



## Did You Know?



### January 1997

- ☞ The Swiss parliament took two days to discuss the splitting up of the PTT. The Telecom side becomes a private firm with 51 of the shares held by the state, and the Post has to battle along without the subsidy from the telephones. In addition their monopoly for parcels drops from 5 to 2 kg; they keep addressed letters.

If the upper house modifies this, as is possible, then a referendum will be demanded. To give time for the collection of signatures to demand this, every Swiss law is held in abeyance for 6 months.

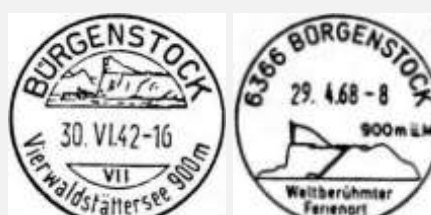
- ☞ One good thing has come out of this in that the minimum number of club newsletters is back again at 100, from the 1000 required in January 1996, which means that postage of 15c about, comes back after having been at 70c. This will save many clubs.
- ☞ You can now buy the 70c rabbit 'B' mail, and the 90c 'A', in rolls of 1000 or 10 000 un-numbered stamps. However, the official statement says that the 70c cannot be used for bulk mailings of 3000 and over.

When I asked at 'Information' at the Bern HPO "then why print the 70c stamps in rolls at all?" they said I should come back in the afternoon. But even then they had not been able to find a logical reason. The reason they had received from 'higher up' was that 'B' letters are to take 2-3 days for delivery, bulk mailings 5-6 days, therefore, if the latter had a rabbit affixed it might be delivered too fast: I cannot believe that the large bulk (junk) mailing firms will not use them in their automatic 'stamp sticking-on machines'. We will see. An article on bulk mailing rates is in preparation.

- ☞ There are no private railway closings planned for 1997, as far as I can see. Only the SBB Läufeinger line, west of the main Olten-Basel line, is closing at the end of March, to be replaced by buses. This is part of the original route laid out by George Stephenson when he recommended that at Olten the N-S and E-W axes should cross.
- ☞ There has been a 'Great Train Robbery' copy near Lausanne where a St Gallen to Geneva express was stopped and 20, selected, mailbags stolen and put into cars under a bridge. Were they looking for some perfectly cancelled letters, also rare, these days?
- ☞ Two interesting books have appeared. "*125 years of the SLM*" in German, 142 pages, CHF 50; this is the story of the firm started by Charles Brown in 1871, the father of the Brown of Brown Boveri, an Englishman who had a tremendous influence on four major Swiss engineering firms. The other is the official book on 150 years of Swiss Railways "*Bahnsaga Schweiz*", 320 big pages, lots of photos, mostly in colour, CHF 98, in German. Both worth it.
- ☞ In the BBZ for December 1996 there is an interesting article on the first Swiss airmails, by Alexander S Newall (UK), and this will be followed by a second article on the first flights to Germany.
- ☞ The new self-adhesive stamps are proving popular and, I believe, a second printing is being considered. They do wash off perfectly. The shiny surface does make for a smudgy cancel at times.
- ☞ I came across a private metal cancel, not for stamps, but for advertising on postcards, made in 1907 for the Bürgenstock lift, which rises 150m to the Hammetschwand peak in 48sec.



When the lift was built in 1905, by Schindler of Luzern, it took 2½ min.





## Did You Know?



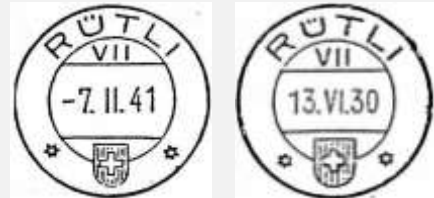
### February 1997

- In his interesting and useful survey of the Bundesfeier cancellations (HNL November 1996); Herr Gervasi missed the special cancel used in Schwyz for 2 months from 15th June to 15th August 1941 (see below). This caused confusion with the MPO cachet used also in Schwyz, but only on 1st August.



I discovered this cancel during my research on the Rütli cancellations, as originally asked by Derrick Slate (HNL September 1996). Before I complete my article could HPS members please examine their stocks and report their findings to the Editor quickly.

