

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE SWISS ABROAD

S W I S S

REVIEW

OCTOBER 2007 / NO. 5



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## Swiss army knives made in China?

**O**MINOUS NEWS WAS ANNOUNCED by the newsreader on Swiss Radio one early morning at the beginning of July: according to reports, there was a distinct possibility that the new Swiss army knife would have to be manufactured in China. Due to the large volume of orders, an international WTO tender was being considered, in which all knife suppliers and manufacturers would be invited to participate.

While good-quality pirate copies of the famous Swiss army knife have long been in circulation, the idea that the official Swiss soldier's knife could bear the words "Made in China" caused quite a stir. This raised the curtain on a mini-drama in the Swiss media, resulting even in a petition to the Federal Council calling for the soldier's knife to be defined as a stabbing weapon (since weapons are not covered by WTO provisions and not therefore subject to international tender regulations).

Why does the Swiss army need a new soldier's knife in the first place? Armasuisse, the procurement office of the Federal Department of Defence, Civil Protection and Sport (DCS), explains the rationale: The old "61" soldier's knife no longer meets modern criteria in terms of safety and technology. For instance, the blade cannot be locked, which may result in injury during use. Added to this, better stainless steel is now available for the blades.

The army therefore wants 65,000 new soldier's knives worth CHF 1.17 million. The new knife, which will be issued to recruits in 2009, will have the following features: stainless steel, lockable cutting blades and a serrated knife, screwdriver, wood saw, reamer and punch, screwdriver with locking can opener and one-handed springless opening of the blades.



Heinz Eckert

The soldier's knife will also be low-maintenance and can be worn on a belt.

The Swiss soldier's knife has been manufactured by Victorinox in Schyz ever since 1891, and a Swiss army knife made in China would be more fatal for the company's image than for its finances. So does the new knife really need to be put out to international tender? No, says lawyer Alois Kessler, the initiator of the soldier's knife petition and a candidate for a seat on the Schyz cantonal council. For him, the new knife is clearly a stabbing weapon and, as such, not subject to a WTO invitation to tender. Kessler accuses the Federal Council of a "goody-goody mentality" that is putting jobs at risk. Other states also interpret the WTO regulations in their favour, he says.

What happens next remains to be seen. A decision is to be reached by the end of the year. Armasuisse is now reviewing its position. After this "Furore over a penknife tender" (*Neue Zürcher Zeitung*), no-one seriously wants to believe that the 2009 batch of recruits will be wearing knives made in China on their belts.

We have received a large number of e-mails and letters from readers complaining that we published an SVP advertisement for the forthcoming elections, and criticising what is perceived as our pro-SVP leanings. The fact is that we invited all parties in the Federal Parliament to advertise in "Swiss Review" to publicise their political manifestos among the Swiss abroad. The editorial team and publishers dictate neither the size nor the frequency of advertisements placed by political groups. This is a matter solely for each political party to decide.

HEINZ ECKERT, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



The first Swiss army knife, manufactured by Victorinox. The first shipment was made in 1891.

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Cover photo: "20 Minuten", a free commuter newspaper, made its appearance in Switzerland at the start of the new century  
Photo: RDB

**IMPRINT:** "Swiss Review", the magazine for the Swiss abroad, is in its 34th year of publication and is published in German, French, Italian, English and Spanish in 21 regional editions. It has a total circulation of 400 000. Regional news appears four times a year.

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### Beloved Aromat

Aromat is impossible to get hold of here in Greece. For fifteen years my mother brought along Aromat for her grandson when she came in Greece, but for the past six years old age has prevented her from making the trip. My sister-in-law has now taken over the task and sends us our beloved Aromat, which by the way is also popular with many of the villagers.

Congratulations on "Swiss Review": it's an example of the "Swiss quality" of which I am very proud, despite having lived abroad for 22 years.

T. GIANNOU-LUSSI,  
MOUSTHENI-KAVALA, GREECE

### "Look before you leap"

Think what you like of Mr Blocher. Only a few people can still remember the time before 1940. Had we not had Federal Councillors like Messrs Etter and Motta (who were as unpopular in some circles as Blocher is now), Switzerland may well have ended up as part of a united Europe under Hitler. All too many businessmen, mainly operators of medium-sized companies, saw gold behind the swastika.

So, Mr Blocher, if you think it wise to look before you leap, you're in good company.

PAUL MERK,  
WINFIELD, B.C. CANADA

### Thank you, "Swiss Review"

We enjoy the "Swiss Review" so much and want to say a fervent "Thank you" to you and the staff! Your "Swiss Review" is lovely! We buy it here at "Chapters Book Store" at Bower Mall. The ad in the edition of June 2007 for the Canmore, Alberta, is charming and was a surprise. Canmore is approximately 130 miles south-west of Red Deer and west of Calgary. My friends in Wetaskiwin, Alberta are from Olten and came to Canada 45 years ago.

I have visited Switzerland 10 or 12 times during my 77 years of life. I especially enjoy visits to Geneva and that beautiful lake. Here in Alberta we have the Rocky Mountains and the famous Banff and Lake Louise. Well, thank you for your artistry, "Swiss Review"!

WALTER PRICE,  
RED DEER, CANADA

### The beloved countenance of the home country

I appreciate the high-quality content and layout of "Swiss Review". Within its covers the Swiss abroad are regularly able to look again upon "the beloved countenance of the home country", despite their cosmopolitan outlook and open-mindedness towards other cultures.

PAULETTE SCHILD,  
CANNES, FRANCE

### National languages

Since I've been living in Goa, I've been receiving "Swiss Review" from Mumbai exclusively in German; in a fresh, witty style. When I lived in Orissa, "Swiss Review" was sent mainly in English, which I had difficulty understanding and found somewhat alienating. The ability to understand Swiss national languages should be a must for Swiss nationals living abroad. Although there is an online version at [www.revue.ch](http://www.revue.ch), I hope that you will continue printing "Swiss Review" for many years to come.

GIANCARLO ALBIZZATI,  
GOA, INDIA

### Forum on home page

It's great to receive "Swiss Review". That way you can stay informed about events back home. It would also be a good idea to have a forum on your homepage.

YOLANDA MARTIN,  
BARCELONA, SPAIN

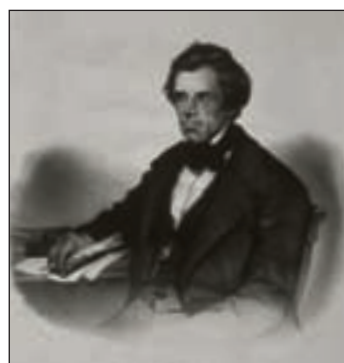
## Federal Councillor Stefano Franscini

Stefano Franscini, the first Federal Councillor from Italian-speaking Switzerland, father of Swiss Statistics and founder of the elementary school in his canton, died 150 years ago. The canton of Ticino has organized an exhibition entitled "Stefano Franscini. Le vie alla modernità" (Paths to Modernity), documenting the life and work of this outstanding Ticinese statesman. The eponymous 350-page catalogue in Italian offers readers fascinating insight into 19th-century Ticino and Switzerland.

Born in Bodio in the lower Levantina in 1796, Stefano Franscini lived at a time of sweeping changes: his life began in a federal vassal state, he became a citizen of the central Helvetic Republic in 1798 and of the new canton of Ticino in 1803, and died a member of the federalist Swiss state. His lifetime spanned the conservative restoration (1815), the liberal regeneration (1830) and the civil war (1847), the last armed conflict on Swiss soil.

Due to his poor background, Franscini's only opportunity for higher education was to study for the priesthood, but he left the seminary in order to return to school and study science. In 1827 he published the first comprehensive set of statistics on Switzerland. This was followed shortly afterwards by his three-volume work on Italian-speaking Switzerland, which provided an accurate and still highly readable description of his canton's history and status. In 1847 his "Neue Statistik der Schweiz" (New Statistics on Switzerland) was published. In his anonymously published tract "On the reform of the Ticinese constitution", Franscini paved the way for the liberal movement of 1830. Ticino was the first canton to draw up a free, democratic constitution. Franscini subsequently became state registrar and state councillor for his canton. His educational reforms laid the foundations of the modern elementary school.

Following the foundation of the Swiss federal state, Franscini was elected to Parliament in 1848 and appointed a member of the first Federal Council. He took over the Ministry of Home Affairs, where he was also involved in building up the national statistical office and the education system. In 1854 he failed to be re-elected to Parliament – at that time a prerequisite for appointment to the Federal Council – but remained involved in government after being elected to the National Council by the voters of Schaffhausen.



