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Autor: Hoekstra, George M.
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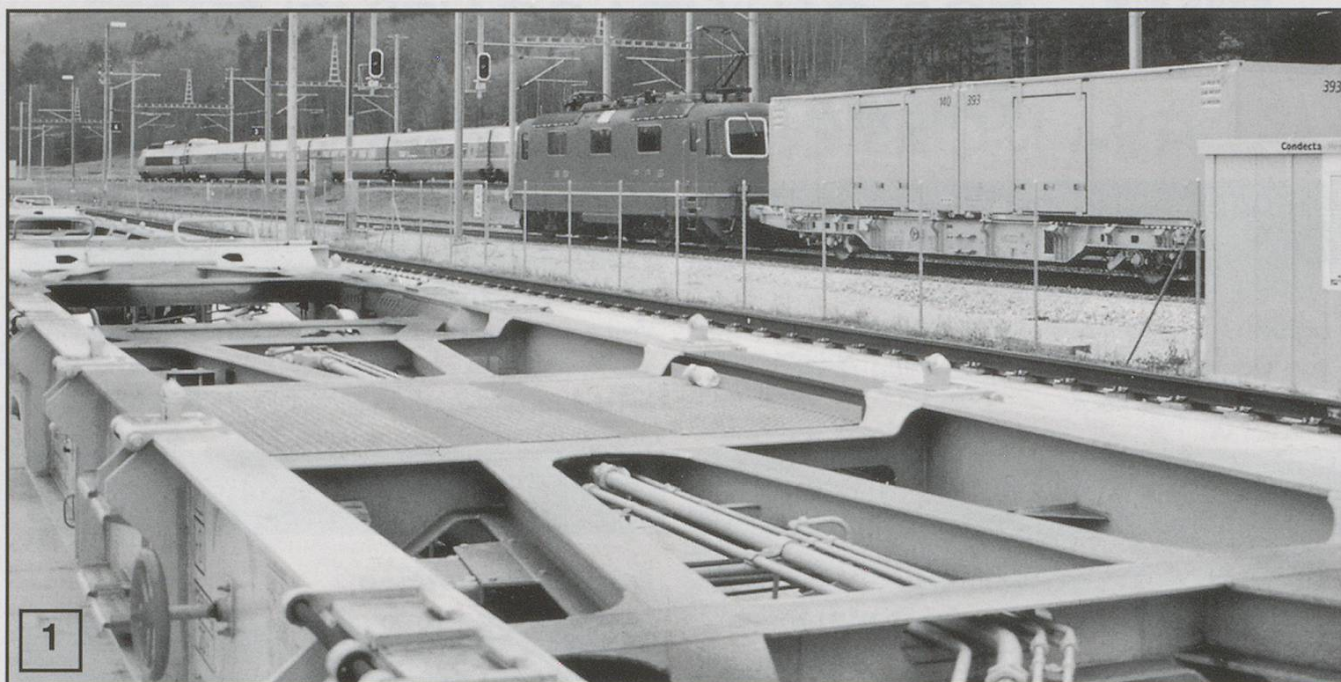
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The TGV racing in the background on its way from Lausanne to Paris, is just about to negotiate the turnoff for Vallorbe. The Re 4/4^{II} with its postal train is not quite as fast, but the special two-axle swap-body carrier wagons are capable of running at 75 mph.

