

# Swissair today - A Quarter of a Century's Achievement

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# Swissair Today—A Quarter of a Century's Achievement

By JOHN ELLIOTT, Press Officer, Swissair.

In a few months' time Swissair, the airline of Switzerland, will celebrate its 25th birthday. The moment is, therefore, appropriate for us to take stock of our achievement and to look forward into the future to see what it is likely to hold. We can do both with considerable pride and confidence.

Twenty-five years represent but a fleeting moment in the history of mankind and less than the span of a generation in our lives. In the air transport industry, on the other hand, the past quarter of a century has been a vast era, if measured against the progress charted in its course. This era has seen the rise of Swissair to the ranks of the world's leading airlines. If technical progress has played its part in this development, so in no small measure have Swiss ingenuity, energy and sound business sense.

When Swissair was founded in 1931 through the merger of two air transport companies, Ad Astra and Balair, it had 11 aircraft which flew domestic services and a few routes to Southern Germany and France. Today 25 modern machines bear the white cross on the red background to 33 cities on four continents. Swissair has organised its network and time-tables to serve Switzerland's geographical position and economic importance. The company has tried to establish the greatest possible number of direct lines with few or no intermediate stops radiating outwards from its home country so as to provide fast connections for travellers coming to Switzerland from all over the world.

A dense network of routes covers almost every important city of Europe from Copenhagen in the North to Athens in the South. Services are flown daily from Zurich and Geneva to London, Paris, Amsterdam, Brussels, Vienna and Frankfurt, to name only a few of the main European centres. For the holiday maker or the business man frequent flights leave for Nice, Barcelona, Madrid, Milan and Rome. At the western and eastern ends of Europe both Lisbon and Istanbul are on the regular Swissair net. Services are also flown regularly to Prague and Belgrade.

Swissair's fast and frequent services from Zurich and Geneva to Athens, Istanbul, Cairo, Beirut, Damascus and Tel Aviv are proving steadily more popular. Part of the reason is no doubt the growing importance of the Near and Middle East in international tourism. To cater for the increasing demand Swissair has recently inaugurated a new Zurich-Cairo non-stop service which covers the considerable distance in under seven hours.

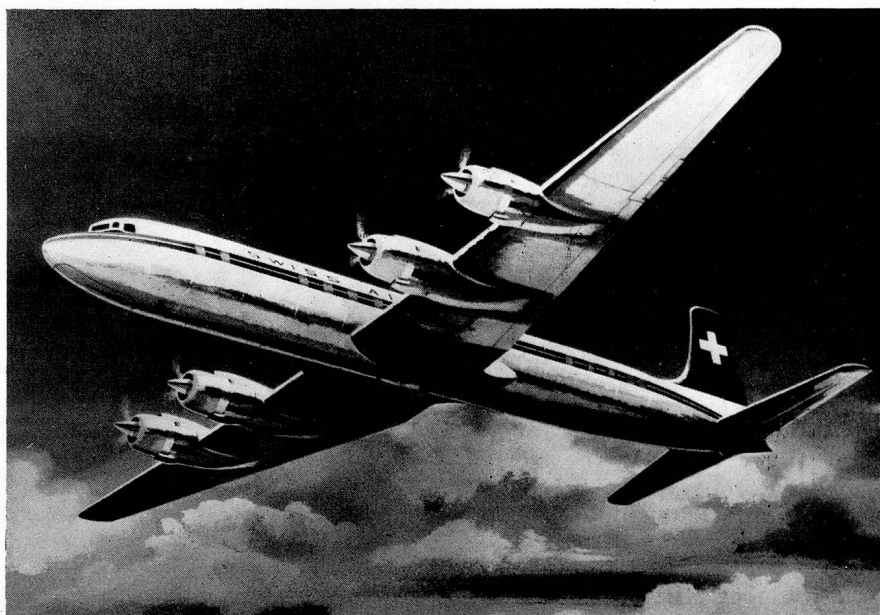
Since 1947 Swissair has been flying the Atlantic to New York. The service is operated daily in summer and five

times weekly in winter. It flies on alternative days the route Zurich-Frankfurt-Shannon-New York and Zurich-Geneva-Shannon-New York. Americans find it of great benefit as it brings them right into the heart of Europe and considerably shortens the time spent travelling.