Derrick shows the 'fine-lined' shield and cross, first day 1.8.41, when was this used again? The 'six-line' shield in the second example was in use from 1930 to 1958, but when exactly?



- Put a note in your diary for 2000: Swiss National Exhibition in St. Gallen from 20th to 25th June. The last time in St. Gallen was in 1959. However they were the only applicant this time, perhaps because the new president of the VSPHv is from St. Gallen.
- Since January 1996 the PTT has required that the postage stamps be applied directly onto foreign parcels; previously all those nice high value stamps had to be on the accompanying A5 card, and were never given to the recipient, except in South Africa. When a dealer here found that out he arranged with a big firm which sent many airmail parcels (special sausages, I believe) to their agent in SA, that these documents were returned to him. That is the source of most of the nicely cancelled singles, pairs and blocks of four of the Evangelists.
- The St. Mark Fr.5 is no longer available from the Philatelic Bureau. When it came out in 1961 registration cost 20c, i.e. 40c for a normal letter. Now it is Fr.5, but one doesn't see St. Mark often on such letters. An item to look for.
- Wine, in packs of 6 or 12 bottles usually, can now be sent by a new PTT parcel service with guaranteed delivery time (what about shaking?). Perhaps there is a label?
- Sending a wall calendar from Switzerland has become expensive. The B rate to UK is virtually twice the price of the calendar alone, and A rate to USA . . . So a number of friends will be disappointed this year, and perhaps the printers here too.
- I have just seen the new optical stamp-reading equipment in action in Lausanne in the renovated MLO in the main PO. Three new ILVs and now 12 video desks, and a new Cegelec flat sorter. The stamp-reader, designed in the University of Lausanne, following good test results, has now been installed in all eight machines (Japanese) so that the position of the stamp can be determined and the cover turned for cancelling in the correct corner. The value of the stamps on the cover can also be determined so that it is sent into the A or B stream automatically.

We can therefore expect to have a PTT statement this year that fluorescence will no longer be needed in Swiss stamps. Nearly 24 years ago, 4.10.63, the first stamps came with phosphor overprint.










- Sion, in the Valais, has now received a coding and sorting installation from AEG, Constance. Chur and Winterthur to follow this year. This branch of the bankrupt AEG has now been purchased by Siemens, so will the name change?

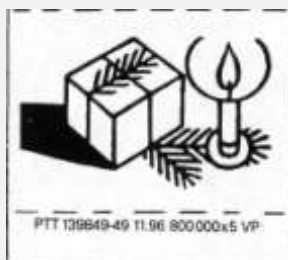


## Did You Know?



### March 1997

-  The PTT have released the new plan for eliminating the present 11 KPDs (postal districts), with the loss of 1000 jobs and 2000 moves to other places, as 40 local 'Sales Regions' are to be created. Trials start now in reorganization of Lausanne II, Luzern VII, Chur X, and Bellinzona XI. One wonders what these people have been doing for the past 150 years. Further lack of co-ordination with new cancels is to be feared.
  
-  The PTT Philatelic Bureau now accepts (at long last) payments from foreign customers via credit cards, Visa and other popular makes.
  
-  The 150 years of Swiss Railways "*Bahnsaga Schweiz*" book, mentioned in the December DYK, can now be obtained in English (CHF 98) as well as German, French and Italian.
  
-  For those who collect silver Cuban coins (and others) don't miss the 1996 10 pesos showing the first Swiss locomotive. Sorry, I don't have one to Xerox for you.
  
-  The SVPS is planning to issue a supplement to their Machine Cancel Handbook, which will include a fully updated list of all crowns. The last supplement was in 1994. Richard T Hall wrote a very good English translation of the complex instructions for using the handbook. If you would like a copy of this please make a note when you place an order with me.
  
-  Gottfried Honegger has once again issued his annual price list for classic stamps, all illustrated in full colour. About 100 A5 pages. Write to Kurzstrasse 1, CH-8716 Schmerikon.
  
-  Two big auctions wait before us: Röllli in Luzern, 20-22 February, and Schwarzenbach in Zürich, 21/22 March. It is always interesting to see what fantastic items are presented.
  
