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Autor: Elliott, Christoper
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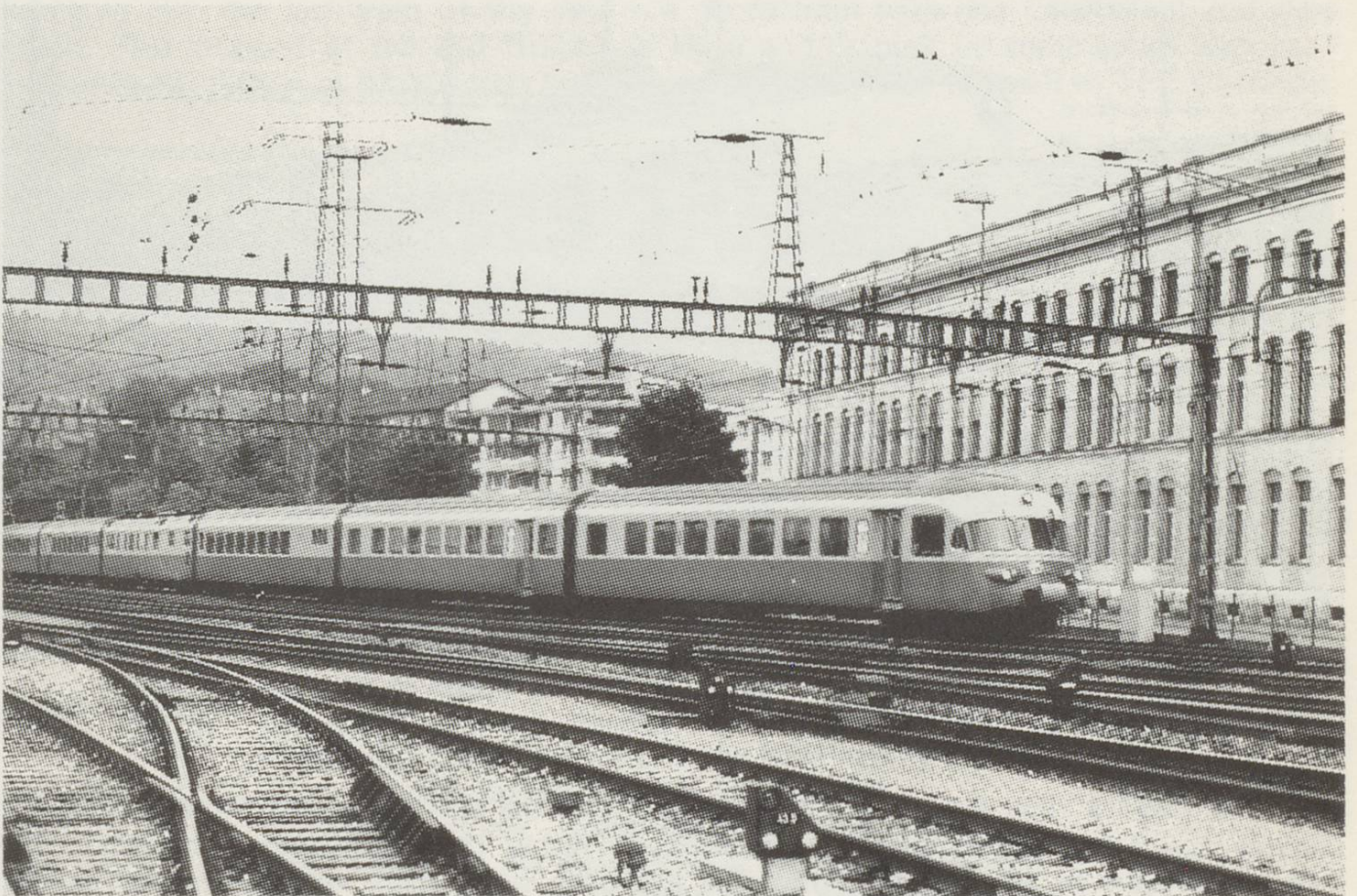
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FAREWELL TEE GOTTARDO

By Christopher Elliott

I recently visited Switzerland the main railway object of which was to see and to ride on the TEE RAE^{II} units before they ended their service as such. (They are to be converted into Eurocity RABe units). I had hoped to travel on the last service from Milano to Zürich Hbf but when I asked to book a seat immediately on my arrival at Zürich Flughafen, I was told it was sold out, so I had to settle for the penultimate service.

