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HEDGEHOG MUM

Seventy-five year old Melly Meyer is well known in Switzerland as "IGEL-MAMI". Over the past 28 years she has looked after and nursed over 1000 sick hedgehogs. Now she pleads: "do not bring me anymore hedgehogs". She says that she is getting too old to keep on looking after these cute little animals which she loves so much. She claims that she is spending over 10 hours a day attending to their needs and seldom gets to bed before 2 o'clock in the morning. At the moment she is still nursing 25 hedgehogs back to health but once they have gone, she does not want any more. During her heydays, Melly sometimes had up to 135 hedgehogs in her house.

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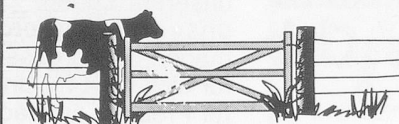


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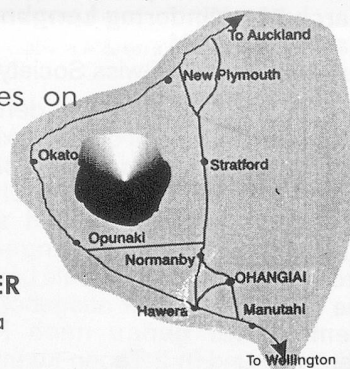
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DIRECT RAIL-LINK ST GALLEN-GENEVA TO BE CUT

Another break between the French and the German parts of Switzerland it seems, a further deepening of the "Röstigraben". This time it comes from the SBB/CFF who have decided that as from 1997 its direct Intercity train service between Geneva and St Gallen will be discontinued.

But strangely enough, this time the complaint about this cut does not come from the French part of Switzerland, but from St Gallen.

At the present there is a through train service Geneva-St Gallen and vice versa via Lausanne, Fribourg, Berne and Zurich every hour on the hour from 6 am until 11 pm. As from 1997, this service will no longer exist. Geneva passengers bound for the "Ostschweiz" will have to change trains in Zurich and St. Gallen passengers bound for the "Welschschweiz" will have to do the same in Berne.

For several years, people in St Gallen have felt that the "Ostschweiz" had been neglected by the SBB. Whilst the "golden triangle" Zurich-Basel-Berne has seen great improvements in train services, the "Ostschweiz" claims that they have received next to nothing. The suppression of the St Gallen-Geneva service is viewed by the "Ostschweizer" as another blow to them.

On the other hand, there was hardly any reaction in Geneva to the SBB/CFF announcement. The reason is that the people in Geneva could not care less since few of them would ever travel to St Gallen in the first place.

The SBB/CFF defended their decision on the grounds that they are planning to introduce double-decker trains between Zurich and Berne as from 1997. These trains cannot go beyond Berne because there are four tunnels between Berne and Lausanne which are not large enough to let double-decker trains go through. So until these tunnels have been rebuilt, the double-decker train service will have to terminate in Berne.

The reply from the people of St Gallen was swift: Since many tunnels in the "golden triangle" were rebuilt to accommodate these new trains, why was the same not done for the four tunnels between Berne and Lausanne? Quite a legitimate question which the SBB have not yet been able to answer.

NOTE TO SECRETARIES

Next issue of the Helvetia magazine: **MARCH 1996**. All contributions must be in by 15 February. Many thanks for your kind cooperation.