May 1954 saw the inauguration of a weekly first-class service across the South Atlantic to Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo. Stops on the way are made at Lisbon, Dakar and Recife. Called the "Supersuisso" and operated with modern four-engined DC-6B aircraft, it provides the ultimate in transatlantic travel luxury.

Also operated by fast DC-6B aircraft are Swissair's other two "Super Swiss" services; every Saturday the "Atlantic Super Swiss" leaves Switzerland for New York carrying first-class passengers only. As on every other Swissair flight to New York, berths are available for a good night's sleep. On the London-Zurich run the daily "Super Swiss" carries both first-class and tourist passengers. It has the distinction of being the only flight between the United Kingdom and Switzerland to cater for first-class passengers.

Throughout the network a highly flexible system has been created to take care of the considerable fluctuations in seasonal demand. At the peak of the past summer season, for example, Swissair flew a total of 61 services per week from the United Kingdom to Basle, Berne, Geneva and Zurich. The number was reduced from the end of October but will again increase sharply after the middle of December to take



On order for Swissair's long-distance services are four of the new giant Douglas DC-7Cs "Seven Seas" shown above. They will be able to fly non-stop from Switzerland to New York.

travellers to winter sports. More night flights will be available this winter, as well as a new Zurich-Innsbruck service to take winter sports holiday-makers to Austria.

In common with other airlines, Swissair has to face the problem of reconciling fixed, unavoidable overheads with seasonally fluctuating revenue. The answer has been the building-up of long-distance services which depend less on seasonal factors and allow better aircraft utilisation. Of the total carrying capacity offered at present, the European services, excluding Greece and Turkey, account for less than half. One third of capacity is offered on the North Atlantic route while the remaining services account for the rest.

To support and administer the network Swissair maintains representations in all countries covered by its routes. The largest of these are in the United States with about 160 employees and in the United Kingdom with about 80. They include administration, sales and reservations staff in the town offices and operations staff at the airports. Specially trained Swiss maintenance engineers are stationed at all major airports to service the company's aircraft. In New York, in a move towards greater independence and improved service to the passenger, Swissair has recently built and equipped its own flight kitchen at Idlewild Airport. It contains the most up-to-date equipment and was planned to allow our catering to keep pace for many years with the anticipated increase in transatlantic air traffic.

Swissair has offices not only in cities on the network but in many others besides. In the United States, for example, such offices are at Chicago, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Los Angeles and San Francisco. In the United Kingdom and Ireland, where we fly to London, Manchester and Shannon, offices are also at Glasgow and Dublin and it is planned to open another at Birmingham in the near future.

The importance Swissair attaches to being strongly represented abroad is shown by the fact that out of the company's total staff of about 3,200 over 500 work outside Switzerland.

Now for some figures to illustrate the scale of the company's activities:

In 1949 the distance flown was 8,611,084 kilometres and the number of passengers carried on all sectors of the net totalled 153,812. By 1954 these figures had risen to 17,798,721 and 544,838 respectively. In the same period total operating revenue increased from 43 million Swiss francs to over 110 million. Figures for 1955 will be considerably higher still; in the first nine months of this year passengers numbered already more than half a million. Revenue for the nine months was nearly 100

million francs, compared with about 85.7 million in the same period last year.

But Swissair is also an important freight carrier. It is one of the few airlines to operate a scheduled weekly all-cargo service from Europe to New York by DC-4 Skymasters which can carry loads of up to six tons. The volume of freight carried by Swissair rose from 1,733 tons in 1949 to 6,089 tons in 1954. In the first nine months of this year it was 5,784 tons, or about 43 per cent more than in the same period of 1954.

The company has always been on a sound financial basis. With the exception of 1949, when devaluation of sterling and other currencies caused some difficulties, operations regularly show a profit. If this is small in relation to total revenue, it must be remembered that all airlines suffer from high taxation, heavy overheads, fixed commitments for amortisation of equipment and a generally rising trend of operating costs. In fact, as Sir William Hildred, Director-General of the International Air Transport Association said recently, operating profit of all the airlines in the Association for 1953 and 1954 was on average only about three per cent of turnover.

