

Zeitschrift:	The Swiss observer : the journal of the Federation of Swiss Societies in the UK
Herausgeber:	Federation of Swiss Societies in the United Kingdom
Band:	- (1938)
Heft:	859
Artikel:	""Swissair" lecture
Autor:	Heitmanek, O.
DOI:	https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-690737

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“SWISSAIR” LECTURE

on

Thursday, April 21st, 1938

at

Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.

by

Flight Captain O. HEITMANEK.

It is said, that at one time, the late Queen Victoria made the retort, “WE are not amused.” This must unfortunately be said about the Film show of last Thursday.

Whilst we fully agree with the statements of the Swiss Minister and the lecturer, that “Swissair” maintains a 100% service and enjoys an equally high reputation, we must frankly admit that the display at the Conway Hall from the film point of view was disappointing.

The Swiss Colony in London is somewhat spoilt with regard to Film shows, as the Nouvelle Société Hélytique has, for the last few years, displayed excellent films.

Not only was the film itself rather poor, but it seemed to me that the projector used did not seem powerful enough for the size of the Hall, in consequence the pictures were very indistinct. An additional disappointment was the announcement that the Film of the Samaden flight could not be shown; I regretted this all the more, as only recently I had flown to the “Highest Airport in Europe,” and as some of my colleagues, who accompanied me on this wonderful flight, were present, we were deprived of refreshing unforgettable memories.

These various mishaps are all the more to be regretted, as the attendance was well over 500. It is of no use to “cry over spilt milk,” nor to exaggerate about the result which this propaganda show might have had; those who have flown with “Swissair” know what a fine experience it is, and those who have not done so yet, will, we hope, get another opportunity to whet their “appetite.” So much for that, we will now forget it, especially as the lecturing part was excellent.

Monsieur C. R. Paravicini, the Swiss Minister, opened the meeting by saying:—

“It has been a pleasure for me to accept the invitation to this Meeting and I am looking forward keenly, as no doubt you all are also, to the various items of the attractive programme which has been prepared for us by the energetic managers of “Swissair,” that organisation of international communication which has gained for itself a reputation throughout Europe for efficiency, accuracy and reliability.

As we all know, its services are regarded with every confidence not only in Switzerland amongst our own countrymen, but also in every country where speedy travel is nowadays an essential factor for success in business as well as in pleasure trips.

I do not think I am wrong in saying that “Swissair” was the first company, at least in Europe, to introduce fast flying by using the technique of flying at a great altitude, a method which almost immediately ensured a success of which our aviation has every reason to be proud.

“Swissair” has admirably fulfilled the mission which was the original reason for its foundation, and it is gratifying to find that the statistics of the London-Switzerland service for last year show a regularity of no less than 100%, with a daily flight in either direction and even—during part of the year—as many as two and sometimes more flights each day.

As to myself, the members of my family and the personnel of the Legation, I think that there are very few journeys from here to Switzerland that are not made by “Swissair.” And personally, ever since the day when I had the privilege of opening the line on April 1st, 1935, by flying from Croydon to Bâle in “Swissair’s” first Douglas, it has never entered my head to travel by any other means when I go—on business or otherwise—to see my home country. From the very first moment the aspect of the beautiful machine, with the Swiss cross, gives

you a most encouraging feeling of security, but when before entering it you shake hands with the member of that smart team of pilots who is to take you over to our mountains, you can hardly conceive how you could ever think of travelling to Switzerland by any other means.

One of these pilots, Flight-Captain Heitmanek, is to-night to give us a lecture, accompanied by pictures on the screen. Captain Heitmanek hardly needs an introduction. His name is a by-word in the flying world, and I am glad to remember that it was he who flew the plane on my first flight with “Swissair.” I am sure that you will find him as efficient and interesting a lecturer as he is an airman, who has long ago passed the million mile mark.

But as I have referred to the brilliant team of “Swissair” pilots, I cannot refrain from paying some slight tribute to Mittelholzer, whose remarkable career was cut short last year by his untimely death. A series of lantern slides made from photographs taken by him on one of his famous flights will be shown to-night in his memory.

Before leaving you to listen to our lecturers, Captain Heitmanek and M. Tall, I would like to thank them for the pleasant and instructive entertainment they are going to offer us. And I would also express our appreciation to M. Messmer, our Manager at Croydon, to whose initiative this meeting is due.”

Flight-Captain O. Heitmanek, who received a cordial reception by the audience, thanked the Swiss Minister for his introductory remarks and welcomed, on behalf of the “Swissair,” the members of the Colony who were present.

The lecturer dealing with the achievements of the Company, said:—“We can indeed be proud. Proud not only of the confidence the travelling public has shown when every year in increasing numbers it gives patronage to our air-line system, but proud also of the rapid and successful development our Company has seen. The names of two men will forever be connected with this still young industry and its rise to the conquering position it has reached, Walter Mittelholzer and Balz Zimmermann. The personalities of these pioneers of Swiss Aviation will always stand out whenever there is talk of modern ways of travel. The abilities and foresight of Walter Mittelholzer and Balz Zimmermann are the foundations upon which the present standard of our organisation rests.”

