

Treasury and Federal Reserve Foreign Exchange Operations*

By CHARLES A. COOMBS

The Smithsonian agreement of December 18, 1971 was greeted with satisfaction and relief by the exchange markets. Rates for a number of European currencies settled at or close to their new floor levels, and sizable reflows of funds to the United States developed through the year-end. Following the turn of the year, however, market optimism shifted to an anxious and even skeptical mood as traders began to ponder the long negotiating path to a restructured international financial system. Market concern focused particularly on the risk that certain foreign central banks might suddenly withdraw from their Smithsonian commitments to defend their currencies at the new upper limits, and successive waves of speculation in January and February drove the mark, the guilder, the Belgian franc, and the yen close to or hard against their official ceilings.

The central banks concerned intervened decisively and without hesitation, however, and this demonstration had a reassuring effect. In early March, expeditious Congressional action on a "clean" gold price bill removed another source of uncertainty that had been breeding unsettling market rumors. Simultaneously, the German government took action to discourage borrowing abroad by German business firms, which had been a major source of buying pressure on the mark over the previous three years, while the Japanese government reinstated controls on speculative buying of the yen. Finally, the interest rate gap between Europe and the United States began to be squeezed out from both sides. As recessionary tendencies continued

in Europe, discount rate cuts were announced in Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands, while the United States Treasury bill rate rose significantly.

The dollar showed growing strength and resiliency throughout most of the spring months, as a return flow of short-term funds largely offset continuing deficits in other components of the United States balance of payments. This encouraging trend was abruptly reversed midway in June, however, as sterling was suddenly swept off its Smithsonian parity by a speculative wave that had been gathering force for many months past. In allowing sterling to float on June 23, the British authorities indicated that the defense of sterling during the previous six days had cost the equivalent of \$2.6 billion.

Such official intervention to defend sterling was almost entirely conducted in Common Market currencies, in accordance with a British undertaking on May 1 to join with its prospective Common Market partners in maintaining a spread of no more than 2¼ percent between sterling and any other Common Market currency. This European Community (EC) agreement had thus created a dual system of exchange rate limits in which the 2¼ percent Common Market band became colloquially described as the "snake" in the "tunnel" represented by the 4½ percent Smithsonian band. A critical feature of the Common Market 2¼ percent band was that intervention in dollars was to be confined to circumstances in which a weakening Common Market currency should decline the full distance to its Smithsonian floor or a strong currency should rise to its Smithsonian ceiling. Otherwise, maintenance of the 2¼ percent Common Market band was to be carried out by intervening in each other's currencies.

As sterling came under selling pressure in June, the Bank of England accordingly was called upon to offer marks and whatever other Common Market currencies were being quoted at rates 2¼ percent above sterling, while its

* This report, covering the period March to September 1972, is the twenty-first in a series of reports by the Senior Vice President in charge of the Foreign function of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York and Special Manager, System Open Market Account. The Bank acts as agent for both the Treasury and Federal Reserve System in the conduct of foreign exchange operations.

European partners bought sterling with their currencies. The general effect of such intervention to maintain the 2¼ percent Common Market band was to brake the decline of sterling toward its Smithsonian floor of \$2.5471, while simultaneously pulling down the stronger EC currencies well below their Smithsonian ceilings. In this strained pattern of rates, the markets may have sensed a two-way speculative opportunity to go short of sterling and long of Continental currencies in the hope of profiting on both. Most of the outflow from London seems to have ended up in the Common Market.

On June 23 the British authorities announced their decision to float the pound, in effect temporarily suspending their participation in the Smithsonian and EC agreements. Following that announcement, other European currencies immediately rebounded to their Smithsonian ceilings, reflecting market fears of a severe tightening of capital import controls, a joint float of the Common Market currencies, or some combination of both. The European currency markets were then closed down, and an emergency meeting of the Community Finance Ministers was set for the following Monday in Luxembourg. At that meeting

Denmark formally withdrew from the EC monetary agreement, while Italy secured a temporary authorization to keep the lira within the 2¼ percent band by intervening in dollars rather than European currencies. The Finance Ministers then reaffirmed their determination to defend both the Smithsonian parities and the Common Market band.

Despite this reaffirmation and subsequent drastic controls imposed by Switzerland and Germany to ward off unwanted capital inflows, rumors of a European joint float continued to incite heavy speculative selling of dollars against the stronger European currencies and the yen. By Friday, July 14, the sterling crisis had generated not only the previously noted flight of \$2.6 billion of funds from sterling into other Common Market currencies but also additional flows totaling over \$6 billion from dollars into various European currencies and the yen.

Meanwhile, the United States authorities had been considering the advisability of renewed operations in the exchange markets, involving, if necessary, Federal Reserve swap drawings which had been suspended on August 15, 1971. On United States initiative and with the approval of the Bundesbank, the first of such exchange operations was launched on July 19 in the form of repeated offerings by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York of sizable amounts of German marks on the New York market. This intervention, which was continued briefly on the following day, was described by Chairman Burns as a move by the United States authorities to play their part to restore order in foreign exchange markets and to do their part in upholding the Smithsonian agreement, just as other countries were doing. The Chairman also indicated that the operation would continue on whatever scale and whenever transactions seemed advisable. The United States Treasury also confirmed the intervention, stating in part that: "The action reflects the willingness of the United States to intervene in the exchange markets upon occasion when it feels it is desirable to help deal with speculative forces. The action indicates absolutely no change in our basic policy approach toward monetary reform and the necessary efforts on all fronts to achieve a sustainable equilibrium in our balance of payments."

On August 10, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York intervened in a second European currency, the Belgian franc, which had remained pinned to its ceiling. In a series of daily operations in some volume, the Belgian franc rate was brought down appreciably below its ceiling and, in the process, some unwinding of speculation on the Belgian franc may have been set in motion.

Since July 19, the New York Reserve Bank has intervened in the market on nine occasions and sold in the process \$31.5 million of foreign currencies; total offerings were, of

Table I
FEDERAL RESERVE RECIPROCAL CURRENCY ARRANGEMENTS
September 8, 1972
In millions of dollars

Institution	Amount of facility
Austrian National Bank	200
National Bank of Belgium	600
Bank of Canada	1,000
National Bank of Denmark	200
Bank of England	2,000
Bank of France	1,000
German Federal Bank	1,000
Bank of Italy	1,250
Bank of Japan	1,000
Bank of Mexico	130
Netherlands Bank	300
Bank of Norway	200
Bank of Sweden	250
Swiss National Bank	1,000
Bank for International Settlements:	
Swiss francs-dollars	600
Other authorized European currencies-dollars	1,000
Total	11,730

Table II
**FEDERAL RESERVE SYSTEM DRAWINGS AND REPAYMENTS
 UNDER RECIPROCAL CURRENCY ARRANGEMENTS**

In millions of dollars equivalent

Transactions with	System swap drawings outstanding on January 1, 1972	Drawings (+) or repayments (-)			System swap drawings outstanding on September 8, 1972
		1972			
		I	II	July 1-September 8	
National Bank of Belgium	455.0		- 20.0	{ + 10.2 - 10.2	435.0
Bank of England	715.0		- 52.0	-663.0	-0-
German Federal Bank	50.0			- 50.0	-0-
Swiss National Bank	1,000.0		-300.0		700.0
Bank for International Settlements (Swiss francs)	600.0				600.0
Bank for International Settlements (Belgian francs)	35.0				35.0
Total	2,855.0	-0-	-372.0	{ + 10.2 - 723.2	1,770.0

course, much larger. All market sales of foreign currencies, either from balances or from small swap drawings, were fully covered by market purchases as the dollar strengthened on the exchanges.

As noted in the preceding report in this series, Federal Reserve swap debt, which had reached a peak of \$3,045 million on August 13, 1971, had been reduced to \$2,855 million by the end of last year. Since then, further net repayments of \$1,085 million have brought down the total outstanding debt to \$1,770 million (see Table II), a reduction of nearly 40 percent from the August 1971 peak. The bulk of such debt repayments during the period under review was accounted for by liquidation of the remaining \$715 million of an original \$750 million drawing on the Bank of England. The sterling needed for such repayments was acquired in regular purchases during June, July, and early August, both through the market and in direct transactions with the Bank of England, plus a sizable direct purchase from the United States Treasury of sterling previously acquired in a United States Government drawing on the International Monetary Fund (IMF). In June, \$300 million of swap debt to the Swiss National Bank was repaid through a direct purchase of \$250 million of Swiss francs from the National Bank, supplemented by Federal Reserve purchases of Swiss francs in the market. In July, the remaining \$50 million of swap debt due to the Bundesbank was liquidated through a direct trans-

action with that institution. In May, swap debt in Belgian francs was reduced by a \$20 million repayment to \$470 million equivalent. Finally, in August, new drawings of \$10.2 million equivalent were made on the Belgian swap line, but these were fully liquidated by early September.

In March and July of this year, the United States Treasury redeemed in two equal instalments a \$153 million equivalent German mark-denominated note that had been issued to the Bundesbank under the 1967 military offset agreement with Germany (see Table IV). Other foreign-currency-denominated securities were renewed at maturity. As of September 8, outstanding United States Treasury foreign-currency-denominated securities amounted to \$2.0 billion equivalent.

STERLING

In 1971 the United Kingdom had recorded a large payments surplus, with a substantial gain in official reserves. Meanwhile, however, the British economy had become afflicted by a wage and price spiral which threatened to weaken its competitive position in world markets. Moreover, a significant proportion of the 1971 reserve gain reflected hot money inflows that could be reversed in short order. Consequently, at the Smithsonian meeting the United Kingdom maintained sterling's gold parity, thereby limiting the appreciation of sterling against the dollar to the 8.57

percent increase in the dollar price for gold. A middle rate for the pound of \$2.60571—commensurate with the dollar's devaluation—was established, and the Bank of England announced official buying and selling rates in conformity with the Smithsonian agreement's provision for a band of 4.5 percent around the new middle or central rates. At the same time the British authorities relaxed the exchange control regulations they had announced in late August and early October to discourage inflows of nonresident funds. Spot sterling fell close to the new floor of \$2.5471 in late December, as some speculative positions began to be unwound and year-end adjustments were made. Taking advantage of this development, the Federal Reserve acquired sterling in the New York market and repaid, just prior to the year-end, \$35 million of the \$750 million equivalent swap drawing on the Bank of England that had been entered into in August 1971.