In 1855 Franscini inaugurated the Federal Institute of Technology, to date the only federal university. Two years later he died unexpectedly in office.

Political and scientific activities were never an end in themselves for Franscini. He believed that statistics were an essential basis for political and economic decisions, and viewed the educa-

tion of the masses as a *sine qua non* of democracy, which relied on emancipated citizens. The exhibition and book provide an informative look at the life and work of this pioneer of liberal thinking.

RENE LENZIN

The exhibition "Stefano Franscini. Le vie alla modernità" is on show at the Villa Ciani in Lugano until 21 October. The catalogue can be ordered online from: [www.ti.ch/DECS/dc/temi/franscini/ordinelibroonline.htm](http://www.ti.ch/DECS/dc/temi/franscini/ordinelibroonline.htm)

## Soliswiss General Assembly New council members

Backed by a large turnout, the General Assembly approved the annual report, the financial statements, and the appropriation of retained earnings. It also ratified the Council's past actions and elected Eric Herren and former Ambassador Walter Suter to the Council. To the guests' delight, this year's General Assembly took place on the "Savoie" paddlewheel steamer during a cruise on Lake Geneva.

This year's General Assembly, chaired for the first time by Dr. Barbara Rigassi, was a calm event. The annotations to the annual report were underpinned with commendable services provided by the Cooperative Society to distressed individuals in North and South America, Asia, and Africa.

**Risk Compensation Fund**  
The Risk Compensation Fund is funded by annual membership fees and risk premiums. It can be described as a form of reciprocal insurance: members who suffer a loss of livelihood due to coercive political measures are supported by the Risk Compensation Fund. This classic form of support is becoming less commonplace. Soliswiss is being confronted with more

and more enquiries involving borderline cases or hardship situations.

**Auxiliary Relief Fund**  
Persons who emigrated to a given country only a short time prior to the livelihood-threatening occurrence receive no assistance until the waiting period has expired. In such cases, they can apply for support from the Auxiliary Relief Fund, because the other criteria regarding coercive political measures are fulfilled.

If the livelihood-threatening occurrence is not politically motivated but instead the result of police action – for instance if a government institutes protective measures involving public health as a common good – no compensation is

provided pursuant to the strict interpretation of the Articles of Association. In such cases, however, the Auxiliary Relief Fund can cushion a case of hardship.

The support provided by the Auxiliary Relief Fund is financed with voluntary donations and bequests. Thus, this form of compensation relies entirely upon solidarity with distressed Swiss expats.

## Articles of Association to the Swiss Federal Council

The chairwoman commended the help of the FDFA. In the spring of 2007, Markus Börlin had accompanied the ratification of the 2006 Articles of Association by Swiss Federal Council. Thanks to the new membership categories, the elimination of the technical regulations, and other simplifications, Soliswiss can continue to evolve.

## Votes and elections

As all other motions, the financial statements for 2006 were approved and the Council's actions were ratified. Former ambassador Walter Suter was elected to the Council. With over 40 years of consular and diplomatic service, he is thor-

oughly familiar with the needs of Swiss expats. Eric Herren also joins the Council as a new member. He is active in several federal and cantonal functions and serves foreign institutions as a security consultant.

## Liquidation of hidden reserves

The actuarial reserves were recalculated in response to the introduction of new reporting standards. Unnecessary reserves were reclassified as equity of the Cooperative Society. Additionally, unclaimed share certificates were liquidated. This resulted in a transfer of CHF 8.4 million to the General Fund.

## Soliswiss AG

The asset management and insurance brokerage subsidiary started off well and is now in its second year in business. The product line is being expanded on an ongoing basis and the staff members have been trained in-depth to provide advice and handle sales. Development and ambition are the cornerstones of Soliswiss' future.

Dr. Felix Bossert  
Managing Director, Soliswiss

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Baking bread in Lugnez.



Drinking Suifi (a traditional whey drink) on Alp Gummez in Nidwalden.



A corn mill in Poschiavo.



A cheese dairy on Greizeralp.



A "Burgundy fireplace" in Val d'Illier.



## Swiss newspaper market in flux

The print and electronic media are fighting over a scarce resource: public attention. The main protagonists here in Switzerland are the daily and weekly newspapers.

We review Switzerland's newspaper landscape. By Rolf Ribi

Switzerland's market for daily and weekly newspapers is in flux, as publications come and go and alliances are forged and broken. A few recent headlines illustrate the market's dynamic nature: Tamedia, a major Zurich-based publisher, took over another publishing house almost as large as itself: Berne-based Espace Media; the German Springer media group purchased the Jean Frey publishing house and broadened its reach here in Switzerland; Winterthur's regional newspaper, "Landbote", is cooperating with another regional paper, the "Thurgauer Zeitung"; news magazine "Facts"

and the business publication "Cash" have vanished from the market; more and more free newspapers are jostling to win a share of the commuter market; and more and more new Sunday papers are appearing.

These recent events in the print media sector are of political importance for the state: Article 16 of the Federal Constitution guarantees freedom of opinion and information. And Article 17 provides for freedom of the press, radio and television. Independent media are a cornerstone of democracy since they enable people to form their own opinions and

make decisions freely. But what if the press were in the hands of an ever-decreasing number of ever more powerful media groups (including foreign companies)?

No fewer than 400 different newspapers were being published in Switzerland before the Second World War. Even today, 205 non-free newspapers appear at least once a week: 145 in German-speaking Switzerland, 48 in the French-speaking part, 10 in the Italian-speaking region and two in the Rumantsch language. Yet over the same period, the total circulation of these publications has risen from nearly 2 million to 3.7 million. So the decline in the number of publications is offset by a rise in circulation and readers. Nevertheless, the total circulation volume of all the purchased newspapers has dropped since the turn of the century from 4.2 million to 3.7 million. Despite this, "Switzerland's press landscape is still extremely diverse compared to other countries", according to the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung".

The most popular dailies in German-speaking Switzerland are "20 Minuten" (a free newspaper), "Blick" and "Tages-Anzeiger", in French-speaking Switzerland they are "Le Matin", "24 Heures" and the "Tribune de Genève", in the Italian-speaking part "Corriere del Ticino", "La Regione Ticino" and "Giornale del Popolo". A ranking of the most popular dailies is shown in the box on the next page.

Four trends are shaping Switzerland's news publication market: a concentration on large publishing houses, the battle for the Sunday market, the increasing number of new free newspapers, and the growing importance of the Internet.

### Saturated press market

Media experts agree that the Swiss press market is "mature and saturated" (according to publicist Karl Lüönd). A battle for supremacy is being waged, with spectacular takeovers. Two recent examples: the Zurich-based Tamedia group took over Berne's Espace Media group, making Tamedia the largest media company on the Swiss market, with sales of about CHF 1 billion. The Tamedia empire includes "Tages-Anzeiger", the free commuter newspaper "20 Minuten", the "Sonntags-Zeitung", the women's magazine "Annabelle", "Finanz und Wirtschaft", and now the "Berner Zeitung" and "Bund" as well as local radio and TV stations. Insiders expect to see editorial collaboration between the "Tages-Anzeiger"



The established dailies are feeling the pressure from new free newspapers, particularly commuter papers that target younger readers.



and the two Bernese dailies in the near future. The independence of the "Berner Zeitung" and the survival of the long-established "Bund" are at risk.

Last December saw a veritable coup, when the German Axel-Springer-Verlag media group acquired the Zurich-based Jean Frey media group, and with it the business magazine "Bilanz", the top-selling consumer advice paper "Beobachter" and the listings magazine "TV-Star". The Jean-Frey publishing house was latterly owned by a group of investors led by financier Tito Tettamanti, whose declared objective was to stop the "leftist" publishing houses of Tamedia and Ringier from acquiring the group's reputable "Weltwoche". Springer would have reluctantly acquired the "Weltwoche" as well, but the Swiss owners left the title in the hands of its new, right-wing editor-in-chief. Experts suggest that it's only a matter of time before Europe's fourth-largest media group takes over the "Weltwoche".

"Switzerland is a small country, but has a very interesting market," Springer CEO Mathias Döpfner said last year. The German media group, which publishes the "Bild" and "Die Welt" dailies, had already purchased the business paper "Handelszeitung", the stock exchange organ "Stock", and the "TV Digital" programme guide. Springer is now Switzerland's biggest publisher of business newspapers and magazines and paid-for programme guides. The industry is abuzz with rumours of a merger between the Springer group and Swiss publishing house Ringier. The French media group Hersant (which publishes "Le Figaro") is following a similar strategy in western Switzerland.