-  I have been twice to the new Library now in the Post Museum in Bern. Open only from 2 to 4, Tuesdays to Fridays, but at other times by arrangement. Some catalogues, Handbooks and other items are to hand, as well as many periodicals and bound volumes of PTAs. Well worth a visit. All books and periodicals on Philately are here now, historical postal documentation remains in the BID at its old location in Bern.
  
-  The Michel list of 276 stamp issuing 'firms' (UN has 180 members) for 1995 shows Switzerland lying 110th, between Singapore and Bosnia-Herzegovina, with 34 new issues. USA with 217 (repeat 217) lies only 9th! The UK with 58 is in 56th position.
  
-  To gain a little popularity the PTT reduced by about a franc the cost of inland parcels from the 1st to the 23rd of December 1996. This was limited to non-registered (sorry non-CSI), non-business and 4kg weight. This was not in the PTA, only in newspapers.



The white label with black printing shown here had to be attached.

They were printed in strips of five. Bern main Post Office ran out so had to use the old yellow label which included the words "Don't open before Christmas".



## Did You Know?



### April 1997

- Four different cancels were used for the ten stamps issued on 11th February, all acceptable to collectors. The 70c 'Globi' is a children's character, started by the Globus Department Store in Zürich, and featured in 65 adventure books. The latest is 'Globi the Postman'.



All further details in the [free](#) PTT publication *Focus on Stamps*.

- The FD cancel for the four attractive Roman Artefacts was used not only in Bern, but also in Martigny, in a MPO (No. 6) for the first time, also for the first time covers could not be sent in for cancelling. The really new thing was, however, that covers handed in for cancelling having a mixture of stamps, i.e. old and new, would be cancelled with the MPO date canceller, without an additional cachet.



- In addition to the new 70c stamp showing a 12 inch figurine, held in the Pierre Gianada Museum in Martigny, there is also the 20c stamp (Z.701) of 1983, in the same museum.



The three-horned bronze bull's head shown on the 30c Pro Patria of 1974 (Z.163), although found in Martigny, is in the Valais Museum in Sion. The K cancel No. 612 was also used by the MPO on this day. The Museum is shown on the FD cancel.

- In the January DYK I mentioned the curious printing of rolls of stamps that were not to be used: The explanation has been found; they were used for stamping 'reply paid' envelopes. There is a greater chance of a positive answer if a stamped envelope is enclosed, as was discovered years ago by the Readers Digest. It has now taken off here in a big way, with quantities of a million and above.

- The paper used for printing the 90c stamp in rolls of 1000 and 10 000, had blue fibres in the paper; prices are now soaring for this interesting variety, which was at first denied by the PTT. Collectors now realise that hundreds of thousands of these stamps, on the returned letters, were thrown away when received! Not yet seen on sheet stamps, or booklets, nor for the 70c rabbit. FD of the 90c coil (Z.887R) is 2.12.96.

- The discrepancies between the various KPD (Postal Districts) have now been resolved in connection with Express letters. From the 1st of February these letters have to carry stamps or other payment impressions, the Express Label alone is no longer to be considered as a 'postage stamp' by itself, as it was in some places, from June 1995.

- The Postal Museum in Bern has been re-named 'Museum of Communication' as it now belongs to a Trust controlled by the Postal Service and Telecom. The philatelic library is now also run by this Trust. See the new K cancel right.



- The price of PTT FDCs and other special covers has gone up from 50c to 70c, at a guess after about 30 years, not bad at all. However, the price of complete FDCs has not increased as the previous fee of 20c for 'sticking on' has been dropped.

- The old K cancel No.556 of 12.5.71 has been replaced by a new picture of one of the old houses in Rafz, a picturesque village in the small enclave of the Canton of Zürich over the river Rhine. Who will discover why the date shown in cancel (see right) was chosen as the first day of use of K 556a?













## Did You Know?



### May 1997

-  On the 21st April the renovated Zürich Sihlpost opened its counters. When built in 1930 it had been the most up-to-date PO in Europe, with a degree of mechanisation that exceeded all others in the handling of bags, parcels and containers. At the official re-opening of that part in 1992 we were told that the technical jump of 1930 had not been surpassed.
  
-  The SVPS have issued the 4th Supplement to their two-volume Handbook on Machine Cancellations, covering May 1994 to December 1996. A4, in German and French. In 34 pages all such cancellations are shown; there is also a new list of town dies, in 48 pages. Price CHF 28-, including foreign post & packing.
  
