

Doctors in trouble

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DOCTORS IN TROUBLE

A new crime wave is affecting doctors in Switzerland. It was discovered by a postman who noticed that a doctor on his round suddenly did not receive any mail at all although the doctor was not on holidays but attended his surgery every day. Alerted by the postman, the doctor discovered that someone had instructed the local Post Office to hold all his mail as if he had gone on holiday and that all this mail had been uplifted. Furthermore, a large amount of money had also been uplifted from his own bank account.

At the same time, an employee of the local UBS branch noticed that a whole string of payments made by clients of the doctor had been paid into an account recently opened in another city.

Called to investigate, the police discovered a gigantic network of organised crime affecting mainly doctors. In total over 40 doctors in one canton alone had been the victims of this fraud which operates as follows:

First the crooks get a form from the Post Office to re-direct the mail. They fill in the form at home so that they do not have to sign it in front of the Post Office employee. They forge the victim's signature and seal it with a counterfeited rubber stamp. After this, they uplift the mail whenever it suits them because, up to now, no identification was required by the Post Office for this purpose.

All payments were automatically banked and paid into an account opened in the doctor's name in another city, again using a counterfeited document and false signature.

In total over one million SFR had been embezzled in this manner and the police is convinced that it is the work of an international gang of very sophisticated and professional thieves.

In the meantime, all doctors have been advised to check with their respective Post Offices and their Banks for any sign of tampering with their mail and their bank accounts.

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RIDING THE RIGI

Europe's oldest mountain railway is 125 years old. Through 125 years and millions of passengers, the Rigibahn has stood the test of time as one of Switzerland's most successful mountain railways and as a popular tourist attraction in its own right. Celebrations are being held this year to mark the anniversary of the railway which operates from the attractive village of Vitznau to the top of the Rigi.

The mountain - first documented in 1360 - became a mecca for travellers long before the advent of the railway. As early as the 17th century, the sick sought relief for their ailments in the healing spring water of Rigi Kaltbad. The first tourist hotel on the Rigi was built in 1816.

Later, poets, painters and other famous figures enthused over the romantic appeal of the mountain. Mendelssohn, Mark Twain, Victor Hugo and Wagner all wrote in glowing terms of their fascination for the Rigi. And Britain's Queen Victoria - on a largely secret visit to the region in 1868 - wrote of scenery so glorious "that I can hardly believe my eyes".

Convinced that mountain gradients of one in four could be safely surmounted, Niklaus Riggenbach, the son of a sugar refiner, but more interested in precision mechanics, developed the cogwheel system and applied for a licence to build and operate a railway up the Rigi. The plan met with considerable opposition, however, and a skeptical Swiss diplomat is said to have ridiculed Riggenbach in public with the words: "So you're going to build a railway up the Rigi, are you?" Riggenbach even had his cogwheel invention patented in France rather than in Switzerland. But he finally succeeded in raising the necessary capital from the banks and in 1869 the Lucerne cantonal parliament gave him the go-ahead.

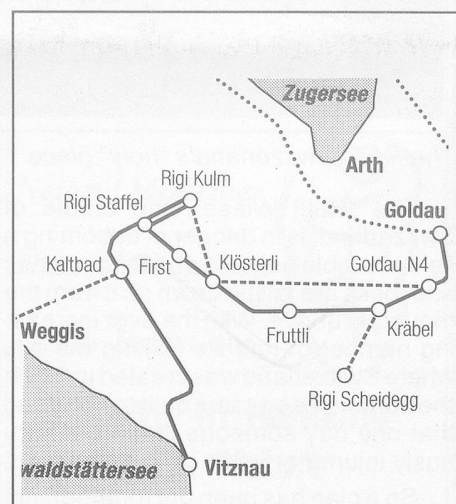
On May 21, 1871, the inauguration

of Europe's first mountain railway was celebrated in style. Members of the Swiss cabinet were among passengers on the maiden journey. The visiting VIP's were driven up the mountain by Riggenbach himself who always insisted on being called a "mechanic".

Riggenbach's expectations of 50,000 passengers annually were exceeded right from the start. More than 60,000 travellers were registered the first year and 100,000 by the mid-1870s.

Electrified since 1937, the Rigi railway carries some 350,000 passengers annually.

However, from the operations point of view, things are not going so well for the Rigi Railways. The Arth Goldau-Rigi part of the railway system is in dire need of replacement, but the costs are far too high. So it may well be that this railway line may be replaced in the near future by a new cable car with the rolling material being transferred over to the Vitznau-Rigi railway line.



The picture shows the present 2 railway lines from Vitznau and Arth Goldau to Rigi-Kulm, the cable car from Weggis to Kaltbad and the proposed new cable car from Goldau to Rigi-Kulm via Klösterli.