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A New Train for Switzerland by Giles Della Gana

Zürich is set to become a hub for a new system of overnight train services. During the late 1980's, the SBB, together with the Österreichischen Bundesbahn and the then Deutsche Bundesbahn, initiated a study into the future of sleeping-car services. The best way forward was seen as an up-market 'hotel-train' concept formed of stock capable of running at 200kph. It was found that a double-deck configuration gave the lowest cost per bed. In 1992 the railway administrations formed the company DACH Hotelzug AG, based at Gumligen near Bern, to run the proposed trains. Construction was entrusted to the ARGE Hotelzug Consortium led by Schindler Wagon AG, with SGP Verkehrstechnik GmbH of Austria and Waggon-fabrik Talbot of Germany. A second group under ABB Henschel Union is supplying air-conditioning and on board electrical and electronic equipment.

The initial fleet will consist of four types of vehicle, fifty-four newly constructed double-deck sleeper vehicles, twenty-nine 'sleeperette' coaches and eight service cars. The sleepers

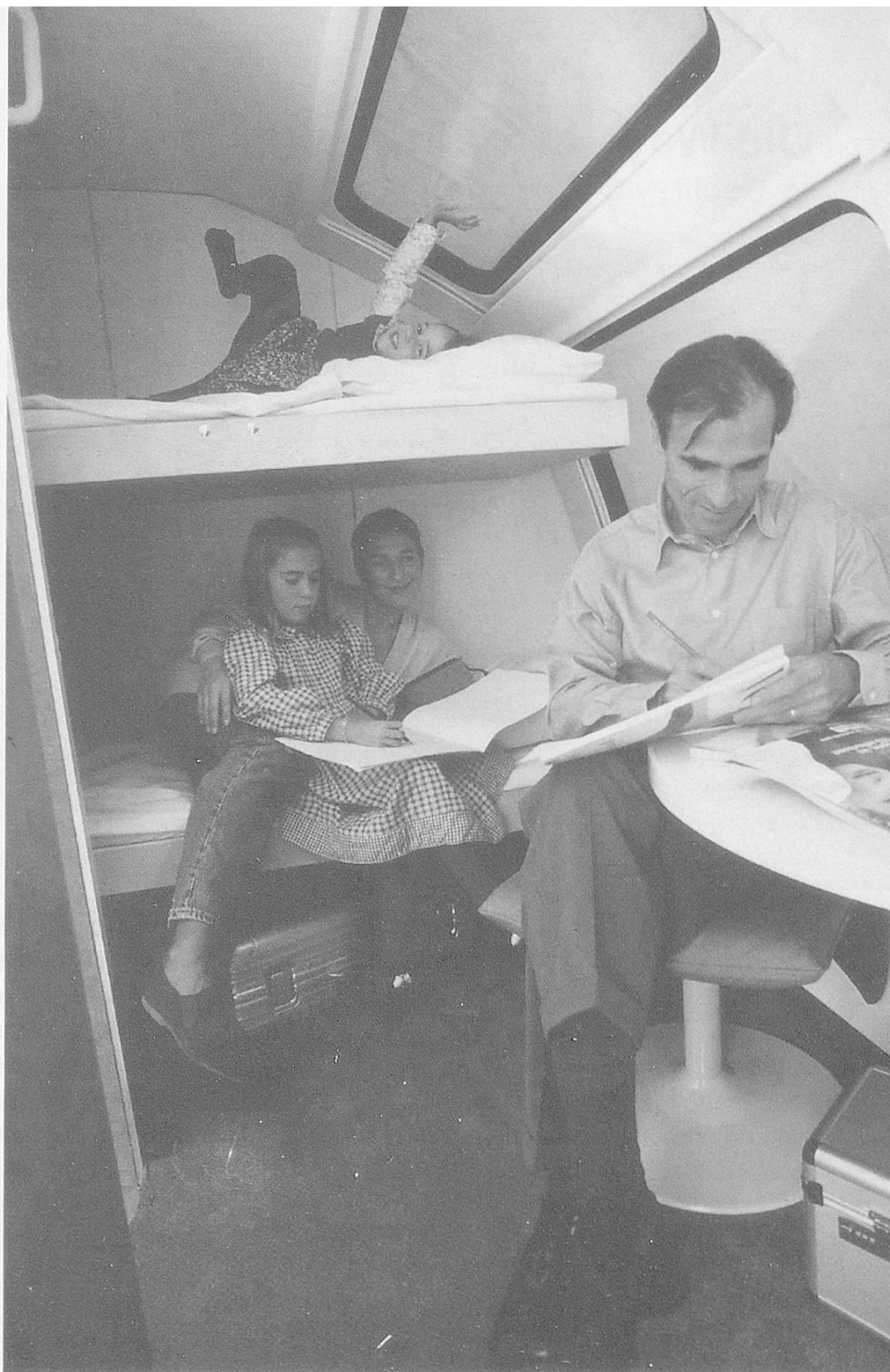
share a common light gauge steel body-shell, are 26.9m long and 58 tonnes unladen weight with bogies from Waggonfabrik Talbot. Because of severely restricted space under the coaches, all major items of auxiliary equipment are housed in a central compartment on the lower deck. Half of these vehicles are designated WLAB type, they include four 'deluxe' compartments, sleeping two, on their upper decks, flanking a central 'comfort' compartment which is above the equipment compartment. On the lower deck there are ten 'comfort' compartments sleeping up to four, plus a service compartment and two toilets. The decks are linked by four staircases, access being from the platform via the lower deck. The balance are designated WLB, the 'deluxe' and service compartments being replaced by 'comfort' class. Construction is split as follows - eighteen type WLAB to be built by Schindler, eighteen WLB by SGP and nine of each type by Talbot. Drawings of an WLAB vehicle appear on P50 of the March 1993 issue of 'Swiss Express'.