After the year-end adjustments were completed, however, the initial post-Smithsonian euphoria in the markets faded. The outflow of funds from the United Kingdom dried up rapidly, and spot sterling moved away from the floor. Doubts about the durability of the new exchange rates quickly surfaced, and by mid-January most other major European currencies were bid up toward, or even above, their central rates. At the same time it became clear that the EC countries were approaching agreement on narrowing the margin of fluctuation between their currencies and that the United Kingdom probably would participate in the arrangements. Consequently, sterling was bid up into line with the Continental currencies, rising by 4 cents to more than \$2.59 before leveling off. In early February, following a further decline in Euro-dollar rates relative to money market rates in London, the pound

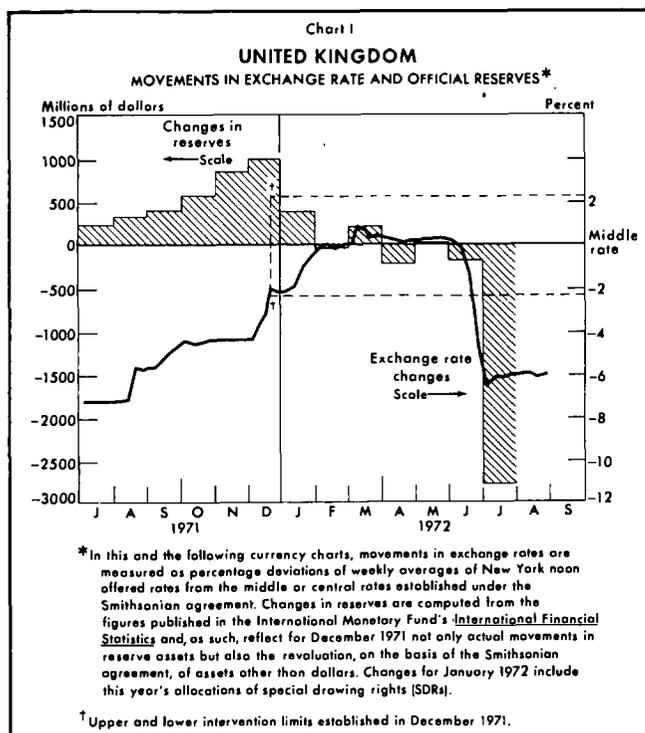
advanced to its middle rate. Over the course of that month, sterling weakened from time to time, reflecting the market's pessimism over the long-term implications of a protracted coal miners' strike, but once the strike was settled the continuing general advance of other major European currencies had a buoyant effect on sterling.

On March 7, against a background of widespread market uncertainty and growing speculation about the readiness of individual central banks to absorb sizable new inflows of dollars, the EC countries announced agreement to narrow the margin of fluctuation between their own currencies to 2¼ percent by July 1. The market saw this agreement as greatly increasing the likelihood of a concerted European attempt to stem further inflows of dollars—either through new controls or a joint float against the dollar—and there was a rush to stockpile currencies that might become more expensive or even unavailable later on. Although the buying wave was directed with particular force toward Continental currencies, demand for sterling was also strong, and the spot rate shot up by almost 5 cents in three days to well over \$2.65. The flurry soon abated, however, as the United States Congress acted on the gold bill, short-term interest rates in this country began to firm, and, following the March central bank meeting in Basle, it was made clear that there was continuing firm support for the Smithsonian agreement. Sterling, in particular, fell back sharply, especially after the release of British trade figures showing a swing into deficit in February. Thus, by the time the British budget was presented on March 21, sterling was down to the \$2.61 level once again. The budget, which was expansionary, stressed the need for combating the sluggish trend in the domestic economy and the persistent high level of unemployment. In addition, there was a

Table III
DRAWINGS AND REPAYMENTS BY FOREIGN CENTRAL BANKS
AND THE BANK FOR INTERNATIONAL SETTLEMENTS
UNDER RECIPROCAL CURRENCY ARRANGEMENTS

In millions of dollars

Banks drawing on Federal Reserve System	Drawings on Federal Reserve System outstanding on January 1, 1972	Drawings (+) or repayments (—)			Drawings on Federal Reserve System outstanding on August 31, 1972
		1972			
		I	II	July 1-August 31	
Bank for International Settlements (against German marks)	—0—	{+8.0 {—8.0	{+6.0 {—6.0	{+1.0 {—1.0	—0—
Total	—0—	{+8.0 {—8.0	{+6.0 {—6.0	{+1.0 {—1.0	—0—



modest relaxation of exchange controls, primarily for capital outflows to the EC and candidate countries, and British firms controlled by residents of those nations were allowed to raise unlimited sterling finance for their operations in the United Kingdom. Following the budget announcement, forward sterling softened somewhat but, reflecting the general pressure against the dollar, spot sterling rose close to \$2.62 by the end of March.

In April the sterling market was reasonably well balanced, with the spot rate fluctuating around \$2.61. On April 28 the United Kingdom discharged the remainder of its debt to the IMF, thereby reconstituting its full drawing rights with the Fund for the first time since December 1964. The repayment required the cooperation of a number of countries. Under the arrangement that was worked out, the United States Treasury drew SDR200 million equivalent of sterling from the IMF, thereby reducing the United Kingdom's repurchase obligation by a corresponding amount to SDR950 million. The United Kingdom, in turn, discharged this residual commitment with SDR500 million equivalent of currencies acquired from third countries against dollars, with SDR50 million of gold and SDRs purchased from Canada, and with SDR400 million out of British reserves. Then, on May 1, the United Kingdom

formally began its participation in the EC narrower band arrangement that had been put into effect one week earlier. There was little reaction in the market, however, as sterling had been holding well within the 2¼ percent band for some two months.

Spot sterling remained fairly steady through most of May. Nevertheless, an increasingly pessimistic atmosphere was developing in the market, as price and wage inflation and the continuing series of labor disputes threatened to cut further into Britain's competitiveness in world markets. The trade deficits, which had appeared in February and had continued in March and April, were taken as a sign that the huge current-account surplus of the past three years was already being eroded and might soon be erased. Market pessimism first showed through in a widening of discounts on forward sterling late in May, and in early June spot sterling began to soften as well. The pound was still trading above the middle rate for the dollar but had fallen close to the bottom of the EC band.

On June 8, the release of first-quarter balance-of-payments statistics for the United Kingdom, showing a sharp drop in Britain's current-account surplus, seemed to confirm market fears about the pound's prospects, and sterling came on offer, with traders beginning to switch into German marks, Swiss francs, and Dutch guilders. Then, on June 15, out of a growing morass of legal and jurisdictional controversies on the labor front, a wildcat dock strike triggered a new selling wave of both forward and spot sterling. With spot sterling now at the bottom of the EC band, the Bank of England and several Common Market central banks were obliged to intervene heavily in support of the pound against EC currencies. As the pound dipped to \$2.58½ against the dollar on June 16, it tended to pull the whole band down *vis-à-vis* the dollar, thereby making the Continental currencies appear relatively cheap.

Meanwhile, sterling's prospects had become a subject of general debate in the United Kingdom, especially against the background of Chancellor of the Exchequer Barber's statement in the March budget address that "the lesson of the international balance-of-payments upsets of the last few years is that it is neither necessary nor desirable to distort domestic economies to an unacceptable extent in order to maintain unrealistic exchange rates, whether they are too high or too low". In Parliamentary debate on June 19, an opposition spokesman stated that he did not see how a devaluation could be delayed beyond July or August of this year. Over the next three days, enormous amounts of sterling were dumped on the exchanges. Forward sterling was driven to deep discounts (as much as 15 percent per annum on one-month deliveries), and spot

sterling was pushed down to as low as \$2.56½ against the dollar, even as EC central banks continued their massive support effort to maintain the 2¼ percent band among their own currencies. In sum, over the six trading days June 15-22, such support amounted to \$2.6 billion equivalent, financed by exchange transactions with the Bank of England which were to be liquidated by the end of July.

Early on the morning of Friday, June 23, with no end to the reserve losses in sight, the British authorities announced:

H.M. Government has decided that, as a temporary measure, sterling will be allowed to float. This means that for the time being the market rate for sterling will not necessarily be confined within announced limits either in respect of the U.S. dollar or in respect of EEC currencies.

It is the Government's intention to return as soon as conditions permit to the maintenance of normal IMF margins round parity and participation in the special EEC currency arrangements.

At the same time, the London market was closed through the following Monday and most of the exchange controls applying to nonsterling-area countries were extended to the overseas-sterling-area countries other than the Republic of Ireland.

The floating of the pound, and the subsequent with-

drawal on the same day of the Continental central banks from their respective markets, gravely weakened confidence in the durability of the Smithsonian agreement and the EC intervention arrangements. On Monday, June 26, however, the EC Finance Ministers agreed in Luxembourg to continue to defend the Smithsonian rates and to retain the narrower EC band arrangements, while the pound continued to float.

On June 27, when London was the only major European foreign exchange market to resume normal operations, the sterling rate dropped almost to \$2.47, but a sharp squeeze for balances developed later in the day as deliveries on earlier sales contracts had to be met, and the spot rate temporarily rebounded to \$2.51¾. Once the squeeze for balances had passed, sterling dropped off steadily, by a penny or two a day over the course of the next week, to as low as \$2.41¼ on July 4 in London. At that point, commercial demand reappeared and the rate recovered to around \$2.45. The revival of commercial demand was underscored by the release of trade figures for June, which had swung back into surplus and confirmed that in fact the United Kingdom was still in current-account surplus. Moreover, the continuing money market squeeze in London tended to support sterling in the exchanges. Even so, new troubles on the labor front, culminating in a dock strike beginning on July 21, had a disturbing influence on the sterling market, occasionally pulling the rate down sharply. Over the remainder of July,

Table IV
UNITED STATES TREASURY SECURITIES
FOREIGN CURRENCY SERIES

In millions of dollars equivalent

Issued to	Amount outstanding on January 1, 1972	Redemptions (—)			Amount outstanding on September 8, 1972
		1972			
		I	II	July 1-September 8	
German Federal Bank	612.0	-76.5		-76.5	459.0
German banks	153.0				153.0
Swiss National Bank	1,215.4				1,218.3
Bank for International Settlements*	164.8				170.9
Total	2,145.2	-76.5	-0—	-76.5	2,001.2

Note: Discrepancies in totals result from valuation adjustments and from rounding.

* Denominated in Swiss francs.

sterling traded in the \$2.44-\$2.45 range. On July 31, the United Kingdom settled its debts in connection with the defense of sterling in June, utilizing \$1,150 million of funds previously swapped out under special arrangements, \$634 million equivalent drawn under the United Kingdom's IMF gold tranche position, and \$823 million from reserves which at the end of July still amounted to \$6,082 million (inclusive of Britain's remaining \$126 million IMF gold tranche position).

Meanwhile, as sterling began to decline sharply against the dollar in mid-June, this Bank, acting in close consultation with the Bank of England, began to buy sterling in the New York market to repay the Federal Reserve's remaining swap commitment. By the end of June the System had been able to reduce its swap commitment by another \$52 million to \$663 million equivalent. After sterling was floated, the United States Treasury periodically bought sterling on days when the rate was declining in New York and by mid-July had purchased a total of \$41.5 million equivalent. At that point the Federal Reserve, in order to repay the remainder of its swap commitment in sterling, initiated a program of daily purchases of sterling, mainly on a direct basis from the Bank of England but also in the market. These purchases, together with sterling acquired from the United States Treasury, including the pounds drawn by the Treasury at the time of the British IMF repayment in April, enabled the System to reduce its swap commitment by \$405 million equivalent to \$258 million as of July 31. The program of daily purchases continued through early August, and by August 14 the Federal Reserve had acquired sufficient sterling to liquidate the remainder of its original swap commitment of \$750 million.

Buoyed by a tight domestic money market and continuing commercial demand, sterling rose early in August to trade above \$2.45. Announcement of an end to the dock strike and release of a second consecutive trade surplus gave additional support to the spot rate toward mid-month. Subsequently, the squeeze for balances eased, with British short-term interest rates declining abruptly, and spot sterling edged to below the \$2.45 level in early September.