Prior to this visit I had only one photograph of an RAE^{II}. The TEE Gotardo TEE 57/58 used to leave Zürich Hbf at 08.39 and return at 20.53, so this meant getting up very early or getting back late from St. Gallen which is where I stay when in Switzerland. Since 31 May 1987 though it has left Zürich Flughafen at 14.18 (Zürich Hbf 14.34) and got back at 23.24 which meant good photographs southbound and none Northbound as nearly the whole Journey was in the dark.



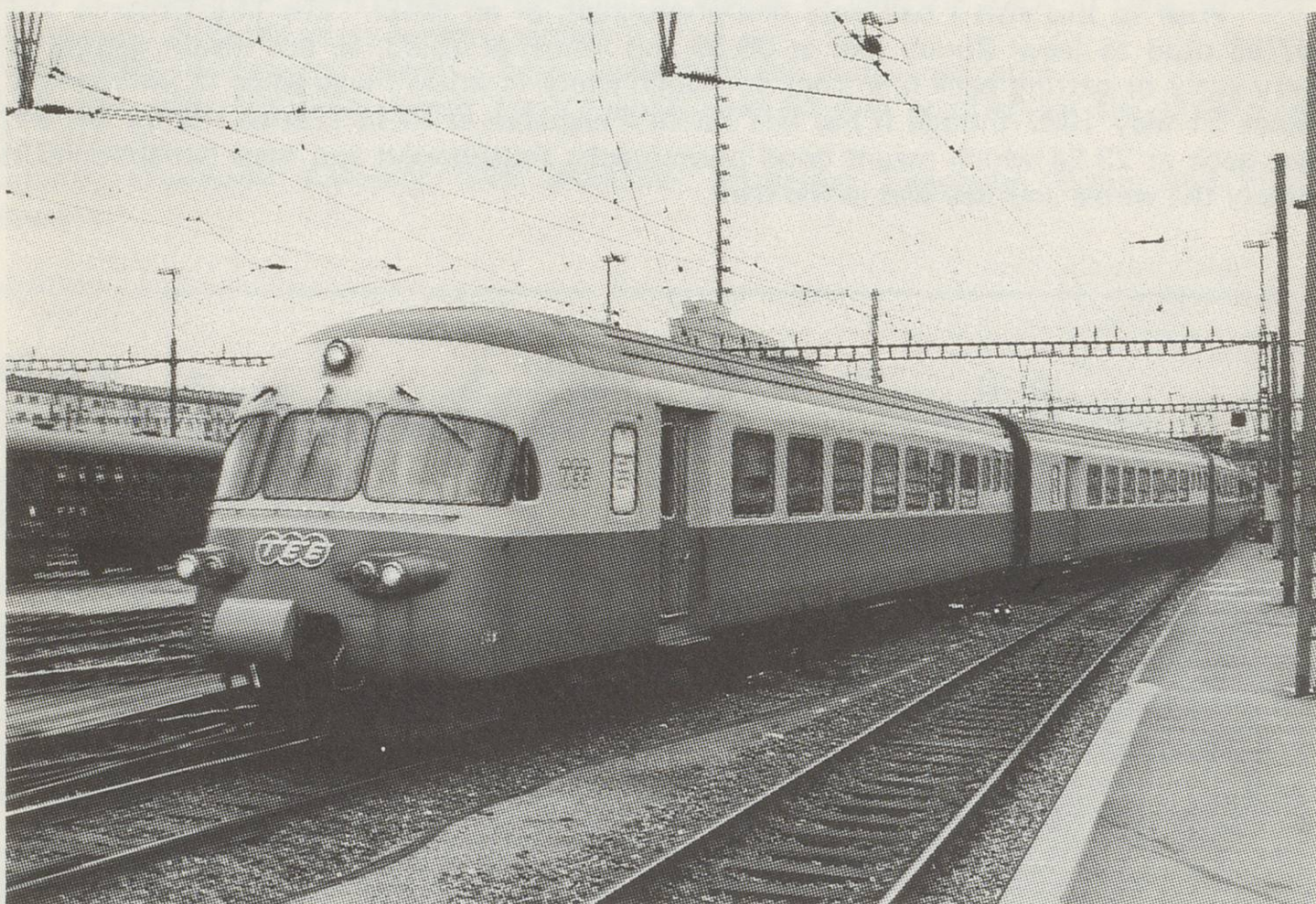
RAe II TEE passing its birthplace. MFO Oerlikon.