Independence is the keynote of the company's policy. This has been ensured by the Articles of Association under which 70 per cent of the share capital of 14 million francs is in private hands and 30 per cent in the hands of the Confederation, cantons and municipalities. The shareholders number about 2,600 and represent all regions of Switzerland. Swissair receives no government subsidy apart from half a million francs annually as a contribution towards the expenses of air crew training.

An airline is as good as the aircraft it flies. Swissair's choice has always fallen on aircraft well-



Soon to join Swissair's fleet: the new Convair "Metropolitan". Note the black-painted nose housing the weather-mapping radar.



proven for reliability and best suited to its diverse operational needs. The present fleet comprises six Douglas DC-6Bs, three Douglas DC-4s, seven Convair 240s and nine Douglas DC-3s. The DC-6Bs, fast modern four-engined aircraft with pressurised cabins, are used on the long-distance services. They are mostly adapted for both first and tourist class travel in separate compartments and can carry up to 76 passengers. The DC-4s, also four-engined planes, fly long and medium range services. The European net is mostly served by the Convairs, modern pressurised aircraft seating up to 40 passengers. The DC-3s, those efficient "workhorses of the air", as they are affectionately called, do much of the short distance work and freight transport.

The company's home base is Zurich Airport, and together with Geneva-Cointrin, Swissair operates through two of the most modern and efficient airports of Europe. At Zurich the company has extensive hangars, workshops and other facilities where engines, instruments and airframes are frequently and regularly tested and maintained. A new engine overhaul centre of a total floor area of 35,000 square feet was opened last year. In it up to three hundred complete aircraft engines, from the largest to the smallest part, can be examined and overhauled annually. After reassembly the engines move to a British-built modern test station for test running before remounting in the aircraft. Of the station's two test cells, one is now in use for piston engines, while the other will eventually be used for gas turbines and jet engines.

A new school being built for the training of pilots and other staff is nearing completion. It will house the new Curtiss-Wright Dehmel Flight Simulator, a training device, which is an exact replica of an air-

craft cockpit with all the controls and instruments. These are linked electronically to an outside control point. With the trainee pilot seated in the cockpit, flying conditions can be accurately reproduced while the instruments record the pilot's actions as they would on an aircraft actually in flight.

At Zurich Airport, too, are Swissair's flight kitchens. In the main season several thousand meals a day are prepared there and at Geneva, ranging from simple meals to the elaborate eight-course repasts served on the first-class services. Swissair is justly famed for its bord catering which is in no way inferior to that of a first-class Swiss hotel.

#### *Looking Ahead.*

All this, and more, represents the achievement. But Swissair has never been content to rest on its laurels. Under the enthusiastic and energetic direction of the company's Chairman, Dr. Rudolf Heberlein, and its President, Dr. Walter Berchtold, the management are now laying their plans for another vigorous phase of modernisation and expansion. Eight new Convair "Metropolitan" medium range airliners have been ordered and will join the European network between May and October next year. There they will replace some of the Convair 240s now in service.

Also on order are our long-range Douglas DC-7Cs "Seven Seas", to be delivered towards the end of 1956 and the beginning of 1957. Both the "Metropolitan" and the "Seven Seas" will be equipped with storm warning radar.