-  In a few months if you are searching for a telephone, look for 'Swisscom', that is the new name.
  
-  The new sorting installation in Winterthur has started trials, with the official start set for 1st June 1997. The code No. is 26; following the usual clockwise numbering, starting with 1 in Geneva and ending with Bellinzona as 30. This applies not only to the postcode and postal districts (I - XI), but also to the Swiss Army Infantry Divisions. That, however, is a military secret.
  
-  The Swiss 'RSPCA' carried out tests with dummy animals to prove to the PTT that their methods were not good enough, although clearly stated. (See my article in the July 1996 Newsletter.) However, this type of Express parcel applies to less than half a percent, and that mostly chicks are sent (30%), followed by other birds, mice, rats, snakes, guinea pigs, fish, bees, and rabbits. In all about 85 parcels a day.
  
-  Details of new stamps and other information can now be called up on <http://www.post.ch>. Note that www does not mean 'world-wide waiting', as some suggest. *Focus on Stamps* is easier and cheaper, in fact free!
  
-  A centenary missed on 1st May 1994 was that of 'Bernese Time' as a hundred years before this was abolished and replaced by 'Central European Time'. Until then the train system of each country used the local time of its own capital as a base. Until the trains came, every town and village used its own local time exclusively. There was no need for anything else.
  
-  The local publicity slogan shown below (No.3.94) was withdrawn on 27.10.75, and the 'summer' slogan on 30.9.75, both to be replaced by No.3.180 on 28.10.75. Now, suddenly, it has been reborn, without any announcement or explanation (it was probably found in an old drawer).

There is no peace for catalogue editors!  
Note the printed 'A' which is often seen on covers today.





## Did You Know?



### June 1997

The Swiss Communist Party (PdA) is contesting the split up of the PTT, as they are trying to get the 50 000 signatures necessary by the 21<sup>st</sup> August 1997. If successful the issue must come before the whole electorate in a referendum.

In the St. Gallen postal district customers are now offered another PO service, namely motor car licence plates. In Switzerland a car owner has his number for life, whatever the cars, and it belongs to the state and is, in effect, proof that insurance is paid up too.

If I go on holiday outside Switzerland I can give up my licence plates to get a reduction, or if I am in hospital (except if my wife wants the car). If successful this useful service will be extended.

In the canton of Vaud it was the cow bell maker in Bulle who also stamped out the number plates for the authorities.

Switzerland has 3642 POs, each serving on average 1919 persons living in an area of 11 km<sup>2</sup>. Figures for the UK and USA are: 19 603, 50 087; 2978, 5204; 12, 187. Switzerland having the smallest area per post office of all the countries listed.

From 27th June to 2nd November 1997 there is a special exhibition in the 'Museum of Communication' (previously called the Post Museum) in Bern on 150 years of co-operation between SBB and PTT, philatelically.

Originally a great deal of all letter sorting was done, most efficiently, in the TPOs. Today there are virtually none on the SBB routes. Only between the 14 automatic sorting centres are the bags of sorted mail transported by rail. To these centres from the surrounding POs the daily load of letters and parcels is taken by road transport and return.

This has the benefit that the trains are no longer held up during the loading and unloading of the mail bags, and that the route can more easily pick up mail from nearby PO's. This has caused the alteration of a number of postcodes recently to suit the new system. However, there is more pollution along the roads!

Between the special cancellations shown below lies a great deal of Swiss aviation history. Swissair bought five DC-4 machines, in fact some of the last to be made by Douglas, and they were registered as 'HB-ILA/E/I/O/U'. HB/ILI made the first flight in 1947, but they were hardly used on the North Atlantic route until 1949.



The 1947 special stamp (Z.42) shows HB/ILA in error. In Europe they were not popular because of the lack of a pressurised cabin. But Swissair caught up in August 1951 when they were the first to fly the Atlantic with new DC-6Bs.

A clear proof of the honesty of the PTT is shown in the example below. This normal letter was franked '1.70' instead of only 90c for an 'A' letter (1.70 would have been for an oversized letter). This over-payment was noticed in Glattbrugg (I went to check!) and the account of the owner of machine No. 85745 was duly credited with 80c!