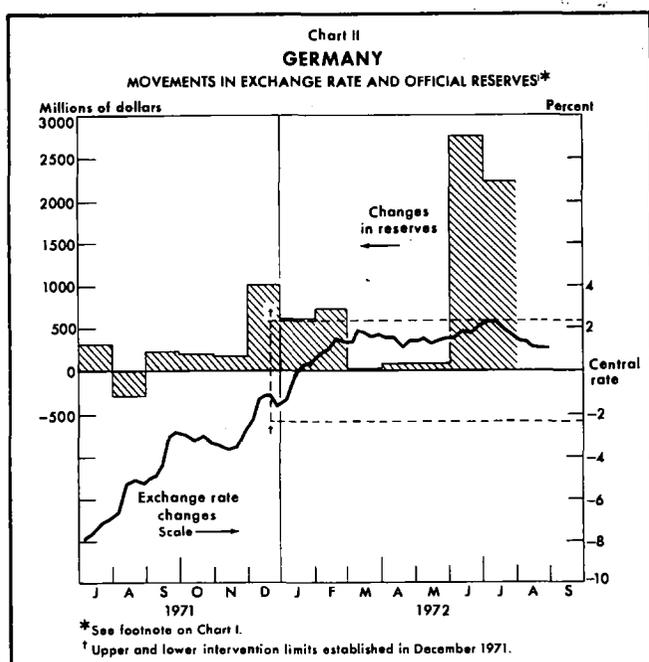
GERMAN MARK

Following the Smithsonian agreement, the German authorities established a new central rate for the mark of \$0.3103½, an effective appreciation of 13.58 percent against the dollar, and set margins at \$0.3034¾ and \$0.3174¾ on either side of the central rate. None of the restraints against inflows of foreign funds introduced ear-

lier in 1971 were removed, but the government announced that it would not avail itself for the time being of its new power to impose deposit requirements of up to 50 percent against German firms' borrowings abroad. When exchange trading was resumed, the mark settled well below its new central rate. Except for some modest outflows toward the year-end, there was no significant reversal of the huge speculative positions in marks that had been built up over the course of 1971.

Early in 1972 doubts began to spread in the exchange markets that a durable settlement of the international monetary crisis really had been achieved. Moreover, many Europeans were expressing concern over the further decline taking place in the United States interest rates. With the press and the markets focusing more and more on these issues, the atmosphere deteriorated progressively over the early weeks of the new year, and almost any news item or rumor was seized upon as a reason for additional selling of dollars. Funds were shifted into Germany particularly, and in heavy demand the spot mark rose through the new central rate by mid-January. Further waves of nervousness swept through the foreign exchange markets in February. Each time the mark rate was bid up sharply, and the pressures eased only after forceful intervention by the Bundesbank. Then, late in February, the German authorities announced new measures designed to lessen the inflow of funds and to defend the Washington agreement. These included cuts in the Bundesbank's discount and Lombard rates and a hike in the marginal reserve requirement against nonresident liabilities. More importantly, the Ministry of Economics and Finance imposed a 40 percent deposit requirement (Bardepot) on most foreign borrowings of nonbanking enterprises, retroactive to January 1, moving for the first time to curb German corporate borrowings abroad. Following the announcement of these measures, the spot rate declined to almost 1½ percent below its upper limit by late February. Over the month as a whole, however, German official reserves had increased by \$744 million.

The demand for marks soon built up again in early March, and the mark was driven up almost to its Smithsonian ceiling in reaction to the growing press discussion of a possible concerted European response to the continued influx of dollars—through either the introduction of controls or a joint float against the dollar. Following encouraging reports of the Basle meeting of central bankers on the weekend of March 11-12 and indications that United States short-term interest rates were beginning to firm, the mark backed off somewhat and traded around the \$0.3150 level. The mark held at this level well into April, with little reaction to the announcement early that



month that on April 24 the EC would implement its narrower trading band arrangement (the "snake in the tunnel").

By that time, and indeed throughout the second quarter, Germany's international payments position was undergoing a substantial readjustment. The domestic economy had leveled off, but wage and price pressures remained strong in Germany and the rise of the mark rate over the course of the previous year was beginning to exert an influence on the German trade balance. Thus the trade surplus, which had swelled to substantial proportions toward the end of 1971 and through the early months of 1972, showed a decline in March and subsequent months. Coupled with a further deterioration in service items and transfer payments, this moved the full current account from surplus to rough balance.

The continuing strength of the mark during the spring reflected, therefore, an increasingly heavy influx of capital. These inflows were mainly generated by the market's expectation that there might be a further rise in the value of mark-denominated instruments. At the same time, moreover, German corporations continued to seek funds abroad through a variety of means. To avoid the Bardepot, the corporations ran down their foreign market borrowings by \$1.3 billion in March and April but at the same time were able to sell to foreigners a substantial volume of mark-

denominated bonds.

The exchange markets were in better balance in May, but the general uneasiness over the international monetary situation showed through on a number of occasions. Such events as the intensification of the Vietnam war early in the month and Treasury Secretary Connally's resignation toward midmonth brought forth a spate of market and press commentary on their ultimate significance for the monetary system. Comments to the press by officials from either side of the Atlantic, or even rumors of what they might have said, were closely scrutinized for any hint of further moves to be made on the international monetary front. Thus, several times in May the German mark was bid up sharply in the exchanges, pulling several other European currencies along with it. These bursts of demand were short-lived, however, and each time the spot rate quickly retreated.

The mark was trading quietly around \$0.3150 in early June, when swiftly moving events in the sterling market sent shock waves into other markets as well. The rush out of sterling was directed mainly toward the mark, which rose sharply against the dollar. By June 16, sterling had fallen to its intervention point against the mark under the EC arrangements and both the Bundesbank and the Bank of England had to intervene massively (selling marks against sterling) to keep the spread between their two currencies from widening beyond $2\frac{1}{4}$ percent. This heavy injection of marks into the exchanges tended to pull the mark down against the dollar, and the rate dropped to \$0.3131 by June 22.

When the British authorities announced the floating of the pound on Friday, June 23, thereby dropping out of the Smithsonian and EC agreements, traders immediately began shifting funds out of dollars and into other European currencies as they feared a general abandonment of the Smithsonian rates. As a result, the Bundesbank was flooded with nearly \$900 million within the first hour of trading, after which it suspended operations and closed the exchange market. In trading later that day and on Monday, June 26, in New York, the spot mark jumped 15 points above its Smithsonian ceiling. Following the EC Finance Ministers' decision on June 26 to continue to defend the Smithsonian limits and to maintain the EC band, the German authorities announced they would reopen their foreign exchange markets on Wednesday, June 28.

When normal trading resumed that day, the spot mark traded just below its ceiling, but marks for future delivery were quoted at large premiums. The next day the German government moved to back up the decision to support the existing international exchange agreements by announcing a series of measures to tighten controls. The Bardepot requirement was raised from 40 percent to 50 percent and

was applied to a wider range of borrowings. Sales of domestic fixed-income securities to nonresidents were made subject to the prior approval of the authorities, to be administered restrictively. The Bundesbank again raised its reserve requirements against the banks' foreign liabilities, so that in effect reserves totaling between 90 percent and 100 percent would be required against any additional foreign liabilities of the banks. Finally, domestic reserve requirements were hiked to absorb the liquidity generated by inflows of the nonbanking sector. This increase in domestic liquidity reflected the fact that Germany's official reserves, which had risen by \$121 million in April and May, had been swelled by a further \$2,763 million in June, largely as a result of the intervention to support both sterling and the dollar.

The tightening of controls by the German authorities did not immediately allay market anxieties and, in the generalized pessimism over the future of the Smithsonian agreement, traders hastened to shift even more funds into Germany ahead of the possible imposition of additional controls. Consequently, the mark was in heavy demand early in July and the Bundesbank was obliged to absorb dollars on a large scale. The buying of marks, and of most major European currencies, continued until the Swiss authorities relieved some of the uncertainties by taking forceful defensive measures of their own on July 4 and 5. The Bundesbank then intensified its efforts to tighten up the Bardepot and also asked banks to enter into a gentlemen's agreement neither to sell assets out of their own portfolios to nonresidents nor to arrange or guarantee any sizable foreign credits to residents. In addition, the Bundesbank once again boosted its minimum reserve requirements against domestic liabilities to mop up the liquidity flowing directly into German corporations.

These various measures helped settle the markets briefly, but a new rush into marks and other currencies soon developed in the week prior to the scheduled July 17-18 London meeting of EC Finance Ministers. With the atmosphere still tense following the floating of the pound, there were reports in the European press suggesting that the EC Finance Ministers would plan a joint float of their currencies against the dollar, rather than stick to their announced agenda. The market seized upon these reports to mount a new drive out of the dollar and into the mark and other European currencies. With the mark pushed once again to its upper limit, the Bundesbank had to absorb some \$1.1 billion over the two days of July 13-14. On Monday, July 17, the EC Ministers in London made clear their determination to maintain the Smithsonian exchange rate structure and emerged with a general agreement on longer term monetary questions, including

the need for par values. The reports out of London gave pause to the markets, and the demand for marks let up over the two days of the meeting. The huge technical positions built up over previous days and weeks, short of dollars and long of marks and other currencies, nevertheless remained intact.

By Wednesday, July 19, the mark had edged slightly away from its ceiling and eased further after New York opened that morning, to around \$0.3160 by 11 o'clock. Shortly thereafter, on the basis of a United States Government policy decision, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York placed large offerings of marks in the New York market. These offers were for System account, with marks made available by the United States Treasury on a swap basis. Such unexpected intervention generated an immediate market reaction, and traders quickly moved their mark quotations down. As the market backed away, the Federal Reserve's offering rate was subsequently lowered several times. The operation generated considerable market comment and, in response to press inquiries, Chairman Burns confirmed the System's intervention in marks, adding that such intervention would continue on whatever scale and whenever it was deemed desirable. The following morning in Germany, with the market fully alerted to the news of the United States initiative, the spot mark fell further, reaching \$0.3152 (some $\frac{3}{4}$ percent below the upper limit) by the time the New York market opened. The Federal Reserve followed up with a further offering of marks out of previously accumulated System balances. Over succeeding days, with additional favorable press and market commentary on the Federal Reserve initiative, the mark rate continued to decline. This tendency persisted into early August, with some unwinding of speculative positions, and the rate settled temporarily around \$0.3140.

By midmonth a more favorable atmosphere developed for the dollar, following the release of improved United States balance-of-payments figures for the second quarter and indications of new efforts by the United States to negotiate a settlement of the Vietnam conflict. In addition, the various measures taken by the German authorities in July were beginning to bite. Consequently, the mark rate dropped further, reaching \$0.3134 on August 16, and the Federal Reserve again sold marks to consolidate the dollar's improvement. These sales brought to \$21.4 million equivalent the total of marks sold in market operations.

The shift in sentiment in favor of the dollar continued, pushing the mark rate to \$0.3126 $\frac{1}{4}$ on August 21. On the next day, however, German commercial banks reportedly found themselves short of liquidity to meet their reserve requirements through the end of August. A squeeze developed in the Frankfurt money market, and the banks

scrambled to buy marks in the exchanges, setting off a sharp rise in the mark rate before the banks' liquidity needs were met. When the July trade figures for the United States showing a narrowing of the trade deficit were announced on August 24, however, the mark eased once again.

In other operations during the period under review, the United States authorities, under agreements with the German Bundesbank, were able to liquidate certain German mark obligations entered into prior to the floating of the mark in May 1971. In March and July the United States Treasury purchased sufficient marks from the Bundesbank to redeem in two payments a \$153 million mark-denominated note. Moreover, on July 24, the Federal Reserve liquidated its remaining \$50 million equivalent mark swap commitment, also purchasing marks directly from the Bundesbank. This repayment placed the \$1 billion swap arrangement with the Bundesbank on a fully standby basis, and no new drawings have been made.