Their passing away in one and the same year has come as an irreparable loss to the Company and the cause they were serving as well as to their families and friends. Other men had to step in, men who also know the responsibilities and can face the tasks resting now upon them. The newly appointed directors of “Swissair,” Mr. Groh, former vice-manager, and Mr. Pillichody, former director of “Alpar,” deserve all the confidence for successfully handling the future fate and development of “Swissair.”

Flight-Captain Heitmanek then reviewed the most important events in the history of Swiss Air Transport, from which we give the following extracts:—1919: Foundation of the first Swiss Aero Co. by Mittelholzer and Comte, followed soon after by the establishment of the “Ad Astra” by merging Mittelholzer’s organisation with a local Aviation Co. in Geneva.

In 1922, when the Swiss Government, as well as some of the cantons and towns interested, agreed to a small subsidy, the “Ad Astra” was reorganised, and for the first time a Swiss commercial machine made its appearance beyond the Swiss frontiers (Geneva—Zürich—Nürnberg Service).

The year 1926 brought the foundation of another Aviation Co., the “Balair,” an organisation backed by Swiss business men under the directorship of Balz Zimmermann. With the then already famous and airworthy Fokker machines, the Swiss Cross was carried from Basle to Amsterdam and in turn out East to Vienna. The “Ad Astra” spread up North reaching Berlin in 1928.

The most important year in the development of Swiss Aviation, the one which brought concentration of means, equipment, personnel and leadership, was the year 1931; the merging of the “Ad Astra” with the “Balair” opened up new and important fields, from these concerns the “Swissair” emerged, which spread its wings out West to Paris and Cherbourg. 1932:—A new speed record was set up on the Zürich—Vienna route by a Lockheed-Orion machine, 2 hours and 40 minutes, instead of the previous 5 hours. 1934:—Night mail service established with capitals of Western and Northern Europe.

In 1935, the whole fleet of “Swissair” flying equipment was renewed and the now so famous all-metal Douglas transport machines were introduced. Since then the Douglas D.C.2 and 3 have covered thousands of miles in summer and winter, by day and by night. They have, in command of competent and reliable pilots, set up new standards in speed, regularity and modern ways of navigation. In the same year the service Zürich—Basle—London was opened.

The second part of the lecture was devoted to the navigation of an aeroplane, which was demonstrated with the help of the film. The lecturer ably explained “blind flying,” saying that this kind of flying was impossible without the basic instruments. “Nowadays, it is no problem any more for us to control our machines entirely by instruments even under the most adverse weather conditions,” Captain Heitmanek said.

A flight from Zürich to London was then shown and described.



Flight-Captain Heitmanek paid a moving tribute to his former chief, Walter Mittelholzer. He said:—"Mittelholzer's flying career has been a continuous series of success. His pioneering flights rank among the finest exploits aviation has seen. Mittelholzer was first from Bagdad to Teheran and over Mt. Demawend, first over the peaks of Kenya, first over Kilimandjaro, first across the northern heights of Abyssinia, and first to cross Africa in a seaplane. Walter Mittelholzer has gone, but his spirit still lingers with us."

Several slides from Mittelholzer's various flights were then shown, as well as views from the maintenance department at Dübendorf.

After a short interval, a "Hutzli" film, which was supplied by the courtesy of the Swiss Federal Railways, was then shown on the screen; it showed excellent pictures from the remote little valley of the "Kienthal." Mr. A. Tall acted in a very efficient way as commentator. His humorous remarks greatly added to the enjoyment of the audience.

Mention should also be made of the musical entertainment, before and during the lecture, supplied by members of the Swiss Accordion Club, under the leadership of Mr. Gandon.

The meeting ended with the playing of the Swiss National Anthem.

ST.

EDITOR'S POST-BAG.

23rd April, 1938.

The Editor,
"The Swiss Observer,"
23, Leonard Street,
E.C.2.

Dear Sir,

I was invited as a guest by one of my Swiss friends to see some films shown by Swiss Air, at the Conway Hall last week.

As I am a lover of Switzerland and know the country very well and have many Swiss friends both in London and Switzerland, I must say that I was surprised at the poor display of films which was given.

One knows that the Swiss Air is a very efficient and up-to-date concern, but I am afraid if these films were intended for propaganda purposes, any English person present who had never visited Switzerland and hoped to see some wonderful views would have come away feeling very disappointed.

The apparatus used was more like a toy; the screen was too small. I have seen far better Swiss films shown privately, which can be obtained from any of the hiring Agencies. Surely, Swiss Air, with all their facilities, are in a position to give us magnificent views of Switzerland.

The Lecturers did their best with the poor materials available, but the object of the Swiss Air seemed to be to run this show as cheaply as possible.

Here, again, the old saying is proved that "economy is not the best policy," and I am afraid this ship was spoilt for more than a halfpennyworth of tar.