Newspapers are also experiencing a very different trend: regionalisation. Major media groups are buying up majority and minority holdings in smaller regional publishers. For instance, the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung" has shares in the "Zürcher Unterländer", "Zürcher Oberländer" and "Zürichsee-Zeitung". While the "Tages-Anzeiger" holds shares in the "Winterthurer Landboten" and "Thurgauer Zeitung". With five regional editions within cantonal borders, Tamedia is pursuing a highly aggressive campaign. Other regional cooperative ventures: The Mittelland newspaper group led by the "Aargauer Zeitung" provides the jacket section of the "Basellandschaftliche Zeitung", thereby gaining a foothold in Basel. And the "Winterthurer Landbote" and "Thurgauer Zeitung" merged to create "Die Nordostschweiz", with the "Winterthurer

Landbote" providing the jacket section. "Through this cooperation, both newspapers can further expand their leading position in north-eastern Switzerland and secure their publishing independence," declared "Landbote" Editor-in-Chief Colette Gradwohl.

#### Prominent victims

This summer, two prominent publications – the news magazine "Facts" and the business paper "Cash" – fell victim to the print media's jockeying for position on the Swiss market. Both were regarded as the last groundbreaking publications in Switzerland's media landscape. After twelve years and losses of more than CHF 100 million, Tamedia discontinued the weekly magazine in June. The omens were never good for "Facts". Initially it was a marketing ploy to attract colour ads. Its design was continually being changed, and editors-in-chief came and went in rapid succession. There were plenty of headlines such as "Women cash in as men pay", but no big scoops. Worse still, when the paper linked a centre-right Federal Councillor to Berne's red-light district, the editor-in-chief was forced to make a public apology.

Shortly before the (expected) end of "Facts", the business publication "Cash" came to an (unexpected) end. Against the backdrop of an economic boom, the Ringier publishing house decided to shelve Switzerland's biggest-selling business newspaper "following losses in the tens of millions". Shortly after its launch

18 years ago, "Cash" boasted a circulation of 70,000 and was a highly profitable publication. But sales began to decline and the weekly paper slipped into the red. According to former Editor-in-Chief Markus Gisler, the main idea behind "Cash" was to provide "critical support for business" – a daring concept (the banks, for instance, boycotted the publishing house).

#### Publishers' brawl over free newspapers

The talk in Switzerland is of a "freesheet war". These free commuter newspapers attract no less than CHF 120 million in advertising revenue. Thirty percent of the population reads free papers, primarily younger people and those with fewer academic qualifications. Leading the market for free dailies is "20 Minuten", a morning paper majority-owned by the Tamedia publishing house and with a circulation of 420,000. It is a veritable cash cow, generating turnover of CHF 100 million and profits of CHF 40 million. Small wonder then that other competitors are being lured by such attractive margins: Ringier, with its evening paper "Heute" and the slimline free business daily "Cash", which have so far proved financial failures. In French-speaking Switzerland, Tamedia's "20 Minutes" competes with the Edipresse group's "Le Matin Bleu".

This autumn, however, a veritable "publishers' brawl" is set to break out. The free publication ".ch", with a circulation of 425,000, is aiming to be the first out in the early hours of

#### THE TOP-SELLING DAILY, WEEKLY AND SUNDAY PAPERS AND MAGAZINES IN 2006

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7	Sonntags-Zeitung	201 358	-0.6	sonntagszeitung.ch
8	Neue Zürcher Zeitung	146 729	-2.8	nzz.ch
9	Die Südostschweiz	139 802	+0.2	suedostschweiz.ch
10	Neue Luzerner Zeitung	131 004	-0.9	neue-lz.ch
11	NZZ am Sonntag	121 204	+4.8	nzz.ch
12	Zürcher Landzeitung	109 931	-2.2	zuercherlandzeitung.ch
13	St. Galler Tagblatt	103 077	-2.9	tagblatt.ch
14	Basler Zeitung	98 645	-0.0	baz.ch
15	24 Heures	95 315	-7.7	24heures.ch
16	Die Weltwoche	82 849	+3.0	weltwoche.ch
17	Le Matin	76 194	-0.3	lematin.ch
18	Tribune de Genève	67 151	-5.5	tdg.ch
19	Le Temps	45 970	-2.1	letemps.ch
20	L'Hebdo	44 870	+2.2	hebdo.ch

the morning ("before seven"), with dispensers at the entrance to buildings and home delivery. Tamedia is planning to respond with a new free newspaper, a shorter version of the "Tages-Anzeiger", or by increasing the print run of "20 Minuten".

The invasion of free newspapers is causing unrest in the press industry. "Conventional dailies, formerly the backbone of direct democracy, are coming under more and more pressure," wrote the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung". "Sooner or later", it said, "someone will fall victim to the tougher competition". The "Tages-Anzeiger" expresses similar misgivings: "Regional newspapers will feel the effect of a new free newspaper on their advertising revenues. The competition is getting tougher." Even the "kiss of death" is predicted: "Free newspapers are destroying the traditional dailies. Then the battle between free newspapers will kill off this new business, too," suggests media columnist Kurt W. Zimmermann.

#### Skirmishes on the Sabbath

Swiss publishers discovered the market for Sunday papers early on, spearheaded by the "Sonntags-Blick", founded back in 1969. In the Eighties, the newly founded "Sonntags-Blatt", a Sunday version of various regional papers, disappeared when the Tamedia publishing house launched its Sunday paper in 1987. Within ten years, the paper was a gold mine. Five years ago, the "NZZ am Sonntag" was launched on the market. "Südostschweiz", a daily newspaper already issues a seventh edition on Sundays, and in September the "Mittelland Zeitung" will follow suit. And the "Basler Zeitung" plans to publish a weekend supplement on Saturdays. Everyone wants to profit from the millions in advertising revenue that are flowing into the coffers of the Sunday press. In the Ticino, the free Sunday papers "Il Caffè" and "Il Mattino della Domenica" have proved a hit.

What makes Sunday papers so interesting for readers and advertisers? Apart from sports events, party conferences and road accidents, there is usually little news made on a Satur-

day. And breaking news is the preserve of the fast digital media. Sunday newspapers therefore rely on eye-catching front-page stories for sales. This also satisfies "the need for explanation, background, context and detail, as well as for service, entertainment and affinity", according to publicist Karl Lüönd. For editors and advertisers it is interesting to know that Sunday newspapers have double the useful life of weekday papers.

#### The future of the daily paper

Can the traditional paid-for daily paper survive in the age of the Internet and digital media channels? The question is highly relevant in terms of national policy: direct democracy relies on active co-determination by emancipated, informed citizens. It is the press that guarantees the free exchange of information and opinions. While audiovisual media are fast and attractive, they provide less detailed, more ephemeral information.

"Who killed the newspaper?", asked the London "Economist" on its front page. And indeed, the Internet revolution is changing the media world. More and more people are reading and advertising online. A glance across the "pond" shows the extent of the change: in the United States, the number of paid-for papers has declined by a third over the past twenty years. "We have largely written off newspapers here in the US," announced "Vanity Fair" two years ago.

In Switzerland, too, media experts are predicting the end of the printed newspaper. "Paid-for information on paper is an outdated model," says media expert Kurt W. Zimmermann, citing the decline in the readership of virtually all major daily newspapers and the boom in free newspapers. "Newspapers will soon appear only in electronic form rather than in print," declares Hanspeter Lebrument, the president of the Swiss Press Association. He thinks that the young mobile phone-oriented generation will soon stop buying newspapers altogether. Even Hugo Bütler, the former editor-in-chief of the "Neue Zürcher Zeitung", recently said,

"Whether the "NZZ" editorial team's work will still be in the form of a printed newspaper in thirty years' time is a question that will ultimately be decided by our readers".

Yet other members of the industry beg to differ. "I don't share the newspaper industry's general mood of doom and gloom," says Swiss-American dual citizen Marcus Brauchli, the editor-in-chief of the highly respected "Wall Street Journal". However, only papers "that rely on their own stories, comments and analyses" will survive. The leading US business publication is planning to extend its online issue without undermining its print edition. Peter Hartmeier, editor-in-chief of the "Tages-Anzeiger", looks at it this way: "The trusted name of a quality newspaper and its close ties with readers offer potential for the future." And that goes for printed and online newspapers alike.

