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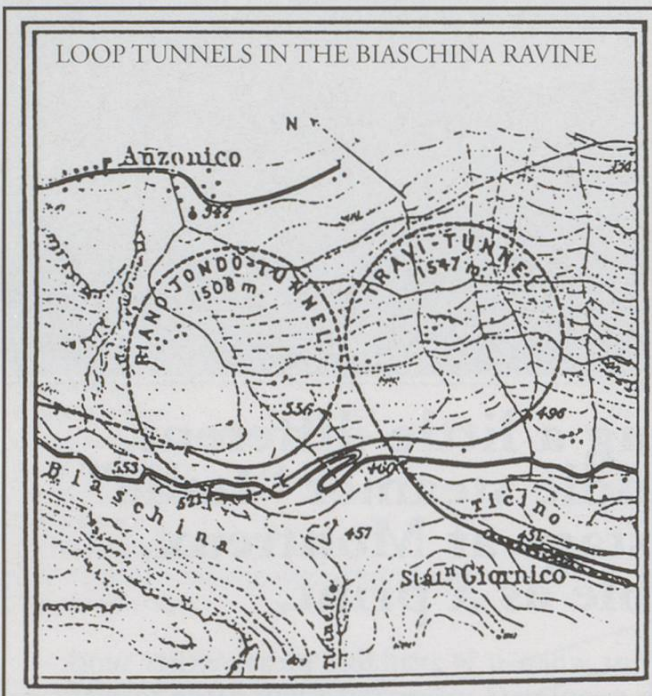
No Swiss Railways enthusiast misses out the Gotthard run as he travels north or south between Bellinzona and Arth-Goldau. Although completed in the late 19th century, the track layout and tunnels remain a monument to engineering and construction skills of the time (sweat and dynamite), and even now they provide travellers with splendid scenery and a magnificent ride. Those too old to participate can still enjoy the thrill from an MITV

videocassette. Impressive as are the approach lines to the north of the tunnel, the loop lines on the south side forge a way of their own.

Not so well known, however, is that these loop tunnels (see illustration) were copied in a section of the Canadian Pacific Railway, in Yoho National Park, between Field and Kicking Horse Pass. The object of the Canadian Spiral Tunnels is exactly the same as those near Biasca: to reduce height gradually, enabling heavy freight trains to increase their load and speed. By the way, the CPR engineer who master-minded the Canadian tunnels was J.E Schwitzer

The musician in me responds to the report that when a member of the railway staff was moving house from one end of the tunnel to the other, he loaded his cottage piano onto a freight wagon. A tunnel workman was surprised to hear the train passing by, accompanied by the spectral sounds of a piano. It was the railwayman playing his way through.

Abundant details of the line, with many photographs, can be found in Graeme Pole's 'The Spiral Tunnels and the Big Hill', published by Altitude Publishing Canada Ltd., 1500 Railway Avenue (P.O. Box 1410), Canmore, Alberta, TOLOMO



Above: a diagram of one of the famous spirals on the Gotthard