SWISS FRANC

Under the Smithsonian agreement the Swiss authorities fixed a central rate for the franc of $\$0.2604\frac{1}{8}$ —in effect, an increase of 6.36 percent against the dollar from the franc's previous parity and of 13.88 percent from the parity in force prior to Switzerland's revaluation on May 10, 1971—and announced their new intervention points, $2\frac{1}{4}$ percent on either side of the central rate. Actual trading conditions were little changed, however, since the banks had been allowed to deal throughout and because the restrictions imposed the preceding August remained in effect. Increases in the banks' net foreign liabilities over the July 31, 1971 levels continued to be subject to a 100 percent reserve requirement, and interest payments on nonresidents' deposits made after July 31 were still prohibited. In the wake of the Smithsonian agreement there were modest outflows from Switzerland, and the franc gradually began to ease toward the new floor of $\$0.2546\frac{3}{4}$. There was no substantial unwinding of speculative positions, however, and the Swiss banks remained highly liquid as the year-end approached.

Early in January, with the current account of Switzerland's balance of payments continuing in small surplus and the markets hesitant in the face of the many monetary issues still to be resolved, the franc rate remained slightly above the floor, even as domestic monetary conditions eased further. By midmonth the market was already beginning to question the durability of the exchange rate realignment, and the spot franc rose along with other European currencies. Over succeeding weeks, as traders grew increasingly jittery, several rounds of heavy buying

pushed the franc up to as high as the central rate. At that time, in view of the continuing inflows from abroad, the Swiss National Bank instituted a requirement that 25 percent of the proceeds of foreign bond issues in Switzerland (which were running at more than twice their volume of a year earlier) had to be converted into dollars by the central bank at the franc's lower intervention limit. Another wave of demand for francs developed in early March when, in the general strengthening of European currencies, the Swiss franc was rapidly bid up to some 1 percent above the central rate. The tensions in the foreign exchanges eased abruptly at that point, however, and the franc rate fell back sharply. Since domestic liquidity remained extremely abundant in Switzerland, the decline was steeper in the Swiss franc market than elsewhere on the Continent, and after mid-March the spot rate was again below the central rate.

On April 5 the Swiss National Bank and the Swiss Bankers Association agreed on two measures to mop up some of the excess domestic liquidity. First, marginal reserve requirements ranging up to 20 percent were introduced against the growth in the banks' domestic liabilities since July 31, 1971. Second, the already existing 100 percent reserve requirement against increases in the banks' net foreign liabilities was considerably tightened through a more restrictive interpretation, even though the required ratio was halved. At first, there was little reaction to these measures in the Swiss franc market and the spot rate held fairly steady. But, as the market came to appreciate the possible consequences of the restriction on the banks' net foreign currency positions, the franc weakened.

Late in April the Swiss banks began to transfer funds to the National Bank under the terms of the tightened reserve requirement against increases in net liabilities to foreigners. An alternative for the banks was to reduce their net external liability positions by purchasing dollars from the National Bank, and on May 2 the National Bank sold \$150 million at the rate of $\$0.2577\frac{1}{4}$ (SF3.88) for this purpose. The following day the National Bank announced that it would henceforth be prepared to sell dollars at this higher rate, rather than at the official lower intervention point of $\$0.2546\frac{3}{4}$, thereby reducing the effective range of fluctuation of the Swiss franc. In a parallel move, it lifted to the same level the exchange rate for conversions of foreign bond proceeds raised in Switzerland, while increasing to 40 percent from 25 percent the share of such proceeds that had to be converted at the central bank. These measures had no direct impact on the market but, over succeeding weeks, resulted in a further decline in the National Bank's dollar holdings.

The nervousness that broke out in the exchanges at the beginning of the second week of May pushed the franc

somewhat higher, but there was never any severe pressure and the spot rate soon receded, declining until the middle of that month. Trading in francs then turned quiet, with the rate about $\frac{3}{4}$ percent under the central rate and well below the EC currencies. Taking advantage of the relatively weak exchange rate, the Federal Reserve, with the agreement of the Swiss National Bank, initiated a program of moderate purchases of Swiss francs in the market to make a start on covering the System's swap commitments in that currency—\$1 billion equivalent to the Swiss National Bank and \$600 million to the BIS. By early June, such Federal Reserve purchases were sufficient, together with \$250 million of francs bought directly from the Swiss National Bank to replenish its dollar balances, to enable the Federal Reserve to make swap repayments totaling \$300 million equivalent to that bank. The System's Swiss franc swap indebtedness to the National Bank was thereby reduced to \$700 million, while the additional \$600 million equivalent Swiss franc drawing on the BIS remained outstanding.

Late in May the Swiss National Bank's sustained efforts to absorb domestic liquidity began to take hold and the Swiss franc strengthened. On May 30, an erroneous press report from Switzerland to the effect that Under Secretary Volcker had not absolutely ruled out the possibility of another dollar devaluation set off a particularly sharp reaction in the Swiss franc market. In heavy trading, the rate surged by $\frac{1}{4}$ percent within half an hour. Although the wire service later admitted that it had transmitted its

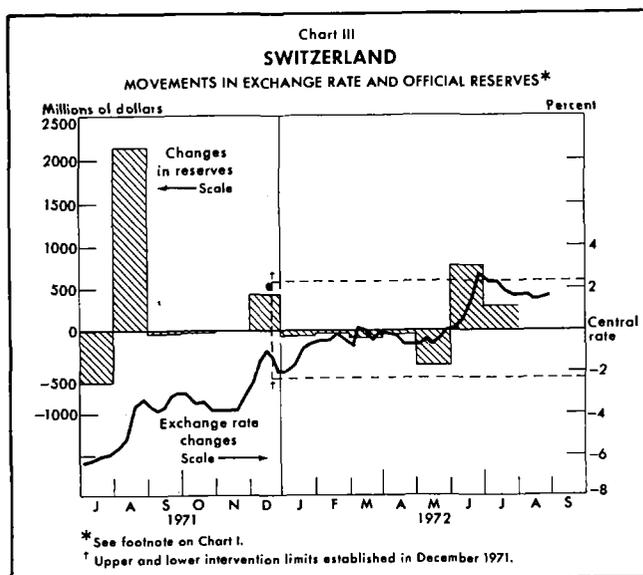
own interpretation of Mr. Volcker's response to questions and that the Under Secretary had in fact strongly supported the Smithsonian alignment, the market did not immediately recover from the initial adverse reaction, and the franc swung widely around the central rate over the subsequent days.

This misunderstanding was the first of a series of disquieting developments to hit the exchange markets in rapid succession in the late spring, and the Swiss franc became increasingly subject to speculative pressures. Early in June, free-market gold prices—which had already advanced sharply the preceding month—surged in a strong speculative outburst on rumors of an increase in the official price of gold. In response, the Swiss franc rose rapidly, moving through its \$0.2604 $\frac{1}{8}$ central rate.

Later in the month, the fever in the gold markets abated and the Swiss banks' concerns over their midyear liquidity positions were eased by the willingness of the National Bank to extend assistance through short-term swaps. (In fact, it granted a total of \$923 million in swaps over the midyear period.) Nevertheless, demand for Swiss francs began to pick up, as funds were switched out of sterling on a progressively heavier scale. Since Switzerland is not a party to the EC currency arrangements, the franc rate was not pulled downward, as were many other Continental currencies, by the rapid drop of sterling *vis-à-vis* the dollar. Instead, the spot franc was propelled upward by speculative positioning to \$0.2653 by June 22.

Following the floating of the pound on June 23, the Swiss National Bank announced that it would not intervene in the foreign exchange market until further notice. The Swiss banks were still free to trade, however, and the franc immediately rose above its ceiling. On June 26 the Swiss authorities took new and more drastic measures to limit the inflow of foreign capital, this time banning the sale to foreign investors of domestic securities, foreign securities denominated in Swiss francs, and mortgages on land and also prohibiting all sales of Swiss real estate to nonresidents. Following these steps, the franc rate moved back down toward its official ceiling. When other Continental central banks reopened for business on June 28, however, the National Bank stayed out of the market to assess the situation further, and the franc continued to trade erratically above the upper limit in a thin market through the month end. During this period, the Federal Reserve sold out of balances small amounts of francs in the New York market, with most of the proceeds used to purchase German marks.

When the National Bank resumed operations on Monday, July 3, it warned that a negative interest rate penalty on increases in nonresident deposits in Switzerland would



be imposed if the inflow of funds became too large. Nevertheless, there was a heavy demand for francs, and the bank was forced to intervene at the upper intervention limit. The Swiss authorities moved promptly, therefore, to impose a quarterly 2 percent tax on any portion of foreign deposits with Swiss banks in excess of the balances held on June 30, 1972. In addition, they extended the prohibition of interest payments on nonresident deposits made after July 31, 1971 to all banks (this ban had previously applied only to deposits with the larger banks), prohibited all banks from having net foreign exchange liability positions (including forward positions) at the close of business on any day, subjected borrowings abroad by Swiss citizens and corporations to the prior approval of the Swiss National Bank, and placed on a legal basis the previous gentlemen's agreement establishing the marginal reserve requirements against banks' net foreign liabilities. This barrage of measures halted the inflows, and the Swiss franc fell away from its upper limit, reaching as low as \$0.2647 on July 5.

As the July 17-18 meeting of the EC Finance Ministers approached, the Swiss franc again came into extremely heavy demand, and the National Bank had to absorb just over \$1 billion. Once the meeting got under way, however, the market concluded that the anticipated joint EC float against the dollar probably would not materialize, and buying pressure on the franc tapered off. When the meeting ended in a reaffirmation of official intent to defend the Smithsonian parities, some offerings of Swiss francs against dollars developed and the franc rate fell rapidly away from its \$0.2664 $\frac{1}{8}$ ceiling. The downward movement was accelerated by the news of the United States authorities' reentry into the exchanges on July 19 and by the favorable response that action received. The franc reached as low as \$0.2641 before leveling off. On July 21, in order to absorb part of the franc liquidity resulting from the heavy mid-July inflows, the National Bank raised its marginal reserve requirements against increases in the banks' domestic and foreign liabilities.

The Swiss franc market, no longer fueled by a rapid succession of speculative rumors, then turned very quiet. In mid-August, when sentiment toward the dollar improved in response to the Federal Reserve's continuing market intervention and release of improved second-quarter United States balance-of-payments figures, the Swiss franc followed the German mark downward. By early September, the spot rate was fluctuating around the \$0.2645 level.

BELGIAN FRANC

Following the Smithsonian meeting, the Belgian authorities announced that the franc's central rate would

be set at \$0.022313, an effective revaluation of 2.76 percent against gold and a total appreciation of 11.57 percent against the dollar. New intervention points were established at 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ percent above and below the central rate. At the same time, Belgium and the Netherlands (which appreciated the guilder by the same percentage against the dollar) decided to maintain the close link between their currencies by continuing to intervene when necessary to keep the rate between the franc and the guilder within a 1.5 percent spread. Moreover, the Belgian authorities maintained the two-tier market structure, with only current transactions going through the official market. When the Brussels exchange market was reopened on December 21, the Belgian franc was quoted well above the new floor and rose gradually thereafter. By the year-end, when Euro-dollar quotations fell below comparable Belgian domestic interest yields, the franc reached the new central rate.

Early in 1972, the Belgian franc joined other currencies in rising sharply against the dollar, and by February the National Bank had begun to take in dollars, both on a swap and an outright basis. Moreover, in the separate market for financial francs, quotations had risen to a significant premium over the commercial rate. To a large extent, the run-up of the franc reflected relatively high interest rates in Belgium, as well as market fears over the prospects for the Smithsonian agreement. For its part, the National Bank cut its lending rates three times between the first of the year and early March, with the discount rate reduced from 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ percent to 4 percent in $\frac{1}{2}$ percent steps, but these actions served merely to bring Belgian rates down into line with comparable rates in other centers. At the same time, economic activity was only gradually recovering from a slow-down and Belgium's current-account surplus remained large. Once the spot rate began to rise, fears of a possible further advance led to a buildup of leads and lags in trade payments, which in turn generated additional demand in both spot and forward markets for commercial francs.