Yours faithfully,
A. H. B. SHAW.

27th April, 1938.

The Editor,
"The Swiss Observer,"
23, Leonard Street,
E.C.2.

Dear Sir,

Upon receipt of the first intimation that "Swissair" were going to give us a Film Show, I made some enquiries and was told to expect something really good. I was not surprised, in fact, to get such an answer, because I have always looked upon the "Swissair" as a most efficiently organised concern. Only a very short time ago one read very flattering remarks in various English trade journals on the efficiency of Swiss aviation.

But alas! !

The evening of April 21st certainly did not fulfil my expectations. Not only were the air films disappointing, but a number of other details were also lacking. To mention just a few.

The hat—the first few opening words—the lecturer—the size and condition of the screen—the speed of the machine and its noise—in fact, *everything* seemed to go wrong that evening. It gave a general impression of being unprepared, and thus contrary to all the emphasis that was laid upon the great care that "Swissair" took in carrying out their flying duties.

No one, I am sure, will contradict the fact that "Swissair" can justly be proud of their achievements, but why not carry that efficiency into their advertising? Advertising "Swissair" was no doubt the prime object of the show, judging, at least, by the lecturer's closing words.

To those who asked their English friends to join them at Conway Hall, the evening was a most uncomfortable one. I would certainly have in-

creased the shower of rather sarcastic remarks made afterwards, had it perhaps not been for the last film and the pleasant manner in which that commentary was delivered, but there again the equipment considerably spoilt the effect.

At this stage I do not want to go into details as it would probably lead too far, but I should like to show you how easily a wrong impression can be given. When a shot depicting a "Nebelmeer" was shown, a friend of mine asked "What is this?" When I replied "A Nebelmeer," he said, "It looks more like the top of a rice pudding!"

Yours very truly,

T. A. SEIFFERT.

TO OUR READERS.

The Editor of the Swiss Observer would be greatly obliged if readers would supply him with addresses of likely subscribers, so that specimen copies could be posted to them.

If such addresses supplied should be already included on our mailing list, no extra copies would be sent.

CITY SWISS CLUB.

Messieurs les membres sont avisés que

L'ASSEMBLEE MENSUELLE

aura lieu Mardi 3 Mai au Restaurant PAGANI,
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FORTHCOMING EVENTS.

Tuesday, May 3rd (Dinner 7.15 sharp) — City Swiss Club — Monthly Meeting — at Pagani's, Great Portland Street, W.1.

Wednesday, May 4th, at 7.30 p.m. — Société de Secours Mutuels — Monthly Meeting — at 74, Charlotte Street, W.1.

Wednesday, May 4th at 8 p.m. — Swiss Mercantile Society — Meeting of the Philatelic Group at "Swiss House, 34/35, Fitzroy Square, W.1.

Thursday, May 5th at 8 o'clock — Nouvelle Société Hélicoïde — Lecture by Major Paul de Vallière on "Comment la Suisse est née. — Premières Luttes. Le Secret de sa vitalité." at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1. (Entrance free).

Wednesday, May 11th at 7.45 p.m. — Monthly Meeting, followed by a lecture on "The European Situation" by Dr. G. P. Gooch, M.A., at Swiss House, 34/35, Fitzroy Square, W.1.

Sunday, May 15th — The Symphonic Social Choir — Concert and Dance — at the Brent Bridge Hotel, Hendon.

Thursday, June 16th — "Fête Suisse" at Westminster Hall, W.

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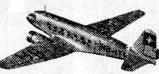
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Dimanche 1er Mai 1938 :

11h. — Prédication : Mr. le Pasteur Garin
(McAll Mission de Paris.)

11hh. — Ecole du Dimanche.

7h. — Culte : Mr. le Pasteur Garin.

Baptême : le 24 avril 1938.

Jennifer Anne Stuber, née le 4 octobre 1937 à Hayes, Mddx., fille de Fritz Emile Stuber, originaire de Sommiswil (Soleure) et de Dorothy, née Solly, originaire de Canterbury.

SCHWEIZERKIRCHE

(Deutschsprachige Gemeinde).

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Sonntag, den 1. Mai 1938.

11 Uhr morgens, Gottesdienst und Sonntagsschule.

7 Uhr abends, Gottesdienst.

8 Uhr, Chorprobe.

TRAUUNG.

Am 25. April wurden getraut :

Hans Walter Benz von Zürich (Stadt) und Ursina Leonie Bay von Klosters (Graubünden).

Anfragen wegen Religions-bezw. Confirmanden-stunden und Amtshandlungen sind erbeten an den Pfarrer der Gemeinde : C. Th. Hahn, 43, Priory Road, Bedford Park, W. 4 (Telephon : Chiswick 4156). Sprechstunden : Dienstag 12-2 Uhr in der Kirche.

Printed for the Proprietors, by THE FREDERICK PRINTING CO., LTD., at 23, Leonard Street, London, E.C.2.