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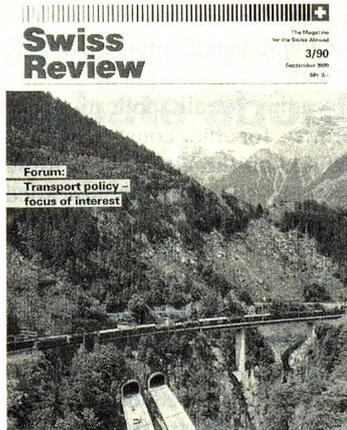
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Switzerland plays an important role as a transit land. The Gotthard continues to be an important link between north and south. Picture: Swiss federal Railways Gotthard line and N2 motorway. (Photo: Key-color)

Editorial

No Hedgehog Mentality here!



In this, my first editorial for "Swiss Review", I should like first of all, my dear compatriots in foreign countries, to send you sincere and cordial greetings. I look forward to the opportunity of doing all I can to promote your interests, together with my colleagues in the EDA's "Service for the Swiss Abroad". In this connection, may I remind you that this "Service" should not be confused with the "Secretariat for the Swiss

Abroad", which is a private institution. But our "Service" is the only Federal agency which deals officially with matters concerning the 450,000 or so expatriate Swiss. In a forthcoming issue of "Swiss Review" we plan to tell you more about the activities of the EDA "Service".

Now I will say a few words about the principal theme dealt with in this present issue of the magazine, namely Swiss traffic policy. A single glance at a map of Europe is enough to show how our country is literally located in the very heart of the continent. This central location and the control that it involves over the important Alpine passes have long given the Confederation of former times, as well as the Switzerland of today, a significant European role to play. Switzerland is willing to make a substantial contribution towards an extension of the North-South connections and thereby towards the further development of European transport. The Federal Council has recently issued its policy recommendations to the Parliamentary authorities for the construction of a transversal railway crossing the Alps (best known under the acronym NEAT), announcing that in its view, Switzerland must actively collaborate in a dynamic process of European integration. The construction of such a new transversal railway would moreover be completely in line with an ecologically acceptable traffic policy. This gigantic project, which is estimated as costing some ten thousand million Swiss francs would – once it has been approved by Parliament and perhaps by the electorate too if a nation-wide referendum proves necessary – be the most colossal construction undertaking ever tackled by the Confederation. One thing is certain; it will involve a great deal of courage, of risk and of readiness to make sacrifices. Our country too would obviously benefit enormously from the projected undertaking. Connections with Europe would become shorter and quicker, the possibilities for personal contacts more frequent and intensive. And it would enable us to play a part in this unique process of European consolidation and integration – a historical process from which we cannot in any event stand aside. With its recommendation of the NEAT scheme the Federal Council has in my opinion displayed praiseworthy farsightedness and vision in relation to the future of Europe – thus precisely the opposite of what it is sometimes reproached with! It will now be up to our two houses of Parliament, and perhaps to the electorate as well, to give the lie to those malicious tongues that accuse us of "Helvetian Egoism" and the mentality of an isolationist hedgehog that reacts to danger by merely rolling itself up into a ball!

Minister Rolf Bodenmüller, Head of the EDA Service for the Swiss Abroad

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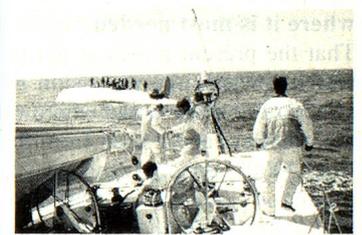


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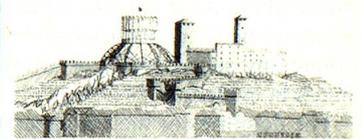
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