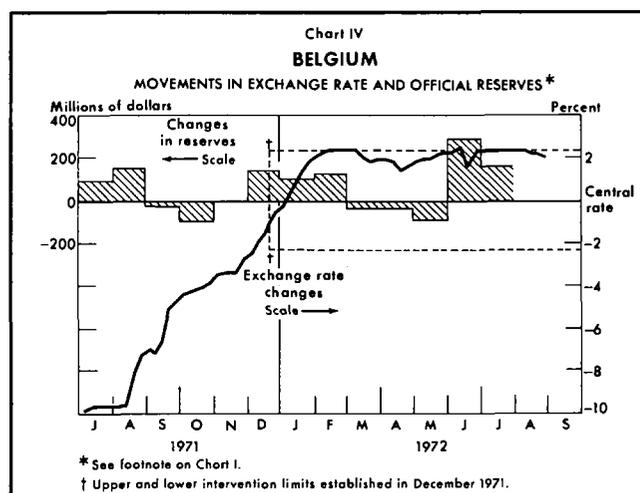
Early in March, when there was widespread discussion of a possible common EC response to growing dollar inflows, either through a joint float of their currencies or through administrative controls to bar these inflows, there was a jump in demand for several currencies, and the National Bank of Belgium again had to take in dollars at the Smithsonian ceiling. On March 9, in an effort to discourage short-term capital inflows, the authorities instructed the banks to avoid any further buildup in their spot liabilities to foreigners without a corresponding increase in their spot foreign assets. This tended to stem the tide for the time being, and the franc rate backed away.

With the Brussels money market now highly liquid, and with incentives having opened up in favor of moving

into Euro-dollars, the Belgian franc continued to decline through mid-April. The generally improved exchange market atmosphere also encouraged some unwinding of the earlier leads and lags in favor of the franc. Nevertheless, the Belgian current account was still in surplus, and when the domestic money market turned tighter once again late in April while Euro-dollar rates declined, the Belgian franc began to advance. This tendency continued through May, when renewed nervousness in the exchanges led to a number of brief spurts in the Belgian franc rate. Late in May, when the Belgian government needed dollars for current payments, the Federal Reserve purchased francs in a direct transaction with the National Bank and, using these francs as well as some balances on hand, repaid a total of \$20 million equivalent of its swap debt to the National Bank. The System's Belgian franc swap commitments were thereby reduced to \$470 million, including \$35 million equivalent owed to the BIS.

When sterling came under speculative attack in mid-June, the Belgian franc was initially pushed up to its upper limit against the dollar. Sterling soon dropped to its middle rate, and the spread within the EC band thus reached the full 2¼ percent. Consequently, as pounds continued to be dumped on the markets, the National Bank of Belgium joined other EC central banks in the support effort, buying sterling with francs in the market and making francs available to the Bank of England for corresponding intervention in London. As the whole EC band was pulled down against the dollar by the pressure on sterling, the franc dropped to as low as \$0.022537 on June 22, or 1.3 percent below the ceiling. The floating of the pound on June 23 released the downward pressure on the EC band, and the franc snapped back to its ceiling. After absorbing some dollars, the National Bank of Belgium quickly withdrew from the market along with the other Continental central banks that had opened that morning. In the limited trading that followed, the franc rate immediately rose above its Smithsonian ceiling. After the EC Finance Ministers met in Luxembourg on June 26 and made clear their intention of upholding both the Smithsonian and EC currency arrangements, the Belgian exchange market was reopened on June 28. At first, the rate held just below its upper limit and there was no need for the Belgian authorities to intervene.

The grave uncertainties left in the wake of the floating of the pound soon led to new demands for Continental currencies, however, and along with other European central banks the National Bank had to intervene heavily in early July, particularly on July 13-14, just prior to the EC Finance Ministers' meeting in London. Reports from that meeting tended to reassure the markets and, as with



other currencies, the franc edged away from its upper limit. Nevertheless, although the German mark, the Dutch guilder, and the Swiss franc all declined fairly sharply over subsequent days, the Belgian franc hovered close to its upper limit. By late July it had moved back to its ceiling and held there into early August, with the National Bank again absorbing dollars almost every day.

In part, the relative strength of the Belgian franc reflected the continuing current-account surplus. In addition, the Belgian authorities had worked out a gentlemen's agreement with the Belgian commercial banks to absorb some of the domestic liquidity created by the earlier official purchases of sterling and dollars, and the banks made sizable deposits with the central bank at the end of July and during most of August. Finally, it was clear that the speculative buildup of the previous month had not been unwound, and the longer the rate held at the ceiling the more entrenched became market expectations that the Belgian authorities might not be able to resolve the situation within the context of the Smithsonian agreement.

In these circumstances, on August 10, following consultations with the National Bank of Belgium, the Federal Reserve initiated a probing action in the New York exchange market to see whether some shift of expectations could be generated that would pry the Belgian franc loose from its ceiling. As in the case of the operation in German marks in July, this Bank placed a large offer of Belgian francs in the market at the current rate. As the market backed away, the offer was subsequently moved down and a moderate amount of francs was sold over the course of the day. On the following morning in Europe there was

not only some decline of the franc rate but also some sympathetic easing of other currency rates. To consolidate the gain, the Federal Reserve followed up with further offers on subsequent days, but, with the market continuing to back away, only a small amount of Belgian francs was sold. By August 14, the Belgian franc was clearly following the general downtrend of other European currencies, so that no further offers were made. As had been agreed at the inception of the operation, the Federal Reserve covered its franc sales by drawing on its swap line with the National Bank. These drawings totaling \$10.2 million equivalent were repaid by early September, as improved conditions permitted the Federal Reserve to acquire the needed francs through market operations.

With the generally improved sentiment for the dollar, the franc continued to decline on its own through the end of August, reaching as low as \$0.022743 before steadying in early September. As of September 8, the Federal Reserve swap drawings in Belgian francs remained at \$470 million equivalent.

DUTCH GUILDER

At the conclusion of the Smithsonian meeting, the Dutch government announced that the guilder would be revalued by 2.76 percent against gold, thus producing an effective appreciation of the guilder of 11.57 percent relative to the dollar. New intervention limits were set at 2¼ percent on either side of the new central rate of \$0.3082. There was little outflow of funds from the Netherlands when the Amsterdam market was reopened on December 21 and, with the Dutch current account strengthening against the background of sluggish domestic economic activity, the guilder rate began to rise during late December and early January.

With interest rates falling in foreign centers early in January, the Netherlands Bank reduced all its lending rates by ½ percentage point, the discount rate being cut to 4½ percent. Domestic money market rates declined in response, but the exchange rate did not follow suit, as there were sizable new direct investment inflows and the underlying Dutch payments position remained strong. Even more important, the demand for guilders reflected the exchange market's growing concern over the viability of the exchange rate realignment negotiated in Washington, and the rise of the guilder followed closely the advance of other Continental currencies, particularly the German mark. Consequently, the guilder rate was ratcheted upward in several stages in January and early February, reaching almost to the upper intervention level. In February, the Dutch authorities moved to provide addi-

tional liquidity to the Amsterdam money market, first by open market purchases of Dutch Treasury bills and subsequently through exchange market swaps, and these operations relieved some of the upward pressure on the spot rate. Nevertheless, just after midmonth a new wave of exchange market uncertainty briefly pushed the spot guilder to the ceiling, and the Netherlands Bank had to absorb a modest amount of dollars. The market turned quieter through the end of February, and in view of the further decline in interest rates abroad, effective March 2, the Netherlands Bank cut its discount rate by ½ percentage point to 4 percent.

By early March, however, the debate in Europe over alternative means of dealing with dollar inflows was in full swing, with a further extension of capital controls appearing to be the most likely route. Consequently, there was an influx of funds into guilders by traders and investors who feared that new controls could render the guilder more expensive or even unavailable for certain kinds of transactions later on. The heavy demand pushed up the guilder rate, although the Netherlands Bank slowed the advance by entering into new swaps with its banks. Then, on March 7, the EC countries reached the decision to narrow the band of fluctuation between their currencies, and the market took the view that the Community would now be in a better position to take common action against dollar inflows—perhaps through a joint float. The demand for guilders thus swelled even further, pushing the spot rate to its Smithsonian upper limit, and over the course of three days the Netherlands Bank had to absorb \$417 million. On March 9 the Netherlands Bank moved to curb inflows from abroad by prohibiting non-residents from making new guilder time deposits or renewing such deposits when they mature and by banning the payment of interest on nonresidents' demand deposits. At the same time, the central bank restated its determination to maintain its Smithsonian buying and selling rates for dollars. Following these moves, the market turned much quieter and, as new inflows tapered off, the spot rate soon retreated from the ceiling.

The Dutch money market was now extremely liquid as a result of the earlier heavy influx of funds, and the guilder tended to drift downward through the second half of March and well into April, steadying only after dropping below \$0.3100 in mid-April. Thereafter, the guilder followed the gradual updrift of the German mark and other Continental currencies, and by early June was trading quietly around \$0.3125.

The guilder was then caught up in the rush out of sterling. Although the guilder rate was bid up at first, the operation of the EC currency arrangements eventually resulted in a

decline of the whole EC band *vis-à-vis* the dollar. As sterling weakened, it reached its support point against successive Community currencies. By June 22, the guilder too was at the ceiling of the Community band (now well below the Smithsonian upper limit against the dollar) and the Netherlands Bank was obliged to buy sterling with guilders. This additional supply of guilders tended to push the guilder rate still lower against the dollar, to 1.4 percent below the ceiling at one point.

On June 23, following announcement of the floating of sterling, the Netherlands Bank along with other European central banks withdrew from the market. After the EC Finance Ministers' meeting on June 26, the Dutch joined others in reaffirming their commitment to the Smithsonian and EC arrangements. The Amsterdam market was officially reopened on Wednesday, June 28, with the guilder trading below its official ceiling. Over subsequent days, however, the dollar came under pressure in other Continental markets and, with exchange controls in other countries deflecting funds away from those currencies, the guilder came into strong demand, obliging the Netherlands Bank to absorb substantial amounts of dollars. By July 7, stiff measures by the Swiss authorities had helped calm the European exchanges and the guilder edged away from its ceiling. The respite proved only temporary, as the prospective EC Finance Ministers' meeting on July 17-18 in London sparked new rumors of a possible joint float against the dollar that led to massive shifting out of dollars into most Continental currencies. Along with other central banks, the Netherlands Bank had to absorb progressively

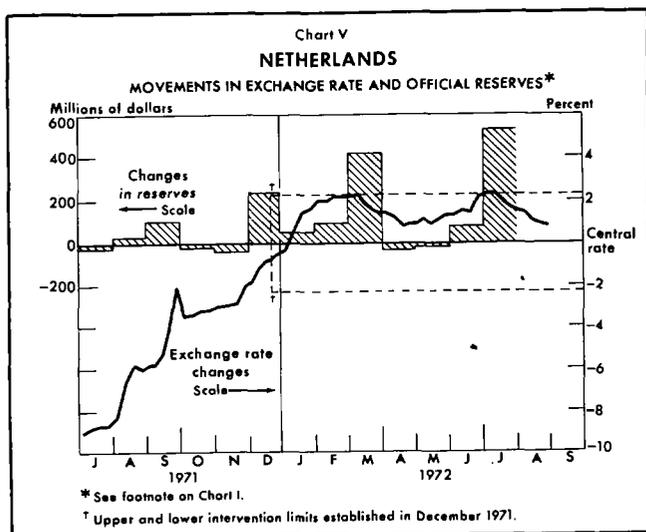
larger amounts of dollars. In sum, from the time of the floating of sterling through July 17, the Netherlands Bank took in \$543 million at the Smithsonian ceiling.

