totaling \$55 million in Belgium's dollar balances. These operations brought to \$200 million the total swings in the Belgian position financed in this manner, rather than through purchases and sales of gold, since the inception of this arrangement. As previously pointed out, these operations demonstrate how flexibly the recently developed international financial machinery can help finance the payments swings that inevitably accompany even a balanced growth of trade and payments.

FRENCH FRANCS. The French franc remained firmly at its ceiling throughout the first half of 1963 as the French balance of payments continued in substantial surplus, and there was no occasion for Federal Reserve intervention in the

market. The French surplus moderated during the second half of the year, however, and the Federal Reserve was able for the first time to engage in some exploratory operations in French francs. Between July 19 and 23, in an effort to test the market, the Federal Reserve drew and disbursed a total of \$12.5 million equivalent of French francs under the swap line with the Bank of France that had been increased to \$100 million on March 4. This intervention lifted the dollar slightly off the floor, but it quickly became apparent that very sizable disbursements would be required to bring about any appreciable improvement of the dollar rate, and intervention was accordingly suspended. Later in the month the Federal Reserve readily acquired in the forward market through the Bank of France sufficient francs to cover the outstanding swap drawings.

No further opportunity for operations in French francs presented itself until October, when an active two-way market developed in Paris. In order to induce further improvement in the dollar rate, the Federal Reserve asked the Bank of France to sell at its discretion spot francs for Federal Reserve account, any sales to be covered by simultaneous drawings on the swap arrangements. A total of \$9 million equivalent of francs was sold in this manner. These small scale commitments were quickly covered through forward purchases of francs. Since the turn of the year, French international payments have moved closer to equilibrium and the dollar has moved off the floor without official assistance.

ITALIAN LIRE. On January 21, 1963 the Federal Reserve repaid \$50 million drawn in December 1962 under the swap arrangement with the Bank of Italy. Thereafter, there were no operations in lire until the fall when the lira came under pressure as a result of the Italian cabinet crisis and the continued deterioration in Italy's balance of payments. In order to bolster its reserves, which were being depleted by operations needed to support the lira rate, the Bank of Italy in October drew \$50 million on the swap line with the Federal Open Market Account. This stand-by swap facility had been increased meanwhile to \$250 million.

In order to provide further support for the Italian reserve position and in anticipation of its future need for lire to meet obligations arising out of the issuance to the Bank of Italy of \$200 million in lira-denominated bonds, the United States Treasury in September and October purchased a total of \$67 million equivalent of lire from the Bank of Italy. As described earlier in this report, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York for Treasury account then swapped \$17 million of these lire against Swiss francs with the BIS in order to reverse an equivalent

swap of German marks against Swiss francs. In December, as the Italian deficit persisted, the Federal Reserve bought an additional \$50 million of lire from the Bank of Italy, simultaneously selling the lire forward to the United States Treasury, which thereby further reduced its uncovered lira bond liabilities. Then in January the Bank of Italy drew a second \$50 million under the swap arrangement with the Federal Reserve, which at the same time purchased a further \$50 million of lire from the Bank of Italy and again simultaneously sold the lire forward to the United States Treasury. Part of the Treasury's lira acquisitions were used on March 9 to pay off a maturing \$50 million equivalent lira bond issued to the Bank of Italy on December 7, 1962.

AUSTRIAN SCHILLINGS. The Austrian balance of payments has remained in surplus, and there has been no occasion for Federal Reserve operations in Austrian schillings since January 1963 when an earlier \$50 million equivalent swap drawing from the Austrian National Bank was repaid. However in order to absorb some of the Austrian National Bank's growing dollar holdings, the United States Treasury in April and December issued to the Austrian National Bank two \$25 million equivalent eighteen-month bonds denominated in Austrian schillings.

SWEDISH KRONOR AND JAPANESE YEN. A stand-by swap line of \$50 million equivalent was negotiated with the Bank of Sweden in January 1963, and one for \$150 million was negotiated in October with the Bank of Japan. There have been no Federal Reserve System or Treasury operations in Swedish kronor or Japanese yen.

