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The year in retrospect





→ First "avec." Stations opened

By end of April, the first two shops according to the "avec." formula were opened in the stations of Schüpfen and Brugg. With these, the concept, jointly developed by SBB, Migros and Kiosk AG, should be tested. In autumn, a third shop was opened in the station of Mettmensstetten. The results of the tests is conclusive, the shops with a broad offer (train tickets, groceries, kiosk articles) and their long hours of opening (on all 365 days of the year, at least from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.) correspond to a strong need of the railway clients. In the next years, "avec." shops shall be opened in up to 50 stations. This increases the attractiveness of medium-sized stations, and the more important railway services can also be sold without sales personnel of the SBB.



→ Switzerland bogged down by snow

Several times in February, exceptionally heavy snowfalls affected the whole transport system in Switzerland. Also railway operation was strongly hampered because of iced-up switches, amongst other things. However because road traffic was even more affected, public transport could on the whole profit from an increased demand. This was particularly noticed at the Gotthard. Whilst the transit motorway was blocked for several days, the 117 years old mountain line of the SBB was opened to traffic again only a few hours after an avalanche came down. The avalanche protections built in the past years for several dozens of millions of francs have proven their worth.



→ Green light for flexible and shorter working hours

The time clock, symbol of a highly-regulated working time, will soon be time-expired at the SBB. In April, a breakthrough was reached in the negotiations with the trade unions for the introduction of new working hour models accepted by all. Its main feature is a more flexible working time arrangement in the interest of the employees and the enterprise. With the simultaneous reduction of the working time to 39 hours, the staff is compensated for renouncing a cost-of-living allowance, and the reduction of the workforce is slowed down. The new working hour models will be introduced at the time of the timetable change, beginning of June 2000.



→ Landslides and washed-out tracks

What was predicted by many experts proved true in May and June: the melting away of the big masses of snow in the Alps, combined with exceptionally heavy rainfall, led to inundations in many parts of the country. Rivers and lakes flooded and also underwashed many railway tracks. At times, big train delays and line interruptions occurred. The train worst hit was an S-Bahn trainset that on 12th May collided with the debris of a landslide between Wetzikon and Aathal, and derailed. Fortunately, there were no casualties.



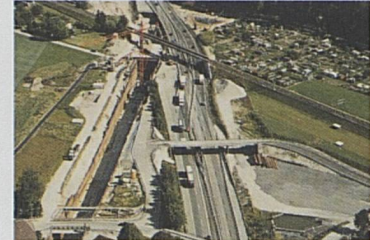
→ IC double-decker trains assigned to always more lines

The timetable change by end of May again brought an extension of the train offer. Specifically international traffic (Zurich–Stuttgart, Geneva–Milan) and regional traffic (15 minutes' sequence on the right-hand shore of the Lake of Zurich) could profit from improvements. The extension of the half-hour-sequence on the national long-distance network is particularly noteworthy, as it is one step in the phased realisation of the Rail 2000 offer (1st stage). The timetable 99 brought the half-hour sequence on the lines Lausanne–Fribourg, and Zurich–Lucerne. After termination of the renovation work at the city tunnels of Lucerne, it became also possible to use IC double-decker trains here.



→ Quiet-area compartments correspond to a need

The boom in mobile telephony has consequences for the railway. On the one side, travel time on the train can be put to advantage yet more, with business or private calls. On the other side, many train passengers feel disturbed in their enjoyment of travel by the mobile phones, but also by noise from other sources. With the introduction of quiet-area zones in Inter-city and Interregio trains, the SBB has reacted to this development, after a pilot test had brought positive results. To mark the carriages and compartments, a new pictogramme was created.



→ Rail 2000 underruns the river Emme

Everywhere, construction work for the new infrastructure of Rail 2000 is progressing at full speed. The core section of Rail 2000 is the 45 km long new line construction Mattstetten–Rothrist. At the most spectacular structure of the new line, the underrunning of the river Emme and the motorway in a 1600 m long tunnel, the cutting-through took place in September.



→ Adtranz plant closure rouses emotions

The announcement of Adtranz in late autumn that it is going to close its Pratteln and Oerlikon plants triggered a very big storm of indignation in Switzerland. Also the SBB is strongly concerned by the decision. The proximity of the final assembly plant for rolling stock to the SBB network has proven to be a decisive advantage for both partners in the past. The SBB places great value on a timely execution of the current orders of Intercity double-deck cars and tilting trains in the required quality. It cooperates in the search for solutions in order to at least retain part of the production in Switzerland.



→ Record in Gotthard traffic broken yet again

In the first half of the year, the freight boom only concerned Swiss domestic traffic. In autumn, the upward surge also began in international traffic. On 25th November, a new all-time record could be registered on the Gotthard with 150 159 tonnes transported in one day. At the measuring point in Erstfeld, 84 trains were registered in the direction north-south, and 74 south-north. This record was only possible because with constantly new operational means, the last capacity reserves are put to use on the Gotthard mountain line built in the 19th century. In the long term however, the creation of new capacities with the Gotthard base tunnel is an urgent necessity in order to uphold quality.



→ Lothar raged also at the SBB

On the second day of Christmas, the hurricane "Lothar" brought devastation to many parts of Switzerland. Also the railways were strongly affected. The tremendously strong squalls cut off numerous catenaries because trees had fallen on them. The SBB registered 88 line interruptions on a single day. In spite of this extreme stress – and this on a holiday – the inconveniences for the clients could be kept in limits, considering the circumstances. In order to bring the passengers to their destination, many bus substitution services were organised.