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Rhaetian Lines That Might Have Been

By Mike Polglaze

Some years ago Cyril Freezer wrote an article in *Railway Modeller* called *Lines that Might Have Been*. I don't know if he recalls it, but he had a considerable influence on my modelling views and since then almost every layout I have built has been what I call a "freelance prototype". These include the present *Via Mala* and before that *Hinterrhein*, both layouts having been based on a part of the RhB that might have been, *die Bernhadinbahn*. This was one of a number of routes proposed by the RhB around the turn of the century, but because of World War I and its aftermath, never came to fruition. Had they done so, today's map of the RhB would look very different from the one we know.

As a result of some "greymail" by our Hon.Sec. (I wouldn't exactly call it blackmail, he has some photos I want) I sort of agreed to have a stab at doing a series of articles on these proposed lines, which will be spread over future issues of *Swiss Express* on an as and when basis. John Jesson has sent me some useful notes which are, of course, in German and will have to be translated.

The lines it is intended to cover include:

1. Bernhadinbahn (Thusis - Mesocco - Bellinzona)
2. Vintschgaubahn (Scul - Martinsbruck - Landeck)
3. Ofenbergbahn (Zernez - Schluderens)
4. Bergellerbahn (St.Moritz - Chiavenna)

One proposed line I had not heard of until the RhB Centenary Book was a line from Landquart to Vaduz (Lichenstein) with a branch from Maienfeld to Bad Ragaz. Does anyone know of further details of this?

It is interesting to note that of the above routes, only the *Bernhadinbahn* and the Bad Ragaz branch would have remained within Swiss borders. The *Bernhadinbahn* and *Vintschgaubahn* came nearest to actual construction. Had they been built it would have opened up an interesting alternative route to the Gotthard, Zurich and Arlberg routes of today but alas, one can only speculate on what might have been.

Whilst we know the routes, grades etc. of these proposed lines one thing that must forever remain unanswered is who and what would have worked them. We know the RhB would have worked the *Bernhadinbahn* because it is completely within Switzerland, indeed, all but the very end is in the Canton of Graubunden but what of those that penetrated Austria and Italy? Would the RhB have been granted sole operating rights or would some agreement similar to that used on the Centovalli have been introduced where between Locarno and Domodossola, the Swiss and Italians have their own stock, but trains and crews work the whole length of the line.

