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SWITZERLAND IN INTERNATIONAL AVIATION.

By Dr. R. Speich, Chairman of the Board of Swissair,
Swiss Air Transport Co., Ltd.

The aeroplane has quickly taken one of the leading places in international traffic since the end of the second world war. This does not mean, however, that development is thereby at an end; on the contrary, with the help of aircraft new possibilities are always arising to enable the establishment of reliable and direct connections between the peoples within the shortest time, or for carrying mail and cargo over thousands of miles within a few hours.

The problems resulting from this situation are various in their nature, and require thorough examination and careful preparation until the regularity necessary for a constant service is assured. Above all, the flying personnel, and at the same time, the ground staff occupied with the preparation of the planes, must receive a first-class training and be able to obtain sufficient experience in order to enable them to cope with any situation which might possibly arise. In Switzerland we are fortunate enough to possess excellent pilots and radio operators, and the traditional and acknowledged talent for instrumental precision makes it possible furthermore for highly qualified staff to be engaged for the airfield workshops. On the other hand, we lack navigators such as have been required by seagoing nations for hundreds of years and therefore continually trained for the purpose. In this connection there is a gap to be closed.

Like most other countries, Switzerland possesses no factories in a position to produce large modern transport aircraft. The Swiss requirements for such planes would, from the economical point of view, hardly justify the establishment of plants for this purpose, and we would probably make the same unpleasant experience as we did some time ago with the manufacture of private automobiles. At the present time, the Americans lead in the construction of aircraft for the regular civil air transport, as, in view of the enormous costs for preparation and the trial period, which could be partly covered in the United States thanks to the orders from the army, only manufacture in series is considered; a loss must be expected as certain when constructing less than 100 aircraft of the same type. We are therefore compelled to procure our planes and spare parts from foreign countries,

which, in the case of the political situation growing more tense, involves serious disadvantages as far as the possibility for obtaining further supplies is concerned.

In spite of these considerable obstacles, and without taking into account the enormous means which would be needed to build modern airfields, Swiss air traffic has extended greatly since the end of the second world war, and our national air transport company continues to work at full speed for further development. Until recently, Swissair, the national airline of Switzerland, restricted its services to regular traffic within Europe and to the Near East. A number of special flights with DC-4 planes to New York and South Africa have, however, been operated, and a flight to South America, as far as Buenos Aires, was also carried out. The question of operating regular lines over the North and South Atlantic, as well as to Johannesburg, is under discussion. As far as personnel is concerned, Swissair is, practically speaking, prepared. As regards the technical side, however, modern long-distance aircraft must still be acquired, for which considerable financial means would have to be found. It is still not sufficiently clear as to whether regular Transatlantic traffic could be borne from the economical point of view, and the experience of other air transport companies that have already started such a service is not particularly encouraging. This problem must therefore be examined carefully and thoroughly, as financial adventures would hardly be welcomed by the conservative Swiss people.

Swissair, unlike most other air lines, is operated on a purely economical basis, and does not receive subsidies from the Swiss Government.

PIANOFORTE RECITAL.

Paul Baumgartner.

We wish to direct the attention of our readers to a Pianoforte Recital, which will be given by our compatriot, Paul Baumgartner, on Sunday, October 10th, 1948, at 7.30 p.m., at His Majesty's Theatre, S.W.1.

Paul Baumgartner enjoys a great reputation on the Continent as a fine artiste, and we hope that many of our readers and their friends will make it convenient to attend this recital, and thus give their support to our countryman.

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