THE GOLD POOL

Since its reopening in 1954, the free market for gold in London has re-emerged as the largest and most important center in the world for such gold transactions.¹ The annual flow of gold to the London market, from new production and Russian sales, generally exceeds by a substantial margin both industrial and speculative demand. This residual supply has been regularly absorbed by central bank purchases of gold at prices ranging fairly closely around the

¹ For a description of the London gold market, see "The London Gold Market", Bank of England, *Quarterly Bulletin*, March 1964, an excerpt from which is reprinted as a supplement to this Review.

fixed United States parity of \$35 per ounce. The lower limit of the free market price range is approximately \$34.83, which derives from the United States parity of \$35 per ounce, less the Treasury charge of \$0.0875 and shipping costs from London to New York ranging around \$0.08. Conversely, the upper price limit at which central banks would be prepared to buy gold in London is set by the cost of buying gold in New York plus shipping charges from New York to London.

Over the long run, the London market price of gold is thus heavily dependent on the support of central bank demand and, ultimately, on the United States Treasury as the buyer of last resort. Since the reopening of the market in 1954, official demand for London gold has varied considerably, reflecting mainly changes in the dollar reserve position of foreign central banks. In each of the years 1954 through 1957, the London gold price fell below \$35, and dropped as low as \$34.85 in 1957 as the United States balance of payments moved into surplus.

In the short run, nevertheless, sudden surges of speculative demand for gold may substantially exceed the current flow of new gold from South Africa and other sources. Such a temporary shortfall of gold supplies occurred in October 1960, when an outburst of speculative demand was generated by a succession of heavy gold losses by the United States and aggravated by market uncertainty brought on by the approaching Presidential election. This explosive situation culminated in an abrupt rise of the London gold market price to around \$40 per ounce on October 20 and aroused world-wide panicky apprehension of a general breakdown in the exchange rate structure of the Western world. In these circumstances, the Bank of England, with the full support of the United States monetary authorities, intervened in the market on a substantial scale in order to bring the price down to more appropriate levels.

Following the pledge by President Kennedy in January 1961 to maintain the official United States gold parity, earlier speculation on a breakdown in international currency parities faded away and the London gold price declined rapidly, stabilizing in March 1961 at about \$35.08. During the second quarter of 1961, market supplies were increased by Russian sales, by offerings from private United States holders required under President Eisenhower's Executive Order to dispose of gold stocks held overseas, and by very large sales out of the British gold reserves during the sterling crisis touched off by the German and Dutch revaluations.

But these temporary additions to the flow of gold reaching the market tapered off during the summer months at about the same time that the main Western producer, South Africa, began to build up its official gold reserves



from domestic production. Simultaneously, the gold and exchange markets became increasingly apprehensive, as the United States deficit worsened and the Berlin crisis began to build up toward its climax later in the year.

By the end of August 1961, the London market price had risen once more to nearly \$35.20 and held close to this level until mid-November (see chart). As the price approached \$35.20, European central banks refrained from market purchases since London gold at these prices exceeded the shipping parity from New York. While this withdrawal of central bank demand brought the market into better balance, there remained the risk that a sudden upsurge of speculative demand might confront the British and United States financial authorities with an unpleasant dilemma: If, on the one hand, the free market price were allowed to rise, there was a clear risk that speculation might feed upon itself and result in a new wave of apprehension such as occurred in October 1960. If, on the other hand, the full brunt of a speculative attack were to be absorbed by drafts upon the United States gold reserves, the subsequent weekly publication of such United States gold losses might also have unsettling consequences.

In view of the mutuality of interest among the central banks and treasuries on both sides of the Atlantic in maintaining orderly conditions in the gold and exchange markets, the United States financial authorities approached the BIS group of central banks in October 1961 with a proposal to establish on an informal basis a central bank sell-

ing arrangement which would share the burden of intervention on the London gold market to keep the price within bounds. Under the informal arrangements subsequently approved by the central banks of Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom, and by the United States, each member of the group undertook to supply an agreed proportion—the United States share being 50 per cent—of such net gold sales to stabilize the market as the Bank of England, as agent for the group, determined to be appropriate. This selling arrangement was given a trial run in November 1961 and then deactivated in early December when an easing of market conditions brought the London gold market price down to \$35.15. By the end of February 1962, the relatively small net sales effected during this trial run in late 1961 had been fully recovered through purchases in the market.