I had once found the example of a small rubber stamp shown in the other cancel but had never tried to find out what 'RM' stood for. Now I know:



'Rückmeldung erstellt' is 'back payment made'. Sometimes I have seen a manuscript 'RM erst.' for the same reason. The cancel is in black.





## Did You Know?



### July 1997

- The Federal Council has given the whole stamp issuing procedure to the PTT. This is a major step, but I think it has been only a 'rubber-stamping' duty in recent times. We will see if now more or less stamps will be issued, and if pointless stamps of no great interest, like the two 'Town and Country' of May, will be considered. Perhaps if the latter pair had had better designs they would be more acceptable.
- Liechtenstein is celebrating their 125 years Railways with three special stamps on 27th August 1997. The Austrian Railways line from Feldkirch to Buchs runs along 9km of line serving three stations in the Principality. See the little map in the Newsletter, March 1996.
- The HPO in Chur now has an automatic coding and sorting installation with code 29 as expected, using one OCR ILV machine coupled to eight video desks. This is the last such plant in the grand scheme 'Post 2000' to cover all of Switzerland, i.e. the 15th. A short article is in preparation on the scheme, which has cost millions.
- A neat solution has been found to the problem mentioned on p 25 of the April Newsletter; just designate the letter "B mail", which invalidates the 'A' shown on the stamp.
- I have not been able to obtain clear answers to the present practice with TPO station cancels for the SBB/CFF (the so-called private railways are another matter). I have not seen many TPO cancels lately, and that knowing that practically all sorting is done in the coding centres, I asked at the Zürich 'TPO' office. I was told that all letter boxes on the TPOs themselves have been locked closed for 'a number of years', but that each coach has a canceller still, and that letters can be handed in for normal cancelling, if you can find someone to hand them to!

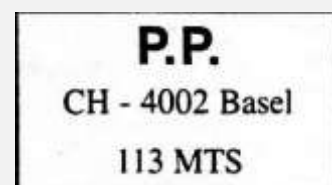
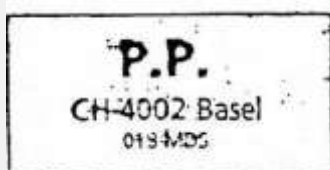
Many stations are no longer manned, and another source says that station masters do not cancel mail on Sundays now.



However, the figures below show a TPO for 21.V.97 and a station cancel of 19.5.97, a Sunday. You can now start collecting 'Last day of use' cancels, a sad end to a once important and interesting area of collecting.



- The PTT announced at the end of May that they were withdrawing all additional items presently on sale at most POs, such as newspapers, magazines, greeting cards, balls of string, travel tickets, insurance and many other things. It had all been just a big flop.
- It has been noticed for years that letters can be sent cheaper from, say, Austria to Switzerland via Copenhagen, or from Portugal to Spain via Rotterdam; mostly bulk mail. Now the PTT have joined in with a **PP** 'flag' used in Basel, No. 019MDS. Attempts to get copies by the SVPS were refused by the PTT as it belonged to a foreign firm, revealed by the code number for 'returned' mail. Now another has turned up, but printed on a cover, No. 113 MTS.





## Did You Know?



### August 1997

- The long-awaited collection of 45 tables/articles in the 'Postgeschichte' on the Swiss foreign airmail rates from 1919, by Roland Kohl, has now been issued in book form. Published by Hans Schwarzenbach, for CHF 75. (Europe B post). There are 116 A4 pages, in German.
- Giro holders can now have traveller's cheques and foreign cash delivered to them by post, the only cost being the registration of the cover, CHF 5, as the ordering can be done by Freephone.
- Once upon a time the main Swiss export was mercenaries, used all over Europe. The only remnant is the Pope's Guard in the Vatican, nearly 500 years old. Two recent Vatican stamps show them in the old uniform, supposedly designed by Michelangelo. They are all trained Swiss Army Soldiers, familiar with modern weapons too. Otherwise Swiss are not allowed to serve in foreign armies.  
  