"It all goes to show that newspaper publishing remains a booming and profitable business, and that news will continue to be disseminated on paper for a long time to come," wrote the German weekly "Die Zeit". While newspapers are no match for television and the Internet in terms of speed, they can hold their own "in terms of in-depth reporting and informed research: in short, through excellence." Nevertheless, "Nothing will be achieved without journalistic credibility and the will to invest in editorial quality."

The most widely-read news magazine in Europe shows where the newspaper of the future is heading: four million people read Germany's weekly magazine "Spiegel", and two million users visit the virtual Internet daily "Spiegel-Online". According to Editor-in-Chief Stefan Aust, "There is a huge demand among the general public for experienced journalists who can read, review and prepare information and explain the contexts." Swiss publishers and editors should pay heed to the words of "Spiegel's" editor-in-chief: "People are not in the least bit tired of buying newspapers and magazines."

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Federal Office for Statistics, Swiss Press Association,  
Documentation Centre [www.doku-zug.ch](http://www.doku-zug.ch)

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**Along the mule trails.** A hiking trail from the alpine north to the Mediterranean south winds its way from the Urnerland to Ticino. Notes on the history and culture along the former mule track over the Saint Gotthard Pass. By Rolf Ribi



An historic train combination puffs its way across the Wassner viaduct on the line between Erstfeld and the Ticino on 1 June 2007, the 125th anniversary of the Gotthard railway.

It's a hot day in August, with temperatures above 30°C in the shade. Most of the St. Gotthard trains take a short break at Flüelen station on Lake Uri. At the port, the old steamship Schiller casts off. Here stands the enormous iron "Rütli" sculpture from the 1964 Swiss Exhibition. And here too is where the "Swiss Path" from Rütli has passed since the celebrations marking the 700th anniversary of the Swiss Confederation.

The Reuss Canal from Flüelen to Attinghausen was once one of the greatest achievements of the new Swiss state in 1848. On the floor of the Reuss valley, we are reminded of the disaster of 1987. In the night of 25 August, torrential rains in the St. Gotthard region caused the river to breach dams in three places. The mass of water engulfed railway lines and washed away entire houses. The muddy flows drenched Flüelen, Seedorf and Attinghausen, flooding 270 hectares of land and drowning 800 farm animals (though luckily no people). The motorway, the most important link between north and south, was partially or completely blocked for weeks.

We wander on upstream, constantly in view of the mighty Birstenstock. Shortly before Erstfeld we come across heavy iron gates embedded in rock; a military no-go area where in the past we prepared for war during our national service, producing newspapers, radio and TV programmes deep inside the mountain. Since the opening of St. Gotthard railway in 1882, Erstfeld has been a railway village. A mighty Krokodil CE 6/8 locomotive from 1919 stands on the Swiss Federal Railways site.

Soon we reach the village of Silenen, which has served as a base for mule packers and pilgrims since the 13th century. The "dörfli" (little village) in Obersilenen is famous. This hamlet of national importance contains the ruins of a five-storey tower built in 1240 and a splendid warehouse where mule packers reloaded their goods. A few steps further on, you enter another era: shortly before Amsteg, we find the huge construction site of the Gotthard base tunnel. It is here that Alp-Transit Gotthard is drilling the world's longest railway tunnel on behalf of the Swiss government and the federal railways, a near-flat

track stretching 57 kilometres between Erstfeld and Bodio.

#### Famous St. Gotthard hiker

In Amsteg we spend the night at the historic Hotel Stern & Post, which was an inn at the foot of the Gotthard Pass trail as early as 1357. The mule track passed by, there was a warehouse for reloading packs and feeding the animals, and tolls were levied. The owners have a guest book dating back to 1833. The most famous contemporary, Johann Wolfgang Goethe, passed through in the late 18th century on his three trips to St. Gotthard. "On 20 June 1775, we left Altdorf for Amsteg, where they prepared tasty baked fish for us", the poet wrote in his diary.

Heavy, grey clouds hang in the sky. We follow the marshland path upwards and cross an area at risk from avalanche on the Birstenstock. A few sun-bleached 16th- and 17th-century wooden houses on stone foundations still dot the marshland, with arcades and many flowers.

We reach the village of Gurtellen along the cantonal road. It's cold and wet, so we retreat to the small Hotel Gotthard, where for years four sisters have been serving customers and earning heaps of praise from gourmet guides.

#### Alpine spectacle

An hour's walk further on, we approach Wasen and its pretty little hilltop church. The village is at the intersection between three alpine roads: the Oberalp leads into Bündnerland, the Furka into Valais and the Susten Pass into the Bernese Oberland.

The path up St. Gotthard now follows an old mule trail. After crossing a wooden footbridge over the Reuss (by the hamlet of Neiselen), we find ourselves on ever-steeper terrain and have to watch our footing. After that the path is clear to Göschenen, the famous village on St. Gotthard's northern gateway. On this cold and wet day, the highest parish in Uri's Reuss Valley appears deserted, grey and gloomy.

The new day is just as rainy and cold. The path through the old part of the village leads past the well-preserved former tollgate. We climb up to the Schöllenen turning. After the Häderlisbrücke, a faithful copy of a 17th-century bridge over the Reuss, the mountain pass, railway tracks and hiking trail are squeezed between ever-narrower walls of sheer stone. A sign warns us about falling rocks.

### The Teufelsbrücke legend

Suddenly it's there: the legendary narrowest part of the Schöllenen Gorge. We walk over the bridge which opened up the ravine to stagecoaches in 1830 and later to motor vehicles. Far below are the remains of the old Teufelsbrücke (Devil's Bridge) built around 1220. It was along this foam-sprayed footbridge without railings that intrepid mule packers, shepherds and pilgrims traversed the raging Reuss.

The cold wind sucks the fog patches from St. Gotthard through this bottleneck. In the inn by the bridge we remember the legend our parents told us about the Teufelsbrücke: the people of Uri wanted to build a bridge in the Schöllenen Gorge, but no-one knew how. So the devil offered to build the bridge on condition that he could have the soul of the first person to cross it. When the wise people of Uri chased a billy-goat across first, the devil flew into a rage and picked up a house-sized rock to smash the bridge to pieces. But on his way he encountered an old woman who scratched a cross on the rock, whereupon the devil ran away, leaving the rock and the bridge. (The "devil's rock" now stands in front of the north entrance to the road tunnel).

Aside from the Teufelsbrücke, there is another very special monument: a 12 metre-high carved granite cross with a Cyrillic inscription. The cross is dedicated to the Russian general Alexander Suvorov and his fallen soldiers in honour of their tremendous achievement in crossing the Alps on 24 September 1799. French emperor Napoleon had set up the Helvetic Republic in the then Swiss Confederation, but Russia and Austria wanted to kick the French out. So Suvorov headed across the St. Gotthard Pass from northern Italy with 21,000 soldiers. A bitter battle ensued in the Schöllenen Gorge, where the French had holed up. Despite suffering heavy casualties, the 70-year-old general emerged victorious and headed on towards Altdorf. Pursued by the French, the remaining 14,000 men left Switzerland on 11 October.

### Gold fever in Andermatt

Contemplating such reminders of days gone by, we wander into the cheerful Urseren valley. Andermatt and its centuries-old barrier woodland lie in the background. The narrow road in the well-preserved old part of the village is cobbled in natural stone and has two lanes of tiled granite, testimony to the age of the stagecoach. The lovingly furnished Tal-museum is located in one of the prettiest houses in the entire valley. Even General Suvorov spent the night there.

Andermatt has the same problems as all the other villages in the Reuss and Urseren valleys: the economy and tourism are under threat, young people are moving away, and the army and the national railways are withdrawing from the canton. So plans by a rich Egyptian investor to build an 800-bed luxury holiday resort in Andermatt – complete with wellness spa and sporting facilities such as a golf course – seem like a gift from the gods. Not surprisingly, the village has been struck by gold fever.

Hospental lies an hour's walk away in the middle of the Urseren valley. The medieval tower looms over the village, set out across 1500 square metres. The lovely baroque Hotel St. Gotthard stands along the old mule trail by a Roman bridge over the Reuss. It was here that General Suvorov set up camp on 24 September 1799.

The mule trail along the fledgling Reuss leads straight up below the mountain pass.