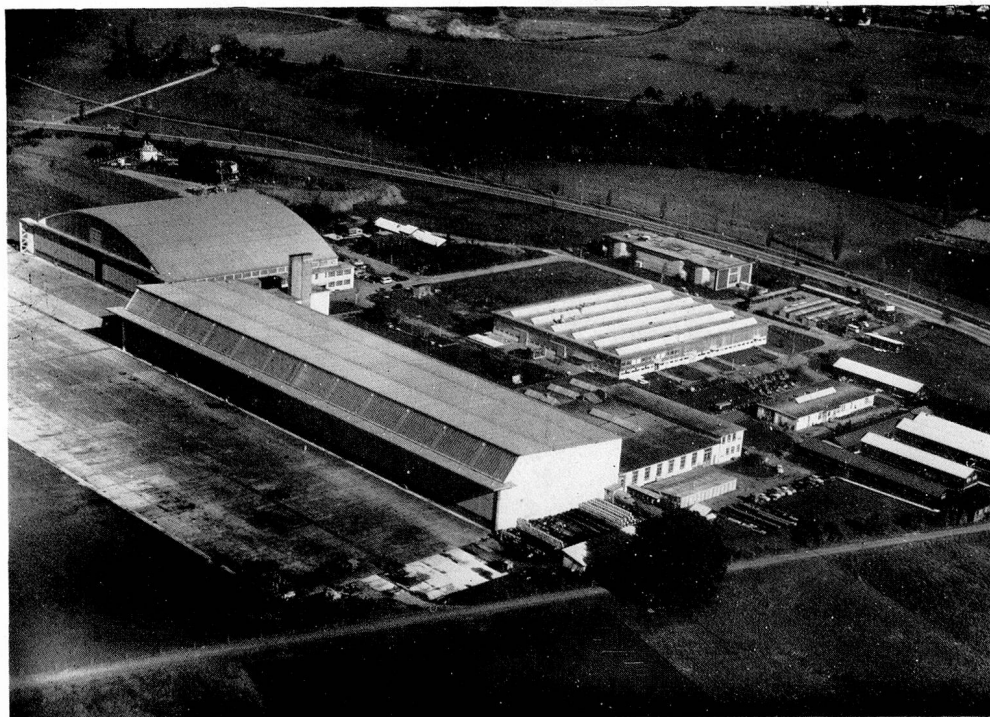
The "Metropolitan" will fly at a cruising speed of 450 km. per hour, has a range of 1,200 km. and will carry 44-52 passengers. Its pressurised cabin is specially sound-proofed and carries a built-in passenger stairway.

The range of the DC-7C will be 8,000 km. and its speed 625 km. per hour. It will accommodate up to 80 passengers. The power for this giant will be provided by four turbo-compound engines developing together 13,800 H.P. The cost of these 12 new aircraft together with the necessary spares will total no less than 100 million Swiss francs.

Expansion plans at present under consideration include a second weekly flight to South America, to be operated by DC-7Cs, terminating at Buenos Aires, and a route to the Far East terminating at Tokyo.

As soon as the DC-7Cs are delivered they will be put into service on the North and South Atlantic routes. The route to New York will then be served by both DC-7Cs, which can fly the North Atlantic non-stop, and by DC-6Bs. The number of flights to New York will be increased to ten a week.

Consideration is also being



**General View of Swissair's Maintenance Base at Zurich Airport. In the foreground are the workshops, on their left the main hangar; in the centre is the new engine overhaul station and slightly to the left behind it the engine test house.**



A Swissair plane in the maintenance dock where wings, fuselages and control surfaces are regularly examined and maintained.

given to increasing the frequency of services to the Middle East.

Swissair thus stands on the threshold of new important developments. The new aircraft and new routes to be opened will ensure it a strong competitive position among the world's major airlines. The directors and management, working with the calm prudence and steady foresight that characterise the Swiss people, face the company's future confident of continued success. Swissair will spare no efforts to keep its well-merited title of "Switzerland's No. 1 Ambassador".

## SWISSAIR SPECIAL FLIGHTS FOR CHRISTMAS AND NEW YEAR.

Swissair will operate 16 special flights from London to Switzerland between December 17th and 27th inclusive.

Nine of these will go to Zurich and seven to Geneva. One Zurich flight, on December 22nd, will go via Basle. Altogether ten specials to Zurich and Geneva will be run on December 22nd and 23rd.

Most of the specials will leave London between 8.50 a.m. and midday. On December 24th, a special night flight will operate to Zurich, leaving London at 1.20 a.m.

## SWISSAIR REDUCE SUMMER NIGHT FARES.

Swissair have substantially reduced the return fares for midweek night tourist flights to Switzerland and Italy next summer, leaving London between Monday and Thursday night inclusive. The new fares are as follows:

London-Basle	£19. 0.0d.	
London-Geneva	£19. 0.0d.	
London-Zurich	£20.10.0d.	
London-Milan	£27. 0.0d.	(via Zurich)
London-Rome	£34.17.0d.	(via Zurich or Geneva).

The reductions range up to about £3.10.0d. compared with weekend night flights.

A special 23-day tourist return fare of £25.0.0d. to Berne will also be introduced.



AIRPORT KLOTEN — ZURICH.