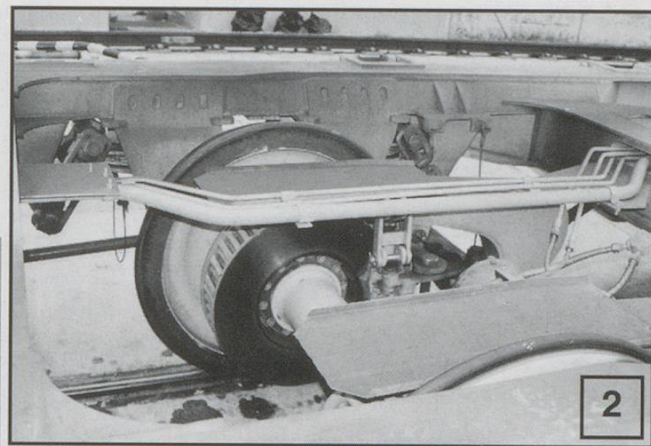
The Swiss love to send parcels: the total population of just over seven million, sends off an incredible total of 600,000 parcels a day which in turn equates to 25 parcels for every man, woman and child per year! Some of the traffic is mail order. Then there are the parcels of goodies sent by families to the men doing their military service (which is compulsory and lasts on average 2-3 weeks every other year, for males between the ages of 20-45), the countless components and spare parts for Switzerland's multitude of very small industries and naturally many private ones. I myself send off one almost every week.

To handle all of this, the Swiss postal service "La Poste / Die Post / La Posta" relies very heavily on rail transport. The beginning and the end of the chain, though, are the familiar yellow vans. Every parcel is bar coded. Once "tagged", they go through the distribution centres, where they can be both directed towards their destination, as well as being traced en route. They are loaded onto rolling cages which are then transported in special swap-bodies.

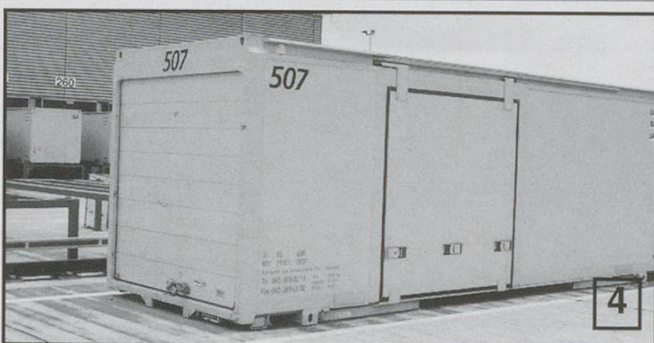
These travel on special wagons in merry-go-round trains which link most major population areas. Three purpose built and almost fully automated sorting centres: Daillens in the west, Härkingen in the centre and Frauenfeld in the east, do most of the distribution to the smaller local centres. The bar code directs the parcel onto the different stages: onto another rolling cage, into another swap-body and so on, till it arrives at the final destination, the point at which the postman puts it in his van. In an average day, the purpose built swap body carrier wagons on the trains transport over 3,000 tonnes over a total distance of 100,000 km! Without the trains, all of this would have to go on the road, just imagine. . . .

Your correspondent was invited to visit the automated sorting centre at Daillens, near Lausanne and thus made possible the following Photo-Story. A great big "merci beaucoup" to the people of "La Poste-Transports", of the "Centre de distribution de Daillens" and the CFF press office in Lausanne!

The 57 ft. long "Lgnss" wagons are fitted with disc brakes, anti-rolling cylinders and oleo buffers. They are registered with AEE Cargo in Zug, a specialist wagon rental company. See drawing No. 1.