The last attempt to form a Swiss unit was by the British to help out in the Crimea in 1854, as revealed by some letters found by Zumstein. Individuals have, however, served on all sides in modern wars, and been jailed on their return.
- The PTT has just released figures for their annual payments to the SBB/CFF showing a sharp decline. It has fallen from CHF 155m in 1992 to only 124m in 1996, with a predicted 108m in 1998. This was to be expected and the reasons have been mentioned here in detail already.
- The Swiss firm Müller Martini (well-known for office machinery) has received a number of important orders. They are to fully equip the three new parcel sorting offices in Daillens, Hürkingen and Frauenfeld, and, following successful trials in Zürich, to provide flat-sorters for Bern and Zürich.
- The 70c 'Globi' stamp of 11.3.97 has become a big success with two reprints. The children's book 'Globi and the Post' has sold more than any of its predecessors in the 60-year series.
- Ordinary POs have only the CHF 20 St. John high value stamp of 1961 on sale. Perhaps the very high prices for foreign parcels will help to reduce stocks. Some Philatelic Counters still have the 5fr and 10fr stamps in limited quantities.
- The origin of the name 'Strubeli' as applied to some favourite Swiss stamps is covered in depth in the July issue of Tell. Briefly it means 'tousled hair' and comes from a German children's story (for more detail refer to the RESEARCH section on the Society's website [www.swiss-philately.co.uk](http://www.swiss-philately.co.uk)).
- I came across the following five customs cancels in the PTT records recently. Has anyone seen them used? (What do the abbreviations on two of them mean - P.V. and G.-V.?)





## Did You Know?



### September 1997

- ☞ The Communist Party (PdA) of Switzerland, as the only political grouping which tried, have failed to get enough signatures to force a general referendum, so the separation of the Telephones from the Post will now be implemented on 1st January 1998.
  
- ☞ A few months ago I noticed a red British letter box at the centre of tourist Luzern at the Schwannen-Platz; now Tony Hoyle has cleared up the mystery. In 1991 (700 Year celebrations) Bournemouth - twinned with Luzern - gave them this letter box, an original idea. However, I doubt if letters to UK are allowed with GB stamps.
  
- ☞ A similar 'twinning' idea is behind the new Swiss-Thailand joint stamps, the visit 100 years ago of the King of Siam to Switzerland. More details in the September issue of the BBZ and in *Focus on Stamps*. The matching Thailand stamps had not then been seen.
  
- ☞ The remarkable thing for philatelists about the Swiss stamp, is that it is the first without fluorescence in the paper, made possible by the new optical recognition device to face the covers for cancelling and coding, designed by the University of Lausanne and now fitted to the Japanese CFCs in Geneva, Lausanne, Bern, Basel, Luzern, Zürich (2), Winterthur and St Gallen. The coloured fibres in the new paper, however, fluoresce like the new Swiss bank notes, to deter fakers.
  
- ☞ Phosphor paper was introduced in Switzerland on the 4th of October 1963 for four values only to assist trials, as the first 'reading' machine (Telefunken, Germany) was installed only in 1968 in Bern, followed by Geneva in 1978. So until the first two machines were installed in Zürich in 1992 not many stamps printed on phosphor paper were actually used for facing.
  
- ☞ The booklet with eight self-adhesive 90c stamps of 10.9.96 has proved a great success, and has been reprinted three times. However, the promised 70c version has not appeared.
  
- ☞ The important almost-quarterly 'Postgeschichte' (Postal History) magazine is losing its founder and editor, Hans Schwarzenbach after 18 years. Any takers?
  
- ☞ The Swiss PTT has a subsidiary 'Post International' which has a courier firm (from 1996) in Italy who collect mail, mostly postcards, from holiday resort hotels. This is taken each day to either Chiasso or Locarno for cancelling, sorting and rapid sending out into the world. The 'stamps' are self-adhesive, exactly the same size as the 90c stamps above, but printed by another firm, and issued in booklets of eight identical stamps. I don't know what price the hotels sell them at. The colour is blue with pink, and the text reads 'P.P. CH-6830 Chiasso 1'. Who has seen one? Charles LaBlonde sent me some from the USA to start my investigation!
  
- ☞ In 1513 Appenzell joined the old Swiss Confederation, as the 13th and last member, but in 1597 religious difficulties tore the tiny canton apart, forming the catholic inner part AI and the outer reformed part AR. The word Rhoden (Rh) means cleared forest (cf. Roding Valley in Essex). The Protestants were allowed to use the same bear on their flag (see the special cancels right). Note that the two parts of I.Rh to the east are the same village, 9413 Obereggi. What does VR stand for on the flag of AR?





