

**Zeitschrift:** Helvetia : magazine of the Swiss Society of New Zealand  
**Herausgeber:** Swiss Society of New Zealand  
**Band:** 12 (1947)  
**Heft:** 4

**Artikel:** Swiss railroads : celebrate 100 - year anniversary  
**Autor:** [s.n.]  
**DOI:** <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-942976>

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SWISS RAILROADS.

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CELEBRATE 100 - YEAR ANNIVERSARY

One hundred years ago the first Swiss train huffed and clattered over the 14-mile stretch from Zurich to Baden. The rickety wooden cars swayed behind the small, growling locomotive. Passengers blinked under a hail of cinders and soot. The seats were hard, uncomfortable. But the thrill and prestige of travelling almost 30 miles an hour was worth all the inconvenience. Soon well-to-do Zurich burgers and their families made the trip to Baden regularly. They called the train the "Spanish Bun Express," because of an imported coffee-cake that was a specialty in Baden.

Now, as the Swiss railroads celebrate their centennial, the "Spanish Bun Express" is ready to run again. The Federal Railroads ordered a replica of the first "Limmat" locomotive. The reincarnated "iron horse" will make its return debut during the annual Sechseläuten Spring Festival in Zurich around the 21st of April. During the rest of the year, it will tour leading Swiss cities.

The Zurich-Baden line and other early railroads in Switzerland were built through private initiative. Just as in the United States, rivalry and competition were keen. Administration was enormously complicated because each canton had control of its own transportation policies and legislation. Finally, at the end of the last century, control was transferred to the Federal Government, and a uniform policy developed.

In 1902, several large private companies merged, and the Swiss Federal Railroads were founded. Today, the government network includes approximately half of the nation's total track length of 3,968 miles.

Several privately operated companies are also important. One of the leading independents is the Berne-Lötschberg-Simplon line. Another is the Rätian Railroad which serves the Grisons over 270 miles of narrow-gauge track. The Montreux-Bernese Oberland Railroad, also a narrow-gauge road, connects the Lake of Geneva region with Spiez, rail center on the Lake of Thun in the Bernese Oberland.

Both government and private roads are 90% electrified. Hydro-electric power, or "white coal" as the Swiss like to call it, is one of the few natural resources the mountain republic has in abundance. And the Swiss, with characteristic efficiency, utilize it to the utmost. Result is that Swiss trains are spotlessly clean, and surprisingly fast even over mountainous terrain. Express "flyers" from Geneva to Zurich average close to 80 miles an hour.

The Swiss solved many complex engineering problems in developing rail transportation to its present high level. There are over 150 tunnels over 400 feet long, headed by the great alpine tunnels: the Simplon, St. Gotthard and Lotschberg. The 12-mile long Simplon tunnel, 7,000 feet below the crest of the snow-capped peaks at the Swiss-Italian frontier, is the longest in the world. The St. Gotthard tunnel is  $9\frac{1}{4}$  miles long, the Lötschberg 9 miles. In some regions

trains wind through loop-tunnels that corkscrew up steep mountain slopes, then there are numerous viaducts, avalanche galleries and nearly 5,000 bridges. And finally, those unique examples of Swiss technical ingenuity, the cogwheel railroads and funiculars that take visitors at dizzy angles to alpine summits.

At present, rail traffic in Switzerland is at an all-time peak. Over 800,000 passengers are carried daily, and mileage travelled every 24 hours totals about 125,000 miles. New engines and rolling stock are being added by all lines in steadily increasing quantity, and the Federal Railroads have announced their schedules, both domestic and international, will be speeded up even more within the next few months.

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SUNDRY NEWS FROM SWITZERLAND.

On the 10th of March the 1st of August Committee met in Berne to discuss the arrangements for this year's collection. It was decided that the funds collected in 1947 should be earmarked for the education of infirm people and for cancer research work.

The net result of last year's collection amounted to 1,100,000 frs., of which amount three-quarters were allocated to Swiss abroad, and one-quarter to Swiss who, owing to the war, had to return to Switzerland.

A commercial treaty between Switzerland and Czechoslovakia has just been concluded. Czechoslovakia has agreed to deliver to Switzerland - sugar, glass and china ware, coke, Iron and metal goods, machinery, textiles, boots and shoes and chemical products, whilst Switzerland will supply Czechoslovakia with machinery, scientific instruments, dyes, medical products, textiles, watches and agricultural products.

Negotiations which have been under way during the last few days between Swiss financial experts and officials of the Belgian Ministry of Finance concerning a 50 million franc loan to Belgium have been concluded. The loan has been granted by Swiss banks. The Swiss credit will be used for the modernisation of the Belgian telephone and telegraph system. The 70,000 telephones with automatic equipment are to be imported from Switzerland.

The Swiss Federal Government in a report on its policy towards the Press in the war gives an account of the struggle with the Nazi Government and its Press organs, which continued throughout the war. It makes plain Nazi intentions to prepare for the invasion of Switzerland by undermining the determination of the Swiss to maintain their neutrality under arms.

During the war the German Legation in Berne made representations on Press matters to the Federal Government on 169 occasions. The report says that the British Legation in Berne conducted a Press service but this differed from that of the Germans, in that it was mainly informative and designed to take the place of English newspapers when Switzerland was cut off.

The authorities refrained from intervening against it, partly for reasons of equality of treatment, and partly because it acted as a counterweight to German and Italian propaganda. "The Legation bulletins in fact were equivalent to the war-time publication of an English newspaper, a case without precedent in Press relationships."

According to informed quarters Switzerland recently declined to grant additional credits to Spain and insisted that future sales to Spain be made on a cash and carry basis. They said the outstanding Spanish debt to Switzerland was 50,000,000 Swiss francs. Switzerland, they added, had adopted the position that no further credits will be granted until this debt is liquidated.