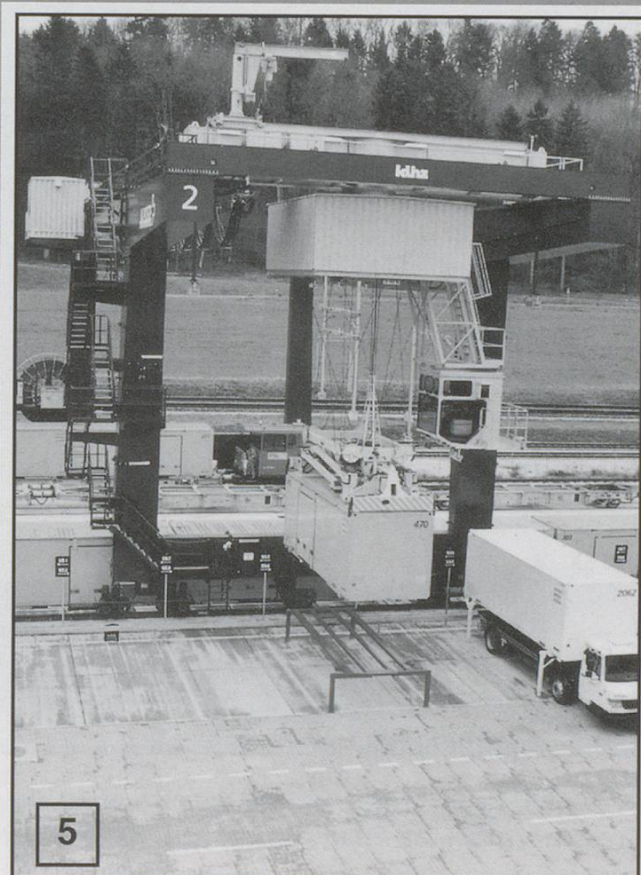


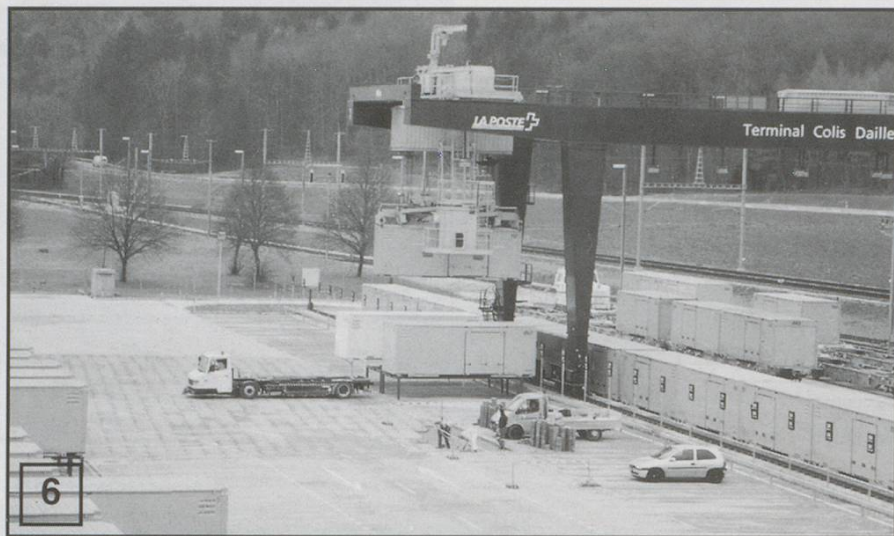
Once in the sidings of the centre, the train is taken over by the resident tractor. It is owned by the manufacturer Stadler, leased to the PTT and numbered in the SBB series, as Tm 237-916-2. The driver is employed by the Post, but trained by the SBB.



The special swap-bodies (as they cannot be stacked, they are not classified as containers) are built by Frech Hoch in Sissach. They are 24ft. 5in. long, 8 ft. 4 in. wide and 8 ft. 9 in. high. They are in the process of being fitted with a transponder, which will enable GPS tracing of the yellow swap-body. See drawing No. 2.

