

two should work separately from non-military communication did not seem to interest anyone involved. Military codes are still the only guarantee of secrecy and when future satellites, not many years from now, have 48,000 circuits or more, it will be hard to believe that the military have that much to say to one another to justify the sole occupation of a valuable parking space in equatorial orbit.

#### CERN ACCELERATOR

### No Room for the Ring?

THERE is a danger that the discord over the siting of the proposed 300 GeV CERN accelerator may cast a shadow over the role of West Germany in European scientific collaboration. In German eyes, the issue revolves around the glaring imbalance between the economic and political influence of West Germany, whereby the Federal Republic shoulders the largest financial burden in European scientific ventures and yet has no important European project on its soil.

A meeting is being held in Geneva on January 28 and 29 between ministers of the six countries backing the accelerator. France will be represented by M. Robert Schumann, the Foreign Minister, and West Germany by either Dr Leussink, the Science Minister, or Dr Walter Scheel, the Foreign Minister. The need for such a meeting became clear when the CERN Council felt unable to reach a decision on the siting of the accelerator at its December meeting. On December 11, the West German Government made it clear that the Federal Government would have to reconsider its allegiance to the project if the German site at Drensteinfurt near Munster was not selected.

The CERN Council has always maintained that the location of the accelerator must be decided on scientific grounds alone. The West German view, however, is that any of the five sites put forward by the participating countries is suitable. (Switzerland is excluded from the auction.) It is pointed out that none of the important European scientific centres is in West Germany—the IAEA is in Vienna, Euratom in Brussels, ESRO in Paris, CERN in Geneva, the FAO in Rome and Dragon in England. Another point that is likely to be discussed in Geneva is the absence of German as an official language at CERN; at present, only English and French are official languages.

Superficially, the West German Government has a fair case, and the CERN Council might well have selected the Drensteinfurt site in any case. But the whole concept of scientific cooperation is placed in jeopardy once a major partner starts trying to impose political decisions on a joint scientific project, and the French Government clearly regards the issue as one of many crises of confidence within the European community. Many other joint projects are in the pipeline—the giant computer project involving Siemens, ICL, CII, Philips and Olivetti, and the Franco-German plan for a joint telecommunication satellite among them—and both the French and German Governments are keen that the impasse over the accelerator should not impair the climate of scientific and technological cooperation. Another collaboration recently announced between France and West Germany is for the construction of a trainer aircraft to replace the twin jet Fouga Magister. This could pave the way for closer ties between the air forces of the two countries.

#### CHANNEL TUNNEL

### Is there a Light at the End?

THE outcome of the competition among three international groups of companies with plans for financing the Channel Tunnel project will probably be a merger. According to a spokesman for the Channel Tunnel Company Ltd—a member of one of the groups—talks have been going on for some time and are now in their final stages. The British and French Ministers of Transport were expected to choose one of the three proposals by the end of last year, but it now seems that their decision is likely to be whether to accept a combined plan.

The initiative for joining forces came apparently from Mr Richard Marsh when he was Minister of Transport. As early as October 1968, he said in reply to a parliamentary question that the three groups were being asked to revise their original proposals and added that they were invited, "should any of them prefer to do so, to combine for the presentation of fresh proposals". Since then, competition has gradually changed into cooperation. Although the talks have not yet reached a conclusion, there is said to be little likelihood that they will break down.

Still more planning will be necessary if the British and French Governments accept the group's proposals. The first stage will be for the group to make another study of the economics of a Channel Tunnel—including revised estimates of the traffic it would carry—to "bring the thing up to date", as Mr Fred Mulley, Minister of Transport, said in Parliament on November 11, 1969. This will take two years. Only then will the final decision be made about whether to go ahead with building the tunnel. There is thus still time in theory to consider alternatives such as a bridge, some kind of combination of bridge and tunnel or even a dam.

Plans for building the rail terminals, however, are already well advanced, with Cheriton in Kent chosen as the British site. The exact land requirements are not yet known, and there will be no compulsory purchase of land until the final decision on whether to bore, but in the meantime the Ministry of Transport is keeping in touch with the local authorities.

#### TOBACCO

### Smoking over Peak

THE latest collection of statistics put out by the Tobacco Research Council (*Statistics of Smoking in the United Kingdom*, Research Paper 1, fifth edition) show that tobacco consumption in Britain is now slightly below the peak of the early sixties. The consumption of tobacco among men is now in fact lower than at any time since the early twenties. According to an analysis of a survey carried out by the Tobacco Research Council, consumption per adult male in 1968 was 8.8 lbs per year, representing a steady decline since the annual consumption of 10.6 lbs per head in 1960. The peak of tobacco consumption in Britain seems to have been in 1945 when consumption worked out at 12.5 lbs per head per year. The end of the Second World War probably explains the decline in tobacco usage, which amounted to only 9.3 lbs per head per year in 1950. If men are smoking less, however, there seems no consistency in