

Swiss PTT in 1976

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In 1976, PTT traffic development was still affected by the unstableness of the overall economic situation. While in some sectors the demand for PTT services showed a slight upturn against the previous year, further declines were experienced in others. Nevertheless, in 1976 – for the first time since 1970 – an overall profit was again made.

On the *postal side*, parcels were on the decrease again (–1.8 %) and so were addressed letters (–1.7 %), whereas unaddressed mail articles showed a marked gain (+13.5 %). Postal giro traffic – except payment orders to non-account holders – continued to rise: the number of postal giro accounts increased by 11.4 %, direct transfers by 7.9 %, while the total turnover was up 5.7 %. Postbus traffic was also slightly on the increase again.

The *telecommunications services* partly saw notable gains in 1976. Trunk calls showed a 3.1 % increase of chargeable minutes, not enough to compensate the loss in 1975 (–8.3 %) though. International calls rose by 5.3 % and thus did better than had been anticipated. Telex traffic growth also exceeded expectations. Seeing the sharp decline in home construction in Switzerland, the more than 61,000 new telephones installed represent a fair result though it cannot quite compare with the previous year's performance (106,000 new connections).

Overall, demand for PTT services in 1976 held its own (+0.1 %) and thus did somewhat better than had originally been anticipated: the decline in the postal sector was less pronounced and the growth in the telecommunication sector more marked than is shown in the forecast.

Retaining, recovering and stimulating traffic was one of the PTT's principal objectives for 1976. To achieve this, efforts were made to improve the range and quality of services offered. Saturday letter delivery was reintroduced wherever it had had to be discontinued owing to the labour shortage prevalent some years back. Other improvements include, on the postal side, the extension of parcel delivery on Fridays and of the office-hours at the counter, and on the telecommunications side the expansion of international subscriber dialling, the augmentation of telex lines, the extension of the radio and television networks, and the reduction of answering times in the enquiry services. The effectiveness of these steps was further enhanced by aptly selected publicity drives. On a particularly big scale was the campaign conducted in favour of Postal Giro, which no doubt materially contributed to the record figures of 67,613 additional postal giro accounts in 1976.

The *improvement of customer service* quite generally received PTT's particular attention. To further strengthen and deepen the good relationships already existing between PTT personnel and customers, an «offensive in favour of customer-oriented behaviour» was launched. The general easing of the labour market made it possible to slash the number of auxiliaries and to replace them by qualified, well-trained members of the staff, which is reflected by a higher standard of service.

Great efforts were made to *improve PTT's financial situation*. The 1976 budget called for a corporate profit of SFr. 30 million. The not all too encouraging business results of the first few months caused all credit positions to be re-

viewed in May and credits to the amount of SFr. 80 million – personnel costs had to take a major cut – to be stopped.

The total *number of PTT staff* fell by 627 as against the previous year. In all sectors the actual numbers were markedly lower than those stated in the budget. These personnel cuts together with continued streamlining efforts, a remarkably low rate of inflation, and supplementary receipts due to rate adjustments led to a higher corporate profit (SFr. 160 million) than had been anticipated.

As in the previous year, reviewing *PTT building* projects in the light of the lesser traffic to be expected resulted in a reduction of the size of numerous projects.

The *postal rate revision* enacted by Parliament became effective on 1 January 1976 and brought additional receipts. As the sharply increased rates for payment orders to non-account holders tended to induce large customers to switch to non-postal modes of payment, PTT endeavoured to counteract this trend by appropriate measures. The Federal Council actually reduced rates in respect of payment orders up to the amount of 50 francs again (1 May 1976). In the parcel service the rate boost led to an increased shift from registered to unregistered items.

Telephone and telex call charges to a number of European countries were likewise raised by an average of 15 % as from 1 January 1976. On the other hand, charges for telephone calls to 12 extra-European countries were lowered because more economic circuits (more efficient new cables and satellites) had become available. Also, a reduced rate for rented lines to overseas countries was introduced.

In December 1971 the PTT General Directorate issued *business management principles* for the first time, to which complementary management guidelines were added for the various sectors in the year under report. They lay down long-term directives with regard to rules of procedure and conduct and are primarily intended for officers in responsible positions at all levels.

The *PTT Board*, the directing body and legal supervisory authority of the Enterprise, made the corporate objective for the year 1976 – «Retaining, recovering and stimulating PTT traffic» and «Improving PTT's financial situation» – its special study. In this context it gave its particular attention to the corporate account as well as to the financial and investment budgets. It concerned itself with the corporate plan for the years 1976..80 repeatedly, gave its views on various operational measures and was regularly informed on the general run of business and the General Directorate's plans of action. Within its authority to approve building projects worth more than SFr. 3 million, it closely scrutinized eight major projects. Furthermore, it concluded the examination of the organizational structure of the General Directorate, which it had started in 1974. In agreement with the management consultants called in it pronounced against any decisive modifications.

The *Consultative PTT Conference*, which represents PTT customers, gave its attention, among other problems, to the planned introduction of periodic pulse metering for local calls. By a large majority the Conference recommended that PPM be used even in the local telephone service as soon as possible.

¹ Summary of the 1976 Annual Report of Swiss PTT