Photo: C. Elliott

On its Southbound journey TEE 57 started from Zürich Flughafen so on Tuesday 20 September 1988 I set off for Zürich Oerlikon between Flughafen and Hauptbahnhof so that I could take a picture of it underway and not in a station. I took the above picture of RAE^{II} 1051 on its way to Zürich Flughafen from the sidings outside Zürich Hbf on the Southwest approach to Oerlikon. I had two cameras in action one with slide film on a tripod and the other with print film in my hands. I then had to pack up very quickly to get the next train into Hauptbahnhof so that I could then get a picture of the RAE^{II}

coming into the station and then some pictures inside. While waiting for the train to come in I saw one of the converted RABe units. These are painted in the new SBB Eurocity livery of light grey with a dark grey band between the windows. The TEE train then pulled into platform 4, then at 14.34 it left for Milano.

Four TEE units designated RAe II were originally built and ran for the first time in the summer of 1961. They ran as the Gottardo from Zürich to Milano, the Ticino from Basle to Milano and the Cisalpin from Milano to Paris. They were the first electric TEE trains to run through different countries with different current systems. Their speed and comfort proved them so successful that in 1965 an extra coach was added.



RAe II TEE arriving at Zurich Hbf.

Photo: C. Elliott

In 1967 a fifth train was built to cope with the still increasing demand so that a service could be run doubled up if necessary rather than turn customers away. This though proved to be a rather inflexible approach since there were often not enough passengers to fill two complete trains. In 1974 the Cisalpin was replaced with locomotive hauled stock while a little later the Ticino was withdrawn. This left surplus sets to be used elsewhere. One set was chartered to Swissair to "fly" from Zürich to Basle and another was used as a feeder service for the TGV from Bern to France while a third sat in the sidings for a long time providing parts for the others.

On Friday 23 September 1988 I left St. Gallen on the 07.44 IC 116 so that I could catch the 09.07 over the St. Gottard. I changed at Faido into a Treno Regionale and then after an hour's stop in Lugano I continued on to Capolago for a trip up Monte Generoso. Unfortunately it was very foggy so I could not see the wonderful view which normally exists. I got back down in good time to walk a little alongside Lago Lugano to take a

photograph of TEE 57 coming through. The day was still very misty but some faint sunshine came through as the train pulled along the lakeside to give a pleasing result. I then had a couple of hours before I was to join TEE 58 in Lugano on its Northward Journey. I caught the next train to Chiasso where after a quick look round I caught train 299 back to Lugano. This is a train which I expect is familiar to many people who have travelled to or from Switzerland as it is the night train to Oostende/Calais.

Once back at Lugano, I had time to photograph the indicator boards but these already showed the EC sign rather than the old TEE signs. The train was due to depart from Binario 3 at 20.34 but about ten minutes before that time we were informed that it was running ten minutes late and then on top of that a few minutes later we were told to cross to Binario 1. A little much I thought for a first class only train. Eventually it came and I climbed aboard into my reserved seat in coach 5. After a few minutes I set off for the restaurant car where I was lucky to get the last seat.

Having stopped at Bellinzona and Zug as scheduled we pulled into Zürich Hbf still some ten minutes late. I just had time for a couple more farewell photographs before I had to rush round to Gleis 14 to get the last service to St. Gallen. This was most interesting as it involved getting an Intercity train (2747) to Winterthur and then changing into the last train of the day – a goods train with one Leichtstahl 2nd class coach. This stopped at Wil and Gossau to leave and/or pick up some goods wagons. I arrived in St. Gallen at 01.20 tired but pleased that I had said farewell to TEE Gottardo.

TERMINUS STEINER

The hotel is ideally situated as a base for those railway excursions, a visit to the Rigi mountain or the local naturepark. Located adjacent to the large railway station of Arth-Goldau and the Arth Rigi Bahn.

Comfortable rooms - some with a view of the railway - Good food from the restaurants or the Garden grill and superb scenery as well as Good Swiss hospitality are the best ingredients for a good holiday. We will gladly send you full details.

Hotel Terminus-Steiner. Bahnhofstraße 9. CH 6410 Goldau
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