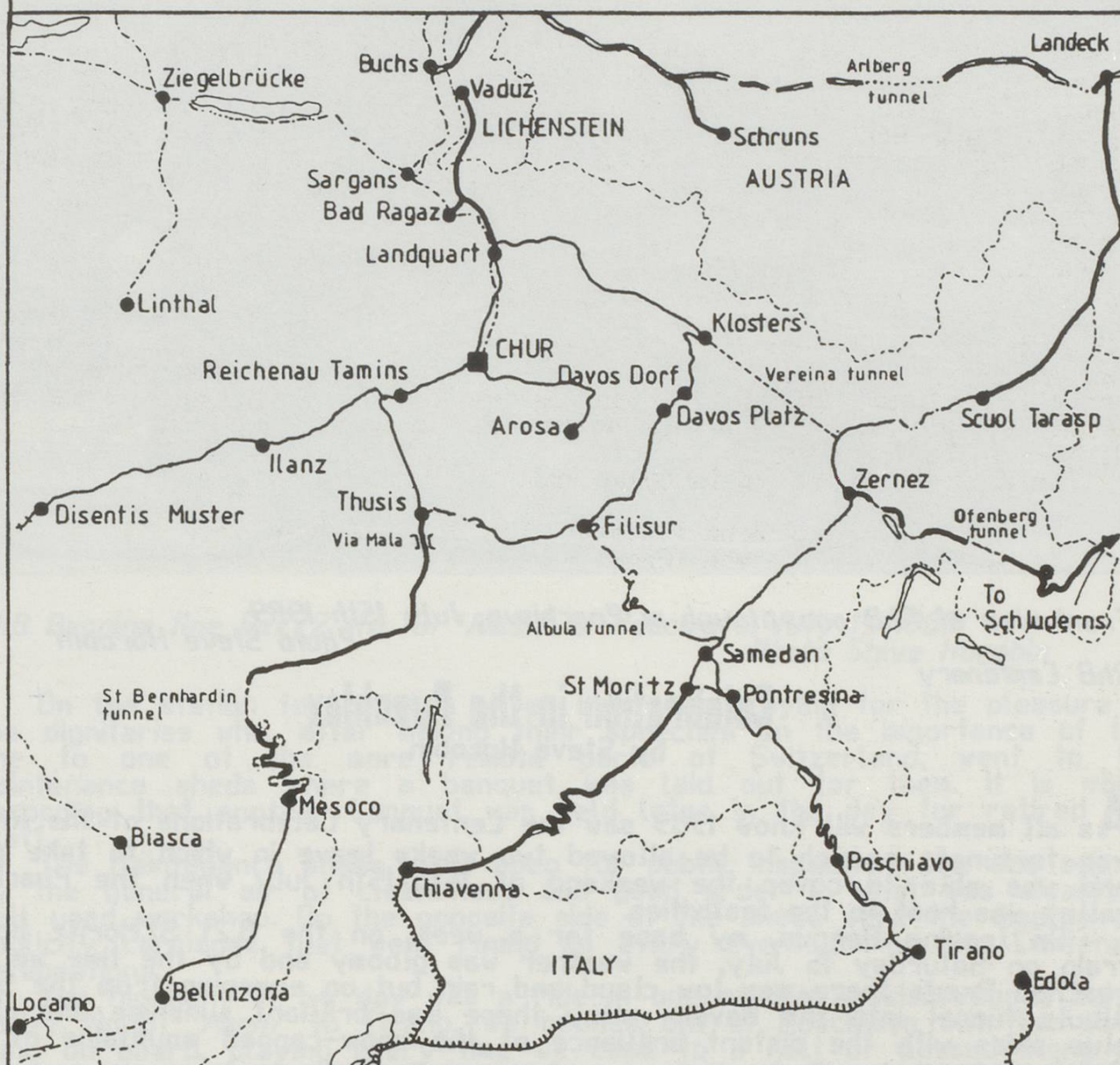
This was the inspiration behind my article in *Continental Modeller* for July/August '88 describing the conversion of a Liliput DBB 2095 class to H0m gauge, this being the Austrian contribution to motive power on the Scuol - Landeck route, working between Landeck and St.Moritz - and even beyond. Although it was a cover story, an excuse for running some on *Via Mala*, something similar could have happened and the same could have applied to passenger and freight rolling stock.

When one considers these routes, along with various developments on metre gauge lines now being planned in Switzerland; the link between the MOB and SBB Brunig lines by means of a third rail over BLS tracks between Zweisimmen and Interlaken, talk of linking the enlarged network to the RhB/FO/BVZ system via a tunnel under the Grimsel Pass! One assumes they can overcome the problems of two rack systems. Then, of course there is the RhB's own contribution, the Vereina Tunnel. What price that line to Landeck now?

The possibilities would have been endless. Imagine a morning train from Landeck to Chur, hauled by either a RhB Ge4/4^{III} or a metre gauge version of the DBB 1044 with SBB stock for Luzern, MOB to Montreux, RhB to

RHAETIAN RAILWAY

Showing proposed extensions



Key

— RhB	— OBB
— RhB proposals	— FS
- - - SBB	+++++ FO
- - - International Frontiers	

Bellinzona and FO/BVZ for Zermatt. The train from Chiavenna arrives behind an Italian designed Ge4/4^v. And what about metre gauge sleeping cars?

But enough of this speculation. If you're good then next time I will tell you all about *Die Bernhardenbahn*.
I wonder why?