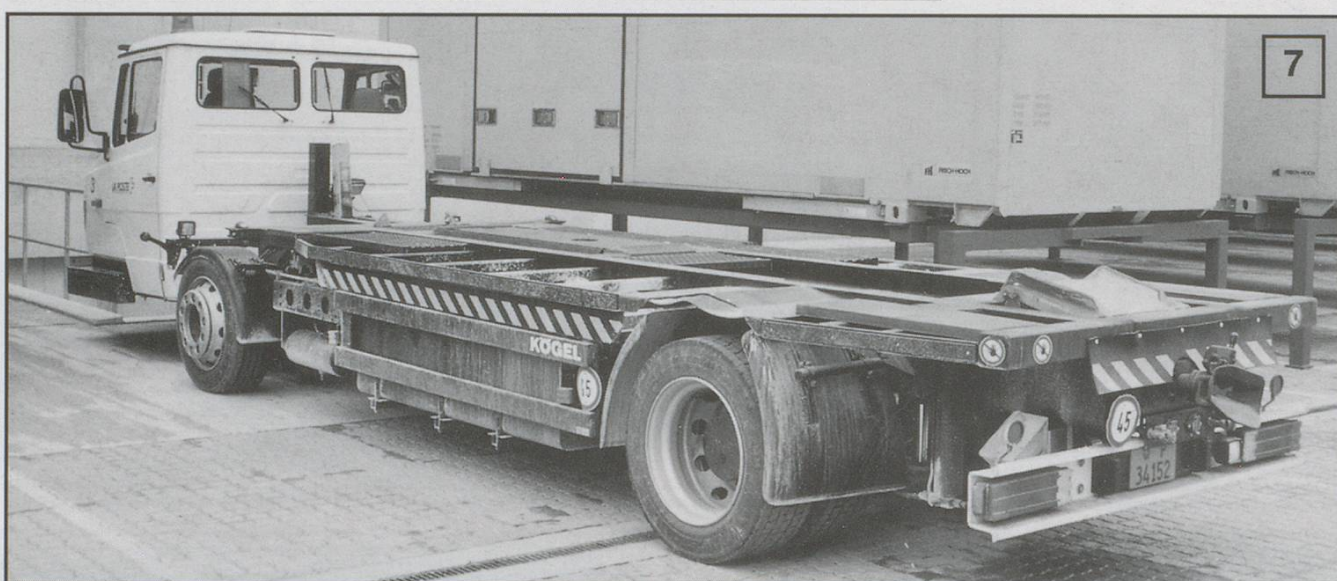
The swap-bodies are lifted off the wagons by one of the two 16 t. gantry cranes and placed on special carrier-beds. The swap-bodies are fitted with emergency legs, but these are not designed for heavy everyday use.





It is just a short distance to the loading bays at the terminal. A purpose built truck drives under the carrier-bed, connects with the swap-body and the carrier, lifts it off the ground and drives to the correct bay. Here the combination of swap-body and carrier-bed is put back on the ground.

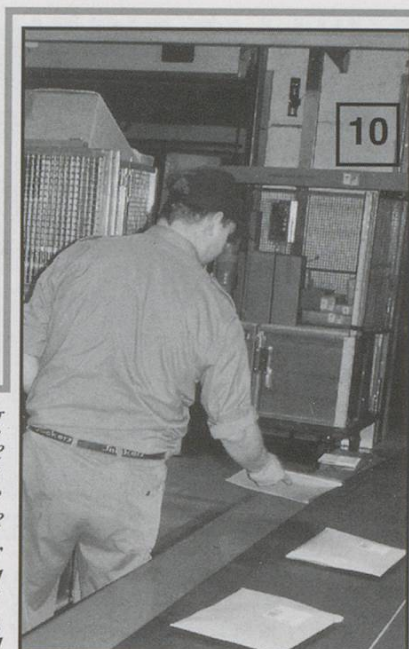
The trucks have a standard underframe with a special cab and loading bed designed and built by Kögel.



Everything is numbered: the swap-bodies, the rolling cages, the loading bays and every parcel. The central computer knows where and when the parcel has passed through.



The swap-body in loading bay 244 is destined for the distribution centre in Härkingen. Inside, the parcels are loaded in rolling cages. In a 24-hour period, the centre handles about 25 trains, with 500 swap-bodies, holding 4,000 rolling cages.



One of the few humans working in the centre. First he has to take out parcels which are oversized, wrongly packaged (i.e. with loose strings that can get caught), or have no bar code. These will have to be handled separately. The others have to be placed with the bar code the right way up on the conveyor belt.



After the bar code has been read by one of these gates, the parcel will be conveyed with full automation. The centre can handle a maximum of 15,000 parcels an hour. These almost flat packets are parcels: the centre does not handle letters.