The most beautiful building by the Gotthardthospiz and its little lake is the "Alte Sust", built at an altitude of 2114 metres in 1847. Ticinese architect Domenico Fontana designed the square building, whose gate on the main façade gave it a Mediterranean character. Its large roof once sheltered not only a hotel and post office but also a coach and sleigh house, and stables for horses and oxen. Since 1986, the building has housed the Gotthard Museum. "God and the devil faced off on the path to St. Gotthard," the Museo Nazionale del San Gottardo proclaims to visitors. It graphically illustrates

Man's arduous battle with the forces of Nature, the life of the mule packers and postmen, the courage of winter travellers, the stagecoach era and the battles for control of the pass.

### In the "Valley of Trembling"

The next morning we leave the Albergo San Gottardo Ospizio in thick fog, and therefore choose to descend to the old road rather than taking the mountain hiking trail. The mountain pass in Val Tremola ("Valley of Trembling") was built in 1830 and gradually improved from 1935 onwards. This light-brown granite road winds down into the valley through 24 well-developed hairpin bends. The early morning hike in this lonely alpine landscape, with its marmots and splendid views into the Leventina and Bredretto valleys, is a real adventure. The nascent River Ticino bubbles cheerfully down into the valley. Unfortunately, the Tremola is now also open to traffic. It seems almost a miracle that the coachmen of the nostalgic St. Gotthard postal service from Airolo to Andermatt managed to control their team of five horses on this precipitous route.

After a two-and-a-half-hour walk we reach Airolo, the centre of the upper Leventina. The 3000-metre-plus peaks of the Rotondo group rise up to the west. A bronze sculpture at the station pays tribute to the miners who died during the construction of the railway tunnel. Nearly all were Italian guest workers.

We've crossed the Gotthard! We continue our hike from the alpine north to the Mediterranean south on the Strada alta Valle Leventina. This upland trail about 1000 metres above sea level connects the villages on the sunny, left side of the Ticino Valley. They are charming little hamlets with lovely old churches and houses with slate roofs. The popular upland path can be traversed in three days: to Osco, then on to Anzonico and finally down the valley to Bisaca and – if you so desire – to Bellinzona, the capital of the Ticino.

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"What's your connection with the sea?"  
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## Health insurance card in Switzerland from 2009

**In 2009 Switzerland will introduce a Swiss insurance card. What are the implications for the Swiss abroad who have Swiss health insurance?**

In February 2007, the Federal Council decided to introduce an insurance card for the obligatory Swiss health insurance scheme as from 2009. All Swiss health insurance companies will issue this insurance card to their insured members in 2008.

The aim of the insurance card is to simplify billing between health insurance companies and healthcare service providers, i.e. doctors, pharmacies and hospitals. The insurance card will contain data and information such as the holder's first name, surname, AHV number, date of birth and sex. The information will be stored on the card and retrieved online by service providers with the consent of the insured person in the hope that this will enhance efficiency.

Insured persons may opt to have specific medical information, such as illnesses, allergies,

blood group and medication, on their card data, usually compiled by their general practitioner. This procedure should improve medical care in emergencies. The stored voluntary information may also be deleted. Patients will be able to protect their personal data with a PIN code. For data protection reasons, health insurance companies will not have access to personal medical data.

### Note:

The new Swiss health insurance card should not be confused with the European health insurance card, which has been in circulation since 1 January 2006.

*The new Swiss insurance card will be issued only to persons who pay health insurance contributions in Switzerland and reside in EU countries which have an agreement with Switzerland on the right to choose the place of treatment.*

These are as follows: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary and the Netherlands. Persons resident in these countries can choose to be treated either in their country of residence or in Switzerland. From 2009 onwards, they must show their health insurance card if they are un-

## ABOUT MUTUAL BENEFITS ASSISTANCE

Persons who are obliged to pay insurance in Switzerland (e.g. persons drawing a Swiss pension) who undergo medical treatment in Switzerland must present the relevant E-form to their service provider in Switzerland, i.e. the doctor, pharmacy or hospital. The form is issued by the supplementary insurer in their country of residence.

In such situations the Common Institution under the Federal Health Act (KVG) in Solothurn will lend assistance and reimburse the Swiss service providers.

dergoing necessary medical treatment in Switzerland and wish to have their health insurance company refund the costs.

*Residents of all other EU Member States as well as Iceland and Norway who pay health insurance in Switzerland will not be issued with an insurance card.*

They can receive medical treatment while in Switzerland via the international mutual benefits assistance scheme and must therefore present the relevant E form or their European health insurance card.

### Internet:

- [www.bag.admin.ch/themen/krankenversicherung/00305/00306/index.html?lang=de](http://www.bag.admin.ch/themen/krankenversicherung/00305/00306/index.html?lang=de)
- [www.kvg.org/en/default.htm](http://www.kvg.org/en/default.htm) (Common Institution under the Fed. Health Insurance Act)

## Switzerland and the UN

The Federal Council has presented Parliament its fifth annual "Switzerland and the UN" report on



## E-VOTING IN THE CANTON OF NEUCHÂTEL

This spring, the Swiss Parliament approved an amendment of the federal law on political rights of the Swiss abroad. The revised law provides for the harmonisation or centralisation of cantonal or communal electoral rolls of the Swiss abroad. This measure creates the framework within which all our expatriates can vote over the Internet. However, it will take several years before the reform comes into force in all Swiss communities and cantons.

The cantons of Geneva, Neuchâtel and Zurich, which have already conducted e-voting trials at the federal level, intend to include

Swiss abroad voters in future trials. Neuchâtel will be the first to include Swiss expat voters in e-voting trials at both the cantonal and federal levels. By the end of the year, eligible voters resident in the canton will receive a letter from the State Chancellery of Neuchâtel, encouraging them to register with the "guichet unique"; the virtual registry office, where they can cast their vote online. In its letter, the canton of Neuchâtel will also inform voters about the registration procedure.

We recommend foreign-resident Swiss nationals who are entitled to vote in elections and referenda in the canton on Neuchâtel to

register now if they have not yet done so. You can register to exercise your political rights at the Swiss embassy or consulate general in your country of residence.

At the same time, you can register with the canton of Neuchâtel's "guichet unique" to vote online. For more information, contact your embassy or consulate general.

*Addresses of Swiss representations abroad:*  
[www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/ reps.html](http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/ reps.html)  
*Information on the "guichet unique":*  
[www.GuichetUnique.ch](http://www.GuichetUnique.ch)





## CHANGES OF ADDRESS: NOT TO BERNE, PLEASE!

Changes of address should be reported only to your Swiss embassy or consulate general. These are the sole authorities responsible for managing the addresses of foreign-resident Swiss citizens and ensuring that "Swiss Review" is sent to the correct addresses.

By doing this, you can help the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) avoid time-consuming research.

*Addresses of Swiss representations abroad:*

[www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/rep.html](http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/rep.html)

international efforts for disarmament and arms control. A new Article 107a would govern the export of munitions and certain kinds of military equipment.

The reason cited for the initiative is the export of arms from Switzerland. The ban on exports also covers small arms and material employed to develop, manufacture or use arms. The aim of the initiative committee is to enhance the credibility of Switzerland's humanitarian tradition and

neutrality, and send out a strong signal for a more peaceful world.

If the initiative is approved by voters, many of Switzerland's munitions manufacturers will be forced to switch to producing equipment for civilian purposes. To protect the affected regions and employers from economic losses, support measures would be incorporated in a new subsection 8 to Article 197 of the Transitional Provisions of the Federal Constitution.

*The report is available online at*

[www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home.html](http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home.html) – (Documentation, Publications, International Organizations) and can be ordered free of charge. Orders should state your name, address and the required language (EN, DE, FR, IT) and be sent to:

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## POPULAR INITIATIVES

The following initiatives have been launched since the last issue:

- "Against the construction of minarets" (until 1 November 2008)
- "For a healthy climate" (until 29 November 2008)
- "Youth and music" (until 19 December 2008)
- "Room for people and nature" (until 10 January 2009)
- "For the expulsion of foreign criminals" (until 10 January 2009)

Signature forms for current initiatives can be downloaded from [www.admin.ch/ch/d/pore/vi/vis\\_1\\_3\\_1\\_1.html](http://www.admin.ch/ch/d/pore/vi/vis_1_3_1_1.html)

## Ban on exports of military equipment

**In June 2006, an alliance to promote peace-building launched a federal initiative "for a ban on exports of munitions" (see "Swiss Review" 5/06).**

The initiative calls for an amendment to Article 107 of the Swiss Federal Constitution. The new paragraph 3 would oblige the Confederation to support and promote

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# 50 stamp histories in a single book

Every Swiss postage stamp tells a little bit of history. All the 2007 stamps will appear in a year book, illustrating the variety of Swiss stamps. The year book makes a great idea for a gift.