Early in 1962, as it began to appear that a surplus of gold might soon develop in the market, the United States again approached the BIS group of central banks with a second proposal, this time for a gold-buying arrangement. Under this arrangement, which was adopted experimentally in February 1962 and renewed in April 1962, the participants agreed to coordinate their purchases in the London market. Individual purchases by the central banks participating in the Gold Pool have thus been replaced by Bank of England buying for the joint account of the entire group, with such purchases by the Bank of England being subsequently distributed among the members in agreed proportions.

By late May 1962 the Bank of England, as agent for the Pool, had bought somewhat more than \$80 million of gold. But before any of these acquisitions by the Pool had been distributed to the participating central banks, gold market conditions were abruptly reversed through speculation engendered by the sharp fall of prices in the New York

and other securities markets and the flight from the Canadian dollar. By mid-July, when quotations reached \$35.12, the Pool's surplus had all been used to stabilize the market.

The selling arrangement was then reactivated effective July 20, 1962. Although President Kennedy's Telstar broadcast on July 23 temporarily relieved nervousness about the dollar, by the time of the IMF annual meeting in September the Pool had put a net amount of nearly \$50 million in the market. After a lull in the first part of October, the Cuban crisis erupted and produced a record turnover in the market. For a very short period the Pool intervened on a substantial scale, but the tension ended quickly as the international crisis receded and the Pool began to recoup its sales through market purchases. In November the selling arrangement was deactivated and has not been put into operation since. By the end of 1962, the Pool's market acquisitions more than matched its earlier heavy disbursements.

Throughout 1963 the gold market was relatively stable, prices never exceeding \$35.12, and the Pool continued to acquire gold. Private demand for gold, it is true, persisted with little evidence of dishoarding, and for brief periods was felt quite strongly in the market. On balance, however, private absorption of gold appears to have fallen off considerably from the very high 1962 levels. At the same time, the volume of newly produced gold coming on the market increased over the year as a whole, particularly in the second half, and Russian gold sales were substantial, especially after early September when the Soviet Union became a heavy buyer of grain in the West. Over the last four months of 1963, prices rarely exceeded \$35.09, and the Gold Pool's market acquisitions accelerated. During the entire year the Pool bought in the market and distributed among the participants well over \$600 million of gold.

In essence, therefore, the Gold Pool consists of two kinds of arrangements, each subject to informal revision and renewal from month to month as agreed upon by the participating representatives. First, there is a selling arrangement designed to share the burden of stabilizing the market. This arrangement is not in operation all the time but may be quickly activated in case of need. Second, there is a buying arrangement which has unified the market purchases of the major monetary authorities and which moves in and out on both sides of the market as needed to help maintain orderly conditions and to encourage the flow of gold into official hands. The Gold Pool originated pragmatically and developed in response to the behavior of the markets and in accordance with the spirit of cooperation existing between a group of central banks whose interests lie close together. The entire operation is carried out in

Table II
LONDON GOLD MARKET "FIXING" PRICES 1954-63
In United States dollars per fine ounce

Year	Highest	Lowest	Range
1954	35.1129	34.9606	0.1523
1955	35.0673	34.9569	0.1104
1956	35.0830	34.8726	0.2104
1957	35.0317	34.8522	0.1795
1958	35.1405	34.9835	0.1570
1959	35.1451	35.0429	0.1022
1960	37.9863	35.0629	2.9234
1961	35.7788	35.0561	0.7227
1962	35.1867	35.0670	0.1197
1963	35.1204	35.0512	0.0692

an extremely flexible and informal manner, so as best to achieve the Gold Pool's objectives.

As the accompanying table shows, the Gold Pool has stabilized prices within the range that had been customary before the October 1960 flare-up. Such price stability and the maintenance of orderly market conditions have brought substantial benefits to the entire international financial sys-

tem. Speculative demand has diminished and more gold has gone into official reserves than would otherwise have been the case. The main point, however, is simply this: the very fact that the central banks are working together in the gold market, as well as in the foreign exchange markets, has strongly reinforced confidence in the existing international financial structure.