Demand pressures for Continental currencies abated considerably when, during the course of the London meeting, the EC Finance Ministers reaffirmed their determination to defend the Smithsonian agreement, while focusing their discussion on longer term issues of monetary reform. Also, on July 17, the Netherlands Bank announced additional measures to curtail capital imports, both through leads and lags in payments for merchandise trade and through intracorporate transfers by multinational firms. These steps helped calm the guilder market further, and the rate began to ease away from the upper limit. The Federal Reserve's reentry into the exchange market through offers of marks in New York on July 19 brought about an easing of the German mark against the dollar over the next few days, and the guilder rate too began to decline. Moreover, as the rate continued to soften through the end of July and into August, previous leads and lags on trade transactions began to be unwound. As a result of this decline, the spread between the guilder and the Belgian franc reached 1½ percent. Under the terms of the Benelux agreement the Netherlands Bank was obliged to sell modest amounts of Belgian francs against guilders in order to prevent the spread from widening still further. By early September the guilder was trading below \$0.3100 in a quiet market.

FRENCH FRANC

The French balance of payments had been in substantial surplus in 1971, and the franc had remained strong throughout the year. As part of the Smithsonian agreement, the French government agreed to keep the gold parity of the franc unchanged, thereby permitting the franc to appreciate relative to the dollar by 8.57 percent. The new central rate for the franc was set at \$0.1954¾, with intervention limits set at 2¼ percent on either side. Although many of the exchange controls imposed in the second half of 1971 were eased or abolished following the Smithsonian agreement, the French authorities maintained the basic structure of their two-tier exchange market. Under this system, which subsequently has been liberalized, the Bank of France defends the franc at the prescribed intervention points only in the official market (through which trade and most service transactions as well as governmental transactions are effected), while all capital transactions and some service transactions are strictly segregated in a financial market where the franc rate is allowed to find its own level.

Despite the strength of the franc during 1971, most market participants had not expected so large an appreciation



of the franc against the dollar, and profit taking brought the rate under heavy selling pressure as soon as the Paris exchange market was reopened on December 21. With leads and lags beginning to be unwound, the French authorities sold a considerable amount of dollars in the market as the spot franc edged downward almost to its new floor. Selling pressure on the franc let up in the last days of December and, as doubts began to develop in the markets over the durability of the Smithsonian agreement, the franc rate early in 1972 started a long steady advance. The financial franc, in the meanwhile, had fallen below the official franc's floor on December 21 as speculative positions were unwound, but it subsequently converged with the official franc.

During the first quarter, the French current-account balance deteriorated. Furthermore, in January the French authorities took a number of steps to stimulate the domestic economy, including reductions by the Bank of France in its rates on discounts and secured advances of $\frac{1}{2}$ percentage point to 6 percent and $7\frac{1}{2}$ percent, respectively. While the franc rate might have been expected to soften in consequence, there was simultaneously a general strengthening of European currencies against the dollar, and the spot franc quickly rose to a level only slightly below the central rate. In early February, an additional burst of demand, set off in part by open debate over measures to control short-term capital flows and rumors of growing official support in Europe for a joint EC float, lifted the franc somewhat above the central rate. These speculative pressures continued through much of the month and, with the Bank of France on the sidelines, the rate rose steadily. At the same time, the financial franc was pushed up to a modest premium above the official rate.

The market atmosphere deteriorated further when, on March 3, French Finance Minister Giscard d'Estaing warned that the European response to continuing dollar inflows would be a further extension of exchange controls—perhaps at first on a piecemeal basis but later in concert. It was shortly thereafter that the EC Finance Ministers announced they would soon cut to $2\frac{1}{4}$ percent the maximum permissible spread among their currencies. In the general rush into all European currencies that followed, the commercial franc was pushed almost to its ceiling by March 9, and the financial franc, bid up not only by speculative pressures but also by heavy foreign purchases of French securities, surged almost 3 percent above that level.

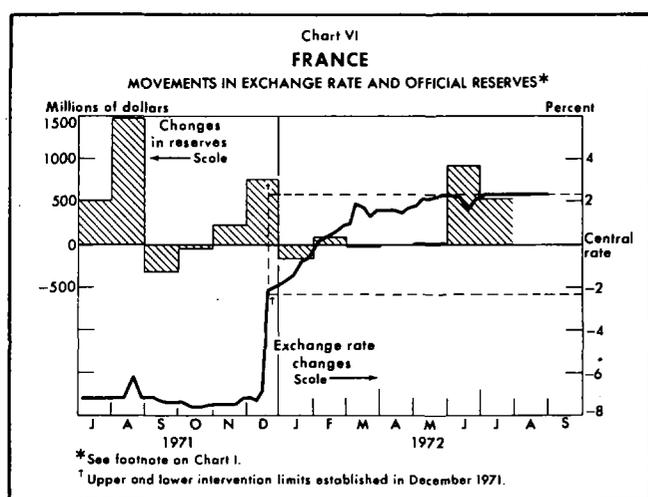
The flurry was short-lived, however, and the commercial franc quickly settled down to a rate well below its ceiling. The financial franc, although staying above the offi-

cial ceiling, also eased. At first, the softening reflected a normal technical reaction to the preceding excessive sales of dollars. In mid-March, however, there was a perceptible improvement in market atmosphere following the regular central bank meeting in Basle, Switzerland, Secretary Connally's indication of willingness to discuss the forum for negotiations on international monetary reform, and President Pompidou's expression of optimism about the international monetary situation. Moreover, the French authorities acted at this time to ease domestic monetary conditions, cutting requirements against the banks' domestic demand and time deposits (the requirements against liabilities to nonresidents were, however, kept unchanged), reducing those longer term interest rates directly controlled by the Ministry of Finance, and lowering the Bank of France's domestic money market intervention rates.

Further relaxations of monetary policy relieved buying pressure on the franc until late April. Then, heavy month-end conversions of export proceeds and, later, a temporary liquidity squeeze during the tax payment period exerted upward pressure on the franc, and the spot rate climbed close to its ceiling. Underlying liquidity conditions continued to ease, however, and, once month-end factors were out of the way, the franc traded quietly just below the upper intervention point until the end of May.

At that point the franc rose to its ceiling in response to an erroneous news report of Treasury Under Secretary Volcker's press conference on May 30. The pressure was especially heavy on June 2, when the Bank of France moved to restrain the growth of the French money supply by raising the reserve requirement against increases in bank credit from 2 percent to 4 percent. With interest rates in France already higher than in other major European countries, however, the authorities were confronted with a dilemma since they did not wish to draw in additional funds from abroad. Consequently, the Bank of France reduced its money market intervention rates on successive days to keep domestic interest rates below Euro-dollar yields. With each drop in the domestic intervention rates, the pressure in the exchange market subsided and the franc temporarily edged below its ceiling. Meanwhile, the financial franc had advanced to a premium of over 3 percent above the commercial rate, reflecting flows of funds into the French stock market and some switching of funds out of sterling.

The franc rate was again pushed hard against its ceiling in mid-June, when speculation against sterling began. As the flight from sterling gathered momentum, large-scale official intervention was required to keep sterling within $2\frac{1}{4}$ percent of the franc. Both the Bank of France and the Bank of England had to inter-



vene on a progressively heavier scale, supplying francs against sterling to an often hectic market. In the circumstances, the franc was pulled lower and lower *vis-à-vis* the dollar until it reached \$0.1972½ by the morning of June 22, some 1.4 percent below the ceiling.

With the announcement of the floating of the pound at the opening on June 23, the franc immediately rebounded to the ceiling. After absorbing a sizable amount of dollars, the Bank of France, in a joint move with the other EC central banks that were still dealing in the foreign exchanges that morning, ceased intervening and the Paris exchange market was closed. When the Bank of France reopened the exchange market on June 28, the franc hovered close to the ceiling but the market was relatively quiet and there was little further official intervention. As a result of the inflows during June, French reserves rose by \$921 million.

During the first half of July, strong speculative pressure began to build up against the dollar; with the franc rate hard against its upper limit, the Bank of France had to intervene almost every day, often in large amounts. The outcome of the EC Finance Ministers' meeting in London on July 17-18 had a calming effect on the market, however, and in line with the general firming of the dollar in mid-July the demand for francs eased to the point where official support tapered off. Nevertheless, the spot rate continued to bump up against the ceiling until news of the Federal Reserve's intervention in defense of the dollar on July 19 helped reduce pressure on the franc. Even then the franc continued firm by comparison with other Continental currencies, as the French authorities maintained a

relatively tight rein on domestic liquidity by raising the banks' minimum reserve requirements against both resident and nonresident liabilities by 2 percentage points, effective July 21. The franc remained close to the ceiling in early August, but a somewhat softer tone developed toward mid-month following market and press reports that the Federal Reserve had been selling Belgian francs. Moreover, the dollar was also helped by subsequent news of improved second-quarter United States balance-of-payments figures and reports of further United States efforts to find a settlement of the war in Vietnam. The financial franc had been dropping more sharply, falling to a premium of less than 2½ percent over the official franc's ceiling, as new issues of franc-denominated Euro-bond issues slackened during the vacation period and as conversions of franc bank notes sold abroad by French tourists swelled. Later in August, both the commercial and financial franc rates firmed but trading remained orderly.

ITALIAN LIRA

Following the Smithsonian meeting, the Italian authorities established a central rate of \$0.001719¾ for the lira, representing a 7.48 percent appreciation against the dollar that was slightly less than the dollar's devaluation against gold. At the same time, they revoked the exchange control regulations introduced as of December 6, whereby the Italian banks had been instructed to refuse conversion of foreign currencies into lire unless the proceeds were required for normal trade or service transactions or for nonspeculative capital transactions backed by the appropriate documentation.

After the Italian exchange market was reopened on December 21, the spot rate soon settled near its new floor. A prolonged period of political uncertainty and the resultant delay in dealing with important social and economic problems generated some capital outflows. At the same time there were continuing prepayments of foreign loans. Consequently, even though the already large surplus in Italy's balance of payments on current account was expanding as the pace of domestic economic activity slowed, the spot rate held close to its lower limit through the second week in January. Then, with successive waves of speculation pushing many of the other EC currencies to their ceilings, the lira was pulled upward, eventually reaching some 1 percent below its central rate where it traded through early March.

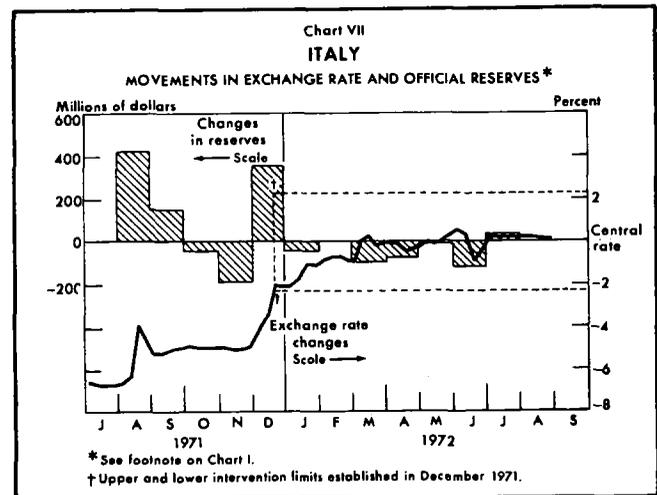
On March 7 the EC Finance Ministers announced their agreement in principle to narrow the margin of fluctuation between the Common Market countries' currencies to 2¼ percent. With other EC currencies at or close to their

ceilings, the market responded to this announcement by pushing the lira up into the proposed band. For some days the spot rate was, therefore, above the central rate. But the European markets soon turned quieter and, when the other EC currencies edged away from their upper limits, the lira—near the bottom of the 2¼ percent band—dropped back to the central rate or just below, where it held through the end of the month.