Once again, another year is drawing to a close, and it was another interesting twelve months for Swiss stamps. Swiss Post issued 50 different stamps, once again offering a wide range of subjects for these miniature works of art. Fifty stamps cover a wide range of topics, histories and backgrounds. All the stamps plus an exclusive vignette will now appear in the Swiss stamp year book. Texts with background information about the individual stamp motifs fill up the pages of the year book and make it an attractive reference work.

## The year book and the hundred franc note

The 2007 year book of Swiss stamps is dedicated entirely to the Swiss National Bank. The bank is celebrating its centenary this year and was honoured with two special stamps from Swiss Post in the spring. Like the two stamps, the year book cover also features the design of Swiss banknotes. The cover shows a section of the hundred franc note and was created by Jörg Zintzmeyer. He also designed the two

National Bank stamps and the current Swiss banknote series. The year book of Swiss stamps also includes many other special features. For instance, Swiss Post issued a stamp commemorating a living person for the first time in its history. Tennis champion Roger Federer was the recipient of this special honour, which generated great interest beyond Switzerland's borders too.

## The year book makes an attractive gift

So you see: as a complete stamp collection, the year book is a sort of Swiss history book for 2007. And is naturally a valuable gift for your friends and relatives.



The "Swiss Stamps" year book costs **CHF 66.-**. You can order it (and all other philatelic products from Swiss Post) online at [www.swisspost.ch/philashop](http://www.swisspost.ch/philashop), by telephone or using the order form. **The year book will be delivered from 20 November 2007.**

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**SWISS POST**



## Switzerland is an important and much sought-after mediator

Switzerland's good deeds remain much in demand throughout the world. Swiss mediators can take particular pride in the peace accord between Maoist rebels and the royal house of Nepal.

By Heinz Eckert



Ambassador Thomas Greminger: Proud of the Nepalese peace accord

It was a huge honour for Switzerland: when the renowned Department of Peace and Conflict Research of the University of Uppsala in Sweden conducted a survey to find out which countries and organisations were most frequently involved in conflict prevention and mediation, Switzerland ranked third behind the UN and the US as the most important mediator in small and medium-sized armed conflicts.

The findings come as no surprise to Ambassador Thomas Greminger, Head of Political Department IV Human Security of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA). He knows all about the services that Switzerland provides to the international community: "Switzerland's good deeds in the cause of peace-building are increasingly in demand," he says. According to Greminger, Switzerland's neutrality plays a secondary role. More important is the fact that Switzerland is a small, independent country without its own political agenda, pursuing no particular interests and posing no risk to anyone. Added to this is the extensive experience acquired by Swiss diplomats in their role as mediators, and their excellent track record in this field.

2006 was a successful year for Swiss peace and human rights policy. At various locations

around the world, Swiss diplomats and experts were able to contribute to the peaceful resolution of conflicts through mediation or expertise, for instance in Nepal, where a peace accord ended the ten-year conflict between Maoist rebels and the king. Elsewhere in the world, too, Switzerland played a key role in peace processes, for example in the Middle East, in southern Sudan, Uganda, Burundi, Indonesia, Mexico, Guatemala and Kosovo.

How does Switzerland become involved in such efforts, and where and why is Switzerland active in the cause of peace? Does it start with a request from a party to a conflict? Thomas Greminger explains: "Naturally we can't just sit in our offices and wait for requests for assistance. Peace-building is a market in which many players operate. And if you want to be successful, you have to be better than the others and present arguments and ideas that are compelling and convincing. It's important that contacts already exist with the country or with individuals." Switzerland is therefore mainly involved in areas where it operates development projects, knows the political and social situation, and maintains good relations with institutions and individuals. These, ac-

cording to Ambassador Greminger, are ideal springboards for peace-building efforts.

For the past two years, the DFA has been in the process of gradually focusing its activities in the field of peace and human rights. By closing down various regional activities (in Mozambique, Angola, Myanmar, Mexico and Guatemala), the Department was able to pool its resources. By the end of 2007, the DFA aims to have concentrated up to 80 per cent of its bilateral peace-making activities on seven priority regions: Nepal, Sri Lanka, south-eastern Europe, the Great Lakes region (Rwanda, Burundi, Democratic Republic of the Congo), Colombia, the Middle East and Sudan. This will allow synergies between the government's various foreign-policy instruments – development cooperation, humanitarian aid, human rights policy, civil and military peace promotion – to be better exploited.

The Berne offices of Political Department IV employ some 70 staff. Additional experts work in the assignment areas, acting as election observers, monitoring compliance with human rights, mediating or providing assistance on constitutional law. The Federal Council has sought parliamentary approval for a budget of CHF 240 million for Political Department IV for the years 2008 to 2011. "I'm optimistic that Parliament will recognise our work and that we can continue it under the terms of the relevant federal law," says Thomas Greminger.

Greminger is particularly proud of the peace accord in Nepal. Since Switzerland has maintained a presence in Nepal for the past 50 years or so through its cooperation on development, it was able to draw on an extensive network of contacts and in-depth knowledge of the country. The November 2006 peace accord, which ended a bloody civil war that had claimed 13,000 lives, owes its success largely to the discreet advisory and mediation services provided by Switzerland which, due to its long presence in the country, not only won the trust of the opposing parties, but also had detailed knowledge about the political situation.

As Ambassador Greminger explains, it is not possible to disclose information about all Switzerland's good deeds, since discretion is a key factor. Some mediation processes have to be conducted in secret for years because the parties would immediately abandon them if they became public.

**All aboard the Lötschberg Express.** Starting in December, goods and passenger trains will travel through the 34-kilometre base tunnel from Frutigen to Raron, marking a milestone in Swiss transport policy. Yet the Lötschberg is only the first, relatively minor, section of the new AlpTransit rail link. Only when the Gotthard and Monte Ceneri rail tunnels are completed will there be an end-to-end flat-rail link between North and South. By René Lenzin



The AlpTransit construction site in Mittholz (left). The portal construction site by the Rhone at Raron in the Valais (centre). The official opening on 15 June 2007, also in Raron (right).

The Lötschberg Base Tunnel was officially opened on 15 June this year, but is scheduled to go into full operation when the rail timetable changes in December. Among the many national and international VIPs who attended the opening ceremony was Federal Councillor Moritz Leuenberger. "Aside from the astonishing technical feat and the achievements of everyone involved, the Lötschberg tunnel is much more than a grandiose hole through the mountain," said Switzerland's transport minister. It embodied "the consistent implementation of Switzerland's road-to-rail transport policy, which is regarded as exemplary throughout Europe."

Indeed, by expanding the capacity for transit traffic through Switzerland, the tun-

nel represents an important step towards the aim of shifting road traffic to rail, which Switzerland has enshrined under law with a view to reducing the number of heavy-goods vehicles crossing the Alps to 650,000 per year.

#### More than 16 million excavated

The construction project boasts some impressive technical statistics. The twin-bore tunnel runs a length of 34.6 kilometres, with 104 cross-galleries between the two bores. The construction of the tunnel and rail infrastructure took eight years. During the most intensive phase, 2,600 people were employed on the construction site, including 2,000 miners. 16.6 million tonnes of material

were excavated. At 1998 prices, the final cost of the tunnel was CHF 4.3 billion: a billion more than planned. Including inflation, interest and VAT, the cost has risen to CHF 5.3 billion.

The Lötschberg is the first section of the New Railway Link through the Alps (NRLA) or AlpTransit line, the concept for which was drawn up in the late 1980s. The first ideas for a base tunnel through the Alps were published directly after the Second World War. Even as late as 1983, the Federal Council believed that there was no urgent need for such a tunnel, three years after the relevant department of the Ministry of Transport was commissioned to draw up a list of variants. After this, however, things happened fast:

#### WHITHER THE ROUTE SOUTH?

The Gotthard axis of the NRLA is scheduled for completion by 2020. However it's not yet clear what will happen south of the two base tunnels. An agreement signed between Switzerland and Italy declares that our southern neighbour will create the necessary capacities to tackle traffic volumes on the Gotthard and Lötschberg axis. But in reality Italy has made little or no moves in this direction.

