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FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT

George M Hoekstra

avec. – THE FIRST DOZEN



The two columns in front of the store document the dual operation: on the right, the SBB with reduced opening times and closed on Sundays – for tickets, travel, luggage and change. **avec.** on the left, open every day for most of the day, for all the rest.

holidays in Muttentz and Gelterkinden. The reason was the large volume of this sector, which could no longer be handled by the licensee. So now, SBB personnel operate the travel

sector as a “shop in shop”.

The latest **avec.** store, recently opened in the station of Muttentz was the 12th “little big shopping” store to turn a station, which had lost its signalling centre and was in danger of becoming desolate and vandalized, into “a station and a lot more”: both statements of the company. The store will be open, like all **avec.** stores, from 06 h till 20 h. But unlike all other stores, the transformation of Muttentz, like its sister store in Gelterkinden, opened a few weeks before, signals a departure of the recipe adhered to before: unlike the first 10 **avec.** stores, where the licensee does everything, the SBB decided to retain the selling of tickets, tours and

The colourful combination of the little Smart with its mini-trailer used by the **avec.** support team, documents their strategy: a lot in a small space, without compromising quality or flexibility!



THE END OF THE MITTELTHURGAUBAHN



Locomotive No. 486 651-3, one of the so-called goods taxis of the Lokoop is still carrying the "mittelthurgaubahn" - logo on the 7th of October 2002. It is one of a pair pulling a heavy aggregate train through Sissach. Also, the engine is proudly displaying the fact that the railway was awarded the Thurgau apple, a prize for innovation, awarded by the canton in 2000. Now the SBB has taken over the bankrupt Mittelthurgaubahn, I wonder if any changes in this livery will be made...

STAMP CORNER



This is what the two stamps will look like. Remember, they are only valid for franking postcards going abroad. A letter with one or more of these stamps will be regarded as not having any stamp at all!

On the 19th of November, the Swiss Post will be issuing two stamps that have not got a

value printed on them. This will be the first time ever, that a stamp marked "Helvetia" is issued this way. With the cooperation of with Swiss Post International, Swiss Tourism and the Philatelist Service of the Swiss Post, these two stamps will only be valid on postcards sent abroad. The dark blue stamp is for postcards to Europe only; the red stamp is for postcards to the rest of the world. They will not be valid for any other post and cannot be combined with any other stamps. The stamp has the famous golden Edelweiss with the Swiss white cross on a red background on it. Most of

you will know this to be the emblem of Swiss Tourism, the official representation of all the local Swiss tourist offices. The Swiss Railway Society has a very good relationship with their London Office at:

Switzerland Tourism

**Swiss Centre, 10 Wardour Street
LONDON, W1D 6QF**

Tel: 020 7851 1700

They have always been extremely helpful. To get back to the stamps, they are sold in books of six self-adhesive stamps at SFr 7.20 for the dark blue "cards Europe" and SFr 10.00 for

the red "cards worldwide" stamps, also for a booklet of six. They will be available not only in post offices, but also in kiosks, hotels and souvenir shops. Single stamps are for sale only in post offices at the normal price of SFr 1.30 for Europe and SF 1.80 for Worldwide.

The Service for philatelists at the Swiss Post also has a new, greatly improved, website, complete with safe facility for credit card orders (HTTPS/SSL protocol):

www.post.ch/philashop, click on English text: "EN".

EXPO 02 – THE IRIS CATAMARANS



I know, it is not a railway, but I did enjoy the high speed "cats" that plied between Bienne, Neuchâtel and Yverdon, and a smaller one between Neuchâtel and Murten.

Photo 1: The *Buenos Aires*, one of the large catamarans, is tied up in the harbour of Bienne. After the EXPO, the "cats" will be sold abroad, as they cost too much to operate and create too much of a swell on the tranquil lakes.

Photo 2: In the cockpit of the *Buenos Aires*. The "captains" normally operate fluvial freight transporters (a lot of gravel for the motorways in the region is dredged up from the lakes and then transported by boats), so they know every nook and cranny of the lakes. On the right, the radar screen can be seen: we are in the canal between the lakes of Neuchâtel and Bienne. The "steering wheel" is only used for the slow motion manoeuvring in the harbour. At speed, the captain controls the vessel with a joystick.



EXPO 02 – A TRIUMPH FOR PUBLIC TRANSPORT

After the EXPO closed on the 19th of October, a total of about 3.5 million people (almost half the total population) had made a total of over 10 million visits to the different sites. Public transport during the EXPO proved to be an enormous success. Instead of the 40% hoped for during the planning stage, a staggering 57% of visitors took the train. In total, about 3.5 million extra railway journeys were made including those between the different sites. As a consequence many of the specially made parking lots remained almost empty - a railway man's dream come true! The workforce will receive part of the several million Pounds extra revenue earned. And earn it they did.

Everybody contributed to the enormous effort to make this fantastic achievement possible. Careful planning was at the heart of it: The SBB alone ran a grand total of 1600 extra trains during the EXPO. For the extra train crews alone, they needed a daily average of 90 persons. Some trains, especially on the Zürich - Olten - Neuchâtel axis, were run quadrupled. At the EXPO stations of Bienne, Neuchâtel and Yverdon, which naturally became extremely busy during the morning and evening peaks, 540

volunteers from SBB central office, including the CEO himself, Mr Weibel, as well as 100 apprentices, helped out by acting as crowd facilitators for one or more days. For security reasons and to avoid overcrowding on the platforms, special waiting zones were installed away from the platforms to hold groups until their train was ready. More than half a million of the visitors, 250 000 of them school children, came as part of a group. In the station of Bern the BLS manned two stands in the mornings to help travellers with information on special trains. In order to cope with the extra traffic the BLS ran extra trains in addition to its regular services to Neuchâtel and initiated a special extended service to Murten via Kerzers. Murten was the fourth of the EXPO sites. The Murten service was run with up to three NINA units coupled together. All in all a tremendous testimonial to public transport. With proper planning it can cope with huge increases in traffic. Well done, everyone!

STOP PRESS: The SBB announced in mid-November that they will be distributing SFr 5 million to their staff as mentioned above.

A well - deserved reward.



STARRING SBB

SEE PAGE 56 FOR THE FULL STORY ABOUT SBB'S TV DAY

Just like the old days: Crocodile Ce 6/8^{III} No. 14305 in front of a GmP: Güterzug mit Personenbeförderung - a freight with passenger accommodation. It was an extra for railway journalists and ran from Sissach via Läfelfingen and on via Zofingen to Brugg. It is seen here while taking a rest at Suhr station. The driver checks the temperature of

the bearings of the connecting rods with his hand. A lot of the driving mechanism of the crocodiles was taken straight from the steam-engine technology. Behind the engine is a rake of historic 2-axle goods wagons, restored by the "Association 10264". John Jesson mentioned this Association in his article "Illustrating the Eras: Era II", which appeared in the last *Swiss Express*, together with two photographs courtesy of the *Eisenbahn Amateur*. The Vice President of the SVEA (*Eisenbahn Amateur* to you), Marcel Broennle, is also a very active member of this Association. He was with us on the trip to tell us all about it!