A still softer tone developed in early April, especially when the Bank of Italy acted to help stimulate an upturn in economic activity by relaxing domestic credit conditions. Taking advantage of the tendency toward lower interest rates abroad, the bank cut its rates on discounts and secured advances by ½ percentage point to 4 percent and 3½ percent, respectively, effective April 10. (The additional 1½ percentage point penalty for banks making excessive use of central bank credit was, however, maintained.) Simultaneously, interest payments on balances held by commercial banks with the Bank of Italy were discontinued for deposits of more than eight days, and were reduced from 1½ percent to 1 percent per annum for deposits of eight days or less. The banks were thus induced to place excess funds in the market rather than with the central bank, and shortly thereafter they cut both their lending and deposit rates.

The spot lira rate declined until just before the EC currency arrangements limiting the maximum permissible spread between any two EC currencies were put into effect on April 24. At that point the spot rate firmed somewhat, fluctuating about 2 percent below the strongest EC currency through the month end. In early May, when the Belgian and French francs moved smartly higher, the lira held at the lower end of the band. But no official intervention was required to keep the lira within the band, as market arbitrage proved sufficient to do so in the absence of strong pressures. As other EC currencies rose during May, the lira rate was pulled higher and it hovered around the central rate until late May. Then, when formal consultations to form a new government in Italy were undertaken, the lira moved up to about 0.4 percent above the central rate.

The accelerating attack on sterling that developed in mid-June brought with it heavy selling of lire and an abrupt shift in leads and lags against Italy. By June 22 the spot rate had been pushed to more than 1 percent below the central rate. When the Italian exchange market remained closed on Friday, June 23, in the wake of the floating of the pound, reports circulated widely both in the market and in the Italian press that the lira would be devalued or that the Italian authorities were strongly considering withdrawing from the EC arrangements. In this



atmosphere, the formation of a new Italian coalition government failed to allay the market's intense nervousness.

On June 26 the EC Finance Ministers, meeting in Luxembourg in the aftermath of sterling's float, confirmed their intention to maintain the EC arrangements and, to facilitate Italy's continued adherence to the scheme, permitted Italy to intervene for a three-month period in dollars rather than in EC currencies to keep the lira within the EC band. (The EC arrangements normally permit intervention in dollars only when a currency is at its Smithsonian limits.) In addition, the Italian authorities took several other measures in an attempt to tighten control over foreign currency movements. They prohibited the crediting of lira notes to foreign accounts, thereby shutting down the export of capital through bank note conversion. They authorized the banks to assume net foreign liability positions rather than, as before, requiring balanced positions. And, finally, they reopened the door to nonbank borrowings abroad.

Fortified with these measures, the Italian authorities reopened the exchange market on June 28. The lira opened that day well outside the 2¼ percent EC band, and sizable intervention was required to bring the lira back into the band at around its central rate. Despite this support, pressure on the lira continued as leads and lags remained adverse and Italian residents continued to repay their foreign borrowings. Consequently, the Italian authorities had to intervene in support of the lira well into July. To help offset the cost to official reserves of this foreign exchange market intervention, the Italian Exchange Office required any bank that developed a net for-

eign asset position to use the surplus foreign exchange to repay outstanding dollar swaps with it, while public enterprises were encouraged to tap the Euro-dollar market for large amounts. By mid-July, Italian banks were repatriating funds on a large scale, state-owned entities were converting considerable amounts taken up in the international market, and tourist receipts were starting to build up. Consequently, pressure on the spot rate subsided, and the lira held just around its central rate through the rest of the month. Some of the foreign exchange inflows were added to official reserves, keeping the total reserve cost of the Italian support operations in June and July to around \$100 million. This improved atmosphere continued through August, although the lira eased somewhat along with other European currencies as the dollar strengthened.

JAPANESE YEN

For several years prior to 1971, Japan had recorded progressively larger balance-of-payments surpluses, marked both by a burgeoning trade surplus and by increasingly heavy private capital inflows. As foreign exchange reserves mounted, the government had moved to impede or offset the inflows of funds by tightening exchange controls, by promoting a shift in the financing of Japanese imports from foreign to domestic sources, by liberalizing some of the controls on imports and on capital outflows, and by depositing some officially held dollars with commercial banks. While these measures had helped to relieve some of the immediate pressure, the markets became increasingly convinced that the yen was seriously undervalued. Therefore, when the United States Government suspended convertibility of the dollar in August 1971, there was a massive rush into yen which ultimately forced the Japanese government to float its currency later that month. Over the following months, the yen rose sharply in the exchange market. But the authorities, concerned that a rapid run-up in the yen rate might impede the hoped-for recovery in the domestic economy, intervened heavily to moderate the advance.

Under the terms of the Smithsonian agreement, the central rate for the yen was established at $\$0.003246\frac{3}{4}$, an effective appreciation of 16.88 percent against the dollar. The Japanese authorities, in line with actions taken by other countries, immediately abolished some of the severe measures imposed earlier to block the inflow of funds. Then, on January 5, with the yen settling near its floor and some reflows developing, the government announced a further relaxation of exchange controls, eliminating among other things the requirement of prior official approval for any prepayment of Japanese exports. Not all

of the control apparatus was dismantled, however, and certain measures limiting the foreign positions of Japanese banks were retained. Over the next two days a bunching-up of export prepayments gave rise to a burst of demand for yen, and the Bank of Japan absorbed a sizable amount of dollars, but the market then turned quieter.

By late January, the exchange markets had become increasingly jittery. Most major foreign currencies began to rise sharply against the dollar, reflecting uncertainty over the viability of the Smithsonian agreement and concern over declining interest rates in the United States. The yen, in particular, was in strong demand as the December 18 appreciation was seen by some as insufficient, given the size of the adjustment needed to bring the Japanese payments accounts into balance. Even with the Bank of Japan intervening to slow the advance, the yen almost reached its upper limit by February 24.

In view of this renewed show of strength for the yen, the authorities resumed their efforts to encourage the financing of Japanese trade out of Japanese reserves rather than with foreign credits and the yen eased. The Ministry of Finance began to make deposits, totaling \$200 million in February and \$100 million in March, with the Japanese exchange banks to induce those banks to reduce their borrowings from United States banks. Deposits with the banks to facilitate the provision of export cover had been initiated in June 1971, and these new deposits raised the total amount transferred out of official reserves to \$1.5 billion. Then, late in March, the Bank of Japan announced that, as an additional step to curb official reserve growth, it would increase its share of the financing of the country's imports from 30 percent to 50 percent over the four-month period beginning in April; credits already extended by the central bank under this program totaled some \$1.3 billion at that time. Despite these programs, however, Japan's official reserves rose by \$1.2 billion during the first quarter, exclusive of the 1972 allocation of SDRs.

Early in April, the authorities decided to stimulate some demand for dollars by requiring repayment at maturity of a series of special dollar deposits made the previous fall in connection with provision of forward cover for small- and medium-sized Japanese enterprises. Since the banks did not have the dollars available, they were forced to come into the market as buyers of dollars to repay the maturing deposits. Shortly thereafter, Japanese seamen began a prolonged strike, and subsequent work disruptions at the docks and in other industrial sectors curtailed Japanese exports for some time. As a consequence of these developments, the yen declined over much of April and remained easy in early May. By mid-May, the yen dropped to as low as $\$0.003282$, and the Bank of Japan sold dollars

to steady the market. On May 23 the Bank of Japan announced that, as of June 1, the 1.5 percent minimum reserve requirement against the foreign exchange banks' free-yen liabilities to foreigners would be replaced by a 25 percent marginal requirement on increases in such liabilities. Also that day, the Japanese cabinet gave approval to a multi-faceted plan to stimulate domestic business activity and, at the same time, bring Japan's external accounts into better balance. The exchange market did not believe these measures would bring any early change in the basic situation, however, and the spot rate held steady through early June.

With the attack on sterling, the entire Smithsonian alignment appeared threatened and the yen was bid sharply upward. Following the floating of the pound, the Bank of Japan closed its exchange market while also announcing a reduction in its discount rate by ½ percentage point, to 4¼ percent. Then, in an attempt to isolate the Tokyo market from a new round of short-term inflows, the bank

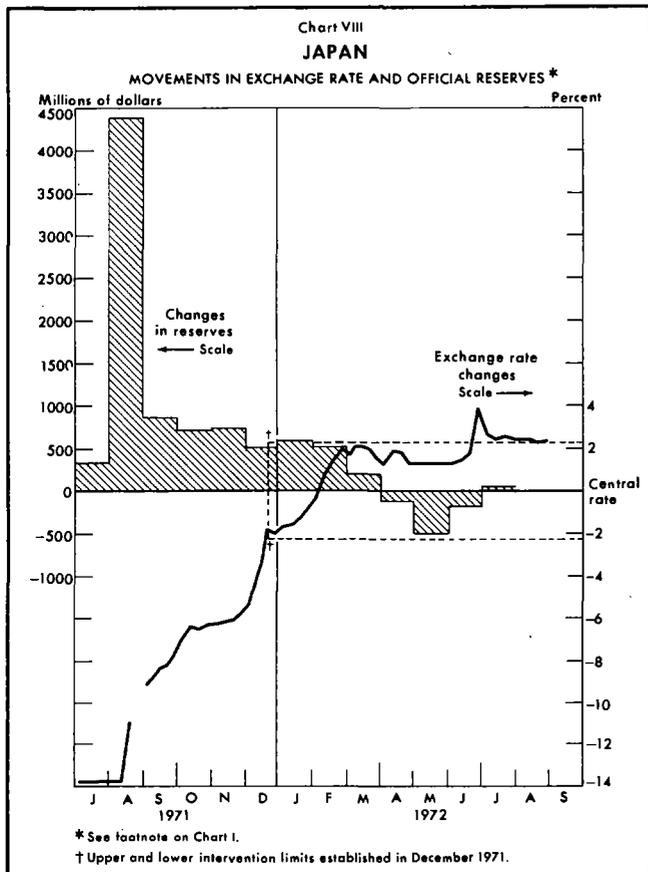
doubled the reserve requirement for free-yen accounts to 50 percent and strengthened the regulations against advance payments of Japanese exports. When the Japanese market reopened on June 29, the Bank of Japan had to absorb substantial amounts of dollars through the end of June to hold the spot rate at the ceiling. These inflows and the continuing basic payments surplus were more than fully offset by the various measures taken to push dollars out of reserves. By the end of June the special deposits with the banks, which had been increased in several stages, amounted to \$1.9 billion, and the Bank of Japan's share in import financing amounted to some \$2.3 billion. During the entire second quarter, the Japanese authorities succeeded in pushing some \$1.4 billion out of reserves through special operations, bringing about a reduction in reserves of \$820 million for the quarter.