This summer, a high-level official of Italy's state railways caused a furore when he declared the

Ceneri tunnel superfluous. Italy, he claimed, wants heavy goods traffic to by-pass Milan to the west, i.e. either on the Lötschberg-Simplon route or through the Gotthard and then along Lake Maggiore on the as-yet single-track line. This statement provoked an angry reaction, particularly in Switzerland, which died down only when Italian Transport Minister Antonio Di Pietro intervened, assuring the Swiss that the Gotthard axis was a priority for Italy. He went on to say that his country would expand the Como-Milan line to

four tracks end-to-end, and in so doing strengthen the historic Gotthard route via Lugano, Chiasso and Como. Where exactly the money for this is to come from is far from clear. After all, given the desolate nature of Italy's state finances, so many infrastructure projects are in the planning stage that some painful cuts will be unavoidable.

But Switzerland, too, needs additional funds. Not only are the base tunnels more expensive than planned, but enormous additional investment will need to be made on the section between Lugano

and Chiasso if the Gotthard line is to be a fast through-route. The current route, more than a hundred years old and with quite a few twists and turns, travels via the Melide dam. The Federal Office of Transport has commissioned a study to examine and compare the four options for a new high-speed rail route. All options require an underwater or above-water crossing and several tunnels. The costs are likely to hit the CHF 3 billion mark. This sum is not accounted for in the budget for major construction projects for public transport.

RL



In 1990, the Government approved the Gotthard and Lötschberg concept, which Parliament adopted in 1991.

Swiss voters gave a clear thumbs-up to the NRLA in two referenda. In 1992, they voted in favour of the two-tunnel option. And in 1998, after the original ROI analyses for the NRLA had been declared completely unrealistic, they approved a financing concept for major public transport construction projects. The concept envisaged a fund made up of revenue from statutory levies (VAT, performance-related heavy-goods vehicle tax and a mineral oil tax) and refundable loans and advances. But the new calculations also proved too optimistic. In recent months there has been a growing acceptance that the railway will only be able to recoup part of the construction costs. The Federal Council and Parliament have therefore converted the loan of some CHF 2.5 billion, which matured at the end of 2004 into an advance payment.

### One track only

To date, opinions in Switzerland have been divided on whether two base tunnels are really needed and which of the two axes is the more important. As part of the financial compromise reached at the time, it was decided that the Lötschberg tunnel would initially be constructed with only one track. This limits its capacity and hence also its potential for shifting transportation from road to rail. Yet a full-blown Lötschberg would only be of limited use for international transit traffic, since its southward continuation through the Simplon tunnel to Domodossola remains an alpine rail section. For heavy goods traffic this means two locomotives, lower speeds and shorter trains.

Daniel Nordmann, Head of SBB Cargo, made his position clear in a recent interview: "Nothing much would change for heavy goods traffic because the Lötschberg is not a base tunnel. The difference in height will remain the same. It links the Bernese Oberland with

the Upper Valais and not the Mittelland with Domodossola. Only the Gotthard base tunnel will increase productivity significantly." Similar sentiments were expressed at a seminar held by Hupac, a company with 40 years of experience in combined transport. Only the route through the Gotthard and Monte Ceneri, which is scheduled to open between 2017 and 2020, will be an end-to-end flat-rail track.

Yet these reservations do not appear to be dampening enthusiasm for the new Lötschberg tunnel. For passengers at least, it will result in vastly shorter travel times, cutting journeys from Basel and Berne to Milan by almost an hour. From a purely Swiss perspective, the main benefit is that it brings the Valais closer to German-speaking Switzerland. For residents of the Upper Valais, the capital will be within commuting distance. People in the north and south of Switzerland are hoping that the faster link will increase tourist numbers. It remains to be seen how justified these hopes are.

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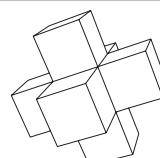
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## 85th Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Geneva

### Micheline Calmy-Rey: "You are important bridge-builders"

**Federal President Micheline Calmy-Rey's address to the Congress of the Swiss Abroad in Geneva received rapturous applause. She urged the Swiss abroad to spread Switzerland's humanitarian tradition around the world. The Congress was held between 17 and 19 August under the motto: "United and committed – the Swiss on humanitarian missions". Jacques-Simon Eggly was elected president of the Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA).**



Federal President Micheline Calmy-Rey with the incoming and outgoing OSA presidents, Jacques-Simon Eggly (left) and Georg Stucky (right).

The Federal President stressed the importance of the Fifth Switzerland and declared, "We are proud of our diaspora. You are important bridge-builders in all corners of the globe." After her address, Ms. Calmy-Rey answered questions from the floor and spoke in favour of introducing e-voting as soon as possible. The Federal President then spoke to young foreign-resident Swiss nationals about international politics and Switzerland's humanitarian missions.

The first to address the congress topic was Jakob Kellenberger, president of the International Committee of the Red Cross. He pointed out that the ICRC was steadily growing; a regrettable indication of the state of the world.

The speech by Aline Rebeaud, who founded the Maison Chance in Vietnam for the care of disabled orphans, attracted great interest.

A panel discussion entitled "Humanitarian Aid: Partners or Competitors?" was held between Walter Fust (director of the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development), Peter Brey (general secretary of the Terre des Hommes Foundation), Isabelle Ségui-Bitz (president of Médecins Sans Frontières) and Hans Lunshof of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

More than 500 foreign-resident Swiss nationals attended this year's congress in Geneva. On Saturday afternoon and Sunday, congress participants had an opportunity to visit var-

ious humanitarian organisations to whom Geneva plays host. On the Saturday afternoon, Swiss nationals from around the world enjoyed a gala dinner on Lake Geneva aboard the "Lausanne".

At the Friday session, the Council of the Swiss Abroad elected its vice-president, Jacques-Simon Eggly, the retiring Liberal National Councilor for Geneva, to succeed Georg Stucky as OSA president. The Council also petitioned the Federal Council for an increase in the loan for Swiss schools abroad.

The next Congress of the Swiss Abroad will be held in Fribourg from 22 to 24 August, 2008.

### Swiss schools promote Switzerland

**SI. Every year, directors of Swiss schools abroad return to their home country for a three-day conference in order to exchange ideas and discuss their concerns, which are mainly of a financial nature.**

These schools are also feeling the effects of the Government's cost-cutting policy, since only a third of their funds are covered by the home country. "Financial analysis", "Best practice", "Payroll costs" and "Benchmarking": the programme organised by the Conference of Swiss Schools Abroad, which was held in Liestal (Baselland), sounds more like a seminar for corporate executives. As in previous years, discussions were chaired by a business consultant. This should come as no surprise, since schools are largely private enterprises despite the fact that Berne provides around 30 percent to their budget. Since financial

aid from the government is steadily declining (dropping by 12 percent between 2004 and 2007), the schools are obliged to optimise their business management and find new sources of cash. "This year we needed CHF 17.5 million, whereas last year we had access to just on CHF 17 million," says Derrick Widmer, President of the Committee of Swiss Schools Abroad (CSSA). He emphasises "the importance of these schools for Switzerland's cultural image and presence abroad". Swiss schools can be found on four continents: six in Europe, one in Africa, two in Asia and seven in Latin America. In all, they are attended by about 6,500 pupils, mostly from kindergarten through to school-leaving age. The schools receive a total of CHF 17 million each year from the government, equivalent to roughly 30 percent of their budget. Several cantons act as patrons, sponsoring the schools by providing teaching support, some of the teaching materials, and often also by making a financial contribution.

### Extraordinary merger

**J.H. Two civic associations, the New Helvetic Society and Swiss Encounters, have merged to create a new society called Rencontres Suisse – Nouvelle Société Helvétique.**

The New Helvetic Society (NSH) was founded in 1914 amid concerns that differences of opinion between German- and French-speaking Swiss would jeopardise the country's internal peace. The NSH was created as the successor to the Helvetic Society, which between 1760 and 1858 was in-





strumental in consolidating the Confederation and creating the federal state in 1848. The NSH was involved in the foundation of various national institutions whose aim was to promote relations between the Swiss abroad and the Swiss at home. This included the Swiss Abroad Commission (1917) and the Swiss Abroad Secretariat (1919). Only in 1989 did the OSA become an independent foundation on whose supervising bodies the NSH was represented in accordance with the statutes, while the director of the OSA in turn sat on the central board of the NSH.