The twenty-nine 'sleeperette' (or tourist) cars,

each accommodating sixty-two passengers in reclining seats, have been converted from ex-DB type Bcm243 day coaches. They have been fitted with air-conditioning as part of the work carried out by Schindler. The service (or S) coaches are ex-DR Amy and Bmy vehicles originally intended for service between Berlin and Praha, but withdrawn and stored due to technical problems. They will provide hotel style check-in facilities which will also serve as a central office for train crew, together with a thirty-two seat bar, an eighteen seat restaurant area and a shop. The lighting system will include the first application of fibre-optics on a train, where two hundred and seventy 'light points' will create the impression of a star-studded sky on the ceiling. Conversion of these already air-conditioned coaches is being undertaken by Partner fur Fahrzeug-Ausstattung GmbH of Weiden in Germany. They will be marshalled between the sleeper and seating vehicles. The trains will be finished in a striking livery of overall dark blue with 'gold' lettering. The latter will take the form of the brand 'CityNightLine' (in English!) in characters 0.5m high, except on one side of the WLAB vehicles, where it will be 2.25m high. A 2.25m high 'moon' logo is to appear on one side of the service coaches.

A 'brand image' will extend throughout the interior of the train and out onto the station platforms that are being used. All in all they should be easy to spot!

The first three vehicles were rolled out of Schindler's Prattein works on 14th Dec. 1994. The Zurich/Wien and Koln/Wien trains are due to start on 28th May 1995. Whilst passing through Switzerland, the Zurich train will call at Winterthur, St. Gallen and Buchs SG. It is anticipated that the Zurich/Hamburg service via



Above and Left: The striking livery and smart interior of the new coaches.

Photos: Schindler Waggon

Basel, will start on the 24th September 95. This will employ the longest formations, comprising of eight double-deck sleepers, one service and four 'sleeperette' coaches. The Wien services will comprise six sleepers, one service and four 'sleeperette' coaches. An additional service from Zurich, via Basel to Berlin is being considered as is the introduction of 'sleeperette' and service vehicles based on the same body design as the double-deck coaches