

seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe. Her premature death in 2009 will be much regretted.

LUISA DOLZA

Dr. Dolza, formerly assistant professor of history of technology at the Politecnico of Turin, is the author of *Storia della Tecnologia* (2008).

Materialising Identity: The Co-construction of the Gotthard Railway and Swiss National Identity.

By Judith Schueler. Amsterdam: Aksant, 2008. Pp. 197. €24.90.

Judith Schueler's *Materialising Identity* is based on the work of Gabrielle Hecht (*The Radiance of France: Nuclear Power and National Identity after World War II* [1998]), which relates the building of the nuclear power capacity of France to the concept of national identity in France. What Schueler does is relate the building and running of the Gotthard Railway with the changing perception of Swiss national identity. She does not concentrate on political, philosophical, literary, and material culture sources, as is the case with two standard studies of the railway line: Guy Marchal's *Schweizer Gebrauchsgeschichte* (2006) and the Swiss National Museum in Zurich's edited *Die Erfindung der Schweiz 1848–1998* (1998). Instead, she analyzes technical and popular literature in circulation since the building of the railway in the 1870s.

The railway's major technical challenge was its fifteen-kilometer tunnel. Franz Rzika, the most famous tunnel engineer of the 1870s, stated that Louis Favre, the head of the tunneling company, should have chosen the Austrian instead of the Belgium method. Favre did not reply in nationalistic terms but simply argued that he had chosen according to the necessities of geology. The line was opened in 1882, with the Kingdom of Italy, the German Empire, and Switzerland having participated in the finance and construction and much self-congratulation for the completion of a unifying connection between Germany and Italy through Switzerland, which was given the role of rendering service to Europe. The opening ceremonies, which lasted for three days, starting in Lucerne and ending in Milan, were an important platform for the Swiss government to position itself as a mediator within Europe. In Switzerland itself, the line was depicted as a means of unifying the Swiss regions with their different languages and identities.

Traffic mainly consisted of industrial goods from Germany to Italy and raw materials back to Germany. But the company also promoted the line as a tourist attraction for wealthy residents of the German and Austrian-Hungarian empires. Tourists could travel through the rugged Alps, view the state-of-the-art engineering, and experience the countryside where Swiss

democracy was “founded” in the thirteenth century. This successful marketing effort transformed the image of Switzerland after 1882 from the Alpine republic to the Gotthard republic.

The most interesting aspect of Schueler's analysis is her examination of the popular literature about the building of the railway and its tunnel that appeared in the 1930s and 1940s; it aimed at showing a reconciliation between modern industrialization and traditional agricultural ways of life. There were stories about how conflicts between tunnel workers and farmers living around the railway line were resolved by depicting both as fighting against the rough nature of mountain areas, only by different means.

The book has some weaknesses. It does not address conflict in the 1930s between the socialist party and the Swiss government dominated by liberal and conservative parties, nor the role that popular literature may have played in reconciliation and the integration of the socialists into the government system. Nevertheless, Schueler convincingly shows how the railway line provided a crucial influence in shaping Swiss national identity. With her interdisciplinary approach she effectively connects the history of ideas with the history of technology. She closes a gap. The question that remains open concerns the interrelation and influences between the traditional analysis of the political and philosophical literature and the technological literature.

KILLIAN T. ELSASSER

Kilian T. Elsasser has a master of arts degree in public history from Northeastern University in Boston. He is a museum consultant, specialist in Swiss railway history, and was a head curator at the Swiss Museum of Transportation.

Cars for Comrades: The Life of the Soviet Automobile.

By Lewis H. Siegelbaum. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2008. Pp. xvii+309. \$39.95.

The history of the automobile in the Soviet Union has by and large been ignored by scholars. One explanation, perhaps, are the strong connotations of freedom, individuality, and privacy that have surrounded—and continue to surround—the auto, which has become one of the more powerful symbols of Western capitalism. But as Lewis Siegelbaum shows in *Cars for Comrades*, automobiles certainly *did* have their place in the USSR. He deals with the production, consumption, and use of automobiles, as well as the infrastructure that surrounded them. In doing so he challenges our understanding of the auto as an inherently Western artifact and argues that it is possible to talk about a specific Soviet car culture.

That the construction of the Soviet automobile was a true cosmopolitan venture from the beginning becomes evident in Siegelbaum's discus-