Swiss Encounters (Rencontres Suisses) was founded in 1945 with similar objectives to the NSH: to promote national understanding through dialogue between the different language regions, social partners and generations, and between rural and urban areas. In 1999, Swiss Encounters merged with a younger organisation, Agir Pour Demain, to create Rencontres Suisses – Treffpunkt Schweiz (RS-TS).

The reasons behind the merger on 1 January 2007 were self-evident: both organisations pursued similar objectives. They canvassed the same target public, appealed to the same potential sponsors and donors for financial support, and both had trouble finding new young members. By pooling its human and financial resources, the new association will be better able to achieve the goals of its predecessors, the NSH and RS-TS. Christiane Langenberger, state councillor for Vaud, is the first president of the new organisation. Her vice-president, Philippe Lévy, a former ambassador, will remain a member of the OSA board and the Council of the Swiss Abroad until the 2009 elections. The same

applies to the other NSH representatives on the Council.  
*www.dialoguesuisse.ch*  
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## Contacts in every corner of the globe – young Swiss abroad

**Young Swiss abroad enjoy their stay in the Alps: an environment that not everyone is familiar with, but that everyone craves. Fancy a breath of alpine air?**

More than 120 young Swiss attended the two summer camps held this year in La Punt in the Engadine, where they enjoyed a range of alpine activities such as hiking, mountain biking, swimming in an alpine lake, and cross-country treks. They forged contacts with young Swiss from all over the world and returned home with lasting impressions and hopefully a little nostalgia for the Swiss mountains.

### Lively winter sports camp

The Organisation of the Swiss Abroad (OSA) wants to give more young people the chance to experience Switzerland. The 2007/08 winter programme offers an opportunity to indulge in winter sports in some of Switzerland's renowned ski resorts and enjoy a colourful, upbeat atmosphere with people from all corners of the globe. The OSA looks forward to welcoming you to Switzerland:

### New Year ski camp in Sedrun (GR)

27.12.2007 – 5.1.2008  
A camp for about 60 young Swiss abroad. Sedrun has been welcoming young

Swiss abroad for years. And the feedback from participants is extremely positive.

*Sign up now!*

### Winter sports week in Langwies/Arosa (GR)

23.2. – 1.3.2008

The winter sports week is being held in the Schanfigg for the first time. Open to young adults age 18 and upwards. This camp has always had a unique atmosphere!

### Easter camp in Fiesch (VS)

22.3. – 29.3.2008

Enjoy spring sunshine and take advantage of tips from qualified OSA snowboard and ski instructors. The camp is organised for two age groups.

### Planning to study in Switzerland?

If you're interested in further training or education, this is the place for information and advice. The OSA endeavours to meet your individual needs and study requirements. But the emphasis is also on fun. After all, it's also your vacation. For information on our language courses, education arrangements or stays with host families go to [www.aso.ch](http://www.aso.ch), "Offers" or contact *Organisation of the Swiss Abroad*  
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## Foundation for Young Swiss Abroad

### Winter 2007/2008 camp for 8- to 14-year-olds

Whether your children are skiers or snowboarders, beginners or experts, our winter camps offer a great opportunity for 8- to 14-year-olds to have a super holiday!

### Winter camps

#### Flumserberg (SG)

Date: Saturday, 2 February to Saturday, 9 February 2008  
Number of places: 24  
Cost: CHF 700 (excl. ski and snowboard hire)  
Registration deadline: 15 December 2007

#### Registration:

Discounts are available in justifiable cases. Precise details on the winter camps and application forms will be available at [www.aso.ch](http://www.aso.ch) (under "Offers") from September 2007 onwards. On request, we can also send you our information brochure by post.

### Swiss Ski

Free youth camp for 13- and 14-year-old Swiss children and the young Swiss abroad.

Twenty Swiss abroad children born in 1993 or 1994 as well as 280 children living in Switzerland will be offered free places at the major Swiss Ski Association ski camp in Lenk on 2–9 January 2008. Swiss abroad children interested in taking part in the youth skiing camp *must be able to communicate in at least one of the three Swiss national languages (German, French and Italian).*

The names of the lucky participants will be drawn out of the hat in mid-October. Registration for the draw: [www.aso.ch](http://www.aso.ch) (under "Offers").

*Please return the completed form by 15 October 2007 to:*  
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### Pro Patria stamps

The project that Pro Patria wants to support and promote with the proceeds of this year's special edition stamps is called "Cultural Routes of Switzerland". Once again, the Swiss Post has created some real philatelic treasures on this theme. The four Pro Patria stamps are devoted to the ViaJacobi, ViaJura, ViaGottardo and ViaCook cultural routes. The four historic routes are in the Inventory of Transport Routes of Switzerland created by the Federal Government, one of a series of inventories of landscapes, areas of outstanding natural beauty and village façades most worthy of preservation.

### Lavaux awarded Unesco World Heritage status

Just like the renowned vineyards of Saint-Emilion, Lavaux on Lake Geneva is now a Unesco World Heritage site. The Unesco World Heritage Committee also agreed to expand the Jungfrau-Aletsch-Bietschhorn World Natural Heritage site. The region has held this status since 2001 and will be expanded from 539 km<sup>2</sup> to 824 km<sup>2</sup>.

### After Africa it's the Rütli

Micheline Calmy-Rey undertook a ten-day marathon journey to seven African countries in July. She also won another victory at the 1 August celebrations on the Rütli: in spite of the risk of another disturbance of the celebrations by right-wing extremists, as happened two years ago when Samuel Schmid attended, the Federal President once again showed the courage which motivates her in all her activities.

### Unpredictable summer

Temperature variations of up to 20°C from one day to the next, snow as low as 1800 metres above sea level, the worst

wheat harvest in 30 years. Rarely has Switzerland experienced such an unpredictable summer. In August there were even floods reminiscent of those of August 2005. Torrential rainfall meant that hundreds of people had to be evacuated across Switzerland. The level of Lake Biel rose to a record 430.90 metres above sea level, 47 cm above the danger level!

### And a second coup!

Swiss boat Alinghi won the seventh race of the 32nd America's Cup by just one second, successfully defending its title against Team New Zealand 5-2. This means that Ernesto Bertarelli's team can keep the silver trophy which they won for the first time in Auckland in 2003. This famous sailing regatta will next be held in 2009, again in Valencia.

### A woman's place is in the kitchen!

According to "Living in Switzerland", a study conducted by the Swiss Household Panel in Neuchâtel, a majority of Swiss (51%) believe that pre-school children suffer if their mothers are not present. Nearly two out of three men think that mothers should look after their children rather than go to work.

### Work satisfaction among the Swiss

According to a study published by the Geva Institute, work satisfaction in Switzerland is the second highest in the world, behind that of Mexico and ahead of the US. However, barely half the working population are really satisfied with their salary. The Travail.Suisse trade union is to demand salary increases of up to 4% in its autumn negotiations with the employers' federation.

### Airports and restrictions

Swiss airports are being overwhelmed by goods which may not be taken on board flights. Since limits were imposed in November 2006 on the amount of fluids which can be carried in hand luggage, nearly two tonnes of perfumes, shower gel and drinks are being confiscated every day!

### Drama on the Jungfrau

Six soldiers lost their lives in a mountaineering accident on the Jungfrau. The soldiers were completing their 17th week in the military training school. It seems that the tragedy was caused by the fall of one of the soldiers, who was roped up to the others. The whole country has been shocked by the inci-



dent, and even Federal Councilor Samuel Schmid could not hold back his tears at the funeral in Andermatt in Uri canton.

### Miss Alpes 2007

Not, this isn't just another beauty contest. The "Helvetic" beauty of candidates is one of the criteria assessed in a new contest held in Villars-sur-Ollon (Vaud canton). The winner must, of course, be beautiful, but she must also be able to shoot a crossbow, make a fondue and recognise wines in a blind tasting test.

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## Vote SVP, Vote for Switzerland!

Dear fellow citizens living abroad,

On 21 October, 2007, elections will be held. We, the Swiss citizens living abroad can also exert our influence on Switzerland's future; personally, I will support the Swiss People's Party's electoral list of citizens abroad, since:

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- The SVP defends traditional Swiss values.
- The SVP wants Switzerland to remain an attractive destination to live, work and do business.
- The SVP represents the interests of Swiss citizens living abroad.

Therefore, choose the SVP's electoral list of citizens abroad and speak out for the interests of Switzerland and its citizens living abroad!

With warmest regards

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