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The Vereinigte Schweizerbahnen

By Giles Della Gana

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The Vereinigte Schweizerbahnen (VSB), or United Swiss Railways Company had its origin in a scheme to link north-eastern Switzerland with Italy via Chur and the Splügen pass. A company was formed in Turin on 27 September 1845, but failed owing to political difficulties. A second company was promoted on 22 August 1852 as the Sudostbahn (not to be confused with the present Schweizerische Sudostbahn or SOB which was formed on 1st January 1890). The project was to be carried out in stages. Some work was started by an English contractor, Pickering, at Rorschach and Chur but was suspended owing to inadequate finance.

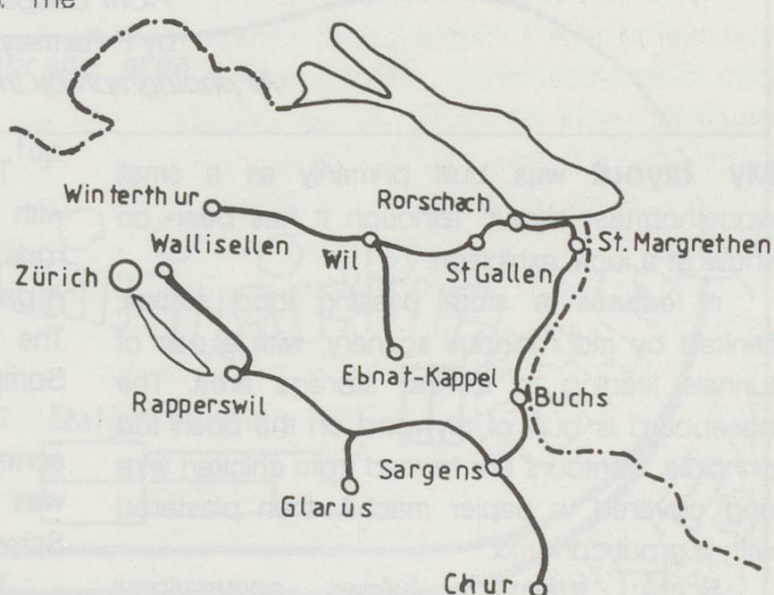
The St.Gallish-Appenzellische Eisenbahn (SGAE) was promoted to link Rorschach with Zurich. After a flirtation with atmospheric traction, construction of a conventional railway was begun in 1852. This was opened in the following stages, Winterthur to Wil on 14 October and Wil to Flawil on 25 December 1855; Flawil to Winkeln on 15 February and Winkeln to St.Gallen on 25 March 1856. The line from St.Gallen to Rorschach and Rorschach Hafen (also see Part 3) opened on 25 March 1856. While work was proceeding on the SGAE, another railway company had started up in the north east. The Glattalbahn (GI-TB) was formed on 25 June 1853, opening a line from Wallisellen to Uster on 1 August 1856.

The Paris banking house of Rothschild completed a scheme to combine the Sudostbahn, GI-TB and SGAE as the VSB on 20 April 1857. The new company proceeded to

complete Pickering's unfinished works. Rorschach to Rheineck was opened on 25 August 1857 and Rheineck-Sargans-Chur on 1 July 1858. GI-TB projects were brought to completion with Wetzikon to Uster, opened on 9 November 1857 and Wetzikon to Ruti on 15 August 1858. Ruti-Weesen-Glarus and Sargans to Murg opened on 15 February 1859 and Weesen to Murg on 1 July of the same year.

The VSB was not an outstanding financial success but its position was improved but the opening of the Vorarlbergerbahn (VB) from Feldkirch to Buchs on 24 October 1872. This was to become an international route of some importance with the opening of the Arlberg tunnel in 1884. The VSB worked the Toggenburgerbahn (TB), opened between Wil and Ebnet-Kappel on 24 June 1870.

By an agreement dated 22 November 1901 the VSB was sold to the Federal system. The transfer of operations did not take place until 1 July 1902, the TB passing on the same day.



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Hans G. Wagli, Sebastien Jacobi and Roland Prost
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