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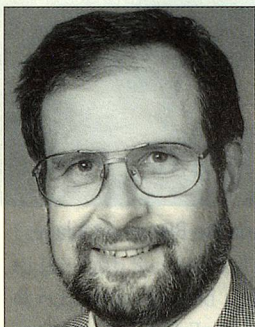
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Information is the backbone of democracy

At last: Switzerland is to join the UN. As soon as the final formalities are taken care of, our country can exchange its folding observer's chair for a fully-fledged member's armchair at the General Assembly. This is the result of the referendum on 3 March, following an information campaign marked by a confusing mix of prejudices and demogogy. There is no point in complaining; that is how things are and one must accept it. They say that information is the first victim of war; it also appears to be the first victim of this type of campaign. Since information is the backbone of democracy, one must ask whether our political system is still capable of functioning under such conditions.

The answer, thank God, is Yes! And contrary to appearances, the dissemination of information also functions. There is no conspiracy between what



Pierre-André Tschanz

"The information is available to all: in sufficient quantity and variety"

some refer to as the „political class“ and the media. And even in the case of debates dominated by prejudices, such as the issue of UN membership, information is available to all: in sufficient quantity and variety. Political debates would simply not be possible in the absence of information.

No-one, incidentally, ever complains about a lack of information. Rather, they grumble about the apparent bias of the media and the „political class“. Denouncing the government's propaganda excesses, National Councillor Hans Fehr, President of the AUNS (Campaign for an independent, neutral Switzerland), cited an editorial in the Swiss Review. The lack of good faith is compensated for by bickering; after all, this serves to raise awareness of the Swiss Review. Available free of charge to Swiss Abroad, the Swiss Review is largely financed by the government. It is published by the Organisation for the Swiss Abroad, a private organisation which has entrusted its content to an autonomous, professional editorial team. The aim of the Swiss Review is to provide Swiss residents abroad with comprehensive, objective information so that they can form their own opinion on events in Switzerland and exercise their political rights at the federal level. The responsibility of this editorial team is all the greater in situations where the sources of information available to our compatriots abroad are sparse. The Swiss Review is non-political and non-denominational. It takes no stand on political debates. However, this does not prevent it from publishing differences of opinion in its columns: such opinions are the sole responsibility of their authors or readers, and no-one needs to share them.

Pierre-André Tschanz

Translated from the German by N. Chisholm



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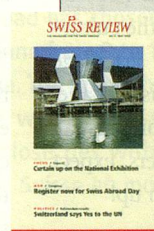
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The seventh national exhibition is explicitly devoted to the Fifth Switzerland too. This was stated by the Federal Council in 1999 and is confirmed by Expo boss Nelly Wenger. This year's congress will therefore culminate on the Bienne artepilage.

COVER: Michael Stahl

SWISS REVIEW

Swiss Review, the magazine for the Swiss Abroad, is in its 29th year of publication and is published in German, French, Italian, English and Spanish in more than 25 regional editions. It has a total circulation of over 360 000. Regional news appears four times a year.

Gabrielle Keller (gk), Editor-in-Chief; Pierre-André Tschanz (PAT), Freelance Journalist; Isabelle Eichenberger (IE), swissinfo/SRI; Pablo Crivelli (PC), Swiss News Agency; Patricia Meserli (MPC), responsible for the Official News, Swiss Abroad Service EDA, CH-3003 Berne. Translation: Nicolette Chisholm.

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