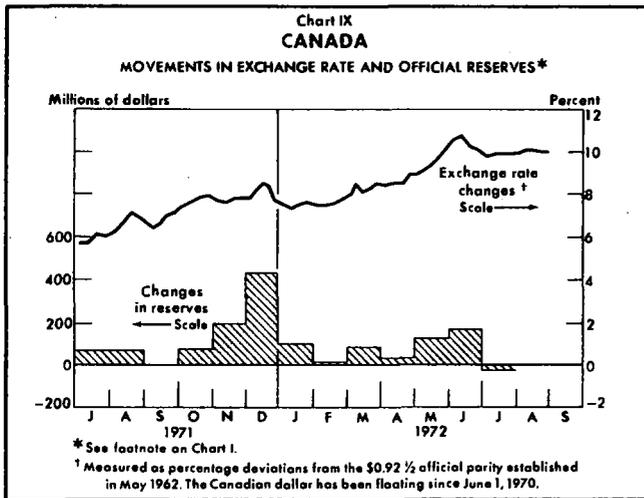
In early July, the exchange markets remained in the grip of uncertainties over the future of the Smithsonian agreement and, with the yen at its ceiling, the Bank of Japan was obliged to intervene heavily. Although most European currencies eventually edged away from their dollar ceilings, particularly after the July 17-18 London meeting of the EC Finance Ministers and the July 19 exchange market initiative by the Federal Reserve, the Japanese yen remained at its upper limit in Tokyo. Demand remained heavy as a result of the continuing large export surplus and renewed inflows to the Japanese stock market. The Bank of Japan, therefore, had to take in dollars almost daily, and sometimes in fairly substantial amounts, during July and August.

CANADIAN DOLLAR

As other major currencies rose strongly against the United States dollar late last year, there was also occasional upward pressure on the Canadian dollar. Heavy buying of Canadian dollars did not develop, however, until the conclusion in early December of the Group of Ten meeting in Rome. Thereafter, the Canadian dollar was pushed as high as \$1.00½, and it remained strong until the Smithsonian meeting of the Group of Ten on December 17-18.

The communiqué at the conclusion of the Washington meeting noted that "Canada intends temporarily to maintain a floating exchange rate without intervention except as required to maintain orderly conditions". The Canadian dollar immediately rose to nearly \$1.00¾, but expectations of a further appreciation dissipated rapidly, and the spot rate dropped back to below the \$1.00 level in late December. After easing further early in January, the Canadian dollar settled at around \$0.99½ by the middle of that month.





With the domestic economy expanding rapidly, the Canadian current account had slipped into deficit in late 1971 and the deficit increased in early 1972. Nevertheless, a step-up in loan demand in Canada put pressure on bank liquidity and in February interest rates began to rise, attracting funds from abroad. This influx of short-term capital, combined with continuing longer term Canadian borrowings, tended to offset the current-account deficit, and the Canadian dollar held relatively steady in the exchanges through late February. At that point, substantial new Canadian wheat sales to the Soviet Union were announced, leading to a bullish reaction in the market. The spot rate for the Canadian dollar began to advance and, with rising interest rates in Canada still drawing funds from abroad, the rate soon rose above \$1.00 once again. As it has done throughout the floating period, the Bank of Canada intervened intermittently on both sides of the market to moderate fluctuations in the rate and, with the Canadian dollar rising on balance, Canadian official reserves rose by \$189 million over the first three months of the year.

During the second quarter the Canadian dollar came into strong, persistent demand. On occasion, this demand reflected the general uncertainties which were having such profound effect on other currency markets. Nevertheless, the growing strength of the Canadian dollar throughout the spring was more clearly traceable to developments in Canada's own payments position. Canada's current account improved sharply during the second quarter, with a swing of some \$400 million away from the exceptional deficit of the first quarter. Moreover, the Canadian pro-

vincial governments and public utilities borrowed heavily abroad through bond issues, particularly in May. In addition, domestic credit conditions in Canada continued to tighten, and the chartered banks moved aggressively to attract funds. The consequent heavy demand for Canadian dollars drove the spot rate up by more than 2 cents from late April through early June, to about \$1.02 1/4. At that point, the squeeze for balances in Canada became acute, and the chartered banks, facing heavy loan demand but under pressure not to raise their prime rates above 6 percent, had begun to offer certificates of deposit (CDs) at yields of as much as 6 1/2 percent. This naturally drew in still more funds, pushing the Canadian dollar to almost \$1.02 3/4. The Canadian authorities then moved to forestall a further rise in the exchange rate by prevailing upon the chartered banks to cut back their CD rates, effective June 12. Subsequently, other Canadian money market yields also dropped back, as loan demand eased up somewhat. The Canadian dollar began to ease in the exchanges, reaching \$1.01 1/2 by the end of June. Over the second quarter as a whole, official intervention in a market which was rising on balance resulted in a substantial net reserve gain of \$328 million.

Trading turned much quieter in July, and the Canadian dollar held fairly steady between \$1.01 1/2 and \$1.01 3/4 throughout the month. With the onset of seasonal strength, a somewhat firmer tone emerged in August and the spot rate edged slightly higher.

EURO-DOLLAR

On the whole, Euro-dollar rates have been relatively stable since early 1972, although for brief periods speculative flurries and exchange market uncertainties have exerted upward pressure on the rate level. In sharp contrast to the extremely wide rate fluctuations during the preceding year, the weekly average of daily rates for the three-month maturity remained within a relatively narrow range.

On the demand side, the market has come increasingly under the influence of a wide variety of administrative restraints imposed by European governments and central banks over the past year. In several countries, access by corporations to the market has been severely curtailed in order to restrain further accretions to official dollar reserves. In Germany, in particular, corporate borrowings in the Euro-dollar market were limited by fears of the impending imposition of compulsory cash deposit requirements for nonfinancial enterprises, even prior to the actual implementation of the Bardepot on March 1. In addition, in many countries various barriers have been erected that

prevent banks from converting Euro-dollar borrowings into local currencies, and these and other impediments to Euro-dollar borrowings were reinforced during periods of pressure on the dollar early this year and again following the currency crisis in June. As a result of these constraints and the decline in interest rates in European domestic loan markets, the demand for Euro-dollars in major European countries tended to be weak during most of the spring and summer. However, the contraction of demand from traditional sources was largely offset by a sharp rise of borrowings, mostly for distant maturities, by public and semipublic institutions in developing countries. Much of this expansion of loans to non-European borrowers reflected the aggressive efforts of major European banks that were flush with funds to find new takers for Euro-dollar loans. Eastern European countries also took advantage of the ample supply of Euro-dollar loans. These various borrowings tended to cushion rate pressures arising from the disappearance from the market of some major Euro-dollar borrowers. Nevertheless, for protracted periods, notably during the April-June period, overnight Euro-dollar rates remained substantially below the Federal funds rate, providing some of the New York agencies and branches of foreign banks with opportunities for arbitraging between the two markets. Some United States banks also took advantage of the relatively attractive rates to borrow overnight Euro-dollars.

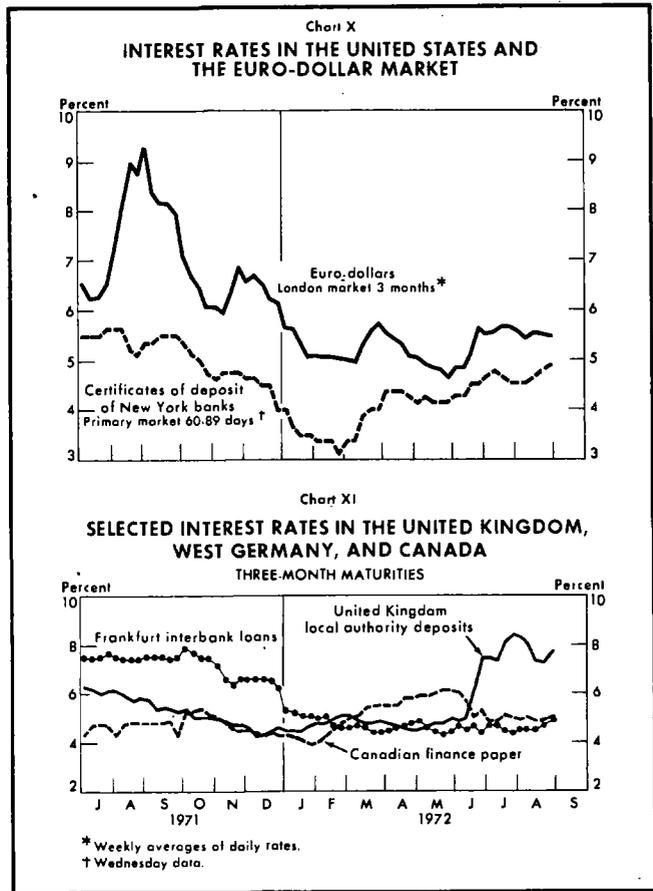
On the supply side, both United States residents and non-United States holders of dollars found the market increasingly attractive during the early months of the year, when short-term interest rates in the United States dropped much more sharply than three-month Euro-dollar rates. Supplies from European official sources were held back as a result of the June 1971 agreement of the central banks of the Group of Ten countries not to place additional dollar balances in the market; however, supplies from non-European official sources expanded further, as monetary reserves of many countries continued to rise. The relative attraction of the market to European commercial banks also increased, as the relaxation of monetary policy by several Western European countries during the January-April period reinforced a general trend toward lower interest rates.

Against this background, Euro-dollar interest rates tended to move downward in sympathy with United States domestic interest rates early in the year. Then, rates began to rise sharply in a belated response to the turnaround in United States interest rates in late February. This rise proved short-lived, however; when the usual quarter-end pressures failed to materialize and domestic European money market rates declined further, rates on all Euro-

dollar maturities began to drift lower once again.

In April, with United States interest rates moving up and with Euro-dollar rates remaining under pressure, the differential between the three-month Euro-dollar rate and that for United States CDs narrowed appreciably. The spread between the two rates had been in excess of 2 percent in the middle of January; it fell to less than 1 percent in April. During the remainder of the spring, conditions in the Euro-dollar market were generally more comfortable. Thus, by early June the Euro-dollar/CD spread had narrowed further to only 40 basis points.

The run on sterling, which developed in mid-June, at first had little direct impact on the Euro-dollar market. As sterling weakened, the central banks of the European Community intervened in the market by selling their own currencies. Several European currencies dropped to levels which the market considered unsustainably low in dollar terms. As a result, these currencies were



bought heavily with dollars. The financing of these purchases brought about a new demand for Euro-dollars which, coupled with some midyear demand, pushed rates up once again. On June 23, the day the British authorities yielded to the intense market pressure and allowed the pound to float, the three-month rate rose as high as 6 percent and seven-day Euro-dollars reached a peak of 7 percent. Then, with the passing of the immediate effects of the speculative buying of continental European currencies and of the midyear pressures, the rates on most Euro-dollar maturities eased somewhat. However, the Euro-dollar market remained susceptible to the anxieties of the foreign exchange market, and during the period of heavy pressure on the dollar in the exchanges in early July there

were periodic scrambles for funds to cover short positions.

When the exchange markets turned calmer after mid-July following the resumption of Federal Reserve operations in defense of the dollar, Euro-dollar rates began to edge downward. After a brief squeeze at the month end, the market stabilized in early August, with the three-month rate fluctuating narrowly around 5½ percent per annum. The tone of the market was nevertheless fairly firm, as United States short-term rates tended to rise and some new demands came into the market. In particular, Italian public corporations resumed their borrowings of Euro-dollars in response to official encouragement, and the squeeze for sterling balances in London also tended to draw funds out of Euro-dollars.