## Did You Know?



### 📖 October 1997

- ☞ On the 1st September a gang of five, mainly Italians, got into the Fraumünsterpost in Zürich and, without violence, made off with 53 million CHF in used notes, leaving 17m behind as their van was too small, but still the biggest PO robbery ever! A week later 20m had been found and 14 persons arrested, including the PTT 'inside' man. The remaining robbers face a tough problem, how do you spend 33m in cash, when the two most used notes of 100 and 1000 CHF are to be replaced soon.
- ☞ The latest combined issue of 12th September, Swiss/Thailand is a bit of a flop as the two stamps have very little in common, not even the size and shape; see examples.

Adolf Duecher, the Swiss Federal Councillor shown on the stamp, served for 29 years until his death in 1912, but did nothing remarkable except, it seems, to have the very



'modern' King of Siam to lunch in 1897.

The Swiss stamp, however, launches a new non-luminescent paper, with security fibres which are visible only under UV light where they show up yellow and blue, and are more visible from the back.



- ☞ Sales of the four Sport stamps were as follows: 1986 - 13m, 1989 - 5.6m, 1992 - 4.1m, 1996 - 2.5m. The main reason for this debacle is that the artist was not allowed to show a clearly defined sport, so the millions of thematic collectors did not buy any.

- ☞ On 27th September the PTT celebrates 140 years of TPOs, with a special cancellation in Zürich (below), just as the whole system fades into oblivion. I have not yet been able to find out when the last TPO cancel will be applied, but it has been announced that 150 letter and parcel wagons have been scrapped. Also that a number of sorting coaches have been given to Bosnia, as that is cheaper than dismantling them in Switzerland.



- ☞ The new EMS 'stamps' are causing a lot of excitement here, are they stamps or not, the BBZ asks. On the one hand they carry no name 'Helvetia' so are not stamps, but are they the first of many such stamp-replacement labels to come, as the postal service mutates in the face of globalisation.

Of the three colourful labels, 55x37mm, for Europe, US/Canada, and Rest of the World, each is sold only in sheets of six labels, self-adhesive, at CHF 665. The Philatelic Bureau will sell a set of three at CHF 133.-. As these labels are stuck to EMS delivery papers, and defaced at the counter by removal of a piece, I am told that this paper is not available to the recipient of the large card cover for A4 documents, so 'used' in the philatelic sense is not possible.

- ☞ Another, more pleasing, item from Bern is an A5 booklet of the twelve Animal definitives issued from 6.3.90 to 28.11.95. Each double page has a mint stamp and a colour photograph with a description in German, French, Italian, and English. Ideal for brushing up one's languages. Price CHF 19.50; and one can use the stamps.



## Did You Know?



### November 1997

- ☞ Telecom PTT has proudly announced that it is costing them CHF 20m to change their name to 'Swisscom', as from 1st October. At the end of 1997 the post office will spend untold millions on removing the Swiss cross and PTT logo from everything imaginable. The name will then be in German 'Die Post', French 'La Poste', Italian and Romansch 'La Posta'.



Why the official name in English 'Swiss Post' is not used everywhere is inexplicable. Any new product, from perfume to cat food, has to have an English-sounding name to be successful, so why not post offices as well, following the telephone, see Fig.1.