In the huge 1,000. ft. long hall, the parcels travel on continuous conveyors with tipping platforms, which lead into one of the 337 destination bins.

Ready for their next stage are these "Dispo Boxes", strong plastic boxes for multiple use, that can be borrowed from the Post and have to be returned to them. They are used a lot by customers that have a lot of similar sized items to send. Note how the rolling cages are held in place by special poles secured to ceiling and floor.



No. 1 : An Lgnss wagon of "Die Post - Paketpost"
(dimensions in mm.).

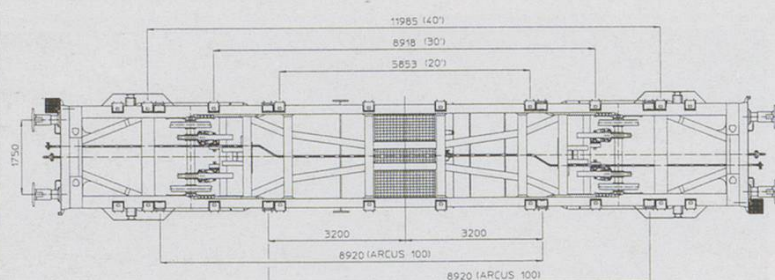
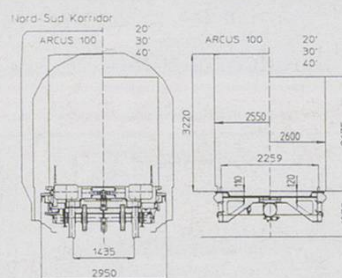
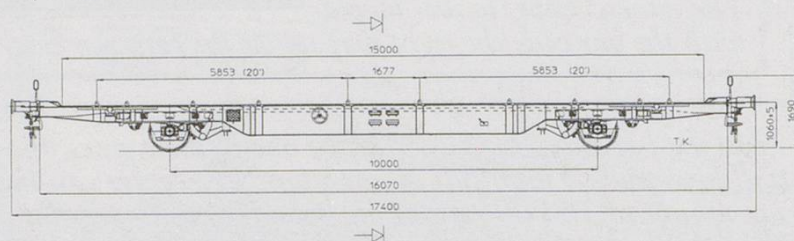



Figure 1: A schematic diagram of a multi-story building structure showing various levels and dimensions. The building is composed of several rectangular sections stacked vertically. From top to bottom, the sections are: a top section with two 20' x 7.45m units (15.5' wide), a section with a 20' x 7.45m unit (7.82m wide) and a 20' x 9m unit (31' wide), a section with a 30' x 11.983m unit (31' wide), a section with a 40' x 15.0m unit (31' wide), and a bottom section labeled 'Arcus 100 L = 13.79m' (29' wide). Dimensions are given in feet and meters. Arrows indicate the width of each section. The total height of the building is 3200 units, with a 3000 unit section below the main structure.

	A	B	C	D
S	18	22	27	31
SS	18	22	27	31

Tragwagen Lgnss - Diec		Guertel	29.04.98	sd
		Gesamt	30.04.98	Gy
DIE POST  Die Schweizerische Post Paketpost Einlieferungs- (Die versenden)		Umsatz:		
			PP2000	F2-980452

Technical drawing of the mobile office unit showing dimensions and weight specifications:

- Overall width: 3650
- Overall depth: 7450
- Distance between main sections: 2100
- Distance between drawers: 1700
- Drawer width: 2550
- Drawer depth: 2340
- Drawer height: 2160
- Overall height: 105
- Max. height: 3955
- Weight specifications:
 - Net weight: 2800 kg
 - Gross weight: 3200 kg
 - Total weight: 16000 kg

No. 2 : Swap-body
of "Die Post -
Pakpost" (dimen-
sions in mm.).

Gewichte	
Leergewicht	2800 kg
Nutzlast	13200 kg
Zul. Gesamtgewicht	16000 kg

Masse innen	
Länge	7200 mm
Breite	2460 mm
Höhe bis Unterkante Sperrbalken	1900 mm

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