Fig. 1

- ☞ On the other hand, there is no money for post office records and archives generally. As the eleven regional directorates have now been dissolved, their local archives, or what is left, will go to Bern, to an unknown future.
- ☞ A wonderful source of revenue, the cancelling of mint stamps, in sheets, blocks and singles, was first allowed 1909. I wonder if Switzerland was the first country to do this.
- ☞ The new joint issue, Switzerland and Sweden (13.11.97) will be engraved by the world master Czeslaw Slania, which will be the first time a Swiss stamp (two in fact) will have the honour.
- ☞ 60 years ago the first 'Day of the Stamp' function was held in Geneva on 10th January 1937, without an official cancellation: has anyone seen the red cachet applied by the Geneva Philatelic Club? The next event was in Bern on the 5th December 1937 with a cancel in German and French (Pen No.S179).
- ☞ The TPO Wil-Kreuzlingen-Wil stopped cancelling mail on 1st June 1997. I am still trying to find out which TPOs remain in service.
- ☞ The Zumstein CD-ROM 1996 was late and the 200 copies were sold out in weeks. Now the 1998 version will be available on time, still for CHF 85. Don't forget that the computer can reproduce 256 colours. A French version is being worked on. Zumstein say that fewer youngsters have bought it than expected. All stamps of CH, FL, and UN Geneva are shown with many details.
- ☞ Not only is the standard Zumstein to hand, but also the dealers' catalogue, both at CHF 23. The latter comes in two versions as last year, in that the German version has the titles and some notes on the classic stamps in French too. The French version has only French texts.
- ☞ A well-known dealer Axel Herms (PO Box 116, CH-6315 Oberägeri) has put out the first (actually volume 2) of four A5 booklets on many aspects of stamp collecting, in German only. This booklet has innumerable tips and much background information on a wide range of stamps, which is not to be found in the usual catalogues. It is a good buy at CHF 12.

- ☞ Figure 2 shows a Basel 2 transit cancel (in French) introduced in 1908 and used until the early 1940s, following the usual modifications (Fig.3) about 1916-20, Who has seen one used?



Fig. 2



Fig. 3



## Did You Know?



### December 1997

- ☞ For the First Day of the pair of Swiss-Swedish stamps commemorating the Nobel prizes, 13th November 1997, a Special PO was erected in the University of Zürich, which sold Swedish and Swiss stamps, applied the appropriate cancels, and where the engraver of the stamps, Czeslaw Slania, signed FDCs etc. More details in *Focus on Stamps*.
- ☞ The Swiss PTT has also given Romania some of its old TPOs. Anyone going there who could check on their present duties?
- ☞ Zumstein have given up their well-known Europa Catalogues, after untold years, to the disappointment of many collectors here.
- ☞ Once upon a time when we owned the PTT (or GPO), we could ask questions and get useful answers. Now we get "that is marketing info, which would help our competitors" (for 4-5 years now the PTT no longer publish their comprehensive yearly statistics), or "that section no longer made a profit, so it has been re-organized" (into oblivion), or "to cut costs we now have no staff to keep such records".

What will the postal historians study in the future? Analyse e-mail on the Internet? The new owners, the shareholders, are only interested in the yearly dividend.

- ☞ The above applies to the new PTT subsidiary, Swiss Post International, see DYK September and the Newsletter front page for November, as no further details have been found out, except that some hotels charge 1200 lira per label, which can then be used for a postcard or a letter, to anywhere, even Italy.

This to me is chaos. Perhaps if the volume of plain postcards (normal price 900 lira) to Switzerland and Germany is high enough, then the odd letter to the USA, by air, is of no great consequence. The SPI now operate in the UK, and most other countries in Europe, but mainly for bulk re-mailings. I don't think other countries will allow the Italian PP stamp trick. Perhaps I am wrong.

- ☞ The Philatelic Bureau (now styled 'Stamps and Philately') will not issue their old 'Preliminary Stamp Programme' for the coming year, "To have greater flexibility" they say; I doubt if this means less stamps issued each year.
- ☞ In the Museum for Communications (Bern) I was allowed, under supervision, to rummage about in some boxes of old cancellers, and found the two versions of Pen No. 53 (CHF 10), Figure 1.



Fig.1

was first published by H Fankhauser at the time of GABRA III in September 1994 in his book on all aspects of the 1914 National Exhibition.



Fig. 2



Fig. 1

- ☞ Figure 4 shows a most peculiar label, it says: "The sender does not require this to be returned should it be refused by the addressee" and stuck on to a registered letter from a sickness benefit firm. Why register it if not that important? (Label is white.)

- ☞ At the end of September 1997 the Frama ATM Machines put on trial in Basel, Biel, and Zürich for operation by phonecard, were withdrawn, as the old type of magnetic card is no longer on sale. There were originally ten, but this had become six.

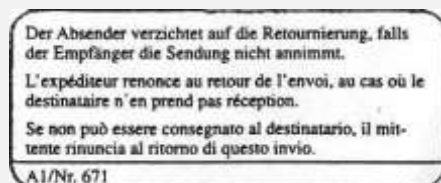


Fig. 2